

Hello Herman

a play

by

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 12,
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 76,
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 86,
 and
 (Sheyla & Lax
 in bed
 watching TV)

Character breakdown:

Lax Morales – The James Dean of journalism. The youngest Journalist to ever win the Pulitzer prize. 23 years old.

Herman Howards – A sixteen year old student at Broome High-school who shot twenty-nine people, leaving twenty-five dead on the floor of the gym.

Gale Howards – Herman's mother, 42 years old.

Julia Howards – Herman's sister, 10 years old.

Black kid – Twelve years old, lived in Surville, Georgia. A ghost.

Sheyla Duvall – 29 years old. Black. Lives in Broome, Iowa. Works at the *Liberty Newspaper*, but knows she's too good a journalist to stay there.

1 : **Ms. Cribb** – a Phys-ed teacher at Broome High.
Anchorwoman
Old lady in bar
Recorded Voice

2 : **School Guard**
FBI man
Officer
Anchor # 2

3 : **Marsha Dixon** – 16, the prettiest girl in school.
Anchor # 3

4 : **Mr. Phelps** – A teacher at Broome High.
Doctor – Works at Paul Blake Memorial Hospital. Close to the edge.
Bartender – Works at The Pit Stop, a biker bar.
Chet Clarkson – a news man.

5: **Kelly Graham** – A New York Goth Chick. She's 16.

Susan – Marsha's friend.

Nurse – Works at Paul Blake.

6: **Timmy Alburn** – A friend of Herman's. 16.

Jim-Carl Ray – A skinhead. Loyal To Dougie-Dogg. 18 years old.

James Hankley – Editor of the Broome High-school paper.

Biker – at The Pit Stop.

7: **Ted Rafferty** – A TV journalist on the down-slope of his career. He's fifty.

Sean Gall – Head of the Surville, Georgia section of the United Aryan Brothers of America. Mid-fifties.

Frank Howards – Herman's father.

8: **Michael Green** – A student at Broome High. He's 17.

Paul Schrewber – Another student at Broome. Captain of the football team.

Skinhead 1 – Impressed by who he thinks Lax is down in Georgia. 16 years old.

Fed 1

9: **Dougie-Dogg Wilson** – A respected member of the United Aryan Brothers of America. He's 23.

Michael Ray – A bully at Broome High. 17.

Biker – at The Pit Stop.

Act I

Scene 1

House is dark. Stage is dark. We hear the Nightly News music. Lights up on a news anchor sitting at her desk reporting live to the camera.

ANCHORWOMAN: Herman Howards, a sixteen year old student at Broome High, a public school in Broome, Iowa, shot twenty-four of his classmates, two teachers, and three police officers before he was apprehended yesterday at 11:40am. Twenty of the children were dead on arrival, four made it to Paul Blake Memorial hospital where two more died. Marsha Bloom and James Corner are still listed in critical condition. Two officers were killed, another is in intensive care. No further word at this moment. One of the two teachers, Nathaniel Phelps, was dead on arrival. The other, Sharon Cribb, is listed in critical condition.

Howards was described as quiet, a loner. His classmates said they always thought he was strange, but never imagined him capable of such an act. When asked, his mother said that Herman is a happy, healthy teenager with a promising future; she can't understand why he would do such a thing.

A phone rings on the other side of the stage.

Scene 2

Lax is in his apartment watching TV as he picks up the phone.

LAX: Morales. Marty!... We got it?... You scheistering, miserable, mother-of all mothers, we got it! Baby, I could kiss you... *Query Magazine?*... A tabloid?... You

couldn't get me better than a tabloid?... They have exclusive rights?... From his mother!?

Boy, she didn't wait long, did she? This is great. "LAX MORALES interviews HERMAN HOWARDS" Like you always say, Marty, "Big money, baby. The right move."... I'm up to it. This has nothing to do with Georgia... I know... Immediately. what airline?... Good enough... Hey, Marty, let's win another Pulitzer.

(He hangs up and goes over to the mirror.)

That's what I'm talking about!!!

(He takes out a tape-recorder.)

April, 23rd. Prologue to Herman Howards Interview for... *Query* Magazine: *(With irony)* I sneak into the heart of evil, emerge with knowledge of the beast, and they reward me for it. A chameleon, I blend, I fit in, I acclimate. I get my story, period... What price will I pay for this one?

Scene 3

A phone rings. Sheyla Duvall wakes up from her bed and answers it.

SHEYLA: It's late... Oh, hello Mr. Lipsburg... No, not too late... So Lax Morales got the interview with Herman Howards... Lax Morales?... Yes I know. He won a Pulitzer for busting up a group of skinheads in Georgia... He comes in today at 6:30am... What time is it now?... No, I'll be there... I know, I'll be "networking"... Yes, I'm happy to be a part of your network, Mr. Lipsburg... Any chance Morales could get me in to see Howards?... Understood... That has to remain open... Goodnight.

Scene 4

A different Anchor is at the news desk.

ANCHOR #2: While parents of the formerly peaceful community of Broome, Iowa grieve the tragic loss of their children, parents all over suburban America are wondering if their town will be next in what seems to be a series of copycat crimes started by the Littleton, Colorado massacre.

Projections appear, above the anchor, of Broome High-school. There are images of the scene inside.

"Bloody Broome", as it is now being called, is the tenth high-school in two years to have incidents of students bringing guns into class and opening fire. *(Change slide)* But never before has the carnage been this bad, and the death toll as high as Bloody Broome.

(Change slide) Twenty-five were killed in all, four are still in critical condition.

(Change slide) The most disturbing fact remains that there is no clear motive for the killing. What has become very clear is that today's teenage culture has become destructive and dangerous everywhere. *(Projection disappears)*

Iowa Senator John Cox (Rep.) issued a statement to the press this evening.

Quick cross-fade. Senator John Cox is giving his statement.

COX: ...And I am making a plea to the Grand Jury that Herman Howards not only be executed, but that his execution be televised in order for these kids to see first hand what happens when you disregard the value of life. Thank you.

Scene 5

Sheyla stands holding a sign which reads "MORALES". She is waiting in the airport. Lax enters the scene and goes over to her.

LAX: I think you're here for me.

SHEYLA: In your dreams, pussycat.

LAX: Sheyla Duvall?

SHEYLA: And you are?

LAX: Lax Morales.

SHEYLA: My god, you're just a kid! I'm sorry, I expected you to be older.

LAX: I know what you mean. I expected you to be younger. Just kidding. *(They share a slight laugh)* I get a lot of that.

SHEYLA: I bet you do.

LAX: Do you have the background on Howards?

SHEYLA: Yes, I have *my* background research on Howards.

LAX: You did it?

SHEYLA: That's right.

LAX: Is it any good?

SHEYLA: It's brilliant.

An odd moment.

LAX: May I have it?

SHEYLA: Why would I give it to you?

LAX: Isn't that what you were hired for?

SHEYLA: No, darling. I was hired to pick you up and take you to the prison.

Nobody's paid me for this background. As far as I know, I should be the one in there interviewing Herman.

LAX: What do you want for it?

SHEYLA: We're negotiating?

LAX: Sure.

SHEYLA: Let me sit in on the interview.

LAX: Out of the question.

SHEYLA: Good luck with it, Mr. Morales.

LAX: No compromise?

SHEYLA: Depends on who gets compromised.

LAX: I'll get you into the prison; you can talk to the guards, take a look at the conditions...*(She's not going for it)* And, if it's as good as you say, I'll drop you some quotes before I hand the story in.

SHEYLA: Drop me some quotes? *(Thinks about it for a second)* No, I don't think you're going to get it.

LAX: That good?

SHEYLA: That good.

LAX: I'll give you an exclusive with me on the whole experience. How about that?

SHEYLA: An exclusive interview with you about your interview with Howards?

LAX: Yes.

SHEYLA: Before you leave Iowa?

LAX: That doesn't give me a whole lot of time to digest the experience, Sheyla.

SHEYLA: Before you leave Iowa.

LAX: Before I leave Iowa.

She hands the envelope containing the background material to Lax.

SHEYLA: The interview with his mother is on page thirty-four. That's the best one.

Scene 6

Another news cast.

ANCHORMAN#3: Lax Morales, well respected journalist, famous for his work with the FBI down in Surville, Georgia, has been hired by *Query Magazine* to interview Herman Howards. Morales was not available for comment. However his agent, Martin Shrift, told reporters "America will have a better understanding of the boy when Lax is through with him. What we have here is the good voice of youth culture vs. The Bad. It will make for some exciting stuff."

Many people are wondering if one of the causes for all these copy-cat crimes of late is the amount of press attention given to the criminals of these crimes.

The addition of a well known name like Morales is sure to raise the price and the attention given to Howards' story.

The T-shirt worn by Howards ("Y2K Blows" on the front, "But I Dig Blow" on the back) is becoming a popular item among Los Angeles Teens. However, the New

York teenagers who label themselves as "Goths" say they have nothing to do with Howards. Chet Clarkson reports.

Cross-fade to Chet Clarkson interviewing Kelly Graham.

CHET: Do you consider yourself a "Goth", Kelly?

KELLY: Yeah. Like, duh, yeah.

CHET: As a Goth, what do you think of Herman Howards?

KELLY: I'm just glad he's like not a Goth, cause Christian America would have crucified us. Come on, he was just this ordinary kid that flipped out. He like didn't have anything to do with Goth culture, and that's good. I mean it's not good that he killed all those people, it's just good that he wasn't a Goth. I mean it would have been worse if he always wore black or something. You know what I mean?

CHET: I heard that some Goths practice self mutilation. Have you ever tried anything like that?

KELLY: I did once, but I don't want to talk about it.

CHET: Why don't you want to talk about it?

KELLY: Cause like it was just this stupid thing that I did.

CHET: Why did you do it?

KELLY: I don't know.

CHET: Do you regret it?

KELLY: Yeah. I do.

Cross-fade to Sheyla interviewing Timmy Alburn, 16, a classmate of Herman's.

SHEYLA: So, Timmy, you were friends with Herman?

TIMMY: I don't even know what that word means anymore.

SHEYLA: Did you know him?

TIMMY: Yeah, it's a small school.

SHEYLA: Did you hang out with him?

TIMMY: How do you mean?

SHEYLA: Did you talk to each other?!

TIMMY: Yeah, we talked to each other.

SHEYLA: Did he tell you anything?

TIMMY: Some stuff.

SHEYLA: Such as?

TIMMY: How he was going to get vengeance on all the assholes. How like he was the smartest kid in the Universe, and Jesus was a prophet before he turned seventeen, too. I don't know, crazy shit.

SHEYLA: What did you think of what he told you?

TIMMY: I just thought he was angry. Real angry at something. I didn't know he was going to shoot the whole school up.

SHEYLA: Why do you think he was so angry?

TIMMY: I have no idea.

Cross-fade to Ted Rafferty interviewing a school-guard at Broome High.

RAFFERTY: Did you know Herman Howards personally?

SCHOOL GUARD: Yeah, I knew him. He was all kinds of fucked up... Can I say fucked up?

RAFFERTY: Yes.

SCHOOL GUARD: Yeah, he was *fucked* up! It's a damn shame that no one saw it coming. I don't know what's wrong with that boy's mama, but it's something for her not to see the signs.

RAFFERTY: What would you say are the signs?

SCHOOL GUARD: The kid had no friends. How can a boy grow up with no friends and be a normal kid? Will you tell me that? Every kid, no matter how strange they are, has friends. Not Herman. He'd eat his lunch alone in the cafeteria and listen to the kids laugh about him two tables away.

RAFFERTY: Did you ever sit with him at lunch?

SCHOOLGUARD: We don't sit with the kids, and besides, child psychology ain't my field of expertise. I could tell, though. The kid was going to snap. Shit, anyone with a set of working eyes should've been able to see that. Those kids could've been nicer to that boy, maybe all this shit wouldn't have gone down.

RAFFERTY: You were on your lunch-break when it happened, correct?

SCHOOLGUARD: What of it?

RAFFERTY: Just trying to clarify.

SCHOOLGUARD: Now you want to blame me for this shit?

RAFFERTY: I was not implying that, sir.

SCHOOLGUARD: All you fools looking to blame someone. Blame the games, blame the music, blame the school-guards. Go blame yourselves.

Cross-fade to Sheyla interviewing Michael Green, outside of his house in Broome.

SHEYLA: Now, Michael, did you ever think that something like Herman Howards was possible in your school?

MICHAEL: I don't think anyone believes that it could happen in their school, but it can. No one is safe from these nerds.

SHEYLA: Do you consider yourself a jock?

MICHAEL: I play sports.

SHEYLA: Did you ever have interactions with Herman?

MICHAEL: I used to rib him a little, but no more than any of the other kids. He's evil!

SHEYLA: Do you ever feel that if you hadn't ribbed Herman he might not have done it?

MICHAEL: Hell no. Kids been getting' hazed forever. But you didn't used to hear about them going into their schools and killing everybody cause of it. No, hazing ain't the problem, these whacko kids are the problem. There's a whole bunch of them at every school. We should just flag them down and put them away before one of them does something like this again.

SHEYLA: If they do execute Howards, do you think it should be televised?

MICHAEL: Absolutely.

SHEYLA: Why is that?

MICHAEL: 'Cause we all deserve a chance to watch the bastard cook for what he done to us.

SHEYLA: Let's be specific. What would you say he's done to you?

MICHAEL: Every night I dream about that monster. Every night. Do you know what that's like? Do you have any idea what it's like to go to bed scared every night?

SHEYLA: We're not interviewing me. It's your story.

MICHAEL: The only way I can get him out of my head, is by watching him die.

Lights down.

Scene 7

Lax and Sheyla in the waiting-room of the Broome County prison. Lax is going over Sheyla's background research.

SHEYLA: You like it?

LAX: Give me a chance to read it and I'll tell you.

He goes back to the research. They sit in silence for a moment.

SHEYLA: So, why is it exactly you think your shit smells like ice cream?

LAX: Let's suppose it's because I'm the youngest journalist ever to win the Pulitzer Prize.

SHEYLA: Cute. *(Pretends to remember)* Oh, yeah, you went undercover into a sect of Neo-Nazi Skinheads. In Georgia, right?

LAX: They had a grandiose plan to kill every Nigger, Spic, and Ash in all the state. I helped the Feds get enough evidence to bust them up before they could do too much damage, and I still told their side of the story as they saw it.

SHEYLA: Well, that's halfway to ice cream.

Lax goes back to his papers. They sit in silence for a moment.

SHEYLA: Morales is a Spanish name, but you don't look like you have any Hispanic in you. Professional name?

LAX: Are we doing the interview now?

SHEYLA: You've sparked my interest. I wouldn't mind if I understood a little something about you. *The exclusive interview with you, remember?*

LAX: What little something?

SHEYLA: Any little something.

LAX: I'm one sixteenth Mexican.

SHEYLA: A sixteenth!? Honey, I'm a sixteenth Cherokee, but I don't go around calling myself 'Writes With a Vengeance'.

LAX: I didn't choose that name, it's been in my family for more generations than I know about. My great-great grandfather grew up in Mexico and ran across the border when he was sixteen. Back in 1886. He married a white girl and had my great grandfather. *He* married a white girl and had my grandfather. My grandfather married a white girl and had my father, and my father married a white girl and had me.

SHEYLA: No daughters?

LAX: Not one. Each man got married once and had one son. Now look, I'm growing fonder of you by the moment, but I really want to read your background before they call me in.

SHEYLA: That's fine.

Lax goes back to his papers.

SHEYLA: You must've seen some ugly things when you were in Georgia, huh?

LAX: You're really not going to let up, are you?

SHEYLA: No.

LAX: *(Puts the background away)* I'm yours.

SHEYLA: You must've seen some ugly things in Georgia, huh?

LAX: You can't imagine.

SHEYLA: Tell me.

LAX: Forget it.

SHEYLA: I can handle it.

LAX: I said, forget it.

SHEYLA: Did you go out bashing 'Niggers, Spics, and' ... what else did you say?

LAX: Ash. That's what they call Jews.

SHEYLA: Did you go out bashing, Lax?

He gives a laugh of full dismissal.

SHEYLA: Did you bash anyone? You can tell me.

Lax's face goes blank, he's in a trance. The blank expression changes to one of pain as he thinks about something.

SHEYLA: Lax? Hey. Lax, honey. You okay?

Laughter is heard on the other side of stage. Cross-fade to two Skinheads sitting with a man in his early fifties. They are in a diner. The man is Sean Gall, the skinheads – Jim-Carl Ray and Dougie-Dogg Wilson.

DOUGIE DOGG: So then, this little nigger piece of shit says to me: "What do you got to be so proud of?"

GALL: And you told him?

DOUGIE DOGG: I didn't tell him nothin', I spat on him.

Jim-Carl laughs hysterically. Gall is less than amused.

GALL: You spat on him?

DOUGIE DOGG: Hit him right on the back of his nappy head.

Jim-Carl explodes into laughter again.

JIM-CARL: I could just see that Dougie-Dogg Goob drippin' down the back uh them naps.

Lax comes by and starts clearing their dishes away. He is wearing an apron and a wooly cap.

GALL: Dougie-Dogg goob?

JIM-CARL: Yeah, he's got bigger goobs than some cows I know.

GALL: *(To Dougie-Dogg)* How can you expect me to make you a captain, when, faced with a beautiful opportunity to teach a nigger exactly why the white race is superior, the best thing you can think of, is to spit a goob on the back of his nappy head?

LAX: Excuse me, Mr. Gall?

GALL: What!?

LAX: I'm sorry to bother you, I've just been waiting to meet you for a long time and didn't think I would get a better chance than now.

GALL: Why do you want to meet me, Yankee?

LAX: My mom told me a good deal about you. About what you did in the sixties.

GALL: Back in the sixties? Your mother from around here?

LAX: She was. Moved up North when she met my dad.

GALL: Ain't that a shame. Well, what can I do for you, son?

LAX: I don't really know. I just moved here from New York.

GALL: New York? Boy you a long way from home. What were you doing in New York?

LAX: I was going to NYU.

GALL: You're not a dumb kid, are you?

LAX: I'm not a dumb kid.

GALL: What made you come down here to meet me, son?

LAX: I was tired of living in a place where you have to feel ashamed of being White.

GALL: You felt ashamed to be White in New York?

LAX: My neighborhood was filled with...uh...color.

The two skinheads let out a little laugh, receive a look from Gall, then fall back into silence.

GALL: Did you ever seek out the New York chapter of the Brotherhood, son?

LAX: With where I lived, it was bad enough to have my skin shining at night as I walked home. If any of those...people, had found out I was involved with something like *that*... Well, I wouldn't be standing here now.

GALL: Now see this is what I'm talking about. A boy is made to feel inferior in his own neighborhood for no other reason than the color of his skin. And they call *us* the racists. Well you've come to the right place. What's your name, son?

LAX: Vic Bishop.

GALL: Where you stayin', Vic?

LAX: Over at the Motel Six.

GALL: Well I think we can find somethin' a little nicer, more home like for you. Why don't you stay with us for a while?

SHEYLA: *(From across the stage)* Hey, Lax. Lax! Snap out of it. The guard's here.

Cross-fade back to Sheyla in the waiting room. Lax goes back over to her as he takes off the apron and hat. He sits in the same position he was in originally.

LAX: What?

SHEYLA: Herman's ready. The guard is here to escort you. Are you okay to do this?

LAX: Fine. Am I going to see you again?

SHEYLA: The exclusive?

LAX: I meant aside from that.

(She thinks about it)

LAX: Come on. It'll be fun... You can't keep a guard waiting.

SHEYLA: Why not. Here's my card. Don't call late.

LAX: I wouldn't dream of it, darlin'.

Lax turns to leave. Sheyla grabs his arm.

SHEYLA: Did you bash anyone, Lax?

LAX: Not in any way.

Cross-fade to the prison questioning room. Lax sits down, takes out his tape-recorder and stares off into space. The same expression appears on his face as Hoots and hollers are heard around him. Lights up on Jim-Carl and Dougie-Dogg surrounding a twelve year old black kid. They taunt him. Lax goes over and completes the triangle around the kid. He makes a break for it and runs past Lax, who does nothing to stop him.

LAX: That was awesome! Shit like that just can't happen in New York.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Fuck that noise! Why didn't you stop him?

LAX: I don't know. I didn't think to. So what?

The two skinheads look at Lax with disgust and walk off. Lax is left standing there. He moves across the stage to a skinhead party. Everyone is drinking. Someone hands him a beer. Everyone is laughing and merry except Dougie-Dogg and Jim-Carl who are talking in the corner as they stare at Lax.

LAX: (to the room) So then I fuckin' bashed him on the head with the garbage can.

SKINHEAD 1: I love the way they say "Fuckin'" in New York.

LAX: I pick him up, look at the kid, and I say: "You little, maggot-piece of shit. I had my ass kicked by so many of your fuckin' brothers. Now I'm gonna' take it out on you and your whole family. Do you understand me? I'm talking about your mother, your father, and your little sister.

SKINHEAD 1: How'd you know he had a little sister?

LAX: They all got a little sister. Anyway, I got a few more kicks in before I heard the sirens.

SKINHEAD 1: And you were all by yourself?

LAX: Yeah, I followed this kid around the corner.

SKINHEAD 1: That's cool, man.

LAX: I tell you, we got a real good thing here. We got real power here. We got White.

The skinhead listens to Lax/Vic and ponders what he's saying. Jim-Carl and Dougie-Dogg look on.

DOUGIE-DOGG: (looking at Lax) What do you think?

JIM-CARL: I think he's a nigger-lover bein' treated like a damn guest of honor that's what I think.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Someone should do somethin' about it.

JIM-CARL: You can say that again.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Someone should do somethin' about it.

He gives Jim-Carl a look to say "Get off your ass and do somethin'."

JIM-CARL: Oh, right.

He gets up and goes over to Lax.

JIM-CARL: You know what I think, I think you're a nigger-lover.

LAX: Excuse me?

The room goes silent.

JIM-CARL: I said I think Vic Bishop is a nigger-lover! *(to the other skinheads,*

laughing) What you think of that?

Lax grabs him, throws him to the ground, and starts beating the piss out of him. All the skinheads there have to pull him off. Gall enters.

GALL: What is this crap?

DOUGIE-DOGG: Vic was beatin' the piss out of JC.

GALL: Why?

DOUGIE-DOGG: He called Vic a nigger-lover.

Gall walks over to where Jim-Carl is lying on the floor.

GALL: What a mess. Vic in my office.

LAX: I'm sorry Mr. Gall. I don't...

GALL: Now Vic.

Cross-fade to Gall's office. Lax and Gall enter.

GALL: Have you been happy here, Vic?

LAX: I've never felt more at home.

GALL: Nothing bothers you?

LAX: No, nothing. I... Well, honestly Mr. Gall, I wish there wasn't so much competition between the brothers. It just seems like personal power within the group is more important to them than the entire concept of White Power.

GALL: I'm glad to hear you say that, Vic. Because I've been keepin' my eye on you for some weeks now. *(Lax looks tense)* I know what you're up to. You wouldn't mind being Captain yourself, would you?

LAX: What?

GALL: I saw the way you beat JC just now. I know what he called you, but even so, don't you think that was a bit excessive?

LAX: I just snapped... I didn't...

GALL: Snapped? Bullshit! You wanted me to know you have what it takes to be a leader of this outfit. Well, you can be. I don't discriminate against Yankees. Not ones like yourself.

LAX: I'm glad to hear that, Mr. Gall.

GALL: Congratulations, son. You are the new Captain of the Surville section of the United Aryan Brothers of America. How does it feel?

A loud buzzer goes off and the sound of a prison door opening is heard. Whenever this happens, the lights are replaced by red light until the door is closed and they return to normal. Lax moves to sit at a table in the prison questioning room. Herman's chair sits empty across from him. Herman enters. He is about five foot seven, stringy blond hair

that comes down to his ears and is then cut short in a buzz. His chin is too small which gives his face a beakish quality. Eyes as blue as the sky in New Mexico. He and Lax take each other in for a moment and then the door is closed, the lights turn back to normal, and Herman seats himself opposite Lax.

LAX: Hello Herman, I'm Lax Morales.

HERMAN: How much money do I get for talking to you?

LAX: That's up to your mother. She's the one who signed the contract with *Query*. I don't have anything to do with that...

HERMAN: How much?

LAX: I'd guess for a story like yours, the standard would have to be at least one hundred grand.

HERMAN: There is no standard for what I've done.

LAX: True. No one as young as you has ever killed so many people during a time of peace.

HERMAN: What do you mean during a time of peace? No one has done something like this ever!

LAX: When Hitler was running out of troops toward the end of World War II, he had to enlist children about your age, a little younger, into his army. Those children killed hundreds of soldiers, but they thought they were doing it in the name of their country. They were in battles. Why did you do it?

HERMAN: What the fuck is that stuff on your tie?

LAX: Dodo birds.

HERMAN: Why are you wearing a Dodo bird tie?

LAX: Why were you wearing a tee-shirt that said 'Y2K Blows' on the front, 'But I Dig Blow' on the back?

HERMAN: Why not, it's true.

LAX: You dig Blow, Herman?

HERMAN: Sure.

LAX: Did you get picked on a lot at school, Herman?

HERMAN: Why do you have Dodo birds on your tie?

LAX: Because they look stupid, but they're really smart.

HERMAN: Okay, that's cool.

LAX: Sounds like the seal of approval. May I interview you now?

HERMAN: Why not?

LAX: Did you get picked on a lot at school?

HERMAN: Everyday.

LAX: Tell me about it.

HERMAN: The jocks called me names cause I'm small. They'd give me wedgies and push me around. Stuff. One time I was at one of the urinals and two asshole hockey players came in and pushed me up against it. I got piss all over my pants. They laughed. I wanted to cry but I sure as Hell wasn't about to let them see that. I just sat there on the floor looking up at them. Then one said, 'Spare some change?' I didn't have any, so he kicked me in the stomach. They walked out and left me there. I had to wait for the bell to ring so everyone would be in class and I could run home.

LAX: What's with 'Spare some change.'?

HERMAN: It's MTV. They were doing this show about kids who leave home and go to live on the streets in New York. They ask people if they can spare some change, and if the person says no, or ignores them, they beat him up.

LAX: The kids are big enough to beat up adults?

HERMAN: Yeah, they're like seventeen, eighteen.

LAX: Why don't they just get jobs if they're healthy enough to kick the shit out of people?

HERMAN: Why get a job if you can make just as much begging? Especially after that show. People all over were scared to say no to them. That's why people around here do it, they want to be like the kids in New York. If someone around here asks you that, and you don't give them anything, you'll get jacked up.

LAX: Have you ever heard of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, Herman?

HERMAN: What do you think?

LAX: Would you have ever thought to do what you did if they hadn't done it in Colorado first?

HERMAN: But they did.

LAX: I know, Herman, pretend they hadn't.

HERMAN: I guess I might not of thought of it, but come on, they became real famous afterwards. Everyone knows who they are. They put my generation on the map. I just took it one step further, for the new millenium.

LAX: You look at them as heroes, Herman?

HERMAN: Yes.

LAX: Why?

HERMAN: Because they said Fuck You to the assholes. After Colorado, nerds started getting respect. Now that I've hit the scene, they'll be running the schools.

LAX: So you feel like you started a revolution?

HERMAN: You'll see. All over the country, kids are going to start doing what I did until all you assholes finally realize that we are here. We matter, Lax.

LAX: What about the twenty-four kids you shot and killed in cold blood, Herman? Are they not part of your revolution?

HERMAN: Fuck them. They grouped me in with the nerds. They thought I didn't count.

LAX: Well, Justin Martin was considered a nerd and you killed him anyway.

HERMAN: I did that fat bastard a favor. Look, I didn't say I wanted to be grouped with losers. Those asshole Jocks grouped me in with them. I didn't have shit to do with those nerds. I'm an individual! Don't forget that! You think that just anyone could go into school and do what I did? No sir. There's only one Herman Howards, and now history will remember me!

LAX: *(takes a moment)* Have you ever played 'DOOM'?

HERMAN: Of course.

LAX: What would you say is the goal of the game?

HERMAN: To shoot everyone up and get lots of points.

LAX: Now, how about 'POSTAL', have you ever played that game?

HERMAN: I own it.

LAX: Explain it to me, Herman. I haven't had a chance to play.

HERMAN: You're a postal worker. You go into the office one day cause you've had enough of people's crap, and you shoot everyone up 'til they're all gone.

LAX: It sounds easy.

HERMAN: Well, you've got time limits, and you get more points for hitting people in the face than in the stomach or the legs or the back of the head.

LAX: Do you 'shoot up' women and children too?

HERMAN: You get less points for them.

LAX: That's nice. Your mom supports you in playing games like POSTAL?

HERMAN: I don't think she knew anything about it.

LAX: But she bought it for you?

HERMAN: No, I downloaded it off the web.

LAX: Would you say that playing these games has numbed you to violence?

HERMAN: I don't get your question.

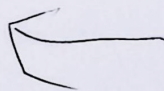
LAX: Would you say that playing these games made it easier for you to go into your school and shoot your peers?

HERMAN: Of course it did. How do you think I got to be such a good shot? At one point this girl started running for the door. She was about fifty feet from me, but I clipped her right in the back of the head and her face exploded and landed all over some kid. *(Herman begins to laugh)*

LAX: You think that's funny?

HERMAN: You had to be there. I mean here was this girl that thought she was home free because she was so far from me,

(A little girl starts running across the stage.)



and she's running, about to get to the door when all of a sudden,
(*Herman holds up his hands like a gun aimed at her from behind. A loud gunshot is heard. She crashes to the floor.*)

'OOPS! THERE GOES MY FACE!' and lands all over this tiny little kid in glasses. I mean, can you imagine what that kid must have been thinking when that happened? Jesus, that's gotta be worse then getting shit on by a bird! Sucker! I mean, what are the chances?

LAX: Do you even know the girl's name, Herman?

HERMAN: She was background. Not a key player.

LAX: It was a game, wasn't it?

HERMAN: It's all a game, Lax. Wasn't it a game when you bashed that nigger's head in with a bat?

LAX: What did you say?

HERMAN: Down in Georgia, when you bashed that nigger's head in with a bat. Did that seem real to you?

LAX: Never happened.

HERMAN: Well, all eight of the guys that were there say it did.

LAX: How do you know?

HERMAN: WWW.KKK.COM, Georgia faction. When you won the Pulitzer, they had quite a few things to say about you, Lax.

LAX: You make it a habit to surf hate-sites, Herman?

HERMAN: I have respect for anyone that's willing to stand up for themselves. Besides, you can learn a lot about people from their websites. That's where you really learn stuff, Lax. Lax Morales. It sounds like you're Puerto Rican or something.

LAX: Mexican. I'm a sixteenth Mexican. Does that make you want to kill me too, Herman!?

HERMAN: I just think it's funny, that's all.

LAX: Why don't we stop here today? You've given me a good bit to digest. I'll come back tomorrow.

HERMAN: Whatever.

Lax gets up and knocks on the door three times. The guard opens it, the buzzer sounds, and the red light comes on. Lax exits. The door is shut. Blackout.

Scene 8

A phone rings. Lights up on Sheyla as she answers it.

SHEYLA: It's late...Lax...What did I say?...Right now?...The Pit Stop?

Classy...Right now?...Why not.

Cross-fade to the Pit Stop Bar. Lax enters. The place is empty except for an old lady at a table drinking alone and the bartender.

BARTENDER: What are you havin'?

LAX: Absolut Gibson.

BARTENDER: Gibson? That's an important man's drink. You an important man?

LAX: No, but I carry myself like an important man. That's what makes important men look important.

BARTENDER: Fair enough, you meetin' someone here?

LAX: Yes I am, sir.

BARTENDER: Yeah, you don't look like the type that drinks alone. Say, ain't you that Morales guy?

LAX: Morales. Yeah, I am.

BARTENDER: What did you do again?

LAX: Nothing worth mentioning.

BARTENDER: Fair enough.

The bartender makes Lax his drink. Lax stares off in a trance again. A Federal looking man comes in and sits at a table. Lax puts on the wooly and goes over to him.

LAX: They're planning to kill them all. Every Black, Hispanic and Jew in the State. This is it, they're going to start the war. They are wired to eighty five percent of the Hate-groups within the U.S. When they set off the attack in Georgia, he expects similar attacks in Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky. And I have access to the documents you need with the right signatures on them to put these bastards away before they do it.

FBI MAN: And you're aware of the risk you would be taking.

LAX: Yes, sir, I don't really see it as a choice.

FBI MAN: What do you want out of this?

LAX: I came down here to get a story. I got one. It wont sell without a happy ending. Seeing how I'm the main character, it seems that ending depends on me. I have to pull this off.

FBI MAN: A real hero, huh?

LAX: What's the worst that could happen? I die. We all got to do it sometime. Might as well do it right.

FBI MAN: You look like a kid to me. Why should the government trust that you can pull this off?

LAX: Two reasons; one, because you don't have a choice. If you dismiss me now, they break out on a rampage, I'll go to the press and tell them everything.

FBI MAN: Is that a threat to the Government?

LAX: No, sir.. It's simply the truth.

FBI MAN: What's the other reason?

LAX: Because I want to get famous bad enough that I won't let you down.

FBI MAN: What is the time frame for delivery of said evidence?

LAX: Three days. Just three more days.

The lights darken and all the skinheads come on. Lax stands up and addresses them.

LAX: Just three more days, my White brothers. Three more days until Georgia ^{succeeds} succeeds from the Union. (Cheers) It will be a day my brothers, the likes of which none of you have ever seen. It will be a day, that will not be forgotten. (Cheers)

The name BISHOP is chanted over and over. The lights turn red and The skinheads are off to the races. They run around, jump, break things, scream. Until Dougie-Dog silences them.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Well, looky what we got here.

The black kid same black kid enters. The three skinheads jump him and throw him to the ground. They tie his hands behind his back and put duct tape over his mouth.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Hey, Vic. Come here a minute.

Lax walks over to the group. One of them produces a bat and hands it to him.

DOUGIE-DOGG: Beat the boy.

LAX: Not in the mood.

DOUGIE-DOGG: You know, it's funny; for all the big talk you give us about bashing niggers with garbage cans, I ain't never seen you beat on nobody but JC. Your loyalty is under question, Vic. Now you beat this boy, or it's going to be you tied up on this floor.

The other skinheads giggle. Dougie-Dogg hands the bat to Lax, who takes it as he stares at the boy. The boy reaches out his hand to him, silently pleading for help. All are quiet.

SHEYLA: Lax? Hey, you in there?

Lights up on Sheyla and the bartender. The skinheads disappear. Lax looks at her, confused for a moment. Then he smiles.

LAX: Hello Sheyla.

Lights down.

Scene 9

Herman is in school working on a computer. Marsha, a beautiful girl, walks back and forth behind him. She is deciding whether or not to go talk to him. They are both freshmen in high-school.

MARSHA: Hello Herman.

HERMAN: *(Taken aback by her. She has never talked to him before.)* Uh...Hi Marsha.

MARSHA: What are you doing?

HERMAN: I'm writing a program for a game.

MARSHA: A game?

HERMAN: Yeah, you know, like a video game. Haven't you ever played one. (*A goofy laugh slips out of his mouth which he quickly gets control of. Marsha looks at him for a second and then laughs herself.*)

MARSHA: No, I've never played a video game. Duh, of course I have. My brothers play all the time.

HERMAN: Duh?

MARSHA: (*Playful*) Stop it.

HERMAN: Stop what?

MARSHA: Stop making fun of me.

HERMAN: (*Also playful*) I wasn't making fun of you.

MARSHA: Yes you were.

HERMAN: No, I wasn't.

MARSHA: You were.

HERMAN: No... All right, I was a little. I just hadn't heard...

MARSHA: What?

HERMAN: I just didn't expect that to be the word to come out of Marsha Dixon's mouth.

MARSHA: Why not?

HERMAN: I don't know.

MARSHA: So what, do you do this all the time? Make computer games?

HERMAN: You ain't gonna' be laughing when I'm rich and famous next year because of this game.

MARSHA: You really think you can sell it?

HERMAN: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

MARSHA: No way, that is awesome.

HERMAN: Yeah.

MARSHA: Like, how much could you make if you sold it?

HERMAN: Enough to be one of the youngest billionaires around. But there's more and more popping up each year, so I've got to get going on it.

MARSHA: I didn't even know you could talk.

HERMAN: You never talked to me before.

MARSHA: Don't get snotty.

A girl their age enters. Marsha checks to see if it's one of her friends.

HERMAN: Are you doing anything this Friday?

It is her friend, she didn't even hear Herman. She waves, then quickly to Herman:

MARSHA: I gotta' go.

She runs over to the girl. As they are about to leave Herman overhears them.

FRIEND: Did you actually *talk* to him?

MARSHA: Yeah.

FRIEND: Why would you talk to him? What do you, like him?

MARSHA: No! I just wanted to hear what the ^{creep's} creepiest guy in school's voice sounded like. *He's a total creep*

They break into laughter and exit. Herman is left sitting there. Lights down.

Scene 10

Lights up on Lax and Sheyla in bed, sleeping. Lax wakes up and realizes his hangover.

LAX: *(In pain)* Oooh.

SHEYLA: Head pounding?

LAX: Something fierce.

SHEYLA: What time is it?

LAX: *(Lax looks at watch)* Eight thirteen.

SHEYLA: I'm late.

LAX: So you are.

SHEYLA: I should go.

LAX: Whatever you say.

(Sheyla gets up and starts finding her clothes which are thrown around the room.)

LAX: Did you have a good time with me?

SHEYLA: I'm not going to answer that.

LAX: Why not?

SHEYLA: Look at that little grin on your face. You think you know the answer already.

LAX: One never knows.

SHEYLA: You really want me to tell you?

LAX: I'm beginning to think I won't like what I hear.

SHEYLA: You got technique. You have stamina. You're big enough. But there's something cold about you. You were never really with me.

LAX: So, on a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest, what would you give me?

(They laugh)

LAX: Seriously though, did you have a fun time with me?

SHEYLA: I had fun.

LAX: So I'll see you again.

Sheyla puts the last of her clothes on and kisses Lax.

SHEYLA: Why are you so shut-off?

LAX: I plead the fifth.

SHEYLA: You will tell me. Don't think for a second you won't.

LAX: You think you're that good?

SHEYLA: I think I'm genius.

Lax gets up and goes over to the mirror. Sheyla walks over to the door.

SHEYLA: I guess I'll be going then.

LAX: *(Still looking in the mirror)* I'll call you.

She exits.

LAX: *(to his reflection)* Hey, buddy. Long time no see. How you doing?

Lights up on Herman in his cell, looking at himself in a hand held mirror, loving the image he sees.

HERMAN: You're a superstar. Yes you are. Yes you are. *(He and Lax look at each other.)* Good-night superstar.

Blackout

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

Lights are down. We hear a section of the recorded interview over speakers.

HERMAN: I got real close to his face. He was like bigger than me. I said to him "Spare some change?" And he said "What?" And I said "I'M THE ONE ASKING THE QUESTIONS NOW, ASSHOLE! So, can you spare some change?" I put the gun to his nose as I said it. He started fucking with his pockets but he was so scared he couldn't get his hands in. I said "Not fast enough," and pulled the trigger.

LAX: This was Michael Ray?

HERMAN: Yeah, Michael Ray.

LAX: What went through your mind as you pulled the trigger?

HERMAN: I thought there would be more blood.

LAX: You look disappointed.

HERMAN: No, I wasn't disappointed. I mean, his nose came off his face; but it held on by a string of skin at the top and fell back into place before he hit the ground.

That was pretty cool. I guess I just thought there would be more blood.

LAX: Why did you shoot him?

HERMAN: He was an asshole.

LAX: What had he done to you?

HERMAN: He was always making fun of me, especially in front of girls. He was just a dick.

LAX: Do you think he deserved to die because he was just a dick?

HERMAN: Everybody dies whether I think they deserve to or not.

LAX: That's true, but most people, even dicks, live until they're old and then die naturally.

HERMAN: Naturally? Not Michael Ray.

Scene 2

Lax wakes up in his bed from a nightmare. He is in his motel room. After gathering his bearings, he gets up, lights a cigarette, picks up his tape recorder, presses record and goes over to the mirror.

LAX: Morales. Lax Morales. You are Lax Morales. Respected journalist and the guy who busted those bastards open. Don't you forget that. Don't you ever forget that. Who are you? That's right.

He turns the tape recorder off and sits down at a table. Begins reading more of the background.

Cross-fade to Sheyla and Gale Howards. They are in Gale's living-room. The TV is on, but only static plays. All the drapes are closed. Gale is knitting a pair of small socks. She does this as she talks. There is something slightly desperate about the way she pulls through each thread.

SHEYLA: I appreciate you talking to me so soon after the incident, Ms Howards. I know this is hard.

GALE: You don't know about this.

SHEYLA: You're right, I don't.

GALE: They all blame me. Every last one of them looks at me like it's my fault. As if I told him to do it. As if I never gave him any guidance as a child. As if I wanted this!

SHEYLA: I'm not blaming you for anything. I'm trying to give you a chance to explain your side of this. That's all.

GALE: I'm sorry. You're right, it is hard. He was my little boy once. He was my little boy who had a sweet smile. God did he have a sweet smile. We were a happy family. And I don't know what went wrong. I don't know. My husband left when Herman was nine. Julia was six. She stayed the same, but Herman, something happened to Herman. He went into himself. He went completely into himself and no one could reach him, not even Frank. He'll tell you that's not the truth, but it is.

SHEYLA: Who will?

GALE: Frank. He'll tell you Herman was happy and nothing was wrong, but it was. Herman's whole concept of the world was ripped away from him when he was nine years old. But it's not my fault. I didn't leave. Frank and I had a decent sex life. (*Nods vigorously*) It was good.

SHEYLA: Immediately after the incident, you were quoted as saying: "Herman is a happy, healthy, teenager with a promising future. I can't understand why he would do such a thing." It seems you've changed your mind. Have you?

GALE: I said that because I had to. Legally I had to.

SHEYLA: Legally?

She stops knitting and gives her full attention to Sheyla.

GALE: I talked to my lawyer before the news people got to my house. I'm not some stupid country gal that allows herself to become bankrupt from twenty-nine lawsuits. Do you understand? I said what I had to say to protect myself... You think I'm a cold woman. That I don't care about what happened to all those children. No one understands until they're put in this position. I didn't. Look, I'm not a doctor. My official statement is that I don't know why he did it. All I know is one minute he's happy, the next minute he's depressed, the next minute I'm asking my friend about a doctor, you know what kind, and then before I blink, he's gone completely insane. My child. Do you have children?

SHEYLA: No.

GALE: I didn't think so.

SHEYLA: Let's change gears for a second. What do you do for a living now that Frank is gone? Does he give you alimony?

GALE: Not enough to live on.

SHEYLA: So, what do you do?

GALE: I'm assistant-head advertising and marketing advisor at Computron's main office.

SHEYLA: That sounds impressive, how long have you been working there?

GALE: Since Frank left, seven years.

SHEYLA: You were promoted quickly. Assistant-head advertising and marketing advisor at Computron in seven years is quite an achievement.

GALE: Thank you. I made it my top priority.

SHEYLA: Did Herman give you any clues as to what he might be up to?

GALE: Nothing.

SHEYLA: Did you monitor his internet time, keep him from watching R-rated movies?

GALE: If you had a kid, you'd know that it is impossible to keep them from watching what they want to watch and going to the sights they want to go to. You don't need a license to drive the information superhighway, Ms. Duvall.

If I had forbid those kind of movies in my house, he would have gone to a friend's house and I would have seen him even less. Same deal with the Internet.

SHEYLA: But you knew he was watching these kind of movies?

GALE: They all watch those kind of movies. It's not like when you and I were kids.

SHEYLA: I'm not so sure we're from the same generation.

GALE: Well, how old are you? 37, 38?

SHEYLA: I'm twenty-nine.

GALE: Sorry. The light must be bad in here. Let me open the drapes.

She goes over to let the light in.

GALE: I've been keeping them closed because I get tired of camera men popping up and taking a flash shot. I almost threw a frying pan at one. I'm not even kidding. *(She starts to laugh a little. Sheyla joins her for a moment. Then Gale's laughter turns to tears. Sheyla goes over to comfort her.)*

GALE: I just want to wake up from this nightmare! *(pleading with her)* When is it going to end? I want to wake up. I want so badly to wake up.

SHEYLA: Maybe I should go.

GALE: No, don't go. (*pained laugh*) As pathetic as it seems, I don't have anyone to talk to. The office told me not to come in because they couldn't afford the press hounding the building, something about their stocks. Frank won't have anything to do with me. Says it's my fault. My friends can't speak to me because the parents of the victims are their friends as well and, well, there's only one me and twenty-five of them. You do the math. It's a logical equation. (*She laughs to herself*)

SHEYLA: Excuse me?

GALE: Sorry, inside joke. That's what I do... That's what I did all day, logical equations for real life scenarios. I was good. If you have three U.S. factories downsized and transferred to Mexico, you'll be saving seven dollars and sixty cents per worker per hour. The question is whether it is more cost efficient to spend the money on the move down there, or to maintain the factories as they are in the U.S. and lower the workers wages?

SHEYLA: I would guess it's cheaper to move to Mexico.

GALE: You're very smart. Maybe you should go look for a job at Computron, I hear they're hiring.

SHEYLA: I'm happy with my job.

GALE: Good for you.

SHEYLA: Do you want to tell me about what happened to Julia?

GALE: She was hit by a car and died when she was ten. What more do you want to hear about it?!

SHEYLA: Was Herman home when it happened?

GALE: I don't think I want to talk to you anymore.

SHEYLA: He was, wasn't he?

GALE: You get out of my house.

SHEYLA: It's not your fault.

GALE: GET OUT!

SHEYLA: I'm sorry.

Sheyla gathers her things and begins to leave.

GALE: You want to hear one more equation. Maybe you can solve it for me.

Sheyla turns back to her.

GALE: If you take one woman living in the middle of America, break her family apart, force her to work harder to get ahead in her career than any man would, force her to think about her daughter getting killed while she was at WORK, trying to make money to pay for food on the table; then have her son lose his mind and...and massacre twenty-five people...massacre children...Make sure nobody talks to her, nobody listens to her side, and then fire her. In an equation like that, how long would it be before she goes insane, all alone in here? All alone in here.

She turns away from Sheyla and starts knitting again. Lights down, the TV being the last to go..

Scene 3

The buzzer sounds. Lax and Herman are in the middle of the interview.

LAX: Now, what went through your mind when you woke up that morning?

HERMAN: The morning I did it?

LAX: Yes.

HERMAN: That was a Monday. I hate Mondays. I had a test that day.

LAX: Are you saying that if you didn't have a test, you wouldn't have murdered your classmates?

HERMAN: Don't put words in my mouth. What I was saying is I might not have done it *that* day. But there is no way in Hell those people weren't gonna' get what they deserved.

LAX: You feel no remorse.

HERMAN: (pause) I didn't want to kill Mr. Phelps.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Because he was an all right teacher. He gave a shit.

LAX: It sounds like you liked him. Why did you kill him?

HERMAN: He got in my way. I hadn't finished yet.

LAX: Did you finish before you were apprehended?

HERMAN: No.

LAX: So there's more people you want to kill?

HERMAN: Yes.

LAX: What are you going to do about it?

HERMAN: Kill them.

LAX: How are you going to do that in prison?

HERMAN: I think I better not talk about it.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Next question.

LAX: What did you do when you got to school?

HERMAN: I waited until everyone was in second period, then I went around and put chains with locks on all the exits. It was easy. Second period is when the security guards take their lunch break. Then I went to the computer lab and told my friend Timmy to send out a different message of the day on the hallway monitors...

LAX: Did you get that idea from Harris and Klebold?

HERMAN: You're good. Only my idea was brilliant. I didn't give any warning. I sent out a mandatory pep-rally message instructing all the kids to skip their third period and go to the gym. Timmy thought it was a great prank, I told him to make sure he was there. (laughs) He said he wouldn't miss it for the world. Then I went to my locker and got the guns and pipe bombs.

LAX: Where did you get the pipe bombs?

HERMAN: I made them.

LAX: Was it easy?

HERMAN: It was easy once I got the instructions off the net. All I needed was to go to a hardware store and get half the ingredients, then go to another and get the other half. No one had any clue what I was up to.

LAX: Where did you get the guns?

HERMAN: A friend of mine works at the WALMART in Council Bluffs, he sold them to me.

LAX: Don't you need to be eighteen to buy guns in Iowa?

HERMAN: Do you have any idea how many people own guns in Iowa? I tell you it scares me. There are more ways around being under eighteen and getting a gun than I can count. Everyone and their brother has a gun.

LAX: You mean everyone and their mother.

HERMAN: What?

LAX: Everyone has a mother, not a brother. That's the saying- "Everyone and their mother".

HERMAN: Whatever.

LAX: You are aware that everyone has a mother, right?

A photograph of a mother hugging her teenage son is projected on the wall. The photograph should be in the style of Time Magazine or Newsweek.

HERMAN: Jesus Christ you're asking stupid questions. I thought you were supposed to be some kind of hot-shot reporter, that's why I agreed to do this. This is a very important story, you know. I don't think you'll ever have one bigger!

LAX: Okay, let's cut to it. Did you ever think of the people's mothers or fathers or loved ones while you were shooting them in their faces?

A photograph of the same boy lying in a pool of blood is projected next to it.

HERMAN: No.

LAX: You never thought that maybe these kids had people who cared about them, would miss them?

HERMAN: No.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Because I'm obviously fucked up, Lax. Do you think a normal person goes into school and shoots everyone? What can I say? I'm special.

LAX: How do you think your mother would feel if you had been killed?

A photograph of Herman smiling replaces the boy in the pool of blood. A photograph of Gale Howards is projected in place of the boy and the mother. A shot of Frank Howards appears next to Gale. They are all smiling in a painful way.

HERMAN: It would have taken her a few days to realize I was gone.

LAX: Oh, come on.

HERMAN: No, Lax. Sometimes I would go two, three, four days without seeing her.

LAX: How is that possible?

HERMAN: It's not like me and her have a lot to talk about. She goes to work all day, I go to school all day. At night, she has her life and I have mine. We don't interfere with each other. She's very good about giving me privacy.

LAX: Yeah, but your life consists of playing video games and making pipe bombs.

Didn't she have a clue?

HERMAN: She's a busy lady.

LAX: What about your father?

HERMAN: He lives in Chicago with his girlfriend.

The picture of Frank disappears. Cross-fade to the Howards living-room. Herman moves over there, sits in front of a TV, picks up a video-game controller and starts playing. Constant gunfire is heard from the set as he plays. Outside we hear a car hit a bicycle and then accelerate. A scream is heard followed by a crowd of voices clamoring around the scene. Herman is unfazed, his eyes never leave the TV. A voice outside shouts: "My God, that's Gale Howards' little girl." Ambulance sirens are heard approaching. Herman reluctantly pauses his game and gets up to go to the window, see what is happening. The ambulance has arrived and more voices can be heard: "Is she going to make it? Oh, Lord, is she going to make it?!" "Is Gale home?" "Somebody's got to get Gale Howards!" Herman moves away from the window as a neighbor approaches. There is a knock at the door. Herman backs up against the wall, scared.

NEIGHBOR: Gale! Gale are you home? Herman? Is anybody in there?

Herman stares at the door until the neighbor gives up and goes away. Herman proceeds to the phone, looks at a list of numbers and then dials. An automated voice answers over the speakers.

RECORDED VOICE: Hello. Welcome to the Computron phone answering system.

Your business is important to us. We know your time is valuable. The following is a list of options to maximize the efficiency of your call:

If you are calling in reference to stock options, press one.

If your call is regarding Computron merchandise, press two.

If this is concerning job placement, press three.

For all other inquiries, press four.

Herman presses four.

RECORDED VOICE: Please wait one moment while I transfer your call.

There are some clicking and transferring noises, followed by a dial tone.

HERMAN: Damn it!

He hits redial.

RECORDED VOICE: Hello. Welcome to the Computron phone answering system.

Your business is important to us. We know your time is valuable. The following is a list of options to maximize the efficiency of your call:

If you are calling in reference to stock...

Herman presses four.

RECORDED VOICE: Please wait one moment while I transfer your call.

The same clicking sounds are heard followed by a tired voice.

VOICE: Computron answering system this is Gloria how may I help you?

HERMAN: I'm trying to reach my mother, Gale Howards.

VOICE: Hold one moment while I transfer you.

Lights up on Rose, Gale Howards' assistant, in the advertising section of the Computron building.

ROSE: Good-afternoon, Gale Howard's office, this is Rose, how may I help you?

HERMAN: May I talk to my mother please?

ROSE: She's in a meeting right now, I can have her call you back just as soon as she's done.

HERMAN: You can't get her, it's kind of important?

ROSE: Hold one moment, I'll see what I can do.

Lights up on Gale in the next room sealing the deal with two men from Ventucom Corporate.

GALE: In this particular sector, I can all but guarantee that you will triple your intake by the end of the first quarter...

The intercom buzzes.

GALE: Please excuse me for one moment. *(She picks up the phone)* Yes, Rose, what is it?

ROSE: Sorry to interrupt, Miss Howards, but your son is on the phone and he says it's "kind of important".

GALE: I'm sure it's not as important as this. I know my son. Tell him I'll

call back when my meeting is over. No more interruptions please. *(She hangs up with an anger that is slightly too evident)* Sorry about that. Now, as I was saying...

Lights down on Gale and the men from Ventucom. Rose clicks back over to Herman.

ROSE: I'm sorry, Herman. She can't take a break now. Would you like me to take a message.

HERMAN: No. Forget it.

He hangs up. Lights down on Rose. Herman goes back to playing his game, his eyes transfixed on the screen. Lax steps into the light.

LAX: Been kind of lonely since?

HERMAN: What?

LAX: Since your dad left with his girlfriend. Been kind of lonely?

HERMAN: You have no idea.

LAX: I have some.

HERMAN: None.

He turns towards the TV again and allows himself to get lost in it. Lax steps back into the shadows. Herman has not moved from his spot. Gale enters.

GALE: Mom's home.

Herman does not respond.

GALE: Don't sit so close to the television, it's bad for you.

Herman scoots back a few feet, his eyes never leave the screen.

GALE: Have you finished your homework?

He shrugs. The house is silent aside from the constant gunfire sounds emitting from the TV.

GALE: Where's your sister?

HERMAN: She was out riding her bike.

GALE: This late?

HERMAN: I dunno'.

GALE: What was it you called about before when I was in my meeting?

HERMAN: Nothing important.

GALE: So, why did you call?

Herman does not respond, he keeps his eyes glued to the game. Gale stares at him for a moment. An eerie feeling creeps over her. Lights down.

Scene 4

We hear the sounds of doors being broken down. Federal agents crashing in. Lights up on Sean Gall in his office in the skinheads' club. Lax enters.

GALL: Vic, what is going on down there?

LAX: The Feds are here.

GALL: Do they have a search warrant?

LAX: They do.

GALL: Don't just stand there! We've got to burn these files before they get in here!

LAX: That won't do any good.

GALL: What the hell are you talking about?

LAX: It won't do any good, because I've already given them the files.

GALL: Why would you do that, Vic?

LAX: I was planning on doing that before I shook your hand for the first time.

GALL: You bullshittin' me, boy?

LAX: No, Sean. I'm proud to say I'm not.

GALL: All this time?

LAX: Every Godforsaken minute of it.

GALL: You are one slimy bastard, Vic. A real rat. Huh.

LAX: My name is Morales. Louis Anthony Xavier Morales.

GALL: You can call yourself what you want, boy. But there is a reason why I trusted you. I seen it in your eyes. You enjoyed bein' Vic Bishop. Deep down you know it too.

The sounds of the Feds coming gets louder. They are right outside the door.

FED 1: *(From behind the door)* Is this it?

FBI MAN: This one. Locked. Get the ram.

LAX: Good-bye Sean. I hope you enjoy getting fucked in prison.

GALL: Boy, you don't know how it works. I'll be seeing you. Don't you worry your pretty little head about that.

Lax moves to open the door for the Feds.

Oh, and Vic, now you got the taste of blood in your mouth. There ain't no going back to what you was...Brother.

Lights down.

Scene 5

Herman is lying in his bed in Jail. He is having a hard time sleeping. Tossing, turning, sweating. A voice is heard from the shadows. It is his little sister, Julia. She should sound like a little girl around the age of ten. She is wearing roller skates.

JULIA: Hello Herman.

HERMAN: Who are you?

JULIA: Forgotten me already?

She comes out of the shadows and we see that she is covered in blood from the car hitting her. Herman is terrified.

HERMAN: Julia? How can you be here?

JULIA: Why didn't you come out and help me, Herman?

HERMAN: I was scared.

JULIA: So, you did care about me?

HERMAN: I'm your brother. A brother's supposed to care about his sister.

JULIA: Supposed to?

HERMAN: I do. I do.

JULIA: You're just scared cause you think I'm gonna' tell you you're going to Hell.

HERMAN: Julia...I love you. Honest. I was sad when you got killed. I just didn't have anyone I could show it to. That's how come I went crazy and did all that stuff. I didn't have anyone to talk to about what happened to you.

JULIA: Bullshit, Herman.

HERMAN: No, that's why I killed them all. Honest.

JULIA: Not why you did it, Herman.

HERMAN: (*frustrated*) Why? Why did I do all that shit? Tell me, Julia.

JULIA: I hurt, Herman. I hurt all the time.

HERMAN: That's not my fault! I didn't kill you!

JULIA: No.

HERMAN: I'm sorry you hurt, Julia.

JULIA: Don't talk to that reporter about me, Herman.

HERMAN: He's all right.

JULIA: It's not nice to talk to strangers about dead people you cared about. You did care about me, didn't you, Herman?

HERMAN: I'm sorry, Julia. Really, I should've gone outside. I should've.

JULIA: You know where you're going, don't you, Herman?

HERMAN: I'm sorry, Julia. Honest I'm sorry.

JULIA: Poor Herman.

(She begins to withdraw into the shadows)

HERMAN: Wait, Julia! Don't go. You gotta' tell me where I'm going. Please, Julia. Please.

JULIA: Poor, poor Herman. I'll be seeing you.

She's gone. Herman gets up, walks around his cell. There is a Time magazine on the table. He picks it up and looks at the cover. A projection of the cover appears above the stage, it is Herman's head facing off against Lax's; the title, "The Good, and the very Bad and Ugly (youth of the new Millenium)." Herman smiles and goes back to his bed. The lights go down on him but the projection remains for a moment.

The buzzer sounds and the red light floods the stage. Lax and Herman face each other in the same positions of the projection, which fades as the scene begins. They both look like they had a bad night's sleep.

HERMAN: Morning, Lax.

LAX: Hello Herman.

HERMAN: Hey, that sounds like a TV show. 'Hello Herman!' starring Herman Howards and Lax Morales. I get top billing? I mean it is my story.

LAX: Get one thing straight, Herman. I'm not here to turn you into a rock star. I'm here because there's a world outside that thinks you're a monster. They think you should be electrocuted on national television and cable. That's a story. I'm here in case they do it.

HERMAN: Fuck you, Lax!

LAX: Fuck me? Herman you have no idea how far from being fucked I am. You, however, are sitting closer to death's gate than you can imagine. Cherish this time you have with me, Herman. Even if they don't execute you, the moment they transfer you to Population, someone's going to get you.

HERMAN: They will never transfer me to population. I'm too important.

LAX: Maybe you're worth more to them dead than alive, kid. Remember Geoffrey Dahmer?

HERMAN: Don't compare me to that freak.

LAX: You think you're all right?

HERMAN: I think I'm genius.

A moment.

LAX: When you were thirteen, your sister was hurt in a hit and run, right?

HERMAN: Right.

LAX: Then she died a few days later.

HERMAN: Yep.

LAX: Were you close to her?

HERMAN: We had our moments.

LAX: You want to tell me about one, Herman?

HERMAN: It's not nice to talk to strangers about dead people you cared about.

LAX: So, you did care about her.

HERMAN: She was my sister.

LAX: Were you home when it happened?

HERMAN: Yeah.

LAX: It happened right outside your house.

HERMAN: You've done your homework, Lax.

LAX: Did you go out and help her?

HERMAN: No.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Because I was thirteen, there wasn't a whole Hell of a lot I could have done, now was there?!

LAX: Did you call your mom?

HERMAN: What?

LAX: Did you call your mom when you found out what had happened?

HERMAN: Did it feel good when you took that bat to the nigger's head?

LAX: I'm asking the questions, Herman.

HERMAN: No.

LAX: No what?

HERMAN: No, I didn't call my mom.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Because it didn't occur to me. What would she have done, anyway?

LAX: I imagine she would have rushed home.

HERMAN: You really don't get it, Lax.

LAX: Tell me about your relationship with your father.

HERMAN: What about it?

LAX: Was it a good one? Did he play ball with you as a small child? Or did he molest you and your sister? Tell me about it.

HERMAN: *(Laughs)* He was all right. Just a dad. He left when I was nine. I haven't seen much of him since.

LAX: What's the most memorable thing he ever said to you?

HERMAN: Make your mark, kid.

LAX: When did he tell you that?

HERMAN: Right before he got in the car and moved to Chicago with his girlfriend.

Cross-fade to the Howards' living-room. Gale and Julia are there. Gale is cooking and Julia is playing on her roller-skates. Herman goes over to them and plays with Julia. He is ten years old. The house is happy and becomes more so when Frank Howards comes in the door.

HERMAN: Dad's home! Dad's Home!

Both kids run to greet their father.

GALE: I thought you said you were going to have to work late tonight.

FRANK: I guess I managed to get my priorities straight.

Frank and Gale share a little smile to suggest this is something they have discussed before.

FRANK: Go and put some shoes on kids. We're going to a very special place today.

GALE: Frank, where are we going? I've got beans cooking.

FRANK: Let them simmer. We're going to John Wayne's birthplace, near Winterset.

HERMAN: Awesome!

GALE: Are you sure you shouldn't just take Herman?

FRANK: Sure. I want to do this as a family. More things as a family, right?

GALE: Let me grab my purse.

The phone rings.

HERMAN: I'll get it.

FRANK: Let it go, Herman.

HERMAN: *(Picking up the phone)* But what if it's important? Hello, Howards residence, Herman Howards speaking.

Gale shoots Frank a look to say "What a cute kid we have". Frank is uncomfortable.

HERMAN: Dad, there's some lady on the phone for you. She's crying a lot.

Frank takes the phone and goes into the bedroom. The room falls silent as Gale looks at the floor. Frank returns.

FRANK: Something's come up at work. I have to get over there. We'll go to Winterset another day... I'm sorry.

Frank picks up his briefcase and tries to give Gale a kiss on the cheek, then he's gone.

HERMAN: Two weeks later he packed his bags and moved to Chicago. I never did get to see John Wayne's birthplace.

Cross-fade back to the interrogation room. Herman moves back into the same position he was in before with Lax across from him.

LAX: What's your favorite movie, Herman?

HERMAN: That's a hard question.

LAX: Don't tell me *Natural Born Killers*.

HERMAN: That's an awesome movie. But, no, I guess my all time favorite is *KIDS*.

LAX: Tell me about it.

HERMAN: Well, for one thing, that's really what it's like. Kids are doing some things that parents don't have a clue about. That's why that movie got so much shit.

LAX: What sort of things?

HERMAN: Fucking without condoms, smoking pot, drinking forties, taking X, getting into fights, that sort of thing. Straight shit. Parents want to close their eyes and pretend that it's still 1955 and everything is hunky-dory. It's just not like that.

LAX: But that movie was about kids growing up in New York. Are you saying Iowa is like that?

HERMAN: After the movie came out, it got a lot closer.

LAX: So, what you're saying, Herman, is that because kids around here saw that movie, they were so impressed they started to live that life. I have a hard time believing you. I saw the movie. It does not have a happy ending. It doesn't give off a positive image.

HERMAN: When the theaters wouldn't show it, and parents forbid their kids to see it even on tape, they automatically made it cool. If the parents won't let them see it, then the kids will do what is done in the film. It's the nature of rebellion; always do what they think you're incapable of doing 'till they notice you.

LAX: So, you think the parents should have sat down and watched it *with* their kids?

HERMAN: Sort of.

LAX: Sort of?

HERMAN: Yeah, kind of.

LAX: Well, Herman, I think we might agree on something.

HERMAN: I think we see eye to eye on more than that, Lax. *(Chuckles)* But that's not why it's my favorite movie.

LAX: Why then?

HERMAN: Because the main kid says what's up.

LAX: What's up, Herman?

HERMAN: He says that when you're a kid, you have to find something you care about and stick to it, cause that's all you got.

LAX: What's the one thing you care about?

HERMAN: I don't know, I'll tell you when I figure it out. *(Herman starts laughing, hard. After he cools down)* You know what I really miss, more than anything?

LAX: What?

HERMAN: My Nintendo sixty-four. Man, if I could just get one more game in, I'd be happy.

LAX: Is that really what you miss most after being in jail?

HERMAN: Yeah, ain't it fucked up?

LAX: Do you follow politics, Herman?

HERMAN: What for?

LAX: Believe it or not, politicians change the world.

HERMAN: How do they do that?

LAX: They make the rules. They break the rules. They change the rules. Do you know who your governor is?

HERMAN: No.

LAX: Do you know your Senator?

HERMAN: No.

LAX: Do any of the kids in Iowa?

HERMAN: They know who I am.

LAX: I guess they do. What's your fondest memory of childhood?

HERMAN: I'm not that old.

LAX: Early childhood.

HERMAN: Shit, I don't know. Maybe...I guess there was this one day when my family took a trip to the beach in New Jersey. My dad had relatives out there. I guess I was five, my sister was two. Me and my dad kept trying to get my mom to go in the water, until finally he picked her up and put her over his shoulder. He was much bigger than mom. He walked out to his belly, and threw her in.

(A baby's cry is heard)

My sister started crying because she thought he was hurting her, so my mom got out and picked my sister up and told her it was all okay, that daddy hadn't hurt her, and then we all started laughing because my dad got bit by a crab and started howling in pain.

Herman's smile changes to an expression of pain. We hear a toilet flush. Cross-fade to the Broome High-school bathroom. Herman enters as the toilet finishes flushing. Michael Ray is looking at himself in the mirror. Michael Green enters from the stall. Herman is a Freshman and they are Sophomores.

MICHAEL RAY: Hello Herman. Spare some change?

HERMAN: Just leave me alone. I've got to go to class.

MICHAEL RAY: Just leave you alone? Hmmm. Not today.

The two boys grab Herman and Michael Ray starts choking him. His face is red, he can't breathe.

MICHAEL RAY: See, if you cut off his wind pipe, you don't have to listen to him howl in pain. *(They laugh)*

Mr. Phelps enters holding a box of Fig Newtons and a carton of milk.

MR. PHELPS: What the Devil do you boys think you are doing?

They instantly let Herman go, then look at the floor.

MR. PHELPS: What are your names?

MICHAEL RAY: Michael.

MICHAEL GREEN: Michael.

MR. PHELPS: Michael and Michael what?

MICHAEL RAY: Michael Ray.

MICHAEL GREEN: Michael Green.

MR. PHELPS: Is that their real names, Herman?

Herman says nothing. He has a blank look on his face.

MR. PHELPS: Do you boys have any concept of the danger of what you were doing? That was a choke hold. Not a game. You squeeze the wrong way, and Herman could have been killed. Killed! Do you understand? Now you two get out of here and go to the principal's office and tell him what you've done. I'll be up shortly to make sure you

tell the truth. You two should be ashamed to call yourselves Broome students, picking on a boy half your size.

The boys exit.

MR. PHELPS: You're a freshman, right Herman?

(Herman nods)

MR. PHELPS: I remember when I was your age, the older boys would treat me the same way. But don't worry about it. In a few years, things like that will all be fond memories of high-school. You'll probably be friends with those boys next year. I know it sounds crazy, but some of the greatest friendships start as fights. Take me and my best friend...

HERMAN: Mr. Phelps? Can I go now?

MR. PHELPS: Yes. Yes of course.

HERMAN: Thanks.

Herman exits. Mr. Phelps looks in the mirror, pats down a wild eyebrow hair.

MR. PHELPS: Poor little guy, he'll always be a nerd.

Cross-fade back to interrogation room.

LAX: Tell me more about the day you did it. You had rounded up all the kids in the gym, then what happened?

HERMAN: A couple of teachers had come in also, I guess to see what was going on. It was Mr. Phelps and Ms. Cribb, the phys-ed teacher.

(We hear what Herman describes over speakers.)

After I saw them come in, I knew I had to lock the doors quickly. I put the last two chains on and threw the keys under the bleachers.

(We hear this.)

Then I went to the top and took out the UZI. Fired a couple of shots in the ceiling *(Shots are heard)* and told everyone to get down on the floor.

They didn't know what the Hell was going on, but they heard the shots. They got down.

I called up Paul Schrewber, the captain of the football team.

(Paul Schrewber, a big athletic kid appears on stage.)

'Paul! Paul Schrewber! Today is your lucky day, Paul! Because you are so valuable to our school, you get to live! Now, come on up here, take a bow and get the fuck out of my gym, Paul.' He slowly got up and started walking toward the door.

(Paul does so. Herman stalks him with his eyes.)

When he got a little closer he began to run.

(Paul runs. Herman addresses him.)

PAUL! You forgot to take a bow. *(back to Lax)* He kept running, so I shot him in the knee.

(Herman makes his hands into a gun and fires. We hear a gun fire.)

He fell down and I could see his bone was shattered and hanging out of his leg.

(Herman goes over to Paul.)

I took out one of the pipe bombs and told the crowd that the first person who moved without me saying so, was gonna' get it up their ass.

Paul was crying and screaming. *(To Paul)* Shut up!

(Herman shoots Paul in the gut. Mr. Phelps enters, walking slowly toward Herman.)

MR. PHELPS: There's still time. Stop this madness, Herman. You haven't killed anyone yet.

HERMAN: *(to Phelps)* Sit the fuck down! I don't want to kill you! He kept walking toward me.

(Mr. Phelps does so. He is close to Herman.)

HERMAN: I had to shoot. He would have grabbed me if I didn't.

(Herman shoots him. Phelps falls to the floor dead.)

HERMAN: *(Looking at him)* He looked so stupid with nothing but red for his right eye. I almost started laughing, but like I said, he was an all right teacher so out of respect I didn't. "Are there any other teachers in the room!?" *(to Lux)* I knew Ms. Cribb was there. No one came forward, so I called up three kids who were sitting on the floor near me.

(As Herman calls the students up, they come one by one.)

That was Susan, this dumb fat girl, James Hankley, the editor of the school paper, and Marsha, the fucking hottest girl in school. I asked again, "Are there any other teachers in the room?! Please come forward if you are a teacher!" No one came. I took out the .45 and walked up to Susan.

(He mocks a gun with his hand and walks up to Susan.)

HERMAN: Oink.

SUSAN: *(In tears)* What?

HERMAN: Oink! Like in *Deliverance*. Squeal.

(She tries but is crying too much to make the sound. Then she breaks down, gives up and starts repeating over and over.)

SUSAN: Jesus, please protect me. Jesus, please protect me. Jesus please protect me.

(Herman looks at her for a minute, really takes her in. Then he starts laughing.)

HERMAN: Not today. I shot her through the cheek, *(A gun shot is heard. Susan falls to the floor. Then to Lax.)* but up, at an angle so the bullet could go through her skull and blood would splatter all over Marsha.

LAX: Why did you want the blood to hit Marsha?

HERMAN: To show that bitch that her shit wasn't all that! She walked around those halls like she owned the place. And why? Because she was a nice looking piece of ass? You think that's gonna' fly in the new order?!

LAX: What new order?

HERMAN: The new millennium, Lax. Shit's going down. Being some sweet piece of ass ain't gonna' cut it any more. It's the ones like me are going to run the show.

LAX: How do you figure?

HERMAN: Do you know what the largest generation is? Mine. We have more than the Babyboomers. I heard so on MTV. There's more of us than any of you other fuckers. You don't stand a chance. We're gonna' do a Hell of a lot more than 'Rock the vote'. More and more kids are going to realize that this is the only way to make you assholes pay attention to us. When they do, watch out. I made damn sure to kill more people than they did in Colorado. You know why? Because you have to reset the precedent. Sure, the precedent was set in Colorado, the nation freaked out. But people didn't freak out when that kid brought a gun into his school in Georgia, T.J. Solomon was his name.

You know why people didn't freak out, cause he only wounded six students, he didn't even kill anybody. How can you expect the world to take notice when you don't up the ante? People looked at that incident and all they said was 'At least it's not as bad as Columbine.' Not with me Lax. I wasn't about to settle for some rinky-dink shit, oh, no. I blew that fucking fat bitch's head off and made sure a little got on James Hankley as well. But I was never going to kill him. *(Back to James Hankley and Marsha)* I wanted him to live, so he could write about it in his precious paper. Marsha on the other hand, she didn't have a chance.

Herman starts to head for Marsha but is halted when Ms. Cribb, the phys-ed teacher comes running in.

MS. CRIBB: Please Herman! For God's sake stop this!

Herman swings around and shoots her. A shot is heard.

HERMAN: *(To Lax)* I shot her right in the mouth from about twenty feet away. Really tough shot. Shut that bitch right up. I would've gotten like two-thousand points if it were POSTAL. I don't even think she died. Isn't she at the hospital or something?

LAX: Intensive care.

HERMAN: Have you seen her, Lax?

LAX: No, I haven't seen her.

HERMAN: But you heard something?

LAX: They had to amputate her lower jaw. What was left of it. She'll have to be fed intravenously.

HERMAN: Awesome! She deserved it.

LAX: Why?

HERMAN: That bitch gave me a C- for gym class. Can you believe that? A C- in fucking gym? Unreal. Lax? Lax, you still with me?

LAX: *(After a moment)* Listen, why don't we stop for today? We'll pick up here tomorrow.

HERMAN: Whatever.

Lax goes to the door, knocks three times and the buzzer sounds, door opens, lights turn red. Lax steps outside. The door closes. Cross-fade to Lax outside the room. He takes out a cigarette and lights it. Runs his hands over his face and through his hair.

LAX: My God, not human.

Lights down.

Scene 6

Lights up on Sheyla walking with a doctor to Ms. Cribb's hospital room.

DOCTOR: It's harder than you would imagine seeing a human being in this state.

SHEYLA: I think I can handle it.

DOCTOR: That's what everyone says, but even so we have to yank visitors all the time from cases like this. They think they know what it's going to be like when they see the person, "Oh, it's just a woman who's missing her jaw. No big whoop." Well it is. Normally I wouldn't even allow an interview to take place with a patient in this condition, but she *insisted*, and if she's strong enough to insist, she's strong enough to do the interview. What I don't need is you reacting in such a way as to remind her how she looks. Am I making myself clear?

SHEYLA: I don't see how you could make it any clearer.

DOCTOR: Good, so long as we see eye-to-eye.

SHEYLA: I'm not going in there to make her feel bad, doctor. I'm going in to get her story. Can she talk?

DOCTOR: Yes, but if you don't know what to listen for, it won't make any sense to you.

SHEYLA: Do you have anyone who could translate for me? She did insist on this.

DOCTOR: I could do the translating. If you don't mind being in my company, that is.

SHEYLA: I don't mind, doctor.

DOCTOR: Jim.

SHEYLA: Doctor Jim.

They enter into Ms. Cribb's room. She is in a hospital bed and gauze is wrapped around her face concealing her entire lower jaw. She should appear grotesque.

SHEYLA: *(Doing her best to look unfazed by Ms. Cribb's appearance.)* Hello Ms. Cribb, I'm Sheyla Duvall. I got your letter.

CRIBB: Ichs ochay. Aaaaaa heee hiss-hus-hed hoo. *(Speaking is work for her)*
Sheyla looks to the doctor.

DOCTOR: *(Translates)* "It's okay, I'd be disgusted too."

SHEYLA: You don't disgust me Ms. Cribb.

CRIBB: harren.

DOCTOR: "Sharon."

SHEYLA: You don't disgust me, Sharon. I came to hear what you want to tell me.

CRIBB: He's evil.

DOCTOR: "He's evil."

SHEYLA: Got that one, thanks. Who's evil, Herman Howards?

Cribb nods.

SHEYLA: Why did he shoot you?

Cribb starts chortling.

SHEYLA: Is she alright?

DOCTOR: She's...uh...She's laughing.

Her laughter turns to tears.

CRIBB: Why!? Why!? Ahd hlike hoo ho.

DOCTOR: "I'd like to know."

CRIBB: Ahh hagr ha hirl honce. A hoohehul hirl.

DOCTOR: Um... "I had a girl once. A beautiful girl."

CRIBB: Hhees hone. Heft he.

DOCTOR: "She's gone. Left me."

CRIBB: Ah han't heat hanheehing hat hoeshont hit hew ha hraw.

DOCTOR: I...uh... "I can't eat anything that doesn't fit through a straw."

CRIBB: Hand ah haf ho hihea hy hiss hahhen.

DOCTOR: "And I have no idea why this happened."

CRIBB: Han hoo hell he? Hrease! Han...hoo...hell...he...hy?!

She lurches in the bed, exhausted and overwhelmed by emotion. The Doctor holds her down as she tries to tear at the gauze from her face. Frantic.

DOCTOR: *(To Sheyla)* Outside! Now!

A nurse comes running in and injects her with a sedative. Cribb eases into sleep. The doctor goes out to Sheyla.

SHEYLA: *(Shaken up)* I'm sorry. I'm so sorry

DOCTOR: It's not your fault. She falls into those outbursts every once in a while. Post traumatic anxiety disorder. The Head-shrinkers will find some kind of medicine for her.

SHEYLA: The Head-shrinkers?

DOCTOR: Excuse me, the psychiatrists.

SHEYLA: You don't talk like a doctor.

DOCTOR: That's because what I've seen since Herman Howards decided to become famous, I wish I wasn't a doctor. Welcome to my world Ms. Duvall.

SHEYLA: Sheyla.

DOCTOR: Ms. Sheyla.

SHEYLA: Oh, you didn't happen to catch the last thing she said before the...episode started, did you?

DOCTOR: (Quoting.) "Can you tell me? Please. Can you tell me why?"

Cross-fade to Lax is in his hotel room reading the background. He stops, takes his glasses off, rubs his eyes, stands up, takes out a cigarette and goes over to the mirror.

LAX: (To his reflection) Tired, sexy?

A voice comes out of the dark.

VOICE: Why did you let it happen?

Lax jumps and turns around to see the twelve year old black kid he hit with the bat down in Georgia. The kid is bloody as anything.

KID: Why didn't you help me?

LAX: What do you want?!

Lax is backed up in the corner.

KID: You killed me.

LAX: I didn't kill you. I hit you as light as I could, you know that! What choice did I have? What choice?! They were going to kill someone that night! It was either you or me! If I had died... They were ready to annihilate the whole fucking State... I had to live.

KID: You walked away while they killed me. You might as well have done it yourself.

LAX: I'm sorry.

KID: You never even found out my name.

LAX: What is it?

KID: I don't remember.

LAX: Am I going to Hell?

KID: *(He laughs)* Not as simple as that. But you're on the right track.

LAX: Track for what?

KID: Was it worth it?

LAX: Was what worth it?

KID: Sacrificing my life for yours.

LAX: I don't know.

KID: You're goin' to need a better answer someday.

LAX: I know.

KID: I'll be seeing you, Vic.

He disappears. Lights go down.

Scene 7

The buzzer sounds and Lax enters the interrogation room where Herman is seated, laughing.

LAX: What's the joke?

HERMAN: I don't think you would find it very amusing.

LAX: Try me.

HERMAN: James Hankley is one of the smartest kids in school, right. He's head of the paper, gets really good grades and all that.

LAX: And?

HERMAN: When I blew Susan away, some of her brains landed on him. *(Herman starts laughing hard)*

LAX: I don't get it.

HERMAN: She was the dumbest kid in class. *(Continues laughing)*

LAX: What did you do after you shot Ms. Cribb, Herman?

HERMAN: After Cribb? Oh, I told James to take his clothes off. He did and then I told him to sit down. Marsha was still up there covered in blood.

LAX: You let James live because you wanted him to write about the day?

HERMAN: Yeah. Do you have a cigarette?

LAX: No.

HERMAN: I can see the pack in your shirt pocket?

LAX: No, Herman.

HERMAN: That's a shitty thing to do to a fellow smoker.

LAX: What happened next?

HERMAN: I'd be able to think a lot clearer if you gave me one of those cigarettes.

LAX: Forget about it. Those things will kill you.

HERMAN: Think I'm afraid of dying, Lax?

LAX: Yes.

HERMAN: Why say that?

LAX: Because you weren't man enough to do yourself in like your buddies Eric and Dylan.

HERMAN: Hey, I was prepared to pay the price for what I did. That takes more balls than just offing yourself.

LAX: You don't believe in karma?

HERMAN: I don't know much about it.

LAX: Well, Herman, in your language I think the closest translation would be "what goes around comes around".

HERMAN: What, I'm gonna' pay for my deeds in the after life? Some kind of "go fuck yourself" afterlife?

LAX: Something like that.

HERMAN: You know what I think? I think that when you die, it's game over.
Nothing. Blackness.

LAX: What about 'reset', Herman?

HERMAN: When you hit reset, the game you played before doesn't have shit to do with the next one. All the characters come back to life.

LAX: That's not how it works in reality. Once a kid is killed, he doesn't come back to life.

(Herman does not speak. His face becomes passive, blank.)

LAX: What are you thinking about?

HERMAN: I haven't been able to sleep well.

LAX: Why not?

HERMAN: Nightmares.

LAX: What sort?

HERMAN: I dream they come back.

LAX: Who?

HERMAN: Those assholes. They come back, and I shoot them again. They come back again. I keep shooting. It's like I have unlimited bullets, and they have unlimited lives.

We keep going and going. No reason. No goal. We just keep going.

LAX: You don't think they're haunting you?

HERMAN: How can dead people haunt your dreams?

LAX: Ask them next time you go to sleep.

HERMAN: *(Herman takes it in for a second, then snaps back with)* You want to hear what else happened? Or not?!

LAX: I want to hear, Herman. I want to hear.

HERMAN: Where was I?

LAX: Marsha was covered in blood.

HERMAN: Right. I, uh, I told James to take his clothes off...

LAX: You said that already, Herman.

HERMAN: Shut up! I'm fine! I don't remember what happened next. I think I started firing into the crowd...No, that happened after the police came to the door. Yeah, that's how it happened.

(Herman gets up and goes over to that part of the stage. Ms. Cribb is on the floor a few feet away. James Hankley is in his underwear, sitting on the floor. Susan lays next to him, exactly where she fell after being shot, and Marsha stands covered in blood.)

HERMAN: The police came to the door and all the kids began to scream because I threw a pipe bomb into the middle of the crowd and a whole bunch of people scattered. *(He mimes all of this.)* It got crazy. The kids ran towards the door, the police ran into the gym, and I was just running around shooting people left and right. There were only three cops at first, and I was able to pick them off right after they stormed the gym.

(Herman takes aim at the three cops offstage with his hands in gun form. Fires three times, we hear three shots.)

HERMAN: The idiots only got one door open, so with all the kids trying to get out, no more cops could get in. It was anarchy. Awesome.

I ran up behind Marsha and put the .45 in her back. *(He does so.)* Ready to die, prom queen? Then I shot someone who was running right next to her. *(He does so. Marsha screams and falls to her knees.)*

MARSHA: Please don't kill me! Please! I'll do anything. I don't want to die. I want to see my mom again. I want to see my little brother. Please, I don't want to die. Pleeeaaaasssee!

HERMAN: Isn't it funny, she was ashamed to be caught talking to me before that. Now she was practically spreading her legs for me. I shot her down low, where it counts, *(he does this)* bashed her nose with the butt of my gun, *(he does this)* and left her there to bleed. *(To Marsha)* I hope you survived.

LAX: Why's that?

HERMAN: (*Back to Lax*) Because I want her to learn what life is like when you're not the prettiest girl in school.

LAX: You're a teacher?

HERMAN: People needed a lesson.

LAX: What did they learn, Herman?

HERMAN: Maybe they learned to be a little nicer to each other.

LAX: (*pause*) Maybe they will be. Maybe we all will be.

HERMAN: I doubt it. The world's gonna' see more kids like me before they finally get it. That's okay, they will.

LAX: They'll finally get it?

HERMAN: No Lax, the world will see more kids like me.

LAX: Are you ready to spend the rest of your life in jail, or would you rather be executed, Herman?

HERMAN: It really doesn't matter. Jail has been all right so far. I don't care if I die. It's gonna' get harder if they transfer me to population, though. I heard today it could happen down the road.

LAX: Yeah, it's going to get harder.

HERMAN: Look, if I can blow away twenty-nine people, I think I can handle myself in prison.

LAX: That's what a lot of kids your age think. That's why a lot of kids your age are getting locked up these days.

HERMAN: Your compassion is breaking my heart.

LAX: See that's the thing, Herman. I don't know that I even give a fuck anymore.

HERMAN: What?

LAX: Part of me thinks you kids are the whole fucking problem, and we should just lock all you little bastards up and throw away the key. Goddamnit if you're old enough to plan and carry out a massacre of twenty-five children and four adults, you're plenty old enough to know what kind of a person does something like that.

HERMAN: What kind of person, Lax?

LAX: Evil.

HERMAN: Were you evil when you bashed that nigger's head in?

LAX: Yes! Yes I was. I had to be.

HERMAN: So did I.

LAX: I was saving lives. It was a war. In war, when it comes down to lives, you go back to basic arithmetic. I let one boy die so thousands could live. One life for a thousand! That's why I had to do it. That's why I *allowed* myself to do it. Why did you allow yourself to become evil?

HERMAN: You know why.

LAX: No Herman, I don't.

HERMAN: Because it felt good. Because for one moment in my nothing life, I actually got to know what it feels like to be God. And - it - feels - good. You don't have to say it, Lax. I know you understand. You have that look in your face. You tasted it.

LAX: You felt like God?

HERMAN: Do you miss the feeling, too?

LAX: Fuck you! You think we're alike? You think you and me are the same? Well, I'll tell you Herman, I've felt like God before. I felt like God when I saw Sean Gall

slapped onto a table, hand-cuffed, smacked in the face, and arrested. Tell you the truth, it turned me on. But I didn't feel like God when I hit that child. That child, who had been tied up and gagged, by bullies just like the ones you hate, Herman.

God was nowhere to be found that day.

You think we're the same. *(laughs)* I'll tell you this, boy; when I walk out of here today and leave you behind to wallow through your sad, scared, petty existence for the rest of your miserable life, I will feel God, strolling along beside me. And I'll say to him:

"God, you've done so many wonderful things, but I just don't understand; why on earth did you create Herman Howards?"

HERMAN: I hope you get an answer.

LAX: I want to ask you one more time, do you feel bad in anyway about what you did?

HERMAN: Between you and me?

LAX: Sure.

HERMAN: Stop the tape recorder.

LAX: What does it matter?

HERMAN: That's a double edged question.

LAX: I'm giving you my word, Herman.

HERMAN: Popular consensus says your word isn't worth a whole lot.

LAX: Fine, Herman. Don't tell me.

HERMAN: All you gotta' do is turn it off. I don't see what the problem...

Lax stops the tape recorder

LAX: We're off the record. Are you happy now?

HERMAN: I'm scared. I don't want to be in a cell for the rest of my life. I don't know what they're gonna' do to me in State, but I'm damn sure I won't like it.

Sometimes I even wish I could take it back. You know, hit reset. But I guess I can't.

LAX: No, Herman. You can't.

HERMAN: Hey, Lax?

LAX: Yes, Herman?

HERMAN: Do you think those nightmares will ever go away?

LAX: No, Herman. I don't.

HERMAN: Yeah. Me neither. You think I'm going to Hell?

LAX: I think I have all I need here. Thank you for your time.

HERMAN: That's it?

LAX: That's your fifteen minutes, kid. I hope it was worth it. Good-bye Herman.

Lax gathers his papers and heads for the door. Herman does not respond. He only gives a look, blank and scared. Lax knocks three times and the guard opens the door, the buzzer sounds, and Herman appears in red light. Lax looks at him for a moment, then exits.

Lights down.

Scene 8

The nightly news music plays. Lights up on the Anchorwoman.

ANCHORWOMAN: The verdict came in today on the People vs. Herman Howards. Howards is indeed going to be the first minor to be executed in the State of Iowa. The execution date is not yet set.

Possibly the larger controversy over the Howards case is whether or not the execution will be televised. Senator John Cox (R.) had this to say:

Lights up on John Cox.

COX: There is a virus going around in our children. A virus more contagious than we know. This virus is a tendency toward violence as a solution to their problems. This virus, I feel, can only be controlled with the appropriate punishment. Now, the courts have decided the appropriate punishment for Herman Howards. I think the good people of this Town, State, and Country have a right to see for themselves, and to show their children, what happens when you break the law in this blessed Country of ours. The people have a right to know. Thank You.

Lights down.

Scene 9

Lights up on The Pit Stop. Two bikers throw darts in the corner, the little old lady sits at a table alone and drinks. At one end of the bar Ted Rafferty is huddled up with his drink, at the other, Lax, obviously drunk. Sheyla enters.

SHEYLA: I didn't know if I was going to see you again.

LAX: (*nearly slurring*) I was hoping you'd show. What are you drinking?

SHEYLA: I'll take a perfect Manhattan, no ice.

LAX: Woman after mine own. BAR KEEP! One perfect Manhattan for the perfect lady.

Pleeeeeeassee.

SHEYLA: What are your thoughts on Herman Howards?

LAX: You're such a reporter. Always cutting to the chase. (*He stares at her for a moment*) I like that. BAR KEEP! Another Gibson. Onions this time, please! Haw!

The bikers stop their game and look at Lax. Sheyla, the bartender, and the old lady all notice this, but Lax is seemingly oblivious.

SHEYLA: What do you think of him, Lax?

LAX: He's a kid. I don't want to talk about him. Let's talk about you, Sheyla. What do you think of him?

Lax laughs as if this were the funniest joke he's ever heard. The bikers are blatantly staring now.

SHEYLA: I don't think it's funny.

LAX: You'd be surprised what some people laugh about.

SHEYLA: Do you want to hear what I think, or did you call me up to get some ass?

LAX: *(Thinks for a moment)* A little of both.

SHEYLA: You're all right, Morales.

LAX: Thank you. So what do you think?

SHEYLA: I think he's a model product. The world's getting to be a cold place, darlin'.

LAX: THE WORLD'S GETTING TO BE A COLD PLACE! *(to the old woman)* Did you hear that, ma'am? We are living in a cold world.

The old woman nods. Lax nods back then swivels around to face the two bikers who have begun to advance on him. He raises his empty glass to them.

LAX: Gentlemen! To the cold world.

After a moment one of the bikers laughs and goes back to the table. The other follows suit but is not so amused by the drink. The bartender brings over the Gibson.

BARTENDER: Pipe it down, or you're done drinking here.

LAX: Sorry. I'll try a little harder.

SHEYLA: Did you get drunk to call me, or call me cause you got drunk and I'm the only girl you know in this Town?

LAX: I'm not sure, but I think it might be the latter.

SHEYLA: Men always have to talk to a girl when they get drunk. Why is that?

LAX: Maybe it's because we know, that when a lady is around, we have to maintain our integrity. Otherwise we might fall apart.

SHEYLA: Maybe.

LAX: I was just thinking about you. And I finished the background research you were so generous to give me. Top of the line stuff.

SHEYLA: Top of the line stuff and you won't tell me why you think he did it?

LAX: I'll tell you. Remember I said I was going to give you an exclusive?

SHEYLA: *(Takes out a tape recorder)* I remember.

LAX: Not now. Hee-hee. That's naughty.

SHEYLA: You said, before you go back to New York I'd get my exclusive.

LAX: So I did.

SHEYLA: You leave tomorrow morning at Six a.m.. I don't think we're going to have a better chance than now.

LAX: I'm Schmoozled right now.

SHEYLA: Why did Herman Howards do it?

LAX: I'm drunk.

SHEYLA: Why did he do it?

LAX: Very drunk.

SHEYLA: Why?

LAX: Preposterously drunk.

SHEYLA: Lax.

LAX: Suburbia.

SHEYLA: What?

LAX: Suburbia.

SHEYLA: Thank you. That clears it all up.

LAX: We used to work hard for our food in small farming communities.

SHEYLA: What, in Mexico?

LAX: America. Round about the time we were extinguishing the Indians. My dear lady.
At least then we Europeans could say we worked hard.

SHEYLA: Do I look European to you?

LAX: Then enough of us came over to the promised land to create demand for the City.

SHEYLA: Do you always give history lessons when you're plastered?

LAX: Big giant slabs of concrete. But at least it was interesting. It was action. You could get drunk and stare up at marvelous buildings to inspire your soul.

Then the world became corporate. Americans wanted a place to live that wasn't dangerous or exciting or stimulating. Eeeeeeeeeewwwwwww, scary. They wanted the convenience of a city *and* the peace of country life. They compromised.

SHEYLA: What did they get for it?

LAX: Neutrality.

SHEYLA: Neutrality?

LAX: Suburbia.

BARTENDER: So what?

LAX: So what? So you can't have it both ways. Neutrality kills the soul.

OLD WOMAN AT TABLE: Amen.

LAX: Who's paying? The kids. The kids with their numb souls are paying for three generations of the suburbs. You live in neutrality, there's nothing real to live for. I don't know that I have it in me to kill. All I know is if I do, Suburbia will bring it out.

SHEYLA: Did you bash that kid down in Georgia?

LAX: What is it with you?! Why can't you let it go?!

BARTENDER: Pipe it down!

SHEYLA: Why can't *you* let it go? Why can't you tell anyone what happened down there, Lax?

LAX: Because...Because it...*(barely keeping it together)* Because it was so fucking awful. All right? It was so fucking awful that I don't know what to do with myself. It was so fucking awful...that Herman Howards is the only person who can really understand it.

SHEYLA: What happened to him, Lax? What happened to that child?

LAX: He reached out, but no one was there to take his hand.

SHEYLA: What happened to you?

LAX: I don't know.

Lax drops his glass which shatters on the floor. Everyone in the bar is silent.

SHEYLA: I think it's time to get you home.

RAFFERTY: You are most certainly right, my dear.

LAX: Excuse me?

RAFFERTY: No, I don't think I will. You dare to call yourself a journalist? You're still wet behind the ears, boy.

LAX: Rafferty. Fucking Ted Rafferty. What are you doing around these parts?

RAFFERTY: My job.

LAX: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were still in the game, Ted. What's the name of your show again, Blue Balls?

RAFFERTY: Hard Calls.

LAX: Hard Calls. Haw. Sheyla, this is Ted Rafferty, a very important man. He's the A-#1 piece-of-shit schlock, TV journalist. Ted, this is Sheyla, she's a real journalist.

SHEYLA: Hi.

RAFFERTY: Someday, boy. Someday you're going to wake up and your dick won't be so stiff. Your hair won't be so thick, your ego won't be so inflated, and your brain won't be so clouded with fame. You'll wake up from a nightmare and wonder if these demons will ever let you rest in peace. You'll wonder which demons Herman Howards threw on you, and which ones you brought on yourself. If you can still get it up to write then, call yourself a journalist. Right now, you're a guppy in a fish bowl, about to be thrown in the ocean. Hope you can swim.

Rafferty exits.

LAX: Well, that was nice of him to give such hard-found, seasoned advice. Don't you think?

SHEYLA: You want to keep going with this interview?

LAX: I'd rather continue back at your place.

Castling.
Lax must
be more
powerful
than
Rafferty
who is
all voice
& no
muscle.

SHEYLA: I bet you would. I think I'm a just little too old for you.

LAX: Maybe I'm just a little too young for you.

SHEYLA: Maybe.

LAX: That's a shame.

SHEYLA: A shame.

LAX: You know I'm not used to having the script flipped on me like this. I'm good at asking the questions, not answering them.

SHEYLA: You do alright at both.

LAX: Hmmm... So there's no chance that, uh... you and me?

SHEYLA: Hmm... I don't think so, darlin'.

LAX: That's too bad.

SHEYLA: Maybe in the next life.

LAX: Maybe. (*Picks up the drink Rafferty left*) To Herman Howards; may his soul find peace in the after-life.

Lights down.

Scene 10

Lights up on Herman's execution. Ted Rafferty is hosting the execution show. Center stage, Herman is being strapped down and connected to the chair.

RAFFERTY: Welcome back. This is Ted Rafferty reporting live here at the execution of Herman Howards, infamous for "Bloody Broome". If you're just tuning in, this execution will be the first televised in the United States, and, from what they are telling me right now, (*He puts a finger up to his ear piece*) has already become the highest

*Let's
decide*

viewed event in television history. An estimated sixty-seven percent of the country has their sets tuned to us as Howards is strapped down to the electric chair.

(He walks over to the window and looks down on a group of protesters outside.)

RAFFERTY: Outside the prison, protesters are surrounding the area holding up signs and chanting...

(He opens the window)

PROTESTERS: KILLING PEOPLE DOES NOT STOP PEOPLE FROM KILLING PEOPLE! KILLING PEOPLE DOES NOT STOP PEOPLE FROM KILLING PEOPLE! KILLING PEOPLE DOES NOT STOP PEOPLE FROM KILLING PEOPLE!

(He shuts the window)

RAFFERTY: Lax Morales, most noted for his association with Herman Howards, was invited to the execution but declined.

(Hence Iowa Senator John Cox (R) enter and rushes over to him.)

RAFFERTY: Senator! Would you share your thoughts on today's events with me?

SENATOR COX: This boy's execution is long overdue. America will be watching and they will see today that the government will not allow their children to be in danger anymore. Killing people may not stop people from killing people, but seeing the execution live sure as heck will. Thank you.

(He moves on.)

RAFFERTY: As more than half the nation sits with eyes on the screen... What? Oh.

They're ready. This is it!

(All attention goes to Herman and the officer standing beside him.)

OFFICER: Herman Howards, you are about to be executed by means of electric chair, under the authority of the State of Iowa for the crimes that you have committed. Do ^{you} have any last words?

HERMAN: *(Looking out at the audience with the head strap on, all buckled in.)* Yes. I'd like to say something to the viewers at home. You may not like me, but one thing's for sure; you will never, never, forget me. Goodbye America. Good luck.

Black out.

The End