

HELLO HERMAN

A screenplay by

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Based on his novella of the same name

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FADE IN:

INT. BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Herman's POV. We see nothing of Herman but his arm and his hand which is holding a .45 caliber pistol as he walks around a school pep-rally. At first the kids do not notice him and are happy and loud. A few cheerleaders are doing various routines, waiting to see why they were called in. Herman moves up to an athletic looking boy, Michael Ray. As Herman speaks, we see the action played out, and hear the noises of the gym.

HERMAN (V.O.)

I got real close to his face. He was like bigger than me. I said to him "Spare some change?"

MICHAEL RAY

What?

HERMAN (V.O.)

"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. "Not fast enough." I pulled the trigger.

The camera cuts to the reactions of the crowd as the gunshot is heard; a terrified hush rolls over the room. The interview continues in voice over.

LAX (V.O.)

This was Michael Ray?

HERMAN (V.O.)

Yeah, Michael Ray.

LAX (V.O.)

What went through your mind as you pulled the trigger?

We see Michael Ray's dead body oozing blood on the floor.

HERMAN (V.O.)

I thought there would be more blood.

LAX (V.O.)

You look disappointed.

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

We see this happen.

HERMAN (V.O.)
(continuing)
That was pretty cool. I guess I just thought there would be more blood.

LAX (V.O.)
Why did you shoot him?

HERMAN (V.O.)
He was an asshole.

LAX (V.O.)
What had he done to you?

HERMAN (V.O.)
He was always making fun of me, especially in front of girls. He was just a dick.

CUT TO:

EXT: PLAYGROUND - DAY

Herman's POV, we see Michael Ray and some other boys ruthlessly taunting him, a crowd of people around laughing.

LAX (V.O.)
Do you think he deserved to die because he was just a dick?

HERMAN (V.O.)
Everybody dies whether I think they deserve to or not.

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

HERMAN (V.O.)
Naturally? Not Michael Ray.

As he says this, we see a close up of Michael Ray's face shouting some insult.

CUT TO:

Close up of a television screen. It is the Nightly News. Behind the newscaster we see pictures of Broome high-school.

NEWS CASTER

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 11:40 am. Twenty of the children were dead on arrival, four made it to Paul Blake hospital where two died. The other two children are listed in critical condition. Two of the police officers were killed, the third is in intensive care. One of the two teachers shot, Nathaniel Phelps, was also D.O.A.. 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 had this to say:

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF THE HOWARDS' HOUSE - DAY
Gale being interviewed.

GALE HOWARDS

Herman has always been a happy, healthy teenager with a promising future; I can't understand why he would do such a thing.

CUT TO:

The Nightly News.

NEWS CASTER

One thing is certain, no one is sure what motives lie behind these vicious killings. Even more frightening, what if there is no motive? Chet Clarkson reporting live.

CUT TO:

INT: LAX'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lax watching the news. He is the James Dean of journalism; smashing looks, strong mind, and an edge you can feel when he walks in the room. There is a girl asleep in his bed. He glances at her, turns off the tube, and picks up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT: MARTY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Marty, Lax's agent, decent looking, twenty-five year old power type. He is in the middle of coitus when we hear his answering machine pick up.

LAX (O.S.)

Marty! Marty pick up the phone. Pull out and pick up. Pick up the God Damn phone...I'm going to keep calling until you pick up. Don't make me sing *Deep Purple*.

MARTY

I should answer this.

MARTY'S GIRL

Are you fucking kidding me?

MARTY

You're right...It's great. Great.

LAX

(sings. He is tone deaf.)

When the deep purple falls

Over sleepy garden walls

And the something, something...

In the midst of my reverie,
(more)

LAX (cont'd)
You-hoo come back to me
Here in my deep purple dream...

MARTY
Lax, how the heck are ya'? What
can I do for you this time of
night?

LAX (O.S.)
I'm not interrupting anything, am
I, Marty?

MARTY
No, no, I was reading and fell
asleep.

We hear the bathroom door slam!

MARTY'S GIRL
(Through the bathroom
door)
Cocksucker!

LAX (O.S.)
I need to interview Herman
Howards, Marty.

MARTY
Howards? Fabulous! Fabulous.

LAX (O.S.)
I'll even do it for one of the
tabloids if they can get me inside
the prison and are willing to pay
Jacob's way too.

MARTY
Query Magazine called me already.
I didn't get back to you
immediately because I know how you
feel about tabloids. But they are
set; Howards' mother has agreed
to sign for their interview.
She's a gold digger from what they
tell me. They're offering you
carte blanche on what you write.
It's a good follow up to Georgia.
But I don't know if they'll pay
Jacob's way.

LAX (O.S.)

They will. If they don't, it's a deal breaker. So, Marty, I need two first class tickets to Iowa tomorrow and a research assistant waiting for me when I get there. I'm going to tape this one, Geraldo style. After that, I'll be in position to get my own show.

MARTY

I love you, baby. I have a friend at the Des Moines Gazette. The editor, Carl Gibbons. I'll give him a call and have the researcher meet you at the airport. Lax, I know you're up to getting into this kid's head.

LAX

Book the tickets, Marty. I'll call you from Broome.

He hangs up.

MARTY

(To the bathroom door)

Sweetie, you coming out?

MARTY'S GIRL

Why don't you go fuck Lax Morales?

MARTY

We might not agree who gets on top.

CUT TO:

INT: MOLLY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The phone rings waking Molly up.

MOLLY

Hello? Carl? It's very late.
What?

(suddenly springing
up)

Yes I have all the background on Howards. You got me the interview!? Morales? Lax Morales, the guy who won the Pulitzer? You want me to give him all my background.

(more)

MOLLY (cont'd)

And pick him up at Fort Dodge! A favor to your friend Marty? Are you out of your head? I'm sorry. I just thought it was my story. I know, he's a good connection. I know. Thank you, Carl. No, you're not a bastard person. What time? Seven! No, that's fine. I'll be there.

She hangs up.

MOLLY

(continuing)

Pricknut!

CUT TO:

INT: NEWS BROADCAST - MORNING

NEWS CASTER #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. "Bloody Broome" as it is now being called, is the eleventh high-school in two years to have incidents of students bringing guns into the classroom and opening fire. Never before has the carnage been this severe, nor the death toll as high as at "Bloody Broome". Twenty-five adults and children were killed in all, four remain in critical condition.

The most disturbing fact remains that there is no clear motive for the act. What is clear, is that today's teenage culture has become dangerous to everyone.

Senator John Cox issued a statement to the press this morning:

SENATOR JOHN COX

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

CUT TO:

INT: AIRPLANE - DAY

Lax and Jacob Silva, his camera man, the ultimate techie, twenty-two, boyhood friends. They sit in first class. Jacob goes over his equipment, carefully cleaning each piece. Lax is jotting something down in his journal.

LAX (V.O.)

Going out to do this piece on Herman Howards, I feel scared.

CUT TO:

EXT: GEORGIA STREET - NIGHT

It is very dark. A group of skinheads hover around something. Fists swinging and feet stomping.

LAX (V.O.)

Not sure what of, but scared. I don't want to meet Herman Howards, because I think I understand him. I think I know why he did it. Makes me want to kill him.

Close up on a black, fifteen year old boy's eye.

CUT TO:

EXT: AIR STRIP - DAY

Plane lands in Fort Dodge Regional airport.

CUT TO:

INT: FORT DODGE REGIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Molly McPeterson waits for Lax and Jacob as they exit the plane. She is an attractive girl but by no means beautiful. The kind of looks that grow on you as you get to know her.

35 years old, looking for a way out of Iowa and into New York. She holds a sign that reads "Morales". Lax sees her and the two parties meet in the middle.

MOLLY

Lax Morales?

LAX

Yes. This is my camera man Jacob Silva.

MOLLY

My God, you're just a kid! I was expecting you to be older.

LAX

I know exactly how you feel. I was expecting you to be young. But, hey, people surprise you.

MOLLY

Yes they do.

CUT TO:

EXT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL - MORNING

Herman's POV heading toward school. As the dialogue ensues, we see what is being described through Herman's eyes. But there is no sound to the action going on, all we hear is the interview taking place. If someone is quoted by Herman, their lips move, but Herman's voice is all we hear.

LAX (V.O.)

What did you do when you got to school?

HERMAN (V.O.)

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 Tim to send out a different message of the day on the hallway monitors...

LAX (V.O.)

Did you get that idea from Harris and Klebold?

HERMAN (V.O.)
Not bad. Yes I did. Only my idea
was brilliant. I didn't give any
warning. I sent out a mandatory
pep-rally message

CUT TO:

The hallway monitor with the new message on it.

HERMAN (V.O.)
instructing all the kids to skip
their third period, go to the gym.

CUT TO:

INT: COMPUTER LAB - MORNING

Tim from Herman's POV

HERMAN (V.O.)
Tim thought it was a great prank,
I told him to make sure he was
there. He said he wouldn't miss it
for the world.

(Laughs)
Then I went to my locker and got
the guns and pipe bombs.

LAX (V.O.)
How did you get the pipe bombs?

HERMAN (V.O.)
I made them.

LAX (V.O.)
Was it easy?

HERMAN (V.O.)
It was easy once I got the
instructions off the net.

CUT TO:

An internet screen with blueprints for pipe bombs.

HERMAN (V.O.)
I went to one hardware store and
got half the ingredients,

CUT TO:

INT: HARDWARE STORE #1 - DAY

Herman's POV of an old, bald man behind a hardware store counter handing Herman a receipt with a big grin on his face.

HERMAN (V.O.)

Then I got the other half at another store.

CUT TO:

INT: HARDWARE STORE #2 - DAY

Herman's POV of a middle-aged man with a moustache behind a hardware store counter handing Herman a receipt with a big grin on his face.

HERMAN (V.O.)

No one had any clue what I was up to.

LAX (V.O.)

And the guns?

HERMAN (V.O.)

A guy I know works at the WALMART in Council Bluffs, he sold them to me.

CUT TO:

EXT: WALMART - DAY

An eighteen year old clerk wearing a Walmart uniform, outside of Walmart, waving to the camera with one hand while the other balances a twenty-two caliber rifle on his shoulder. Big smiles.

LAX (V.O.)

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

CUT TO:

A copy of Iowa's gun laws.

HERMAN (V.O.)

Do you have any idea how many people own guns in Iowa? I tell you it scares me.

CUT TO:

The paper catches on fire. When it burns up, we see average, everyday people walking around the streets of Broome; mothers pushing their babies around, business men working at their offices, hot dog vendors selling food in the park, etc., only everybody has a large gun clearly strapped to their side.

HERMAN (V.O.)

There are more ways around being under eighteen and getting a gun than I can count. Everyone and their brother has a gun.

CUT TO:

A baby in a carriage holding a real gun and giggling.

LAX (V.O.)

You mean everyone and their mother.

HERMAN (V.O.)

What?

LAX (V.O.)

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

CUT TO:

EXT: PARK - DAY

An angelic looking mother playing with her toddler in the park.

HERMAN (V.O.)

Whatever.

LAX (V.O.)

You are aware that everyone has a mother, right?

HERMAN (V.O.)

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 talk to you. This is a very important story, you know. I don't think you'll ever have one bigger.

CUT TO:

A flash of an extreme close up of two baby-blue eyes, then back to the mother playing with her son.

LAX (V.O.)

Did you ever think of the people's
mothers or fathers or loved ones
while you were shooting them in
their faces?

CUT TO:

EXT: PARK - DAY

Extreme close up of the mother's face screaming in horror,
but the only sound we hear is the interview.

HERMAN (V.O.)

No.

LAX (V.O.)

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

ZOOM OUT TO:

EXT: PARK - DAY

The mother holding her dead child in her arms, blood
everywhere. She is screaming uncontrollably.

HERMAN (V.O.)

No.

LAX (V.O.)

Why not?

HERMAN (V.O.)

Because I'm obviously fucked up.
Lax, do you think a normal person
goes into school and shoots
everyone?

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Herman's POV shooting his classmates in the gym.

HERMAN (V.O.)

What can I say? I'm special.

LAX (V.O.)
How do you think your mother would
feel if you had been killed?

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS'BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gale Howards in a bubble-bath drinking a glass of white wine.
Not celebrating, just relaxing.

HERMAN (V.O.)
It would have taken her a few days
to realize I was gone.

LAX (V.O.)
Oh, come on.

HERMAN (V.O.)
No, Lax. Sometimes I could go
three, four days without seeing
her.

LAX (V.O.)
How is that possible?

HERMAN (V.O.)
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,
I have mine.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS'HOME - DAY

POV of the TV. We see Herman at age eleven, playing a video
game on the floor of the living-room. He is blond and wears
a bowl cut. His eyes are the same baby-blue eyes we have
seen in montage sequences before. They are transfixed on the
screen and we can see the reflection of the game on his face.
The only parts of his body that move are his fingers and
eyes. An empty glass sits next to him.

HERMAN (V.O.)
We don't interfere with each
other. She's very good about
giving me privacy.

LAX (V.O.)
 Yeah, but your life consists of
 playing video games and making
 pipe bombs. Didn't she have a
 clue?

HERMAN (V.O.)
 She's a busy lady.

LAX (V.O.)
 What about your father?

HERMAN (V.O.)
 He lives in Chicago with his
 girlfriend.

LAX
 Been kind of lonely since?

HERMAN
 Lonely?

(Caption reads "March, 13th, 1995. 3:41pm")

We hear breaks and a scream outside. Then a car peeling out.
 Screams follow. Herman is distracted by the noise, slightly
 at first. He shrugs it off and continues playing his game.
 Then sirens are heard. It is too much. He gets up and goes
 to the window.

CUT TO:

EXT: ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE HOWARDS' HOME - AFTERNOON

We see a little girl strewn along the curb, blood gushing
 from her head. There is a crowd around her and some people
 are screaming.

NEIGHBOR
 That's Gale Howards' girl!

CUT TO:

INT: BY THE FRONT WINDOW - AFTERNOON

Herman looking out at the scene, a blank expression on his
 face, he doesn't seem to feel one way or the other about
 what has just happened.

CUT TO:

EXT: ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE HOWARDS' HOME - AFTERNOON

Herman's little sister, eight years old, is carried into an ambulance and driven away. The crowd begins to disperse, there is a decent amount of blood left behind on the street. A man walks toward the Howards' house.

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF THE HOWARDS'HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The neighbor knocks on the door.

NEIGHBOR

Gale! Gale, are you in there?
Herman? Is anybody there?

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS'HOME - AFTERNOON

Herman has moved away from the window and is staring at the door while the neighbor knocks. Finally the neighbor gives up and leaves. Herman watches him go from the window. Then he goes back into the living room, looks at his paused game, picks up his empty glass of coca-cola, goes to the fridge, refills his drink, and then looks at the phone numbers on the wall.

CUT TO:

Sheet of paper with a bunch of numbers on it.
"MOM AT WORK:555-1214" is in bold.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS'HOME - AFTERNOON

Herman picks up the phone and calls his mom at work.

CUT TO:

INT: GALE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Gale's secretary, Rose, an official looking girl of twenty-five, hasn't lost her sweet touch yet, answers the phone.

ROSE

Good afternoon, Gale Howards'
office.

HERMAN (O.S.)

Hi, 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 (O.S.)

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

ROSE

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

CUT TO:

INT: MEETING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Gale is sealing a deal with two corporate men when the intercom buzzes.

GALE HOWARDS

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

(intercom buzzes)

ROSE (O.S.)

Ms. Howards?

GALE HOWARDS

Please excuse me for a moment.

(she picks up the phone hastily)

Yes, Rose, what is it?

ROSE (O.S.)

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

GALE HOWARDS

I'm sure it's not as important as this. I know my own son, Rose. Tell him I'll call back when my meeting is over. No more interruptions please.

(more)

GALE HOWARDS (cont'd)
 (She hangs up with an
 anger that is
 slightly too evident)
 I'm sorry about that. Now, as I
 was saying...

CUT TO:

INT: GALE'S CAR - NIGHT

(Caption reads:"5:05pm")

GALE HOWARDS
 Oh, shit! Herman.
 (She reaches into her
 bag and tries to
 call Herman on the
 cell phone, but the
 damn thing's not
 charged up)
 Ugh! Nothing is easy.
 (V.O.)
 Well, if it's important, he'll
 tell me when I walk in the door.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS' HOME - NIGHT

(Caption reads 5:53)

Gail comes in the door, Herman is in front of the TV still
 playing the same game. The sounds of the game permeate the
 house.

GALE HOWARDS
 Hello, mom's home.

Herman does not respond.

GALE HOWARDS
 (continuing)
 Don't sit so close to the
 television, dear. It's bad for
 you.

Herman scoots back a foot or two from the screen, never
 misses a beat. Gale goes upstairs to draw herself a bath.

CUT TO:

INT: THE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Gale sits in the bubblebath drinking a glass of wine as Jazz plays on the bathroom stereo. Not good jazz, no Miles Davis, we're talking about some Kenny G..

CUT TO:

INT: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gale comes back downstairs refreshed from her alone time. Herman is still in the exact same position he was in when she left. She looks around the room.

GALE HOWARDS
Where's your sister?

HERMAN
She was out riding her bike.

GALE HOWARDS
This late?

HERMAN
I dunno'.

GALE HOWARDS
What was it you called about
before, when I was in my meeting?
(An eerie feeling
creeps over her)

HERMAN
Nothing important.

GALE HOWARDS
So, why did you call?

Herman does not respond.

GALE HOWARDS (V.O.)
I knew it. Nothing. God, he can
be inconsiderate.

Gale watches Herman play for a second. She sees him blowing people away left and right. Her face looks uneasy. She has a bad feeling in her gut. Herman plays his game.

CUT TO:

The Nightly News.

NEWS CASTER #3

Lax Morales, respected journalist and youngest winner of the Pulitzer prize, has been hired by *Query magazine* to interview Herman Howards. Morales was unavailable for a quote. His agent, Martin Shrift, had this to say:

MARTY

America will have a better understanding of the boy after Lax is through with him. What we have here is the new voice of youth culture vs. The Bad. It will make for some exciting stuff.

NEWS CASTER#3

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.

The addition of a name like Morales is sure to raise the attention given to Howard's story.

The T-shirt worn by Howards that day; "Y2K Blows" on the front, "But I Dig Blow" on the back, is becoming a popular item among Los Angeles teens.

CUT TO:

INT: MOLLY'S CAR - MORNING

Molly and Lax are in the front, Jacob is in the back with the equipment. They are driving toward the prison. Molly keeps looking at Lax but turning away before he notices. Lax is going through the background research on Herman.

MOLLY

So, why exactly do you think your shit smells like ice cream?

LAX

(not looking up)

I'm the youngest journalist ever to win the Pulitzer prize.

MOLLY

That's so cute. What did you write about?

LAX

(He looks up at her)

I went undercover into a sect of Neo-Nazi Skinheads in Surville, Georgia. They had beautiful plans to kill every "Nigger, Spic, and Ash" in 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. So, they gave me the Pulitzer.

MOLLY

Well, that's half way to ice cream.

Silence for a moment. Lax looks at Jacob asleep in the back seat. Then he looks out the window to his right.

CUT TO:

EXT: OUT THE CAR WINDOW - MORNING

Miles upon miles of corn in all directions. It gives you the illusion that you're not moving.

LAX (V.O.)

Hell.

CUT TO:

INT: MOLLY'S CAR - MORNING

MOLLY

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

LAX

I'm one sixteenth Mexican.

MOLLY

Honey, I'm one sixteenth Cherokee, but I wouldn't go around calling myself "Writes with a vengeance".

JACOB

(Pops his head up for
a second)

I'm one forty-fifth Yiddish.
L'chayim.

(Holds up a hand,
then goes back to
sleep)

LAX

The name, Morales, has been in my family for generations. 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.

MOLLY

No daughters?

LAX

Each man married once and had one son.

Silence for a moment. Lax goes back to his research.

MOLLY

You must have seen some ugly things when you were in Georgia, huh?

LAX

(not looking up)

You can't imagine.

MOLLY

It couldn't have been that bad.

LAX

Forget it.

MOLLY

What did you do?

CUT TO:

A FLASH OF THE BLACK KID'S EYE LOOKING UP. IT IS THE SAME SHOT WE SAW BRIEFLY BEFORE.

CUT TO:

INT: MOLLY'S CAR - MORNING

LAX

Forget it.

MOLLY

Did you go out bashing "Niggers, Spics," and what else did you say?

LAX

Ash. That's what the skin-heads call Jews.

MOLLY

Did you go out bashing?

LAX

(gives a laugh of full dismissal)

MOLLY

Did you bash anyone, Lax?

CUT TO:

EXT: A DARK STREET IN SURVILLE GEORGIA - MIDNIGHT

A group of skinheads surround a fifteen year old black kid. The child is tied up and has duct tape around his mouth. The gang is excited but one of them is keeping it quiet, demanding the floor. His name is Dougie "Dog" Wilson, the rival for Lax's position as captain of the gang. Lax is going under the name of Vic Bishop. He has a shaved head and looks like he fits right in.

DOUGIE DOG

(Handing Lax a bat)

Beat the boy.

VIC (LAX)

Not in the mood.

DOUGIE DOG

Your loyalty is in question, Vic. Now, you beat this boy, or it's gonna' be you tied up on the ground.

There is excitement springing off the pack. They are going to beat someone tonight and they really don't care who. Lax looks at the kid. We see the same shot of the kid's eye we have seen before. Lax looks at Dougie Dog, then the rest of the skinheads.

DOUGIE DOG
(continuing)

DO IT!

Lax looks down at the kid. The same close-up eye shot.

BLACK KID (V.O.)
Please. Don't let this happen.

Lax is tortured. He is about to crumble.

DOUGIE DOG
DO IT NOW!

Lax swings the bat down. Then again. And again. One more time and he drops it, walks away. The skinheads explode into screams of joy and triumph and then proceed to beat the kid to death. Lax walks away tears rolling down his face.

CUT TO:

INT: MOLLY'S CAR - MORNING

MOLLY
Lax? Lax? Hey, are you okay?

Lax snaps out of the memory he was just in and looks at Molly. For a moment he doesn't know where he is, then gets it together. A prison van is parked on the side of the road. The driver, a prison guard, is waving them down.

LAX
It looks like we're here.

Molly still looks at Lax. She hasn't given up on her question. They stop. The guard comes up to the van.

PRISON GUARD
Mr. Morales, Bill Hardy, I'm supposed to escort you and your camera man into the prison in the Transpo Van. There's a whole mess of reporters outside.

LAX
Thank you, Bill. We'll be right there. Jacob, wake up, we're in Oz.

Jacob wakes up.

LAX
(continuing)
Well thank you for the ride Molly.
I'm sure I'll be calling you with
questions about this kid.

Lax starts to get out, Molly grabs his arm.

MOLLY
Lax, did you bash anyone?

He pauses for a moment with his back to her, half in, half out of the car. Jacob looks on waiting to hear what lax will say. With one sudden movement he spins around and gets so close she can smell his breath. In a numb voice and a face without emotion:

LAX
Not in any way.

He gets out of the car and walks with Jacob to the van. Molly sits in her car, not quite sure what to think.

CUT TO:

EXT: NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

POV of a camera for the hot, Sixty-Minutes-type-show *Hard Calls* with Ted Rafferty. Rafferty is fifty-three, with a gruff voice. Through the camera, we see a sixteen year old Goth chick, Kelly Graham.

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)
What do you think of Herman
Howards?

KELLY GRAHM
I'm just glad he's like not a Goth kid, cause Christian America would have crucified us, not like they aren't already.

Like 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.
(more)

KELLY GRAHM (cont'd)
I mean it would have been worse if
he always wore black or something.
You know what I mean?

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)
I've heard that some Goths
practice self mutilation. Have
you ever tried anything like that?

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

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)
Why don't you want to talk about
it?

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

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)
Why did you do it?

KELLY GRAHM
I don't know.

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)
Do you regret it?

KELLY GRAHM
Yeah, I do.

CUT TO:

INT: IOWA STATE PRISON LOBBY - MORNING

Lax and Jacob walk through metal detectors as their equipment
is gone through by a guard. Jacob doesn't like it.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON HALLWAY - MORNING

Lax and Jacob are led down the hallway to the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT: STAIRWAY - MORNING

Lax and Jacob climbing the stairs to the third floor.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - MORNING

Lax and Jacob enter and sit down in the room. It is a medium sized room with one table in the middle and two chairs. Jacob starts setting up his equipment.

PRISON GUARD

I'll go tell the kid you're ready.

Lax nods.

CUT TO:

Prison guard walking down a hallway. He stops at a cell. We do not see who is inside.

PRISON GUARD

Howards. You ready to be famous
you piece of shit?

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - DAY

Lax and Jacob sit in the room waiting for Herman. Lax stairs at Herman's empty chair.

LAX

What are you expecting?

JACOB

Evil.

The door opens and the guard comes in.

GUARD

You guys ready?

LAX

Send him in.

CUT TO:

POV of Jacob's camera. It is a digital camera.

Herman enters. For the first time, we see all of him as he is now, at age sixteen. His hands are cuffed. He stands five seven. Stringy blond hair that comes down to his ears and is then cut short in a buzz. His chin is small, gives him a beakish quality. Eyes as blue as the Iowa sky.

A blank look in his face, but there is something more behind it. Hate. The raw kind that no one is born with. You have to acquire it.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - DAY

LAX

Hello Herman, I'm Lax Morales,
this is my camera man, Bob.

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

For a story like yours, I'd guess
the standard would be around 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 mean during a time of
peace? No one has done something
like this ever!

LAX

(Smiles. He's
already getting
under the kid's skin)

When Hitler was running out of
troops toward the end of World War
II, he enlisted children about
your age, a little younger, into
his army.

(more)

LAX (cont'd)
Those children killed thousands of
soldiers, but they were doing it
in the name of their country.
They were in battles. Why did you
do it?

CUT TO:

POV of Jacob's camera.

HERMAN
What the fuck is that stuff on
your tie?

LAX
Dodo birds.

We see the tie, then back to Herman.

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.

Jacob's camera zooms in on Herman's chin to reveal a scruffy
patch of blond hair. Goofy looking. Then back out.

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.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - DAY

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

HERMAN
Why not?

LAX
Did you get picked on at school?

HERMAN
Everyday.

LAX
Elaborate.

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.

CUT TO:

EXT: NEW YORK CITY STREET - THE VILLAGE - DAY

A bunch of kids are sitting on the street holding out their hands, asking for change. They are big healthy looking kids, seventeen, eighteen. They do what Herman is saying. All we hear is the interview.

HERMAN (V.O.)

They were doing this show about kids who leave home and go 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.

The kids start beating on a man.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - DAY

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?

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

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 first in Colorado?

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 Millennium.

LAX

You look at them as heroes?

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. I gave them
a weapon.

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.

(He chuckles)

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 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!

As Herman goes off on this, his face gets very red and for one moment his eyes actually turn red. There is a pause.

LAX

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.

CUT TO:

The video game POSTAL. As Herman talks, the game does what he says it does.

HERMAN (V.O.)

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

LAX (V.O.)

It sounds easy.

HERMAN (V.O.)

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 (V.O.)

Do you "shoot up" women and children too?

HERMAN (V.O.)

You get less points for them.

LAX (V.O.)

That's nice.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

LAX

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 kill your peers?

HERMAN

Of course it did. How do you think I got to be such a good shot? At one point I was getting ready to kill this little prick, Eddie, who had back from the jocks. This girl started running for the door. She was about fifty feet from me,

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Herman's POV. We see the little girl running and the gun pointing at her exactly like DOOM, only in film.

HERMAN (V.O.)

But I clipped her right in the back of the head...

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

HERMAN

And her face exploded all over some kid.

(Herman starts 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, and she's running, about to get to the door when all of a sudden, "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?

(more)

HERMAN (cont'd)
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
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
(He tries to laugh it
off)
Never happened.

HERMAN
Well, all eight people that were
there say it did.

LAX
How do you know?

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

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

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 one sixteenth Mexican. Does that make you want to kill me too, Herman!?

HERMAN

I just think it's funny, that's all
(He looks hurt, like
up to now they had
been getting along.)

LAX

Why don't we stop now? You've given me a good bit to digest. We'll come back tomorrow.

HERMAN

Whatever.

CUT TO:

EXT: COMFORT INN HOTEL - NIGHT

Lax and Jacob are hanging out in their hotel room smoking a joint. Jacob hands the joint to Lax who declines. He puts a cigarette in his mouth instead.

LAX

No thanks. Another hit and I'll be zorched for tomorrow.

JACOB

I don't mind being a little zorched around that kid.

LAX

Sick puppy, ain't he?

JACOB

All that bullshit about Georgia. He flipped the script on you, didn't he?

LAX

He tried. You know, this Molly chick is pretty fucking thorough with her research. We might be able to use someone like her.

JACOB

There's nothing to it, is there?

LAX

To what?

JACOB

You know what.

LAX

Georgia?
(pause)
Nothing.

They sit in silence for a minute.

JACOB

Well, with what we got on tape today, there's no way the networks are going to deny the show. No way. We're going to take journalism to new heights. Right, Lax? Lax. Don't schitz out on me, man.

LAX

Sick fucking puppy.

JACOB

Hey. Hey!
(he shakes him,
hard.)
You got it together? Cause if you don't, I have better ways to pass my time. I don't need a partner freakin' out on me.

LAX

It's together.

JACOB

It better be.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - MORNING

Herman is waiting in the room with a guard when Lax and Jacob arrive. The guard exits.

HERMAN

Morning, Lax.

LAX

Hello Herman.

HERMAN

Hey, that sounds like a TV show.
"Hello Herman!" Starring Lax
Morales and Herman Howards...Or
should I get top billing? I mean
it is my story.

LAX

(Angry)

Get it straight, Herman. I'm not
here to turn you into a rock star.
I'm not here to make you look like
a tragic hero. You're not.
Personally I think you're just a
psychopath who got off to an early
start. The reason I'm here is
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 gonna' get
you.

HERMAN

(huge grin, yellow
teeth.)

They will never transfer me to
Population. I'm too important.

LAX

Yeah, you're important, but
you're worth more to them dead
than alive, kid.

HERMAN

(Still smiling)

We better get on with the
interview.

CUT TO:

POV of Jacob's camera.

LAX

When you were eleven, your sister
was hurt in a hit and run, right?

HERMAN

Right.

LAX

Then she died a few months 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 who you cared
about.

LAX

So, you did care about her.

HERMAN

She was my sister.

LAX

Were you home when it happened?

CUT TO:

INT: BY THE FRONT WINDOW - AFTERNOON

Herman's POV of his sister being placed in the ambulance.
Blood leaking from her head.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - MORNING

HERMAN

Yeah.

LAX

It happened right outside your
house.

HERMAN

You've done your homework.

LAX

Did you go out and help her?

HERMAN

No.

LAX

Why not?

HERMAN

Because I was eleven. 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 lock you and your sister
in the closet and make you smoke
a pack of cigars? Tell me about
it.

HERMAN

(Laughs)

He was all right. Just a dad. He
left when I was ten. I haven't
seen much of him since.

LAX

What's the most remarkable thing
he ever said to you?

HERMAN

Make your mark, son.

LAX

When did he tell you that?

HERMAN

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

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE PRISON - DAY

From above we see a horde of reporters waiting outside the prison. They mill around like a group of ants who have had the hole to their nest closed up.

PAN TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HIGH-SCHOOL - DAY

Ted Rafferty and his crew are interviewing one of the guards.

CUT TO:

POV of the camera. It is on the guard.

TED 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?

TED RAFFERTY

Say what you like.

SCHOOL GUARD

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

TED RAFFERTY

What signs would those be?

SCHOOL GUARD

No friends. The kid had no friends. How can a boy grow up that way and be normal? Will you tell me that? He'd eat his lunch alone in the cafeteria and listen to the kids laugh about him two tables away.

TED RAFFERTY

Did you ever sit with him at lunch?

SCHOOL GUARD

We don't sit with the kids. I could tell, though. That boy 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.

TED RAFFERTY

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

SCHOOL GUARD

What of it?

TED RAFFERTY

Just trying to clarify.

SCHOOL GUARD

Now you want to blame me for this shit?

TED RAFFERTY

I was not implying that.

SCHOOL GUARD

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

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Herman, Lax and Jacob are still interviewing.

LAX

What's your favorite movie?

HERMAN

That's a hard question.

LAX

Don't tell me *Natural Born Killers*.

HERMAN

That's an awesome movie. But 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 the 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 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 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 theatres 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. Until they notice you.

LAX

You think the parents should have
sat down and watched it with their
kids?

HERMAN

Sort of.

LAX

Sort of?

HERMAN

Kind of. Yeah.

LAX

Well, Herman, I think we may
agree on something.

HERMAN

I think we see eye to eye on more
than that, Lax.

(He stares at Lax and
lets out his chuckle)

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

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.

(he laughs hard)

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 for a week?

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 Mayor?

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.

(A smile appears on his face. Innocent.
He actually looks like a normal kid)

CUT TO:

EXT: JERSEY SHORE, THE BEACH - DAY

The Howards are on the beach. Everyone is happy and looks good. Gale much younger, Frank Howards hairy and well built, the image of a happy father. He is trying to coax Gale into the water while Herman and his little sister play in the sand.

FRANK HOWARDS

Come here, Gale. Don't make me open up a can of whoop-ass on you.

GALE HOWARDS

Oh, Frank, stop it.

(she laughs)

Don't come near me with those wet hands. You know I don't like the water.

FRANK HOWARDS

I think I hear the can-opener turning. Yep, it is most definitely...OPEN!

He runs up to her, puts her over his shoulder, and runs towards the water. She screams playfully.

GALE HOWARDS

Put me down you filthy beast!

FRANK HOWARDS

AAAAARRRRRRGGGGHHHHHH!

They go tumbling into the water. Herman is laughing, but his sister thinks Frank is hurting her mother. She begins to cry.

Herman goes over and tries to comfort her, she won't stop. Gale gets out of the water and picks her up.

GALE HOWARDS

It's okay, baby. Mommy and daddy were just playing. Daddy wasn't hurting mommy. Daddy would never hurt mommy.

The little girl stops crying. Frank gets bitten by a crab and starts squealing in pain. Gale, Herman and his sister all laugh.

GALE HOWARDS

(continuing; whispers
in her daughter's
ear)

Sometimes he can't help but hurt himself.

All laugh again while they watch Frank hobble around by the crest of the water.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS' HOME - NOON

CAPTION READS: Five years later

Herman is ten and his sister is seven. she is roller-skating around and Herman is playing with his G.I. Joes. Gale is reading a magazine in the kitchen cooking something for lunch. Frank comes in the front door.

GALE HOWARDS

Frank? What on earth are you doing home so early?

FRANK HOWARDS

I took the afternoon off. I have a surprise for everyone.

Herman comes running into the room and jumps on his father.

HERMAN

Dad's home! Dad's home!

Herman's sister comes roller-skating into the room.

HERMAN'S SISTER

Daddy!

FRANK HOWARDS

Go put some shoes on, honey.
We're all going to take a trip.

HERMAN

Where to?

GALE HOWARDS

We're going somewhere, Frank?
I've got lunch cooking.

FRANK HOWARDS

Turn the oven off, we'll eat at
a restaurant. How would all of
you like to go see the birthplace
of one of our heroes?

HERMAN

Who?

(can't wait for the
answer.)

Who?

FRANK HOWARDS

The Duke. John Wayne.

HERMAN

Yeah!

GALE HOWARDS

You've always wanted to take
Herman there, haven't you?

FRANK HOWARDS

My father took me. It seems right.

GALE HOWARDS

Do you want to go alone with him?

FRANK HOWARDS

No, it wouldn't be fun unless we
all went, as a family. Do more
things as a family. You know?

GALE HOWARDS

Sounds like fun. I'll go get my
jacket.

The phone rings.

HERMAN

I'll get it!

He runs over to the phone.

FRANK HOWARDS

Let it go, Herman.

HERMAN

But what if it's important?

He picks up the phone. Gale smiles at Frank to say "what a cute kid we have". Frank smiles back but there is a worry in his face.

HERMAN

(continuing)

Howards' residence, this is
Herman Howards...Dad, there's
some lady on the phone for you.
She's crying a lot.

FRANK HOWARDS

I'll take it in the bedroom.

Gale watches him go in.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOWARDS' HOME - NOON

Frank comes out of the bedroom. Everyone is in the same place they were when he went in. They all have their jackets on and are ready to go.

FRANK HOWARDS

We're having an emergency at the
office. I have to go over there.
I'm...uh...not sure what time I'll
be back. we'll have to go see the
Duke's home another time.

(he looks at Herman)

I'm sorry.

As he leaves, he goes to give Gale a kiss on the cheek. She winces.

FRANK HOWARDS

(continuing)

Good-bye.

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOWARDS' HOUSE - DAY

CAPTION READS: Two weeks later.

The car is packed to the rim as Frank ties one last box on top. Herman is standing next to him, trying not to, but crying.

FRANK HOWARDS

Hey, this is just for a little while. I have to take care of some business down in Chicago for a few months, and then I'll be back...I promise.

FRANK HOWARDS' GIRLFRIEND

(Yells from the passenger seat of the car)

Frank, let's go! It's a long drive.

Frank looks at his girlfriend, then looks at the house and sees his wife. She notices his glare and shuts the curtain.

FRANK HOWARDS

Hey, don't forget to make your mark, son. Do your old man proud.

He gets in the car and drives away, leaving Herman standing in the driveway. His tears stop flowing and a blank look comes into his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Herman's face. The same blank expression on it. The three have been in there for a while. Shirt collars are unbuttoned and sweaty pits are beginning to show their evidence.

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.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Herman's POV. The kids all still think that an assembly has been called. They are laughing and joking around like before, reveling in no third period. We see Mr. Phelps, an English teacher, come in with Ms. Cribb, a stalky gym teacher with hair cut real short. Herman goes over and puts the chains on the doors, locks the locks, and throws the keys under the bleachers. Again all we can hear are selected sound effects, such as the sounds of the chains clanking and Herman's voice giving the interview. As he talks, we see what he describes through his point of view.

HERMAN (V.O.)

I went to the top of the bleachers and took out the UZI. Fired a couple of shots in the ceiling 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.

(Add in the sounds of
the gymnasium for
all quotations of
himself)

"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. When he got a little closer, he began to run. "Paul! You forgot to take a bow." He kept running, so I shot him in the knee. He fell down and I could see his bone was shattered and sticking out of his leg. I took one of the pipe bombs out of my bag and shouted: "The first person to move without me saying, gets a pipe bomb up their ass!"

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

POV of Jacob's camera. extreme close-up on Herman's eyes, we have seen this shot before. It zooms out to reveal his entire head. He is in ecstasy reliving the story. It was the happiest moment of his life.

HERMAN

I walked over to Paul. He was crying and screaming. I told him to shut up and shot him in the gut.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Herman's POV. The story continues through his eyes.

HERMAN (V.O.)

Mr. Phelps came walking toward me slowly telling me there was still time for me to stop this madness because I hadn't killed anyone yet. I told him to sit the fuck down, that I didn't want to kill him, but he kept walking toward me. I had to shoot. He would have grabbed me if I didn't. I shot him in the collar bone and it splintered everywhere. He started to kind of fall toward me, so I shot him in the eye. He looked so stupid with nothing but red for his right eye and no collar bone. I almost started laughing, but he was an alright teacher, I mean he gave a fuck, so out of respect I didn't.

The camera stays on Mr. Phelps corpse for a moment.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL - LATE AFTERNOON

Mr. Phelps walks down the hallway with a box of Fig Newtons and a small container of milk. He sees two boys from the football team push Herman into the boy's bathroom. They are on the fourth floor.

CUT TO:

INT: THE BOY'S BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

The two football players have Herman hanging out the window. He is in eighth grade, they are his age, but much bigger.

MR. PHELPS

What the Devil do you boys think you're doing?

The two boys instantly pull Herman back into the room and look at the floor. Herman is not crying, he has the blank look on his face.

MR. PHELPS
(continuing)
What are your names?

BOY#1
Michael.

BOY#2
Rick.

MR. PHELPS
Is that their real names, Herman?

Herman does not respond.

MR. PHELPS
(continuing)
Do you boys have any idea how dangerous what you were doing is? Herman could have been killed for God's sake! Killed! Do you understand that? Now you two get out of here and go to the principal's office and tell her what you've done. I'll be up shortly to make sure that you tell the truth.

They are about to leave the door when Phelps says:

MR. PHELPS
(continuing)
You two should be ashamed to call yourselves Broome students, picking on a boy half your size.

They exit.

MR. PHELPS
(continuing)
You're in the eighth grade, right Herman?

Herman nods.

MR. PHELPS

(continuing)

I remember when I was your age, the older boys would treat me the same way. Don't worry about it, son. In a few years, things like that will all be memories. Believe it or not, you'll probably be friends with those boys next year.

(He is still holding
the Fig Newtons and
milk)

I know it sounds crazy, but some of the greatest friendships start with fights. Take me and my best friend...

HERMAN

Mr. Phelps? Can I go now?

MR. PHELPS

Yes. Yes of course.

HERMAN

Thanks.

Herman walks out with his head hanging low and the same blank expression on his face.

MR. PHELPS

Poor little guy. He'll always be a nerd.

Mr. Phelps checks his look in the mirror, rubs down a wild eyebrow hair, and exits.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Herman's POV. The same shot of Mr. Phelps' corpse.

HERMAN (V.O.)

I asked "Are there any other teachers in the room!" I knew Ms. Cribb was there. No one came forward, so I called up three kids who were laying on the floor near me. That was Susan, this fat girl who no one really liked, James Hankley, the editor of the school paper, and Marsha, the fucking hottest girl in our grade.

The three kids are standing in a line.

HERMAN (V.O.)
(continuing)
I asked again "are there any other
teachers in the room? Hello! If
you are a teacher in this room,
would you be so kind as to please
come forward and take a bow?"

I took out the forty-five and
walked up to Susan. "Oink."

She is confused.

HERMAN (V.O.)
(continuing)
"Oink! Like in *Deliverance*.
Squeal."

She tries, but is crying too much.

HERMAN (V.O.)
(continuing)
Then she gave up and began to say
something like "Jesus, please
protect me."
(She lips the words
while we hear Herman
say them.)
Over and over again. I started to
laugh. "Not today." I shot her
through the cheek, but up, at an
angle so the bullet could go
through her skull and blood would
splatter all over Marsha.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Lax, Herman and Jacob hold the same positions as before.

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?
(more)

HERMAN (cont'd)

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, or some hot-shot reporter ain't gonna' cut it. It's the ones like me are going to run the show.

LAX

How do you figure?

HERMAN

Know what the largest generation is? Mine. We have more than the Baby-boomers. 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, back in June, 99. 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 if 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.

(more)

HERMAN (cont'd)

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. I wanted him to live, so he could write about the day in his precious paper. Marsha on the other hand, she didn't have a chance.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Herman's POV, where we left off.

HERMAN (V.O.)

Before I could waste her, though, Ms. Cribb came running up to the front, crying and begging me to stop. I shot her right in the mouth from about twenty feet away. Shut that bitch right up. Really tough shot. 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?

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Same as before.

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
Yeah, I'm still with you.
(He does not know what will happen next. After a pause.)
Why don't we take a break? I need some...coffee.

HERMAN
Whatever.

Lax gets up and knocks on the door twice. The guard opens and he exits.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

POV of Jacobs camera on Herman while Lax is gone. He is looking at the camera, loving every minute of it. He smiles, blows kisses, sticks his tongue out, etc.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON BATHROOM- LATE AFTERNOON

Lax is looking at himself in the mirror. He is sweaty. Deranged.

LAX
(Looking in the mirror)
My God, not human.

He goes to the window and looks out over the Suburban view so far off. He takes out a tape recorder and starts talking into it.

LAX
(continuing)

When Europeans came to America and systematically extinguished the Indians, we were at least able to say that we, like the Indians, lived off the land and worked hard for our food in small farming communities.

CUT TO:

EXT: AMERICAN FARMING COMMUNITY SHORTLY AFTER THE SETTLEMENT - DAY

It is exactly what Lax describes; Farmers, hay, trees, nature. Complete period picture. The people walking around are happy as can be.

LAX (V.O.)
When we had multiplied enough to create the demand for it, we built the City.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT: THE ULTIMATE CITY, 1920'S - DAY

The same people are walking around in business suits and other twenties garb. Flappers, top hats, etc. They are still happy, but it is a darker happiness. The city has a sinister, mysterious beauty to it.

LAX (V.O.)
Big giant slabs of concrete. Land with little or no nature. One lived removed from nature, but at least it was interesting. The architecture was stimulating, artists from around the world would come to these American cities, it was a microcosm of society. It was action.

Then, the world became corporate.

CUT TO:

EXT: A GIANT CORPORATE BUILDING FILLS THE SCREEN - DAY

The building is grey, square, tinted windows, no character.

LAX (V.O.)

Americans wanted a place to live that wasn't dangerous or exciting or stimulating. They wanted to be near enough to it that they could work there in their nine to fiver jobs and their gray suits. They wanted the convenience of a city and the peace of country life. They compromised.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT: THE PERFECT SUBURBAN TOWN - DAY

White houses with white picket fences, identical, row by row, manacured lawns, zero individuality.

LAX (V.O.)

Neutrality. Suburbia. No real crime. No real danger. Utopia. Now we're learning that you can't have it both ways. Neutrality kills the soul.

ZOOM OUT SLOWLY:

The town gets smaller, the camera starts to pan.

(By the time Lax finishes his next monologue, the camera will have panned over corn fields, over the prison's outer gates, past the courtyard where the convicts are taking in some fresh air, working out, playing ball, etc., up the wall three stories, and through a window, to end up in the bathroom where we see Lax looking out over the sights we have just been through.)

LAX (V.O.)

Who's paying? The kids. The kids with numb souls are paying for three generations of living in the suburbs. They're going insane and Suburbia is as much a reason why as everything else.

Maybe, living in neutrality means 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 would bring it out.

Pan ends now, and stays on Lax looking out the window. He stops recording and looks at the tape recorder.

LAX
(continuing; to
himself)
Only an asshole would print that,
asshole.

He slaps some water on his face, composes himself and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Lax enters the room. Herman is laughing to himself.

LAX
What's the joke?

HERMAN
I don't think you'd 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.)
She was the dumbest kid in class.

LAX
What did you do next, Herman?

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

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

Flash of Marsha standing, covered in blood. James is seated next to her with blood on his face and neck, he is in his white jockey shorts. Susan lies dead on the floor next to them.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

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
(As he takes out a
cigarette and lights
it.)

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 then just offing
yourself.

LAX
(enjoying each drag)
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 kinda' 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
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 doesn't speak. His face changes. It is as if he is beginning to worry.

LAX
(continuing)
What are you thinking about?

HERMAN
I haven't been able to sleep well.
(The blank expression
returns.)

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 when you go to
sleep.

HERMAN
(pause)
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 Hankley to take his clothes off...

LAX

You already said that, 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. 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. It got crazy.

CUT TO:

INT: BROOME HIGH-SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - MORNING

The students are running around everywhere, but no one can get out. It is anarchy. The action follows what Herman is saying.

HERMAN (V.O.)

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. 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.

(more)

HERMAN (cont'd; V.O.)
I ran up behind Marsha and put the
forty-five in her back. "Ready to
die, prom queen?" Then I shot
someone who was running right next
to her. She screamed and fell to
her knees begging me not to kill
her. Isn't it funny, she never
would've even talked to me before
that. Now she was practically
spreading her legs for me. I shot
her down low, where it counts,
bashed her nose with the butt of
my gun, and left her there to
bleed. I hope she survived.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - AFTERNOON

LAX

Why?

HERMAN

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.

(he grins)

The world will see more kids like me.

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE BRIAN GREEN'S HOME - DAY

POV of Ted Rafferty's camera on Brian Green. CAPTION READS:
Brian Green, survivor of Bloody Broome.

TED RAFFERTY (O.S.)

Did you ever think that something like this was possible in your school, Brian?

BRIAN GREEN

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

TED RAFFERTY

Do you consider yourself a jock?

BRIAN GREEN

I play sports.

TED RAFFERTY

Did you ever have interactions with Herman Howards?

BRIAN GREEN

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

TED RAFFERTY

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

BRIAN GREEN

Absolutely.

TED RAFFERTY

Why?

BRIAN GREEN

Cause I want to see the bastard's
eyes pop out of his head.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON QUESTIONING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

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.

Lax begins to sort his papers and get ready to wrap up.

HERMAN

Look, if I can blow away twenty-
nine people, I think I can handle
myself in prison. I've seen Oz,
I know what to expect.

LAX

I want to ask you one more time.
Do you feel bad in anyway about
what you did?

HERMAN

Is this between you and me?

LAX

Off the record.

He stops the tape recorder. Jacob stops shooting.

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 going to
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. I think we have all we need here. Thank you for your time.

HERMAN

My pleasure.

Lax and Jacob quickly pack up their stuff and begin to leave.

HERMAN

(continuing)

Hey, Lax?

LAX

Yes, Herman?

HERMAN

Do you think those nightmares will ever go away?

LAX

(thinks about what he should say.)

No, Herman. I don't.

HERMAN

Yeah. Me neither.

LAX

Good bye, Herman.

Herman does not respond. He just gives them a look. Blank and scared.

CUT TO:

EXT: THE PIT STOP BIKER BAR - LATE

Molly drives up in her car, parks and goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT: THE PIT STOP BIKER BAR - LATE

It's not too crowded. Four or five bikers playing pool, a little old couple in the corner, they don't talk to each other, they just drink. A man sitting alone at one end of the bar, and Lax and Jacob in the middle of it. Lax is plastered. Molly comes over.

MOLLY

I didn't think I'd see you again.

LAX
(having some trouble
not slurring)
I was hoping you'd show up.

Jacob gestures to Molly that Lax is hammered behind his back.
Lax does not notice. Jacob is nearly with him.

LAX
(continuing)
What are you drinking?

MOLLY
I'll take a BUD.

LAX
BAR KEEP! One Budweiser for the
pretty lady next to me.
Pleeeaaasse.

The bartender stares at him for a second, a cold calculating
look. Then gets her the beer.

MOLLY
What did you think of Herman
Howards?

LAX
You're such a reporter. Always
cutting to the chase.
(he stares at her
eyes for a moment)
I like that. BAR KEEP! Another
Gibson. Onions this time.
Please! Hah!

The bikers playing pool are blatantly staring at them now,
deciding how the night will turn out. Molly, Jacob, the
bartender, and the old couple all notice this, but Lax is
seemingly oblivious.

MOLLY
What did you think of him, Lax?

LAX
He's a kid.
(he trails off)

MOLLY
(to Jacob)
What about you?

JACOB

Me?

MOLLY

Yeah, you. What, you don't like to talk?

JACOB

Choose my words carefully.

MOLLY

And?

JACOB

The kid?

MOLLY

The kid.

JACOB

Evil.

LAX

I don't want to talk about him!
Let's talk about you, Molly. What do you think of him?

Lax laughs as if this were the best joke he's heard in years. The bikers take note.

MOLLY

I think he's very much a product of today. The world's getting to be a cold place.

LAX

THE WORLD'S GETTING TO BE A COLD PLACE!

(To the old couple)

Did you hear that, folks? We're living in a cold world.

The old woman nods. Lax nods back, then looks over at the bikers who have stopped playing. He holds up his empty glass to them.

LAX

(continuing)

Gentlemen! To the cold world.

After a moment one of them laughs and goes back to playing his game. The others follow suit but are not so amused by the drunk. The bartender brings over the Gibson.

BARTENDER

Hey, pal? Keep it down, or
you're done drinking here.

Lax looks at the Gibson. Two olives float on a sword.

LAX

Sorry. I'll try a little harder.

MOLLY

Why did you call me tonight?

LAX

I wanted to ask your advice on
something.

MOLLY

My advice.

LAX

Yeah, we fly out tomorrow and I
wanted to know what you think of
my piece.

MOLLY

I haven't read it, Lax.

LAX

No. No one has. I have the only
copy right here.

(He points to his
pocket)

Molly, thinking he's referring to his crotch, is disgusted
and about to leave. Lax pulls out a few crumpled up Pit Stop
napkins from his pocket and hands them to her.

LAX

(continuing)

Wanna' take a look?

She looks at the napkins. The writing is illegible. Jacob
laughs loud to himself.

MOLLY

I can't read this.

LAX

Would you like me to read it to
you?

MOLLY

Why not? Bartender. Gin and
Tonic, please.

Lax fumbles with the napkins, trying to figure out where the first page is. He can barely read his own handwriting.

LAX

Crossroads. Kids today are taught by mass media that life is not precious. Even the ones that don't go into their school with a TECH 9 and shoot up all their classmates are still mean to each other. A few are inhumanely mean. These kids in the height of their hormonal teens, are learning that the only way to prove you exist is by becoming dangerous.

Or is it that they just don't see anything wrong with blowing each other's heads off? Since they do it in cyber-reality, they can conclude that it could be as much fun in real-reality. "I mean like, what is real-reality anyways?" Sometimes I don't know anymore. I'm twenty-two years old and I feel I belong to a different generation. I didn't grow up online. We had to try a little harder to find things out. Occasionally, we even asked our parents for the answer.

Those days are done. Kids aren't going to ask their parents questions anymore. Why would they? The Internet can not only give them an answer, it won't scold them for asking. The Internet has an answer for everything. But who's giving it?

If we stay on this track in which our technology evolves faster than we do, in which our capabilities outreach our compassion, eventually we'll all be plugged into the Net. Entirely. No real contact with real people in real space. We won't need it.

(more)

LAX (cont'd)

We'll be no more alive then the computer screens we study.

I don't blame Herman Howards entirely. Herman thought he was a character in a video game. We let that happen.

What do you think?

MOLLY

It's interesting.

LAX

That's what you say when you don't know what to say.

MOLLY

Some of it's sharp, some of it's shit.

LAX

They'll never publish it.

MOLLY

Why not?

LAX

How can you be so much older than me and be so naive?

(With great drunken
dignity)

This is stuff that comes from the heart. *Query Magazine* doesn't want to pay for that crap. Heartfelt crap. They want a story that's going to put American's minds a little more at ease. They want the picture of a hick monster who's a throwaway. Not some story written by a twenty-two year old punk that tells them they're shitty parents. They don't want to hear that.

MAN AT THE BAR

You are most certainly right, Morales.

LAX

Excuse me?

MAN AT THE BAR

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. I heard something about you sliming your way around these parts. How's your show, what's it called? *Hard Balls*?

TED RAFFERTY

Hard Calls.

LAX

Hard Calls. Right. It's a cute title, Ted. Real cute. Like your hair-piece.

TED RAFFERTY

Someday, boy. Someday, you're going to wake up, and your dick won't be so hard. Your hair won't be so thick, your ego won't be so inflated, and your brain won't be so clouded up with fame. If you can still get it up to write then, you can call yourself a journalist. Right now, you're a guppy in a fish bowl, about to be thrown into the ocean. Hope you learn to swim.

He finishes his drink and get's up to leave.

MOLLY

Having to work to get it up doesn't make you a good writer; It just makes you a bad lay, Ted.

TED RAFFERTY

I'll be seeing you. Cheers.

He leaves. Lax is quiet.

MOLLY

You know why you're going to be a better journalist than Ted Rafferty?

LAX

Why's that?

MOLLY

Cause you'll have me as your
researcher. In New York. When
we get our own show.

Lax looks at Jacob. Jacob shrugs his shoulders to say, "It
couldn't hurt."

LAX

Why would you want to do that?

MOLLY

Because I can't help thinking that
there's more to you than this
cocky bullshit you throw
everyone's way.

There's a writer in you, Lax. You
may end up important yet. I'm
willing to take that risk.

LAX

Is that all?

MOLLY

I want to move to New York. This
way I'll have a job.

LAX

Is that all?

MOLLY

You've got a nice ass. Round at
the base, firm at the top.

Lax looks at Jacob. Jacob looks at Lax's ass, then nods in
agreement.

LAX

I guess it's settled then.

(He laughs)

"It just makes you a bad lay,
Ted." How the fuck do you know?

They all laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

The Nightly News. Two years later.

NEWS CASTER#4

Two years after the Broome High-school massacre, Herman Howards was put to death at seven this morning. His execution was the first televised in the United States. It was the highest viewed event in television history. An estimated Sixty-seven percent of the country had their sets on while Howards was strapped to the chair.

CUT TO:

EXT: OUTSIDE THE PRISON - MORNING

Protesters are protesting, holding up signs.

NEWS CASTER#4 (V.O.)

Outside the prison, protesters surrounded the area holding up signs while they chanted, "Killing people does not stop people from killing people!"

CUT TO:

The Nightly News.

NEWS CASTER#4

Lax Morales was invited to the execution but declined. Senator John Cox, Republican, had this to say:

SENATOR JOHN 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. No matter what it takes. Killing people may not stop people from killing people, but seeing the execution sure as heck will. Thank You.

CUT TO:

INT: PRISON EXECUTION ROOM - MORNING

POV of a television camera. We see only Herman. He is strapped down. His head completely shaved. Everything is in place except for the black hood.

GUARD

Herman Howards, you are about to be sentenced to death for the crimes you have committed. Do you have any last words?

HERMAN

Yes. I'd like to tell the viewers at home, that while you may not like me, one thing's for sure; You'll never, never, forget me. Goodbye America. Good luck.

BLACK OUT.

THE END