

The Serial-Box Athlete

a new screenplay by Trey Hohman

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You're probably not a member of a Major League Baseball team if your life's errors don't show up in the morning paper...

--BABE RUTH

If a woman has to choose between catching a fly ball and saving an infant's life, she will most likely choose to save the infant's life without even considering if the tying run is on third-base...

--WHITEY HERZOG

Images wipe the screen, kinetic and abstract, floating and dreamlike in SLO-MO: -- Varying film stock and formats.

CLOSE ON TY COBB ROUNDING THIRD BASE -- The kinetic motions of ballerina assassin. A whirling dervish of grit and old-school mean. Splattering the unsuspecting catcher into the dirt...SAFE!

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON GEORGE BRETT -- a hot coat of psychotic. Ranting his mangled face at the home-plate umpire in Yankee's Stadium.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON BILLY MARTIN and REGGIE JACKSON, SCREAMING and SQUEALING. Twisting with delicious rage like two batty, jaw-boned hyenas.

(Over the images, a montage of synthesized voices from fans in the stands: e.g. "Will somebody shoot this worthless bum dead now and end my fucking misery!!" "C'mon Crawford, they're murdering ya' out there!!" - SOUNDS are dreamlike and abstract, echoey and discordant:)

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DONALD STERLING CONVENTION CENTER/KANSAS CITY, MO -- DAY

A FIELD REPORTER speaks into camera.

REPORTER

On the eve of major league baseball opening day, we're coming to you live downtown at the Norvington Sports Memorabilia Convention, where local sponsors are offering Kansas City fan, Stan Bateman a cool \$35,000 for autographing a single photo of himself at the city's annual show.

STAN BATEMAN sits on a large stage. Light bulbs gleam as Bateman autographs a JUMBO PHOTO of himself.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

(beat)

Bateman, a recluse, is infamously remembered for shattering the World Series dreams of Kansas City fans everywhere, after inexplicably interfering with the team's left-fielder on a reachable foul ball and game-ending final out in Game 7 of the 2003 ALCS. -- A game Kansas City subsequently lost after Baltimore went on 4-run rally later that same inning to win the series.

Another man hands Bateman an OVER-SIZED \$25,000 CHECK.

BACK TO FIELD REPORTER

REPORTER (CONT'D)

What's worth noting, is how much sincere animosity simply the mentioning of Bateman's name continues to still draw in public forums.

ANGLE ON. Security guards closing off a jagged row of RABID, BOOING FANS donning Kansas City baseball gear. Sounds of wild boars in search of their prey; throaty, blood-in-the-esophagus ilk.

BOO BIRD #1

Hey Bateman, why don't you go kill a family of baby seals while you still got the rest of the afternoon, ya' fuckface!

BOO BIRD #2

Hell's too cold'a place for you to rest, Bateman!

Several items; key chains, candy bars, pens, now pelting Bateman's body, who tries shielding sharp debris with the aid of his big check.

BATEMAN

Leave me in peace, ya' monsters!

Bateman quickly makes his get-away for an exit sign.

BACK TO:

REPORTER

It begs the question from this reporter, "what's it gonna be like when Bateman actually leaves this convention?"...Stay tuned.

INT. HALLWAY - CONVENTION -- CONTINUOUS

Bateman swings himself through the door. Safe.

P.O.V. BATEMAN

An empty hallway. Rusty neon lights above flicker on and off.

Walking down hallway, still holding his enormous check; smiling; relieved.

Bateman moving towards a MEN'S BATHROOM sign. Reaching down, it is locked.

WOMEN'S BATHROOM SIGN seen next door. Bateman looks around; coast is clear.

BATEMAN

(to himself)

Fuck the rules.

Moves to women's bathroom; opens door.

Right behind door, A FIGURE explodes out and grabs Bateman around the neck in an instantaneous lunge.

LONG, SHARP BLADE -- comes at BATEMAN, fast and furious...slicing his throat clean.

Bateman falls forward, making a guttural sound deep in his throat, as the figure drives his knife straight into Bateman's eye socket with a SLAMMING THUD; the other end of the knife now sticking through the wall.

CUT TO:

INT. KID'S BEDROOM. DAY

The grinding noise dematerialize into a bleak silence as we...

FADE IN:

Early morning light spilling into a rough-shot of toys.

ANGLE ON. BASEBALL BATTER THEMED ALARM CLOCK.

The minute-hand clicking from 6:59AM to 7:00AM. The batter takes a big swing and the alarm erupts with the sound of a ball being hit, then the ROAR of the crowd.

A BANNER hangs above the bedroom door, "HAPPY BIRTHDAY SLUGGER."

CARTER, (8) with tousled hair and bright eyes, races out of bed.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY

ANGLE ON. Carter's DAD, (38). Twitching with anticipation. (Images of a man who has just been called into a Thanksgiving Day touch-football game.) Pumps out two fists.

DAD

Pick a hand birthday boy!

Carter debates, then chooses left hand.

Dad opens to reveal, 2 TICKETS.

CARTER

(excitedly)

Baseball tickets! Geez!

DAD

Two rows behind the dugout, sport.

CARTER

(examines tickets)

No way!

DAD

Hold your horses, pal. You forgot to check my other hand...

Carter cannot believe his dumb luck. Taps dad's other fist, revealing a wadded up piece of paper.

Carter, dumfounded. Unfolds, reads. "CHECK UNDER YOUR BED"

INT. CARTER'S ROOM. - MOMENTS LATER

Carter pulls out an object under his mattress.

Carter's MOM in b.g.

C.U. A shiny baseball mit.

CARTER

Look, Mom! It's even signed by Kansas City's all-star center fielder, Brett Warner!

MOM

We're so proud of you, son.

EXT. KANSAS CITY STADIUM. -- DAY

B.G. A STREET BAND plays German music, setting the mood of mystery, verdure, sky. Banners advertising American beer products everywhere.

CARTER and his DAD walking on foot, winding around sidewalks of the bucolic, old-time neighborhood.

CARTER

Awesome!

INT. KANSAS CITY STADIUM; SECTION A -- MOMENTS LATER

Carter and father are escorted down to very good seats. -
The monolithic skyline rises before us; SOFT CLASSICAL MUSIC
lulling our senses.

CARTER

Aw, man! Right behind the dugout!

DAD

Know what would make these seats
even better?

CARTER

What?

DAD

A hotdog with mustard and relish.

CARTER

(excited)

Aw, man! Really?!

DAD flags down a clever-grinned vendor walking by.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH -- 9TH INNING

HARVEY GREASE -- a boisterous, boozy, veteran sportscaster.

ANNOUNCER

...got ourselves a ball game, folks.
Tying run on second, with 2 outs in
the bottom of the 9th, and Kansas
City's Brett Warner stepping up to
the plate with his team down, 6-5
against the struggling Cleveland
Marauders.

THE MUSIC THEME -- a blend of martial, choral and rock &
roll. -- Warner digs in.

SMASH CUT TO:

WARNER fouls off a high fly ball into the night sky, twisting
down towards CARTER'S SEAT-SECTION.

CARTER

Aw, wow!

DAD

Get ready, kiddo!

ANGLE ON. CLEVELAND shortstop, FERNANDO ESCOBAR, (30) whooshing towards stands like a freight train towards slicing foul ball, just as....

....DAD hoists CARTER over Dugout ledge; interfering with Escobar's glove-hand. The ball instead dropping into little Carter's mitt.

UMP

Foul ball!

ESCOBAR

(to CARTER)

You little sh-!

Home crowd cheers at their second chance fortune.

DAD

You caught it!

CARTER

(shock & awe)

Whoah!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Wow! Looks like Warner is going to get another whack at it.

(pause)

Escobar probably could have caught that, but we're talking about home field advantage here.

ANGLE ON. Escobar, continues to glare at Carter & dad.

DAD

(to Escobar/taunting)

Yeah, that's right jack-ass, my kid just saved the game, asshole!!

C.U. CARTER and DAD highlighted on a spastic JUMBOTRON. - Dad spots himself, waves wildly.

DAD (CONT'D)

(into camera)

My kid freakin' rocks!!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. STADIUM. - LATER

Dad and Carter skip out of stadium, pregnant with items of memorabilia purchased.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

...Kansas City winning in the bottom of the ninth on an amazing Brett Warner, two-run, walk-off homer to end the game...

Carter and Dad seen polishing off their enormous sundaes.

CARTER

Wow!

DAD

Great game, huh?

Carter reviews baseball; conflicted.

CARTER

...dad?

DAD

(excited)

What's up, game-saver?

CARTER

...did we,,um,,,cheat?

DAD

What?! Hell no!...I mean, no way pal. That's just how the game is played.

(beat)

Besides,--even if we did *maybe* cheat a little,-it's okay because we helped the home team win. It's what ya' call an exception to the rule. Ya' see?

CARTER

(confused)

...I guess.

DAD

Well I don't know about you kiddo, but daddy's gotta' hit the can.

CARTER

Me, too. -- Number two!

DAD

(proud)

Go for it, ya' big hero. Because today's all about you, winner.

INT. BATHROOM STALL -- MOMENTS LATER

Dad pees; whistles a little tune.

CARTER (V.O.)

Um....dad?

DAD

What is it pal.

CARTER (V.O.)
 (scared)
 Help me, please!?

DAD
 Sure, buck-o.

Dad zips up, and flushes.

ANGLE ON. Carter gazing down at toilet, his trembling chin now smeared in runny ice-cream.

Dad looks down; and his expression changes. (The horror.)

DAD (CONT'D)
 Uh, let me...Uh...Aw jeez pal.

Carter starts bawling bloody murder.

ANGLE ON. STAN BATEMAN'S HEAD floating inside. Glistening.

CLOSE ON. A NOTE/POEM STAPLED TO BATEMAN'S SEVERED HEAD.

NOTE/POEM
*"Fans are not the players, oh the
 things they miss. - Enough with all
 the hassles, 'cause now you're dead
 in piss,,,".*

(Somewhere in the world, other children are laughing and playing video games or checkers; where doom is not the operative ethic against bad fan sportsmanship.)

OPEN on a black screen. SUPERIMPOSE in dark red letters:

THE SERIAL-BOX ATHLETE

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL TEXAS DIRT ROAD. - LATER

Honda Civic limps through a one-lane dirt road.

ANGLE ON. A flimsy chrome sign reads, "Welcome to Carbinton, Missouri."

INT. HONDA CIVIC -- CONTINUOUS

The passenger's seat littered with the essential materials of all good baseball scout; eg. scuffed baseballs, portable radar gun, three-ringed notebooks, empty fast food bags stained with French fry grease, etc.

PAN TO. ANDY NETTLES; Tall, 40's, soft-spoken, but looks like he could kick your ass if he really had to.

EXT. CARBINGTON STADIUM. - MOMENTS LATER

The tall arc lights of a baseball diamond seen in the distance, a game already in progress.

ANDY moves past a chain link fence, spots a 12 YR.-OLD, BAT BOY.

ANDY
How's Meschke doin' tonight?

BAT BOY
Best night he's had all season. Two doubles and a stolen base, so far.

ANDY
(encouraged)
...Atta boy Meschke.

Andy looks through his binoculars, tries to spot him.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Wait-Why isn't he playing third-base?

BAT BOY
Just took him to the hospital...

ANDY
Hospital?! - What happened?

BAT BOY
Blew out his MCL chasing down a foul ball in the fourth inning.
(beat)
Dropped like a wet bag of shit.

ANDY
(optimistic)
C'mon. It might be just a sprain..?

BAT BOY
Sure. And if the queen had balls she'd be king.

Looks at action in the ball field.

ANDY
Anyone else worth checking out?

BAT BOY
(points at dugout)
The Lions got a kid, Greg Goosen.
The good news is, he's only 17 years old....

Bat-boy spits out a stain of tobacco juice.

ANDY
...and the bad news?

BAT BOY
--if Goosen lives ten more years
he's gotta' chance to be 27.
(spits)
Throw the bum a slider, and he turns
into the love-child of Mario Mendoza.

Andy punches at his scouting report.

ANDY
Goddamnit!

In the distance, the loud pop of the catcher's mitt, followed
by umpire's cry-"Strike Thaaa-reeeee!"

DUGAN LAMMATT, (26) His long and massive arms and 6'5" frame,
overshadowed only by the gnarly tattoos occupying his forearms
and neck. His leg kicking high over-head as the pitch is
rocketed right down Broadway. Striking the catcher's mitt
like a cherry bomb.

ANDY (CONT'D)
...Who's the pitcher?

BAT BOY
Name's Lammatta. A freak of nature.
No other word for it. Games he don't
pitch, he's out there in right field.
Gotta' pretty big bat too.

UMP (O.S.)
Strike Three!!!

CUT TO:

BEHIND HOME PLATE. -- MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON. RADAR GUN

Andy crouched behind backstop, aims gun like a pistol.

DUGAN LAMMATT Fires a great liquid whip. His eel-like body
violently contorting at the flashed moment of release; causing
the ball to slice with a malicious snap. -- STRIKE THREE!!!

Andy reviews the number on radar-gun; dumbstruck. Whips out
cell-phone.

ANDY
(into cell)
Gimme Sudaikis.
(pause)
Yeah, well, check the fuckin' jacuzzi!

Andy watches Lammatta strutting towards home plate; a MASSIVE BAT grips his hands.

ANGLE ON. Lammatta, settling into the box; an ease that is both fluid and menacing as he primes his swing.

The PITCHER hurls ball up and in. Lammatta steps back and swats it with ease. Even the sound of the ball coming off his bat is different--harsher, almost metallic. -- Careening like a distant star before dropping out of view beyond a light stanchion.

ANDY (CONT'D)

...Well, "F" me in the "B".

BAT BOY watches ball-flight; re-approaches Andy.

BAT BOY

Would'a been the find of a lifetime...

(beat)

If he were fit for that type of thing.

...Playing in the majors.

ANDY

There's nothing, "if" about him, kid. This guy's a five-tool monster!

BAT BOY

I meant, far-out, "strange bird".

ANDY

--Strange bird? --As in--?

BAT BOY

-- As in, Lammatta ain't quite sure which plane he's on...

EXT. CLEVELAND STADIUM - NIGHT/LATER

The strange, yet toxic smell of a well oiled-baseball diamond.

PAN OVER TO. Lights beam inside a PRESS BOX.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome everybody. The Cleveland Marauders finally back home from a grueling eleven-game road trip. Currently carrying more baggage than a lear jet, after getting pummeled like a group Tibetan monks at a Chinese police picnic.

(beat)

Yes sir, it is summertime again. Cold beer, grandma's apple pie and Cleveland yet again, stuck in last place...

STADIUM BLEACHERS.

ANGLE ON. MATTHEW and PAUL, (Mid-30's). Noise from the stadium crowd to be heard from the subjective viewpoint of both men; both brandish miniature TV's, and scorecards.

PAUL

If being a Minnesota fan is like kissing your sister, then being a Cleveland fan is like kissing your wife, having several children with her, and then finding out years later that she is your long-lost sister.

MATTHEW

(stunned)

I can't believe we're *actually* winning a ballgame...

PAUL

They're always winning. Until they lose.

MATTHEW

(looks around)

At least the ball park looks nice, hmm..?

PAUL

"Nice"? Gimme' a break. I've seen more nostalgia inside a nuclear power plant.

PAN OVER TO. A SCOREBOARD highlights fancy graphics.

Paul's face turns BLOOD RED.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Seriously!! - This bum gets his own video montage?!..His batting average is only .210!!

(beat)

The guy handles a bat the way Dick Cheaney handles a rifle!!!

Matthew diligently marking his scorecard after a play on the field; Paul takes a big swig from his tucked-away flask.

MATTHEW

...You wanna' know what your problem is?

PAUL

-you mean other than the fact our genius GM acquired a 39-year-old right-fielder for \$13 million a year?

MATTHEW

-you like taking the easy way out. ...Losing is "easy"..

PAUL
 Bullshit. "Winning" is easy. All
 you have to do is clap and smile.
 But "losing", now that's hard work.

ANGLE ON. A KID (8) wears a CLEVELAND MARAUDERS CAP & JERSEY,
 walks up the aisle past them.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 (points at kid)
 Look at him,,,it's like watching a
 really cute puppy about to get
 tortured by Michael Vick for the
 next fifty years...

MATTHEW
 You need a therapist.

ANGLE ON. BASEBALL FIELD

Suddenly, a home-run is whacked by a MINNESOTA BATTER. HOMER!
 Bleacher bums boo, tossing the ball back onto the field.

ANGLE ON. SCOREBOARD READS; MINNESOTA 4 - CLEVELAND 3.

PAUL
 No!!!!
 (yelling at the field)
 What I need is better starting
 pitching, ya' damn knuckleheads!!!

DOWN ON THE FIELD -- LATER

ESCOBAR, digs in batter box, taking practice cuts.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Escobar, who had a humorous run-in
 with a eight-year old boy last week
 after he blew a chance to put away
 Kansas City,--leads off in the 6th...

ESCOBAR takes strike one.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Escobar, a switch-hitter, is batting
 .217 from the right-side and .215
 from the left through 96 games.

ESCOBAR takes strike two.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ...Well, at least he's consistent.

Escobar eye-rapes another pitch right down the middle. --
 STRIKE THREE!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- ooh, and he takes strike three!

Escobar throws his bat; walks back towards home dugout.

DIRECTLY BEHIND DUGOUT/2nd ROW OF STANDS.

Meet VINNIE DASSO. aka. "Your typical heckler a-hole." Screaming like a Roman trumpet towards ESCOBAR. A middle-aged man in a Tazmanian Devil T-shirt & Disney-World Hat.

VINNIE

Good eye, Escobar. Don't risk hitting into a double play when nobody's on base, ya' illiterate, spanish-fly Jag-off!

ESCOBAR looks up; glares at VINNIE briefly, but continues down dugout steps.

THE GAME FROM A DUGOUT P.O.V.

The players sit, stand, stir restlessly. A combination of relaxation and intensity not visible from the stands.

PAN OVER TO. CLEVELAND MANAGER, BUBBER FORD. Calm, cool, tall and raw-boned. Although age and frustration are beginning to give him a tattered look at 62.

Sitting next, is pitching coach, BRANSON DUNN, (50's).

BRANSON

That's okay Escobar, you'll get 'em next time.

ESCOBAR, slamming his helmet into ground.

FORD

(to BRANSON)

Unbelievable--This guy could roll out of bed on Christmas morning and get called-out on 3 strikes.

CUT TO:

INT. PROGRESSIVE FIELD.-- LATER

Scoreboard reads: MINNESOTA 5 -- CLEVELAND 4. BOTTOM OF 9TH. No Outs.

ANGLE ON. A ball sails into the LEFT-FIELD GAP.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

-- And there's one well hit -- into the gap...

The ball ricochets off the wall....

ANGLE ON. Marauders RUNNER rounding 2nd, huffing for 3rd.
A Lead-off triple!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- With no outs, and the lead-off
runner on third, stepping in for the
Marauders, is clean-up hitter, C.J
Bradley.

ANGLE ON. CJ BRADLEY, (31). Teeth bling of jewelry. A
batting helmet barely fitting atop his Afro dread-locks.
His torso, suspiciously built like a beer truck.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Playing for his 6th club in as many
years, CJ spent all last winter
sitting on the open market like a
dirty sofa on Craigslist...

(beat)

-- Still, trying to sneak a fastball
past Bradley is like trying to sneak
the sunrise past a rooster...

Still occupied behind DUGOUT; is VINNIE DASSO.

VINNIE

Hey CJ, Fat Albert called and he
says he wants his look back, ya'
bloated Porch-monkey!!

BRADLEY scowls at VINNIE, moving towards home.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

I don't get it, CJ. The scoreboards
says your average is ".310".

(beat)

Is that your weight, or your blood-
alcohol level, ya' fat fuck?!

BRADLEY

(mumbles)

Don't quit your day job at Denny's
pal...

BATTER'S BOX

P.O.V. THE PITCHER'S DELIVERY -- CURVE BALL INSIDE. BRADLEY
STRIDES INTO THE PITCH --BANG!! -- Lashes a long drive.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

,,,a hot shot towards left field.
Definitely enough distance...

The ball heading deep towards left field, drifting...FOUL at
the last possible second.

BRADLEY pulls up. Limpes back towards home plate.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Wow. Just foul! - Wow. - Ya' wonder
 what goes through the mind of a 4-
 time All-Star during a tough stretch
 like this, folks...

BATTER'S BOX

BRADLEY
 (to himself)
 God, please make the economy improve
 because I'm a free agent at the end
 of the season.

BRADLEY digs it again, focused.

The pitch comes. POW! -- A moon-shot so high it literally
 goes OVER the foul pole. -- The crowd roars.

Bradley rounds first; pumping his fist.

The HOME PLATE UMP charges out.

HOME PLATE UMP
 Foul ball!!!

P.O.V.. STANDS / BEHIND DUGOUT

VINNIE
 (to Bradley)
 Aw, what the fuck, CJ?!!

P.O.V.. BATTER'S BOX

BRADLEY
 (to himself)
 Ah, what the fuck, CJ!!!!?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Yipes,-- another game-winning foul
 ball...

THE NEXT PITCH. It looks high. BRADLEY lets it go by.

UMP
 STRIKE THREE!

BRADLEY
 WHAT?!!!!

(Uhhhhhmph) The sound of an entire stadium crowd that has
 just watched a wolf unexpectedly devour a baby rabbit.

BRADLEY WALKING BACK TO THE DUGOUT. Head high, no show of
 emotion. An old Warrior, not giving an inch even in defeat.

VINNIE

(to Bradley)

--Hey CJ, I'm gonna' visit a pound,
after tonight's game, and adopt the
sickest, oldest dog they got--and
name it "CJ the \$12 million deatbeat!"
(beat)

And then I'm gonna' shoot it dead!

BRADLEY STOPS. Looks up at Vinnie. But continues on.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

,,but after I shoot CJ the sick, old
dog, do 'ya' think your scumbag agent
will try shopping its dead carcass
around for \$50 million over 3 years?!

BRADLEY, in a flash, tries to leap on top of dugout. Going
after VINNIE in the stands.

BRADLEY

(bat in hands)

--Keep it up Vinnie, 'cause I'm gonna'
enjoy taking your fuckin' head off!

Several players restrain BRADLEY back to dugout.

VINNIE

(plays innocent)

C'mon, man! What did I say?!

CUT TO:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

So folks, with only 1 out and the
tying runner still on third, this
brings up Escobar again.

DUGOUT.

FORD

(to BRANSON)

Bunt.

BRANSON nods; starts making several hand motions.

CLOSE ON. THE THIRD BASE COACH gets bunt signal, starts in
on his own routine.

ESCOBAR eyes the sign.

ESCOBAR

What is this "bunt" bullsheet?

THE PITCHER -- Nods, starts his windup. A fastball inside.

ESCOBAR (CONT'D)

"Say hello to my little friend..."

ESCOBAR -- Does not bunt. Instead, he takes a full swing and SMACKS...

...A weak LINE-DRIVE straight at the third-baseman.

The THIRD BASEMAN easily catching ball; next lazily landing back on the third-base bag; TAGS-UP tying runner.

DOUBLE PLAY. GAME OVER.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Oh no! Escobar hits a line drive straight at third-baseman Murphy, who easily catches it, forcing the tying-run out at third. Game over.

(beat)

And just like that, the Marauders fall apart again like a box kite in a Gulf Hurricane.

P.O.V. STADIUM: AN EERIE QUIET PERVADES.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Yes sir, line-drives are all the rage today. Escobar, trend-setter. Escobar, game-ender...

(beat)

...Escobar, detracting people away from CJ Bradley's huge slump...

CUT TO:

STADIUM BLEACHERS

MATTHEW & PAUL; filing-out in the same manner that a victim leaves a police station after being falsely imprisoned.

MATTHEW

...What a nightmare. - Throw on some hot coals, anchovies, and some Celine Dion tunes, and we're all set.

PAUL

My head hurts. -- I feel like committing a hate crime.

MATTHEW

Why, - because we were just the victims of one?

INT. PLAYER'S TUNNEL -- MOMENTS LATER

Ford lumbering down the players tunnel, squinting through a haze of tinted red ceiling globes.

ANGLE ON. WENDY BERNSTEIN, (30) stops him cold. Her smart face, only overshadowed by a haircut and smile that speaks of a lifetime of orthodontics and dreams of TV anchoring.

WENDY

Any comments on the loss tonight?

FORD

I'm not allowed to comment on lousy officiating.

WENDY

I'm doing a column on the Myth of depression as a manifest in a major league losing streak, and--

FORD

--I plead the eighth, or whatever.

WENDY

There's a fascinating story here, skip.

FORD

This coming from a woman who used to make omelets on morning television.

WENDY

C'mon. How's a gal supposed to get a little respect around here?

FORD

(mumbles)

Try suicide, ya' post-feminist pulpit banger...

ESCOBAR, seen moving down the tunnel, close behind.

ESCOBAR

(broken English)

What is this bunt bullsheet!?

(beat)

You no trust me to make hits?!

Ford doesn't even break stride.

FORD

(mumbles)

No passion...all "me, me, me".

ESCOBAR

Me, all passion! Passion-what-make-me Cuban!!!

FORD

(mumbling)

...no-bunting, second-rate showboat...

INT. FORD'S OFFICE. -- LATER

An empty locker room shown in b.g. Dark & ominous silence.

FORD sits in his office. Glaringly impersonal; the bright white of an asylum cell. A stack of old game tapes and decrepit video-equipment stand against office's cinder block walls. -- A single light emanates from a tiny t.v on desk; highlight videos showing next game's starting pitcher.

ANGLE ON FORD

A clanking noise is heard from locker room. He freezes.

FORD
...Who's there?

P.O.V.. LOCKER ROOM

A CLOTHING RACK placed in the middle of LOCKER ROOM. Several jerseys blow in the wind. Between jerseys, we might be able to glimpse at something standing behind.

INT. LOCKER ROOM. -- MOMENTS LATER

The glowing EXIT SIGN hanging above. But otherwise, completely dark.

Ford tip-toes towards twisting jerseys, but now the shape is gone. From behind clothes-rack we now see the image. It is only a large fan, blowing.

From behind the fan....BARK!

Ford, spinning around just in time to see, JOHNNY BENCH, a pretty GOLDEN RETRIEVER straight out of a Norman Rockwell painting.

FORD (CONT'D)
Johnny Bench! Quit scaring the life
outta me,,,jeez boy.

Johnny Bench skips over to lick & play with his loyal master.

FORD (CONT'D)
(baby-talk to dog)
-- Some silly countries think skinning
entire clans of you for a few lousy
fur coats is a good idea, yes they
do...
(Ford kisses dog back)
,,,that's a good boy!!

INT. OFFICE. - MOMENTS LATER

Ford shuts office door. Suddenly, the phone RINGS, loud and shrill; startling him.

FORD

Hello?

Silence. There is a SOUND from the receiver, like chewing...

FORD (CONT'D)

(continuing)

...Who is this?

The chewing continues. Ford slams the receiver down.

Seconds later, the phone RINGS again. Ford looks at it. It rings again. He picks it up.

FORD (CONT'D)

Who is this?!

The office door bursts open!

SUDAIKIS

Why did you hang up on me, dumb-dumb?!

It's GM, LEE SUDAIKIS, (37), short, stocky, busy-eyed, crew-cut. (A funny-looking man. Not ugly, just funny.) LEE enters with ANDY the SCOUT.

FORD

(pissed)

,,,Goddamnit Sudaikis, was that you?!

SUDAIKIS

Of course it was me.

FORD

Why didn't you say anything?

SUDAIKIS

I had food in my mouth.

Ford rolls his eyes, calms himself.

FORD

I'm losing it.

Sudaikis, begin to pace the room like a rat on Ridalin.

SUDAIKIS

(ignoring Ford)

--goddamn CJ just couldn't resist going for those bonus money Homers could he?! Goddamn Mister, "Swing At Everything".

(beat)

Which by the way, completely blows-out our goddamn salary cap next year.

FORD

Why are you getting so mad at me?
You're the one who negotiated his
incentive clause..

SUDAIKIS

-- I want ya' to sit him out a few
games.

FORD

You want me to bench my All-Star
first baseman?! Any other genius
suggestions?

SUDAIKIS

The guy's lost all middle-class
ambition for running out ground balls.
(beat)
He's got a soft body now.

FORD

"A soft body"? -- You mean like Babe
Ruth? We're trying to win ball-games
here, not sell jeans, Lee.

SUDAIKIS

That's good, because if you put
Bradley in a pair of corduroys he'd
probably start a fire.

FORD

He's leading the league in walks!

SUDAIKIS

He better walk, because he sure as
shit can't run anymore...

Reflected through the office mirror is the equipment room.
Nobody sees, as a SHROUDED FIGURE enters. -- Sudaikis turns
back just as the FIGURE sweeps out of sight.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

(nods to Andy)
Anyhow, go ahead -- tell him the
good news.

FORD

...What news?

Andy flipping through a stack of files.

ANDY

There's this guy, Dugan Lammatta --

SUDAIKIS

--an ANIMAL.

ANDY
Down in Missouri--

SUDAIKIS
--some shit-bird league --

Sudaikis hits remote control.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)
Just nabbed him from Detroit for
nothing...Buncha' idiots.

CLOSE ON -- TV SCREEN & LAMMATT. Pitching strike after
strike...a behemoth of effectiveness. Radar gun: 102.

Ford edges closer to tv screen.

ANDY
-- The night I saw him pitch, the
kid struck out 15 on two hits with
no walks.

Ford studies the tape more intently.

SUDAIKIS
Go ahead, tell him!

ANDY
Oh, yeah. He also hits--

SUDAIKIS
--Bet your ass he hits!

TV SCREEN -- Clips of LAMMATT batting. A natural stoke.
Flying around the bases like Seattle Slew.

ANDY
Amazing...Blink and you might miss
something you'd never see again.

SUDAIKIS
-- We've inherited a goddamn monster!

Andy fidgets at Sudaikis's last comment.

FORD
(to Andy)
...What is it?

ANDY
The kid's psychological report.

FORD
...How bad?

ANDY
There's enough horror stories in it
to fill a Vincent Price memoir.

SUDAIKIS

(to Andy)

Would you stop exaggerating!--

FORD

-- Read it to me.

ANDY

(reading from file)

Drafted right outta' high school by Philly back in 2004. - Before his 20th birthday, Lammatta's leading the league in homers and strike outs for AAA Rochester.

FORD

Wow--okay, I'm listening...

ANDY

--couple of days before Philly was gonna' bring Lammatta up to the show, the kid starts acting, um, "odd".

*

FORD

...Odd?

ANDY

His teammates start noticing Lammatta talking to himself constantly.-In the dugout, on the team bus, inside fancy restaurants, etcetera. -- When someone asks him if he's feeling okay, Lammatta tells 'em his name isn't "Dugan Lammatta" anymore,,,but "Tony Soprano"...

FORD

Tony Soprano--what the--?

ANDY

(reads from file)

--Pretty soon, this kid's saying and doing all sorts of deranged shit...

FORD

Deranged?...Like what?

ANDY

For example--police go to raid some crack house on an anonymous tip and they find Lammatta inside.

FORD

What?,,,an actual "crack house"?

ANDY

--tells the cops he's working on some top-secret operation for the government...

(pause)

When the arresting officers goes to grab Lammatta/Tony Soprano, the kid takes the cop's eye out,,,literally.

FORD

You gotta' be shittin' me...

ANDY

I wish I were. -- Served 16 months in Federal Prison on an assault with a deadly weapon charge.

FORD

I don't understand--what the hell happened to him?

ANDY

--Upon further review, doctors diagnosed the poor kid with manic-depressive disorder and various low-levels of schizophrenia.

FORD

(shock & awe)

Schizoph--...Jeez.

SUDAIKIS

Blah, blah. Can you kindly hurry up about his last two years, already!?

ANDY

(down at notes)

But, for the last two years, the kid's been nothing but squeaky clean as long as he stays on his Meds.

(beat)

Coaches say you'd never even notice him if he wasn't such a freak of nature on the mound. -- Also found Jesus, or something...

SUDAIKIS

(to Ford)

,,,We're only asking for ya' to "mature" him is all.

(beat)

This kid's a human momentum starter, I'm tellin' ya!!

FORD

"Mature", ain't a verb. And where there's smoke, there's always fire.

ANDY

(to SUDAIKIS)

Who was that catcher we drafted a few years back we had to cut-'cause he robbed a bank?

FORD

My point exactly.

SUDAIKIS

(to Ford)

C'mon--if you were helping this same kid out at some local church or community out-reaching program, you'd be hailed as a saint.

FORD

Pro ball ain't no place to go for intervention!

SUDAIKIS

What?--You're so clean? You're out with Jane Goodall working in some goddamn jungle?--pay me the courtesy.

Ford back to the highlight tape, impressed, conflicted.

FORD

Goddamnit...Where's he from again?

ANDY

Missouri. The Lone-Star State.

SUDAIKIS

-- Where people talk funny and their teeth are all rotten.

*

ANDY

You mean Texas.

SUDAIKIS

Same fuckin' difference....

EXT. STADIUM PARKING LOT -- LATER

Stadium, now completely empty; now only a barren acre of desolate concrete, EXCEPT for a lone and plaid-colored station wagon.

Through the car's passenger window, we see VINNIE DASSO. Carrying two enormous bags of PLASTIC COMMEMORATIVE CUPS.

TRACKING SHOT -- VINNIE

Walking down the parking lot, towards station wagon, sings quietly to himself.

ANGLE TOWARDS CAR. Pulling out his keys, moving, closer, then closer, to the driver's side door. Stops suddenly.

VINNIE
 , , , , What the f--

CLOSE ON. STATION WAGON. In big letters, "LOSER" is cut into door's paint.

VINNIE (CONT'D)
 , , , Why would anyone--?

Hearing a noise; Vinnie sneaks a glance back behind him.

VINNIE'S P.O.V. -- PARKING LOT

...nothing....just an empty lot.

INT. STATION WAGON -- MOMENTS LATER

Vinnie hustles into driver's side. Turns on radio, tweaks the volume. A Beethoven Sonata. Soothing.

Turns ignition, begins to drive off.

P.O.V. THROUGH WINDSHIELD -- STADIUM DRIVE

Just ahead...The stadium's exit.

INT. STATION WAGON -- MOMENTS LATER

VINNIE turning onto a side street.

CLOSE ON. Through the rear-view mirror we see a SHAPE spring up out of the darkness, leaping up on the rear of the car.

The roof sags in and out with the weight of someone on top. Vinnie cuts off radio....Listening.

The roof continues to buckle in and out.

Vinnie stops and rolls down his window, looks outside.

Sensing something; Vinnie starts to react, tries to gear-shifts car back into DRIVE, but it sticks.

VINNIE
Damn!

P.O.V. THROUGH WINDSHIELD

Suddenly the hand springs down from above and SLAMS against the passenger window, shattering it. Reaching for Vinnie's face, a silvery blade gleams. The fingers grabbing for his hair.

He SCREAMS. The fingers tighten around Vinnie's hair as the hand pulls him roughly against the window.

Vinnie flailing his arms wildly, scratching THE FIGURE'S NECK, just hard enough for the FIGURE retreat momentarily.

Vinnie reaches for his gear shift again, but it's too late. The Figure now has the door open.

CLOSE ON. FRONT SEAT -- Vinnie is beyond frantic. Struggling with his seat belt, he turns and twists, looking for an escape. Through the window, he sees approaching headlights.

VINNIE (CONT'D)

HELP ME!!!!

KIDS inside, rock music BLARES; they roll-by. Vinnie SCREAMS but they don't care to see or hear him.

INT. STATION WAGON

The hand springs up again, ripping at Vinnie's face. SCREAMING. Clawing.

VINNIE

Why me?!..I'm a good person!

EXT. WIDE-ANGLE ON STATION WAGON

From outside we can see signs of a struggle. The muffled sounds are animalist, awful - like a pig being gutted - a horrible SQUEAL, covering the GRUNTS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FORD'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

THE RADIO ALARM BLURTS from a night stand. Loud enough to wake the dead, (haha.)

ANGLE ON. -- JOHNNY BENCH, FORD'S GOLDEN RETRIEVER. LICKS FORD'S FACE. WAKE UP!!

DISC JOCKEY

(from radio)

,,,and the Marauders lose another close one last night, 6-5. Make that 12 in a row for this sad bunch.

(pause)

In other news, an unidentified man was found brutally murdered--

CLICK. -- Ford, quick with the reflexes, shuts radio-alarm off instantly.

CLOSE ON. FORD. - Sits up on the edge of the bed, frustrated; he is alone. HE TALKS TO HIMSELF as he moves past a HALLWAY, where he switches on TV, (SHOOT "EM UP FLICK. -- BANG BANG!!!) The blistering sound comes up, loud...he moves on...

INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON. XANAX BOTTLE. -- Two pills are shaken out into a palm, others scattering from the nervous haste.

Watching himself in BATHROOM mirror. Ford tosses down the pills, gulps water. Viewing his haggard reflection with a certain detachment.

Johnny Bench BARKS at Ford. Paws at a moving box laying on bathroom floor. Using his teeth, grabs something out from the box.

CLOSE ON. JOHNNY BENCH'S MOUTH. -- A TROPHY pops out. Plaque reads, "1998 - MANAGER OF THE YEAR."

FORD

Bad doggie.

Ford grabs trophy from Johnny Bench's mouth & quickly stuffs trophy back inside moving box.

JOHNNY BENCH begins to bark again; this time, through open bathroom window.

FORD (CONT'D)

....What's wrong boy?

Ford crosses to the window and leans up to close it.

FORD'S P.O.V. BACKYARD

From his room in the second story, Ford can see into the backyard next door.

There is a clothesline with multiple sheets blowing in the wind. In between the sheets we glimpse the shape standing there, looking up at Ford.

ANGLE ON FORD. -- He freezes. Stares down fearfully.

FORD'S P.O.V. BACKYARD

The sheets continue to twist and turn in the wind, but now the shape is gone.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- LATER

ANGLE ON: A TV SCREEN

WENDY BERNSTEIN in front of CLEVELAND STADIUM.

WENDY

(for the camera)

The city of Cleveland was rocked last night, after the body of an unidentified man was found brutally

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

butchered less than two miles outside
Cleveland Stadium early this morning.

(beat)

Authorities have yet to issue a
statement but our sources tell us
that no arrest has been made.

LOCKER ROOM

CLOSE ON. CLEVELAND'S SECOND BASEMAN, SITTING HALF DRESSED
in front of his locker, staring vapidly at TV NEWS.
GRANDERSEN, (25) totes a Bible, prays softly to himself.

MORNINGSTAR, a stocky Midwesterner, (26) whose face looks
like he's better suited for riding a combine or complaining
about how the Dixie Chicks became too liberal, WALKS BY.
Shaking GRANDERSEN irreverently as he prays.

MORNINGSTAR

Wake up, ya' Christian pussy!

GRANDERSEN...

(appalled)

This doesn't bother you?!

MORNINGSTAR glances up at TV.

MORNINGSTAR

Naw. I'm more of a crying on the
inside kind've a guy...

GRANDERSEN

(up at TV)

-- Because it's times like these
when we need more prayer in the locker
room.

Coming out of the urinal is TOMMY MATHIS, (29) a reserve
utility catcher, sporting a VFW mustache.

TOMMY

You know, my mom's always telling me
how God's a lady. You believe that
shit?

MORNINGSTAR

God's definitely a woman, but she's
no lady.

TOMMY

God damn it, Grandersen, you're the
expert--does God have a huge cock or
what?

GRANDERSEN...TURNS FROM HIS LOCKER to answer the theological
question. All heads wait for the answer.

GRANDERSEN..

,,,Um, the Lord God is our triune--
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost...

TOMMY

Father and Son. - Awright! I told
ya'. God's a dude..

MORNINGSTAR

(beat)

Probably got his Johnson to do special
tricks, even...Turn urine into wine...

(paul)

You know, "Cool shit"...

BRONSON, exits office. Coming out to the center of the locker
room. Lammatta stands behind him.

BRONSON

Awright, heads up!

Players stop what they're doing. Looking up; ogles the
gigantic monster, (LAMMATTA).

BRONSON (CONT'D)

Meet your new power pitcher. Dugan
Lammatta, from Carbinton, Missouri.

TOMMY

Dugan Lammatta?!, - are you kiddin'
me with this clown-show..?

(sizes him up)

Hey Rookie. You look like most Misery-
ians I know. You're big, dumb and
cocky and you haven't achieved shit.

Players laugh. Tommy pours it in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

(to other teammates)

I give this goofy-looking Neanderthal
with the hippie name his parent's
gave him, two weeks, tops.

In a jagged missile stride, Lammatta digs into Tommy's body-
space like a vulture to a bloody doe. His massive hands
clenched into Tommy's jersey.

LAMMATTA

(flat/unemotional)

Call me Lammatta. And my parents
aren't hippies because they're dead.

TOMMY

Let go of me, Drago!

Morningstar intervenes.

MORNINGSTAR

Yo'. Chillax, man...

TOMMY

Jeez man--if sarcasm's a character flaw then I might as well go buy a gun and go shoot myself in the face!

MORNINGSTAR

Relax Tommy.

TOMMY

(storming off)

--I mean,-there's endless things you can buy in America--but evidently a sense of humor ain't one of 'em!

Tommy walks off. -- Morningstar pats Lammatta on the back.

LAMMATTA

Sorry. I don't get most jokes.

MORNINGSTAR

(to LAMMATTA)

It's okay Rookie. - You'll soon learn that besides a few subtleties, we all behave pretty much the same around here...

(looks around room)

For example, Tommy's the biggest asshole, Grandersen's Mr. clean-livin', Willis is the most wired, and I'm of course, the best looking.

(points to urinal)

And right now, I'm in a particularly bad mood because Ludwick over there keeps asking dumb and obvious questions.

LUDWICK, (25), exits urinal.

LUDWICK

If it burns when I pee, that's bad, right..?

MORNINGSTAR

It's called the little C, dummy.

LUDWICK

Cancer?

MORNINGSTAR

No, moron. Chlamydia.

LUDWICK

...The band?

WILLIS, a BLACK MAN, & Center-fielder, pops out of shower.

WILLIS

Chlamydia ain't no band, fool. It's
a Country.

EXT. UPSCALE BUILDING, UNDERGROUND GARAGE -- MORNING

POLICE CARS DRAW UP IN FRONT, DOUBLE PARKING, jump out and
walk, fast, toward the building.

CLOSE ON. DETECTIVE LINUS, (45) looking haggard, finishes a
conversation with a TALL COP by the service elevator.

The elevator doors open as a forensics photographer exits.

LINUS (to Photographer)

Get me good faces on the crowd.
Remember, even the Son of Sam hung
around the crime scene.

INT. UPSCALE BUILDING, OFFICE CORRIDOR -- MORNING

Linus comes out the service elevator into a bright, ritzy
hallway. This hall and the doors along it reek of money.

Ahead there's a police line, which Linus ducks under on his
way through the stately mahogany doors.

INT. OFFICE -- MORNING

A huge law office. A television is turned on in one corner,
showing the news. Two FORENSICS dust for prints, whispering
to each other as Detective Linus enters.

Linus watches them a moment, then turns his attention to
another part of the office.

A leather chair sits in an open area. The chair and the
carpet under it are covered in a ungodly portion of brown,
dried blood.

There is a trail of dripped blood from the chair to a large
cleared off section of the desk. -- "GREEDY PIGGIE-PIE" is
written on the wall in blood, near a modern art painting.

Linus stands staring at this area. The TELEVISION is HEARD:

ANCHOR

(from television)

,,,going to cut-in live downtown
right now, where sports super agent,
Eli Gold was found brutally murdered
in his office early this morning.
Police continue to deny that this is
the work of one man--

Linus walks to turn the t.v. off. He turns and looks to see
the forensics looking at him.

LINUS

(to entire crime scene)

Listen up, people. Share your information, anything. Hints hunches, any scraps of knowledge. -- I don't care if it comes off a match book, a strung out CI, no matter...

ANGLE ON. Splayed on a waxed floor, a NUDE MALE TORSO, (55), is hog-tied through his bound hands around his bent legs. His lopped-off head lays separately on top of mahogany desk.

DETECTIVE KINCAID, (37) enters the room, surveys crime scene, dead body.

LINUS (CONT'D)

(to KINCAID)

What ya' think? Crime of passion?

KINCAID

Yeah. Just look at all that passion splattered up on the wall over there.

LINUS

Crime scene get anything off these canvasses?

KINCAID

Still pending. But probably nothing.

LINUS bending down, reviews the severed head lying neatly on desk.

LINUS

Savage treatment of the body. Indicative of a hatred and vengeance.

KINCAID

Makes sense...

(reviews Gold)

This guy's so crooked he could convince a hemophiliac to give blood.

Kincaid surveys room. Suddenly, discovers something balled-up inside an oval office lamp. Tweezers it.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

Heads up. Killer typed us a poem.

Linus' head clicks up.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

(reads poem)

"You took away my Manny. It was like I had the flu."

(beat)

"You took away my Manny. So now your head is blue,,,"

LINUS
"Manny"?...No last name?

KINCAID
No.
(pause)
But it's obvious our killer's talking
about Manny Dominquez...

LINUS
(puzzled)
,,,Who the hell's that?

Kincaid shoots Linus an obvious glare, almost insulted.

KINCAID
What?,-do you live in a cave?,-*only*
Cleveland's all-star center-fielder
for the past eight years,.,.

LINUS
I don't follow baseball...

KINCAID
Oh yeah, I forgot. You hate all
sports, blah, blah.

Linus eyes, Kincaid, "stop horsing around, I'm still your superior", etc.

KINCAID (CONT'D)
--so anyways, last year, Manny was
Gold's biggest client, right.

LINUS
So?

KINCAID
(motions to body)
So let's pretend you're this dirtbag.

Linus moves to the side of the body; sees something far more graphic than the other angles.

LINUS
Okay.

KINCAID
First off, divorce yourself from all
parameters of human decency.

LINUS
Gotcha'.

KINCAID
Second, understand how Cleveland was
holding all the cards on your client's
(MORE)

KINCAID (CONT'D)
bargained-priced, remaining two-year
option.

LINUS
...okay.

KINCAID
--then keep telling yourself how you
can weasel Manny out of those option-
years, by molding your client into a
lazy malcontent during Cleveland's
August-stretch run...

Linus's still studying Gold's body.

LINUS
...Malcontent?

KINCAID
--as in, suddenly your client starts
hitting into double-plays and running
the base-paths with the intensity of
an underpaid bus boy..

LINUS
Gotcha'.

KINCAID
And viola, Cleveland trades-away
Manny. -- And if you were lucky enough
to be this dead scumbag, you're
fielding a fist-full of brand-new
\$100-million contract-offers for
your moody, all-star client after
the season. -- And a bigger, fatter
commission for yours truly.

Linus jerks up. Amazed.

LINUS
...That's actually legal?

KINCAID
(cryptic)
You feeling like this dead asshole
yet? - Touch your new fangs to be
sure. 'Cause it's like when Deep
Throat tells Woodward in All the
President's Men. "Just follow the
money".

LINUS, rolls his eyes.

KINCAID (CONT'D)
-- Meantime, Manny bats .389, leads
Houston to a World Series title and
(MORE)

KINCAID (CONT'D)
 coincidentally broke my heart. -- It
 was like dumping your already semi-
 hot girlfriend, then watching her
 lose 20 pounds and get breast
 implants.

Long shot: shows the full murder scene. Gold sits dead in
 the leather chair, his head neatly placed on top of the desk.

LINUS
 No witnesses of any kind?

KINCAID
 Nada. Vague description. Male wearing
 a baseball cap.

SMASH CUT TO:

MOVE IN ON: MARAUDERS BASEBALL CAP.

SLOWLY PULL BACK from BASEBALL CAP. A LARGE HEAD belonging
 to...A CRAZED-LOOKING, HOMELESS MAN. A big moose of a man,
 around 45 years old, weeps openly as several fans pass by.

HOMELESS MAN
 What am I supposed to do about this
 Cancer in the system, people?!
 (beat)
 Because I have no more loyalty to
 Major-League Baseball than I do for
 our Democratic system brother,--and
 neither do those whopping, babbling
 nerds on beer commercials, either.

Fans walk past homeless man, yelling out, "Shut up, ya' crazy
 bum! -- Get this guy outta' here!", etc.

HOMELESS MAN (CONT'D)
 Yes my brothers, malingering's a
 dark poison for team morale. -- Like
 point shaving or getting repeatedly
 busted for wife beating--and that's
 bad for business ya'all. Because
 slavery never ended in this country.
 They just gave it another name.
 (beat)
 Sports Fan!

PULL BACK TO WIDE ON

EXT. CLEVELAND STADIUM - NIGHT

Sunset rims the tops of the stadium. Dusk approaching.

ANGLE ON.

MARQUEE at stadium's main entrance reads: BUBBER FORD MEMORIAL MASKS TO 1st 10,000 FANS.

A line has formed around the block. CLOSE on a girl, MAUREEN WELLS, (24) a gorgeous sorority type, a rouged expression of pouty arrogance, all looks and attitude. She stands in line with her boyfriend PHIL, around the same age. A handsome counterpart.

PHIL
Honey, calm down...

MAUREEN
Phil, he was totally demeaning me personally!

PHIL
What did you want me to do? Punch him out? I have to work with the guy, Maureen.

MAUREEN
Well last I checked, you were sleeping with me, so unless you wanna' start fucking someone else soon, I'd suggest an attitude shift.

PHIL
(pleading)
Can we just try and enjoy the game, please.

MAUREEN
(whiny)
But I hate baseball.
(looks down at her watch)
If we hurry, we can still catch the new Drew Barrymore flick starting at 8:15.

PHIL
C'mon, baby. This'll be fun.
Remember what fun is?

He pulls her close, snuggling with her.

MAUREEN
(huffs)
...whatever.

EXT. BOX OFFICE

Maureen and Phil reach the box office, presenting their tickets; where an USHER stands randomly handing out MASKS.

ANGLE ON MASK

A FACIAL CARICATURE OF Marauders MANAGER, BUBBER FORD.

PHIL

Cool.

Phil takes two, gives one to Maureen.

MAUREEN

Gross. Who's this supposed to be?

USHER looks at the Mask in disgust.

USHER

-- Our charisma-deprived manager,
Bubber Ford. Tonight's his 3,000th
game managing in "the bigs".

MAUREEN

Yuck.

USHER

You askin' me, Jack Kevorkian could
manage a team better than this goom-
bah.

Maureen turns to find an odd & "creepy-ish", BUBBER FORD
MASK in her face. Phil has slipped it on.

PHIL

BOO!

Phil gets more in her face, playing with her. She swats him.

MAUREEN

Take it off. I'm serious, you fucker.

Phil playfully grabs at her ass. She swats at him, but
harder; keenly more serious now.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Seriously Phil. Take it off. It's
spooky.

PHIL

Party-pooper.

INT. STADIUM - A MINUTE LATER

Maureen and Phil moving down the aisle, searching for their
seats. -- Maureen looks behind her, toward the rest of the
crowd. A sea of white GHOSTLY BUBBER FORD MASKED FACES flood
the section. PHIL tries for a kiss. MAUREEN coldly turns
herself away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTER'S BOX -- LATER

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 ...bottom of the seventh, and the
 Marauders still clinging to a 6 - 2
 lead.

MORNINGSTAR is warming up on deck, somewhat distracted.
 Gazes up at A FORD-MASKED FIGURE seen behind the dug out
 taunting him by shaking his masked covered-face fervently.

MASKED MAN
 I hex you with my "kung-foo" voodoo!

Morningstar continues to look throughout the crowd. Near
 the far corner of the stadium, ANOTHER FORD MASKED FIGURE
 stares down at him from a half-open exit. Now it could be
 just his imagination running away with him, but it almost
 appears as if a figure is pantomiming slitting his throat
 with a gleaming blade.

MORNINGSTAR motioning for his teammate, WILLIS, to come out
 from the dug out.

MORNINGSTAR
 (amused)
 Yo' Willis, come check out this basket-
 case in section 287. -- He's telling
 me he's gonna' cut my throat if I
 don't drive-in Grieves.

He and Willis look up towards stands, but THE FIGURE has
 suddenly vanished.

MORNINGSTAR (CONT'D)
 Aw shit. Where'd he go?

CUT TO:

EXT. BALLPARK. -- CONTINUOUS

Maureen shifts in her seat. Bored, anxious.

MAUREEN
 (whiny;dramatic)
 Oh my god, can we please go now?!

Phil's concentrated gaze, now solely directed out on the
 ball field.

PHIL
 Come on, baby. Just two more innings.

MAUREEN
 But it's soooo dulll!

PHIL
Baseball is dull only to dull minds,
honey.

MAUREEN
Fuck you Phil. You take me to one
lousy baseball game and suddenly
you're the stupid Dali Llama?

A BEER VENDOR walks down the isle.

PHIL
Yo'! Two beers here!

Beer vendor quickly pours from can to cup. Phil takes a
bigger than usual slug from it. - Refreshed. - Offers second
beer to Maureen.

MAUREEN
(pushes beer away)
Yuck. Phil, you know I'm allergic
to hopps and carbonated sugar!

PHIL
C'mon baby. One beer won't kill
ya'.

MAUREEN
(whiny)
But you promised we'd get back home
early so I could take care of my
sick kitty.

PHIL
Honey, your stupid cat with diarrhea,
can hold out for 2 more innings.

MAUREEN
(threatening)
Her name's "Meow Meow", asshole.
And don't you dare start making fun
of people's bowel problems, Mr. "glass-
house".

PHIL
It's a cat with diarrhea! This is
America's Past-Time, for chrissake!

In immediate b.g. -- TWO DRUNKEN BOZOS suddenly start
recreating Haggler vs. Hearns two rows behind them, as the
swell of excitement hits the crowd even before the first
sloppy punch has hit it's mark.

MAUREEN
(evil)
No!
(MORE)

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

It's just another one of your
*insipid, adolescent, sexist athletic
moron-fests, bursting with unwashed,
testosterone-jacked, homophobic scream-
machines!!*

(looks around Stadium,
at the fans)

...a fuckin' goon-palace!

Phil again tries snuggling up to her.

PHIL

You know honey, baseball games are
supposed to be great foreplay.

Maureen stands.

MAUREEN

You're so unbelievably pathetic.
...I'm gonna' pee.

Phil chugs his beer, expels a beefy burp.

PHIL

(cool)

Hey Yo' babe..?

MAUREEN

(angry)

WHAT!!!

PHIL

Fetch me another beer, babe?

Maureen snarls at Phil, starts up the aisles.

INT. GIRL'S REST ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

A large bathroom. Ten stalls line one wall. Under one stall;
Maureen sees a woman's HIGH HEELS.

MAUREEN walks past the stall with the high heels to a stall
several doors down.

CLOSE ON HIGH HEELS: Hairy ankles. The shoes are kicked
off. The feet disappear from view as Maureen....

INSIDE THE STALL - MOMENTS LATER

.....a few stalls away, methodically places toilet paper
around the dirty seat before raising her skirt.

MAUREEN

(irritated)

Ugh. So disgusting...

A faint noise makes her freeze. Suddenly, a stall door CREAKS open.

Maureen listens. FOOTSTEPS are heard. Loud and heavy.

Maureen eyes the crack in the stall door. Not much is visible. Suddenly, a SHADOW sweeps by. Footsteps stopping in front of her stall.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

(bitchy)

Um, hello. Occupied, thank you.

The shadow seen from underneath her stall doesn't move.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

(pissed/annoyed)

,,,I said someone's trying to take a tinkle, hello?!

Maureen looks down again, the shadow is gone...Only dead sound fills the room.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

...Stupid Bitch.

Maureen finishes up quickly. She flushes, throws the stall door open and rushes out to find.....

.....AN EMPTY BATHROOM.

Maureen is out the stall door. Now thoroughly spooked.

P.O.V. MAUREEN

The stall doors are all closed, but no legs show underneath any of them.

Maureen shoots for the sink. Jagged shards of paranoia scraping the edges of her skull. Looking into the streaked bathroom mirror; angry, annoyed, determined.

MAUREEN

I fuckin' hate baseball...

Suddenly, the stall door previously next to Maureen's violently rips open as a FIGURE rushes her. A FORD MASKED SHAPE appearing behind. LUNGING FOR HER, grabbing her, spinning her around. She tries to pull away as FIGURE grabs her with one hand, a flash of silver shoots forth. Maureen is pierced with a long sharp knife. Quick and silent. She bellies over. The MASKED-FIGURE advances on the young girl, grabbing her again, pulling her to him closer, raising high his long, hunting knife. The young girl is helpless.

Maureen now sees the huge knife, her mouth billowing forth a LOUD SCREAM.....

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

.....which is effectively drowned-out by the crowd in the stands as they CHEER FURIOUSLY at a great play on the field.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We're back folks. Marauders still clinging to a 6-4 lead with 2-outs in the top of the ninth, and Marauders injury-prone veteran closer, Butch Krauss trying to finish-off Miami.

Slumped on the mound, is BUTCH KRAUSS, (39) looking about 10 years older than he actually is in real life, (like a famous actor who is too old to be staring in a baseball movie.)

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Krauss, occasionally effective;-whose track record for consistency is that he's consistently inconsistent...

The bespectacled left-hander checks the sign, delivers pitch.

The ball is a looping curve that hits the dirt six feet outside. Ball four.

Butch drops his arms, tries shaking the kinks out.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If the world ever needed a spokesman for mediocre major league pitching, here's you're ideal candidate, folks.

FORD charging to the mound. TOMMY, from behind the plate; follows.

BUTCH

I'm trying to paint the corners.

FORD

Except you're using a roll-on.

TOMMY

Have you guys ever heard of, "unfavorable chance deviation"?

Butch & Ford just stare at Tommy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

--you see, when you're in an unfavorable chance deviation, what I recommend is that you aim the ball right down the heart of the plate, instead of--

FORD
--shut the fuck up, Tommy.

Ford walks back to dugout.

INT. THE DUGOUT

BRANSON
So, that about it, no?

FORD
Mm.

Branson picks up the PITCHING PHONE.

BRANSON
(into phone)
Get Lammatta ready. What do you mean
he's disappeared?...Go find him!

EXT. PITCHING MOUND -- CONTINUOUS

THE CATCHER: Throws down a sign. Two fingers, then one.
BUTCH nods.

Butch launches another meatball. While it's still in the
air heading towards the batter, he knows he's in trouble.

BUTCH
...Gosh darn it.

The batter tees off on pitch and BAM!; the ball taking off
like a skeet pigeon, deep into the bleachers.

CLOSE ON -- FORD

FORD
No, no Nannette!!!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Wow. If ever someone wished they
could hop in a DeLorean and go back
a few seconds to get a pitch back,
it would be Butch Krauss, folks...

PITCHER'S MOUND -- FORD, out of the dugout again, closing in
on the mound like a bailiff.

BUTCH, not waiting for Ford to get out on the field, ducks
his head, and slumps back towards the dugout.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And Cleveland skipper, Bubber Ford
wasting no more time...

FORD: Making an emphatic gesture to the bullpen.

Ford glares at Tommy/catcher.

TOMMY

I told him to throw it the other way!

FORD

Well you obviously didn't tell him enough!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

,,,so with two outs in the ninth and Butch Krauss suddenly serving-up more meatballs than Emeril Lagasse's mother, and just like that, it's a tie ball game...

THE MARAUDERS' BULLPEN

Dramatically, a small door in the corner of the bullpen opens; Lammatta trotting out, re-tucks uniform.

BULLPEN PITCHER #1

Where have you been, man?!

Lammatta races out bullpen doors. His face hardening into a veneer of psychotic determination.

BULLPEN PITCHER #1 (CONT'D)

You haven't even warmed up!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Coming in for relief is Dugan Lammatta, making his big league debut from Carbondale, Texas -- make that Carbington, Missouri...Either way, I've never heard of it.

EXT. PITCHING MOUND -- MOMENTS LATER

Lammatta races up field. Ford at the mound, waiting.

FORD

(fatherly)
Relax, kid, Relax.

Lammatta sighs; and lets his head sink in.

LAMMATTA

(beat)
Yup.

FORD

Remember to keep 'em off balance with the change-up.

LAMMATTA

Yup.

FORD

If he's flat footed in the box, you go at him high and hard.

LAMMATTA

Yup.

FORD

What are you, Gary Cooper?

Lammatta spits.

LAMMATTA

Who?

FORD

Forget it.

FORD SLAPS Lammatta ON THE ASS in a gruff, reassuring way, starts to head back towards the dugout until...

CLOSE ON. A GIANT GASH MARK ON LAMMATTA'S NECK.

FORD (CONT'D)

Damn son. How'd ya' get that gash on your neck?

LAMMATTA

Oh. yeah. Gotta' pit bull puppy. Gets pretty feisty when we wrestle.

FORD

Jeez kid, take it easy. We don't need anybody biting off a pitching finger, m'kay.

Ford smacks Lammatta on rear end again for good measure; heads back to dugout.

INT. HOME PLATE -- CONTINUOUS

Lammatta-- A V-Shaped fuselage of sinew and steel; nods at the catcher's signal, digging in....Winds up. Launches a fast ball up and in.

THE BATTER -- Curls back to get out of the way; instead the fastball catches the top part of his bat and dribbles forward.

LAMMATTA -- Charges the ball full speed, grabs it with one hand and fires a strike to Bradley at first base. Sounds of a gunshot; hitting Bradley's mitt. -- OUT!!

EXT. BATTER'S BOX -- MINUTES LATER

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

,,bottom of the ninth, tie ball game, two on, two out, and Escobar due up.

ESCOBAR, standing in the on-deck circle, looking on.

THE DUGOUT

Assistant manager waves Escobar back in.

LAMMATTA trots out of dugout. Grabs ESCOBAR'S BAT from his hands. Likes the feel.

LAMMATTA
(to ESCOBAR)
...Yeah, great. Thanks.

LAMMATTA heads towards HOME PLATE.

Escobar, fuming.

ESCOBAR
(broken English)
What is this bullsheet? You bench
me for a rookie sheethead?!

FORD
(to Escobar)
S'okay Escobar, just saving ya' for
tomorrow, is all.

Escobar's eyes; exuding raw malice; wildly grabs for a SPARE BAT from the bat rack. Moving closer to Ford, menacing.

FORD (CONT'D)
(sees ESCOBAR w'bat)
Escobar--put that--

Suddenly the CROWD ROARS. The dugout; all screams.

Lammatta has just hit a shot to deep right field, HOME RUN!

FORD (CONT'D)
(out of dugout)
Atta boy Lammatta!

Stadium PA SYSTEM explodes as Lammatta rounds the bases.

SCOREBOARD Reads: -- Cleveland 9, MIAMI 6.

E.C.U: ESCOBAR, -- sits alone, watching the celebration. His expression is one of queer anger.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Well, that's it. -- A one-pitch win
and a three-run homer for Lammatta,
and the Marauders gettin' bailed out
by the new kid with the cannon...

INT. LOCKER ROOM. - POST GAME

REPORTERS WALK THROUGH THE PLAYERS ROOM -- Players are up, joking irreverently.

Ford squints into glare of a reporter's camera light.

REPORTER

So with 69 games left in the season,
any chance of seeing more of the new
rookie?

FORD

Like I've always said, the key to
winning baseball games is great
pitching, fundamentals, and three
run homers...

Ford scans across locker room; noticing...a cadre of REPORTERS
around LAMMATTA. -- Strangling the lectern with his massive
palms. His lips hovering miles above microphone.

LAMMATTA

I don't know, I guess Jesus clearly
wanted me to dominate out there
tonight, so of course, that's exactly
what happened...

WENDY BERNSTEIN, jots frenzied items into her note pad.

WENDY

(flirty)
So Lammatta, ya' got a special lady?
Or are you officially Cleveland's
hottest new bachelor?

LAMMATTA

(shy)
Nope, still single.

WENDY

(fluttery)
Aw...That's so sad.

LAMMATTA

I'm too self-conscious, I guess...

WENDY

Aw...That's so sweet.

Lammatta twisting a goofy smile.

LAMMATTA

(sincere)
-- But I mean, I haven't even begun
to work all this crazy shit inside
my skull yet, ya' know?

WENDY
 (taken aback)
 , , , um.

LAMMATTA
 (an open canvas)
 --Ya' see, in my past, I tended to
 only wanna have sex with dirty whores.
 (beat)
 Because I hated myself, ya' see.

WENDY, not knowing how to respond to Lammatta's uncomfortable candidness, simply says:

WENDY
 , , , um--

LAMMATTA
 --I mean, there's "good" self-
 consciousness, and then there's the
 "toxic, paralyzing, raped-by-psycho-
 terror" self-consciousness...

WENDY
 -- , , um--

LAMMATTA
 (smiles)
 -- But this is all the kinda' crap
 I'm all workin' out with the guidance
 of our Lord & Savior, , , and Thorazine.

Lammatta abruptly pulling her into him for a strange and suffocating clenched hug.

LAMMATTA (CONT'D)
 (sincere)
 Pray for me, ma'am?

And then oddly, Lammatta leaves the reporters behind; skipping to the shower patrician like a Special-Ed kid whose been given a sparkler. Pumps his fists to nobody in particular..

LAMMATTA (CONT'D)
 (goofy)
 Rock me, J.C!

WENDY
 (to herself)
 Looney Tunes.

INT. FORD'S OFFICE. - NEXT MORNING

CLOSE ON. Headlines in Cleveland Tribune Sports Section,
"Ex-DRUG OFFENDER, HURLER, FASTEST EVER?"

COMPETING HEADLINE IN SMALLER TYPE; READS: SUPER AGENT GOLD,
 BRUTALLY KILLED.

SUDAIKIS

Sonofabitch, like outta' some goddamn fairytale!

FORD

So you didn't find the kid's post-game interview "weird", at all?

SUDAIKIS

"Weird", ,um, , , in what way exactly?

FORD

(pleading)

He hugged a female reporter wearing nothing but a bath towel for Chrissakes, Lee.

SUDAIKIS

He's outgoing! -- Fact: Nobody's as gregarious as a person who recently started using drugs.

FORD

And nothing about him bothers you?

SUDAIKIS

He's gonna' bring us luck, I can feel it in my bones...

FORD

Anyway, I hate to piss on your cozy campfire here, but I haf'ta talk to you about Escobar.

SUDAIKIS

Escobar? - Why are we all-of-a-sudden talking about Escobar?

FORD

Because I'm benching him.

SUDAIKIS

What?-no-no-no. We're paying him thirty-million over three years!

FORD

Lee, I'm not gonna' start a player just because you overpaid the greedy weasel...

SUDAIKIS

-- You both simply have some language barriers to work through, is all.

FORD

Exactly. All last year we tried teaching him English and the only word he ever learned was "million".

SUDAIKIS

Quit being such a drama queen. The kid's only 24 years old.

FORD

"Kid" my hairy-nutsack. These goddamn Cuban ballplayers and their fake ages...

(beat)

Worse than Hollywood actresses...

(excited)

Plus, last night I thought the little prick was gonna' belt me with a--

Receptionist chimes in.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Mr. Sudaikis, there's a Detective Linus and Kincaid here to see you..?

SUDAIKIS

Detectives? What do they want?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Just says it's urgent.

SUDAIKIS

(to FORD)

You not paying your parking tickets?

(to receptionist)

Okay. Bring them in.

Moments later Detective LINUS and KINCAID, enter.

LINUS

Mr. Sudaikis?

SUDAIKIS

Yep. You're looking at him.

LINUS

Afternoon. I'm Detective Linus, head of major crimes unit. This is Detective Kincaid.

(looks at FORD)

I'm sorry, and you are?

FORD

I'm the team's manager, Bubber Ford.

KINCAID

(idol crush)

Of course. It's awesome to finally meet you, skip---although I gotta say, I was really shocked you had Benson running on that 2-2 count in the fifth last night.

FORD

(rude)
That wasn't illegal, was it?

SUDAIKIS

...What's this about Detectives?

LINUS

You might've heard from the news,- a 56 year old unidentified man was found dead eight days ago, less than two miles from your stadium.

SUDAIKIS

Okay-Yeah, I maybe read something.
(beat)
What exactly happened? - Guess it must be unclear if you're poking into it.

LINUS

It's very clear, regrettably. He was beheaded.

SUDAIKIS

Beheaded? Like partially removed or...

LINUS

No it was-again, regrettably. Totally chopped off.

KINCAID

Your basic heinous atrocity.

SUDAIKIS

(helpless shrug)
Well those people have their own lives, who knows what the hell-- bad loans, drug deal.

KINCAID

The DOA was actually Cleveland season-ticket booster, Vinnie Dasso.

SUDAIKIS

(almost happy)
"Fat-Mouthed Vinnie"?! No shit?

LINUS

Found several letters at Vinnie's house.

KINCAID

Mostly hate mail he was writing to ball players on your team, but never mailed.

SUDAIKIS

Makes perfect sense.

(beat)

Six years ago, fat-mouthed Vinnie
tried suing us for gross negligence
after we lost in the playoffs...

Linus places several photo-copied letters on the desk.

LINUS

(to Sudaikis)

Oddly enough. We also found some
letters you had written to Vinnie,
personally.

KINCAID

Pretty hostile stuff.

SUDAIKIS

Wait a--If you're trying to illuminate
something into that-

LINUS

You aren't a suspect. Don't see
yourself that way.

KINCAID

We're merely hoping to pick your
brain,,get your personal take on
Vinnie "the fanatic fan".

SUDAIKIS

My tak-?-We're trying to run a
professional ball team here, guys.
I mean, we got bigger problems to
worry about besides some combative,
crazed heckler.

KINCAID

(to Ford)

Anything to add, coach?

SUDAIKIS

(cautious)

,,,I always tell my players, "stop
worrying about the asses in the
stands, or soon enough you're gonna'
be sitting with 'em."

KINCAID

(impressed)

Of course. Fair enough, skip.

FORD

(continues; sincere)

--I mean, yeah, sure Vinnie was a
real pain in the ass--but that doesn't

(MORE)

FORD (CONT'D)
 mean we'd actually want anyone--I
 mean, murder?,,,Christ, that's just--

KINCAID
 Listen, don't worry about this.
 We're just tracking leads.

SUDAIKIS
 (mock formality)
 Well let's be grateful that two of
 this city's finest are on the case.
 (quick)
 Anything else Detectives?

Linus, Kincaid, shut notebooks, head for exit.

LINUS
 Thanks for your time.

KINCAID
 Good luck on the rest of the season.

SUDAIKIS
 Anytime.--if ya' ever need tickets,
 you know where to find me.

Detectives exit.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)
 (to FORD;pissed off)
 ,,,Tell me your not a moron.

FORD
 What?

SUDAIKIS
 "Vinnie was a real pain in the ass?"
 Are you trying to launch an
 investigation?

FORD
 There's already an investigation!

SUDAIKIS
 That automatically implies you gotta'
 start becoming so goddamn honest?

FORD
 I'm sorry Lee! It's scary!

SUDAIKIS
 (insulted)
 ..."Scary?"
 (MORE)

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

(motions to Lammatta's
photo)

Jesus man, we gotta miracle fall in
our fat-laps and you go acting whiny?
(commanding)
-- You focus on winning games, and
not on becoming Detective-Dudley.

INT. A SOUND STAGE -- LATER

CJ BRADLEY, donning a gold chain and a diamond stud earring.
Currently being interviewed by Wendy Bernstein, on "Sports
World."

WENDY

CJ Bradley...you've been referred to
by past teammates as:

(looks down at notes)

"a cynical and selfish destroyer of
good moods and good chemistry."

And, "a lazy and narcissistic rebel
without a clue."

(pause)

Care to comment?

BRADLEY

The big misconception Wendy, is that
there's no compassion.

WENDY

Interesting. That sounds almost
like an apology.

BRADLEY

(brazen)

Hell no. What do I need to apologize
for?

WENDY

(quick;down at notes)

Um, let's see. -- In November of
2008, you "allegedly" shattered the
dental plate of a referee who called
you for a foul during a pick-up
basketball game..?

BRADLEY

(whiny)

Man--all that evidence is from a
buncha' people with shaky credibility.

WENDY

Really? -- The basketball game was
charity-event sponsored by The United
Way.

BRADLEY

Can't a rich black man get any justice
in this Country no more?

WENDY

(biting)

Yes, I'm sure the orphans of Darfur
feel your pain, CJ.

BRADLEY

Who?

WENDY

Let's get back to the issues--

BRADLEY

Man--the only issues I'm hearin' is
how you media-folks don't wanna' do
no real reporting on no black athlete
unless he went and shot himself in
the leg or ordered some hit on some
punk-ass at some damn strip club.

WENDY

You sound bitter, CJ.

BRADLEY

Ain't bitter. Just the truth. But
the sub-text is clear.

WENDY

Sub-text?

BRADLEY

"Look at this afro-centric, thug
messaging up our family game."

WENDY

So in turn, what?--the media is
unfairly provoking you for something
as benign as having a volatile temper?

BRADLEY

Wait--hold up...

(points at Wendy)

Now we're really gettin' at the heart
of the problem...

WENDY

...And what is the heart of the
problem, CJ?

BRADLEY

This whole, "Plantation mentality".
(direct)

Why does a brothah' always have to
be classified as "volatile"?

(MORE)

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

(pause)

Why don't you call me, "fiery"?

WENDY

(confused)

I don't understand.

BRADLEY

Man--You take all the famous psycho white-boy athletes in the history of sports,--the media always calling 'em "fiery" or "tough-minded" because they're scrawny, white dudes.

(beat)

But because I'm a proud black man, I'm forever branded as the "volatile Negro", or some cracker-jack tag...

WENDY

So your entire image is completely race related? You've made no mistakes?

BRADLEY

Fans don't want no robots. They want emotion! They wanna' either love ya' or hate ya'..

(beat)

I'm just the cat everybody loves to hate. - Every-damn league needs 'em.

(smiles)

You got your Terrell Owens in football, your Ron Artest in basketball, and your CJ Bradley in baseball..

(beat)

You even got 'cha Clubber Lang in Boxing. - Yet again, another brothah' labeled as the "Great Black Villain"...

WENDY

(confused)

But that was just a movie...?

BRADLEY

Your point is!!?

PULL BACK FROM SCENE TO REVEAL...A TV SET, airing the per-recorded BRADLEY INTERVIEW -- as STRIPPERS dance on a dimly lit stage in b.g.

ANGLE ON. Bradley, on his cell phone.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Fuck those Cheetos' muthah' fuckahz!
Why can't I do Pringles, too?!

(MORE)

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

One's a cheese snack and the other's a potato chip. Tell 'em I got two different chicken franchises and they don't be giving me no static like this!

BRADLEY -- looks up, trying to watch his TV interview on "Sports World": flustered at the tall stripper who's dancing in front of TV.

BRADLEY (CONT'D)

Move Ho! I'm trying to watch my shit!

STRIPPER

Fuck you, CJ. You move.

BRADLEY

I gotta' bad back.

STRIPPER

From what?--lifting all them shot glasses into your mouth?

Bradley rolls his eyes, hands stripper a bill.

STRIPPER (CONT'D)

...This is only \$1.

BRADLEY

I got my baby's momma to feed!

EXT. STRIP CLUB. - EARLY MORNING

BRADLEY steps outside. The morning sun shines down as he breathes in, taking in the day.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL...Nothing unusual, except for the four news vans, flashing cameras, and crowds and crowds of lookie-loo's gathered just off site. They spot Bradley, and begin to MOB HIM.

SURROUNDED BY REPORTERS

REPORTER #1

CJ, do you in any way, feel responsible for Vinnie Dasso's gruesome murder?

BRADLEY

...What gruesome murder?

Microphones are shoved in his face as Bradley is sieged upon by journalists and TV cameras. The questions coming at him like lightning. He sees a small crevice in the crowd and goes for it. - WHAM! - A huge microphone bumps his mouth. It is...WENDY BERNSTEIN.

WENDY

Has the pressure gotten to you? Have you finally snapped, CJ?

Bradley's eyes flare.

BRADLEY

Suck my dick.

WENDY

Yes, it's good to isolate these dark forces that cloud a unstable athlete's empty mind.

BRADLEY

It's called charisma, bitch.

WENDY

Chopping up your fans, yes. Very charismatic. You couldn't make this up with a blotter full of acid and Hunter S. Thompson.

PULLBACK FROM WENDY/BRADLEY REVEALS:

A TV INSIDE MARAUDER'S LOCKER ROOM

TOMMY and WILLIS lay on a trainer's table. Viewing the impromptu strip-club/media fracas on the tv.

TOMMY

Jeez-Louis, CJ's about as nuanced as a hammer blow to the head.

Willis examining a bag of pills.

WILLIS

,,Yo' dude. Which ones do I take?

TOMMY

Take the brown pills, but don't take the white ones or the red ones..

WILLIS

Why brown?

TOMMY

Because the reds and whites are left over from when I was seriously addicted to pills.

WILLIS

Why didn't you just throw them away?

TOMMY

Because I'm sentimental.

WILLIS

About pills?

TRAINER, (37) stabs Tommy's left knee with B12 shot.

TOMMY

Ouch! Jesus doc! We got an important game tonight and you're shooting up my left knee first?! -- Are you trying to put the hex on me?!

Morningstar walks by.

MORNINGSTAR

(to trainer)

Why don't you try pumping that shit up his ass and see if you can blow his brains out.

TOMMY

Lick my floppy sack, Morningstar.

BRADLEY; slams door open. Disturbed. Teammates stand in b.g.

BRADLEY

(almost to himself)

Heartless monsters wanna' turn my \$10 million option into a financial bloodbath!

TOMMY

Interesting. So did you come up with that brilliant thesis before or after you cut Vinnie's head off?

GRANDERSEN...

(offended)

What are you saying? That Bradley killed fat-mouthed Vinnie?

TOMMY

Last time I checked, I wasn't the one who tried tearing his head off with a Louisville Slugger...

BRADLEY

Did you go to deaf school, man?! I didn't kill nobody!

MORNINGSTAR

No one's saying you did, Bradley, relax.

TOMMY

But nobody's exactly saying you didn't, either.

BRADLEY

Eat shit Tommy!

Bradley storms off. Teammates glare at Tommy with acrimony.

TOMMY

....What?

MORNINGSTAR

It's called tact, fuck-o.

TOMMY

Sorry if me pointing out the facts
offends your frail sensibilities.

MORNINGSTAR

Fuck you, nut case. Where were you
after the game that night?

TOMMY

Taking extra B.P, thank you.

MORNINGSTAR

Didn't you once tell us how you had
an uncle who was a manic depressive?

(beat)

Whackos are in your gene pool.

TOMMY

No jerk-off, uncle Kenny wasn't a
manic-depressive, he was a pyromaniac.

GRANDERSEN..

Hey, aren't most serial killers
seemingly harmless?

WILLIS, exiting out of the shower.

WILLIS

Harmless, no. White, yes.

TOMMY

(Caucasian-sounding)

"Hollah"! Pimpa-licious!

Tommy tries giving Willis "dap", but instead Willis just
looks at him with utter contempt.

WILLIS

...This league is so racist, man.

MORNINGSTAR

Every time you go 0 for 4 you think
the league is racist. Face it Willis,
you're an equal opportunity "out".

TOMMY

No seriously, Willis is right. It's well documented, most serial killers are slightly off, white males in their twenties.

MORNINGSTAR

This coming from the world's only left-handed catcher, who still thinks WWF Wrestling is 100% real.

TOMMY

There's no logical reason why a lefty can't play catcher, douchebag.

MORNINGSTAR

Try to be a realist, will ya?,- last month the Cardinals stole 11 bases off ya' in one game.

TOMMY

Fuck you. Mammals are adaptive.

Morningstar moves towards shower.

MORNINGSTAR

So's a three-legged dog.

WILLIS

(to anyone)

I read how they found the guy's lips in the glove compartment.

PRICE, (23) right-fielder, spits out his Chinese food.

PRICE

Willis, ya' sick-maggot, I'm eating here!

INT. COMPUTER LAB -- LATER

There is a whole raft of cops, fingerprint specialists, photographers, coroner, etc. -- KINCAID APPEARS IN THE B.G OF THE SHOT taking in the scene.

The two dead bodies lay inside a computer cubicle. Their SEVERED HEADS, posed beneath a corporate sign that says **"TICKETS NEXT"**.

Thousands of USED TICKET STUBS surround the two DEAD BODIES.

Coroner has a tiny radio beside him, post game is heard in the background.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

If last night's game were a fight they would've called it, and if it
(MORE)

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 were a horse they would of shot it.
 So make that 7 wins in a row for
 this streaking Cleveland club, as
 rookie phenom, Dugan Lammatta made
 his 3rd official start of the season,
 going eight scoreless innings in a
 two hit--

Linus enters, looks around, annoyed.

LINUS
 (to CORONER)
 --Hey shut that shit off.

Coroner looks back at Linus, scowlingly, shuts radio off.

LINUS, walks over to one of the bodies, crouches down by
 severed heads, checks the angle and level of entry.

LINUS (CONT'D)
 I'm seeing petechial hemorrhages in
 the eyes. Strangled beforehand.

KINCAID
 You got it. Same as the others.

LINUS
 Both post-mordems indicate full
 decapitation of head, partial
 decapitation of the lower extremities,
 feet and scrotum.

KINCAID
 I guess cutting their head off isn't
 enough of a buzz-saw for Mr. Fun-
 time anymore, hmm?

LINUS
 ...anything else?

KINCAID
 Possible synthetic fibers. Maybe
 from a wig. But that's it. No semen,
 no latent prints, nothing.

LINUS
 No sign of struggle?

KINCAID
 No hair or skin under the fingernails,
 no bruises or contusions.

KINCAID pulls out a zip-lock bag; inside a NOTE.

KINCAID (CONT'D)
 Killer was nice enough to leave
 another poem though.

LINUS

Gee wiz. Lucky us.

KINCAID

(reads poem)

"Broker bums oh how you dare, Broker
bums you best beware."

(beat)

"The more you buy the more you steal,
Now you're dead, how does it feel,,"
,,,Again, signed S.B.A.

LINUS

Not exactly Robert Frost.

KINCAID

...Robert Who?

Linus ignores; continues to review the scene.

LINUS

And the significance of the baseball
tickets?

KINCAID

(nods)

These two apparently run a ticket-
brokerage house. - Hence, why this
place looks like a meth-lab with
computers...

LINUS

(confused)

So,--they just sell tickets?

KINCAID

No. They re-sell tickets.

LINUS

...There's a big difference?

KINCAID

Of course--These yahoos hire two
dozen key-punchers on speed...

LINUS

...key punchers?

KINCAID

-- pays 'em to suck-up all the good
seats away from the public in 90
seconds flat...so now, if a fan wants
to buy tickets for a game, instead'a
gettin' good seats, he *instead* sees
his game-of-the-year effectively
"sold out"--and next, link taking
'em to this company's resale site

(MORE)

KINCAID (CONT'D)

where they can't buy a decent ticket
for less-than 200% above face-value.

LINUS

In the old days, we used to call
that scalping...

KINCAID

(down at DOA's)

Except now it's legal. Can you
believe that shit? Buncha' animals.

Linus walks over to trail of blood across the floor; thinking.

LINUS

They weren't robbed. None of the
other victims were robbed.

KINCAID

Go on.

LINUS

Maybe some asshole with a big hunting
knife decided it's finally time for
a little lesson in sports etiquette.

KINCAID

(light bulb)

Kind of guy you wouldn't even notice
at a huge sporting event.

LINUS

Forty thousand people in attendance.

(beat)

A utopian paradise for a serial
killer.

KINCAID

Damn -- if that's true --

LINUS

-- Then he's getting smarter and
faster and he's only gonna' keep
killing more bad seeds.

SMASH CUT TO:

SPORTS/MURDER MONTAGE:

(Subsequent scenes to play out in correspondence with
Announcer's Voice-over.)

Lammatta WARMING UP in the bullpen, throwing lasers at the
catcher.

CUT TO:

Real-time; Real-game. Same results. Strike out after strike out. -- Throwing so much ungodly heat that the ball looks like an Advil by the time it crosses the plate.

CUT TO:

BRADLEY eyes a lazy slider, obliterating it into left field bleachers.

CUT TO:

TOMMY guns down a runner trying to steal third base. OUT!

SCOREBOARD reads --Cleveland 6, New Jersey 1.

CUT TO:

LAMMATTA at the plate; reading every tic of the pitcher's motion as if he's preparing an impersonation. WHACK! -- The crack of the bat making an almost inhuman sound. HOMER!

BACK TO:

Next Game SCOREBOARD: Cleveland 4 - Chicago 2.

CUT TO:

Next Game SCOREBOARD: Cleveland 3 - Detroit 0.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Faced with the potential of the 5th Rebuilding Era in 15 years, Cleveland baseball seemed utterly doomed like a gang of blind pigs wandering in a primitive forest.

(dramatic pause)

Then came Lammatta,,,A name fast becoming the caustic moniker for raw talent, grit & winning ball games...

CUT TO:

Next Game SCOREBOARD: Cleveland 11 - Royals 2.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The Cleveland Marauders, for whatever perverse and freakish reason, are winners of 17 of their last 19 games, and this team's Q-rating rising like the mid-90's NASDAQ...

(beat)

Just as the sudden outbreak of swollen heads & back acne ignited the steroids, era,-Lammatta has suddenly ignited a string of victories for this once hopeless ball club...

Lammatta GETS THE SIGN -- Winds. Delivers. The pitch bends like a bamboo in a monsoon; leaving the opposing OAKLAND A'S batter jelly-legged. Ball game.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The moment this walking, breathing
human-highlight scuffs the rubber,
he becomes a sinister pitching
magician. Sawing pretty athletes in
two while making batters disappear...

BACK TO:

Lammatta ON THE MOUND. RIPS ANOTHER PITCH. STRIKE THREE!!!
The batter's box swerving like an episode from, "The Twilight Zone".

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's as if Paul Bunyan joined the
NFL, or Einstein had decided to go
on Jeopardy...

POST GAME. Lammatta being interviewed by a STI of reporters.

LAMMATTA

(into mic)

People said I'd never play again.
They thought I'd lost my mind. Some
people even thought I was dead...

(beat)

But like Jesus I've been resurrected..
(creepy)

When I'm pitching, it's like it shuts
out all the bad voices in my head...

REPORTER

(Taken-aback)

...Um, bad voices,,,?

LAMMATTA

(rubbing head)

You know,-those little men with axes
grinding inside of here,-.

CUT TO:

INT. SQUAD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At his desk, Detective KINCAID interrogates an odd man.

KINCAID

Harold, I don't want you in here no
more...

CONFESSOR

I pay the city my taxes for this?!

(beat)

I killed 'em all!

KINCAID

(bored)

Okay.-And why did you kill 'em Harold?

CONFESSOR

Because they were so dirty, all of
'em! So filthy!

KINCAID

Fascinating...So how did you do it?

HARVEY

(mild confidence)

..With a big gun..?

KINCAID

Get the fuck outta' here.

BACK TO:

BATTER'S BOX. -- LAMMATT A BLASTS A FASTBALL DEEP...& GONE!

ANGLE ON. SCOREBOARD READS: CLEVELAND 4 - MILWAUKEE 2.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

I tell ya' what folks, manager Bubber
Ford must've been nice to a bunch of
orphans in some past life of his,
because if I'm him right now I'm
looking up to the stars and saying,
"What did I do to deserve this, kid?"

1) A typical office/water cooler. A cad of white-collars
mimicking Lammatta's pitching motion. High fives each other.

2) Sign dangles from an office building window: **GO LAMMATT!**

3) Crowds of fans wearing LAMMATT JERSEYS; making their way
inside ball park, to see their prophet, priest & king...

HOME PLATE.

4) TOMMY scoops-up an incoming throw. OPPOSING BASE-RUNNER
barreling into him; knocking him out cold.

CLOSE ON. Ball is still Tommy's glove. (Out!) Ballgame!

Trainers hustles out.

TRAINER

(raises two fingers)

How many fingers am I holding up?

TOMMY

...Wednesday?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

...After sweeping a September 14th doubleheader, the Marauders are hotter than blazing doughnut grease... Suddenly the issues of the world as trivial as a fat stewardess.

(beat)

What's that sound? Clutch hits? Emotion?? Cleveland Marauders?! Do I hear "Winter Wonderland" being played in Hell?

P.O.V. DUGOUT

ESCOBAR, sits on the bench as players celebrate another victory. Silent, bitter; a dead-eyed gaze.

CUT TO:

INT. RADIO STATION BOOTH -- MORNING

SHOCK JOCK

(into mic)

Sooner or later Tattoo's gonna' show up and take these Cleveland chumps off Fantasy Island, because the Marauders will inevitably find a way to choke it all away...Trust me.

(beat)

Now,, -back to more pressing sports issues..."why don't more pro cheerleaders do porno?"

BACK TO:

ANGLE ON. Lammatta ROUNDING THIRD BASE IN A HEARTBEAT. COACH TRIES HOLDING HIM UP, BUT HE IGNORES SIGN.

CATCHER FLIPS HIS MASK -- Here comes the throw on a beat.

Lammatta impaling his helmet into catcher's mask; an awesome collision. WHAM! -- A cloud of dust. -- UMP SIGNALS "SAFE"!

CLOSE ON. Lammatta smiling, but not in a nice way. (More like the smile of someone who enjoys pulling wings off flies.)

SCOREBOARD READS: CLEVELAND 12 - DETROIT 1. (FINAL)

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

,,,make that 12 in a row and 41 out of 46 games for this surging club, as they once again, thrash Detroit.

(beat)

Lammatta, finishing the game with 10 strike-outs, 2 doubles, and 1 near decapitation...

*

INT. HOTEL LOBBY -- LATER

Lammatta walking through a hotel lobby like gunfighters heading to a show-down.

The innocent charm and humility now drained from his face; replaced by calculation, disinterest.

Fans swarm him, shouting questions, requests, autographs.
(AD LIB)

A POTENTIAL AGENT, (35) in stride with LAMMATTA; selling.

AGENT

You're like this \$500,000 Maybach
parked in the driveway of a \$100,000
house in the middle of nowhere.

(beat)

But if you sign with me, -- I'm
talkin' clothing lines, production
companies, sponsors...

LAMMATTA

Hhhhh...how--

(pause)

AGENT

--how much money could you stand to
make?

LAMMATTA

(dull)

Yeah.

AGENT

You're gonna' be so rich, we're gonna
haf'ta hire someone just to figure
out all the things you want to buy...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALLEY -- NIGHT

The body of dead man. A knife wound has completely severed his neck. A medical orderly draws a sheet over him.

CLOSE ON. A Human head. -- it is: SHOCK JOCK.

GRIEVES, (40) a dumb-looking local cop, looks on.

GRIEVES

...He was dead on arrival.

LIMUS uses his Minox, photographing.

LINUS

Losing your entire skull will cause
that, usually.

GRIEVES

Dahmer cut off heads. Who else?
Definitely not Bundy...Maybe Kemper?
Gacey definitely..But never Berkowitz.

KINCAID

Shut the fuck up, Grieves!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DUGOUT/PREGAME BATTING PRACTICE -- DAY

Lammatta SEEN SIGNING AUTOGRAPHS OUTSIDE THE DUGOUT. Now caught in the perpetual motion-machine of American stardom...

ANGLE ON. Reporters eyeballing him sideways -- as they try to sort him out.

REPORTER #1

How are you getting along with your manager?

LAMMATTA

Aw yeah. Skip treats us all like grown men...

(beat)

Let's us wear earrings and everything...

REPORTER

Your team officially clinched a playoff spot last night. How do you feel?

LAMMATTA

(rubs his head)

Call god. Ask him. It's like, "wow". I can't understand it either, dude. I'm just a vessel, ya' dig.

Teammates walks past, -- totally ignored.

REPORTER

What do you have to say to all those people who left you for dead?

LAMMATTA

I'm not the vengeful type, man.

(candid)

But if I were, there'd be a lot of dead people, probably...

A TEN-YEAR-OLD KID holds a baseball.

KID WITH BALL

Will you sign my ball, Mr. Lammatta?

LAMMATTA
 (signing ball)
 Remember kid, "hugs" not drugs, m'kay.

KID WITH BALL
 Awesome!

B.G. Bradley and Morningstar; standing behind Lammatta like a couple of movie-extras.

BRADLEY
 ...I used to get love like that.

MORNINGSTAR
 Nobody's ever loved you, Bradley.
 Would you love you if you weren't
 you?
 (beat)
 You barely love you and you are you.

BRADLEY
 Bitch please. What makes that fool
 so special?

MORNINGSTAR
 (contemplates)
 People love his renewed sense of
 purpose...2nd chances and that shit.
 (pause)
Plus, he's "fiery", ya' know.

BRADLEY
 (blow top)
 Aw, fuck you! You got the personality
 of a lamp!

MORNINGSTAR
 (confused)
 ...what did I say?!

INT. STADIUM; SECTION G -- CONTINUOUS

Polite yelps from the once half-empty, now suddenly, SOLD-OUT stadium crowd. -- A STARK CONTRAST from the previously-heard normality of boos and dead air. (E.G. It's now officially cool to be a Cleveland baseball fan of winners.)

ANNOUNCER
 It's official, folks. - Being a
 Marauders fan is the safest sports
 decisions a fan can make nowadays,
 right up there with bashing Michael
 Vick at cocktail parties.

ANGLE ON. -- MATTHEW and PAUL walking down the isle towards their seats; review all the additional, J-CREW FACED posers suddenly in attendance.

PAUL

Where were all these yuppie fascists
two years ago when we were 38 games
below .500,,?

MATTHEW

(looks at fans)

This place is so polite now, you
could drop a baby in left-field & it
wouldn't wake up till the 8th inning.

PAUL

(continues)

--like being dropped inside some
kinda' Pilates studio...

SOMEONE BEHIND THEM YELLS, "DOWN IN FRONT!"

PAUL (CONT'D)

(to fan behind)

--Kiss my ass, ya' organically soaped
pussy!!!

(back to Matthew)

-if sports were a giant prison,
"bandwagon jumpers" would be the
child molesters...

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET -- A WEEK LATER

A newspaper vendor lays out a pile of tabloid newspapers at
the front of his busy newsstand. The papers' headline is:
BIZARRE MURDER!, in huge, black print.

The vendor lays out another tabloid pile. Headline "MARAUDERS
WINS 1st PLAYOFF SERIES!"

INT. THE HILTON HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Lammatta standing in front of a mirror, applying putty to
his jaw to make it square. Then a false mustache and a wavy
blonde WIG HAIRPIECE. -- Next, putting on a metallic rayon
sport coat, a long silk scarf, and a pair of dark glasses.

LAMMATTA stares into mirror's reflection.

LAMMATTA

(to himself)

...The greasy-thrill of fame.

Tommy walks in. Freezes.

LAMMATTA (CONT'D)

(calm)

Hey Tommy.

TOMMY

(weird)

Um, what the hell are you wearing?

LAMMATTA

It's this media, man. Every time I wanna go somewhere, they're all over me now.

TOMMY

It's eleven o'clock at night. We gotta' huge game against Boston tomorrow. Where are you going?!

LAMMATTA

Midnight mass.

(Lammatta disguised)

You think anyone will recognize me?

TOMMY

Only if they're looking for Andy Kauffman.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

Ford lays half-way down on his bed. Reading, "Winning Through Psychic Power." He looks up from the book, insomnia staining his eye sockets like soot. -- Turns on t.v.

P.O.V. TV COMMERCIAL

LAMMATTA coming into frame, catching a drop in his hands; contemplating its significance. Thunderclouds boom in b.g.

LAMMATTA (V.O.)

It starts with one drop. And before you realize it, the storm hits.

ANGLE ON. LAMMATTA, posing shirt-less on a mound. Torrential rain seeping down his triangular soul patch just below his lower lip; the blood-colored rain splashing through his SLO:MO pitching motion.

LAMMATTA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Raging all around you. Vulnerable.
...No protection.

CLOSE ON. LAMMATTA, CRAZED-EYES HEAVY INTO CAMERA LENS

LAMMATTA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have weathered the storms, the moods swings, the addictions. Because no matter how dark the clouds might surround you, one must take radical action...

ANGLE ON. LAMMATTA. Opens his arms to the savage clouds above. Almost daring something to strike him down..

CORPORATION'S BEAR PAW LOGO/INSIGNIA FLASHES ABOVE:

NORTHROP ENERGY. "AN ENERGY COMPANY WITH A LOT ON THE BALL."

P.O.V. COMMERCIAL ENDS. -- CUTS TO LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR.

ANCHOR

Welcome back. In other news, police continue to investigate the ongoing circumstances behind the disappearance of Maureen Wells. The 22 year old female, who was believed to have been last seen attending a baseball g--

CLICK. -- FORD SHUTS OFF TV.

Scowls at hotel clock on night stand. Time reveals 2:04 am.

INT. HOTEL HALLYWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Ford walking through the hallway. Moves to room 666. Knocks.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Open it. You've got a key, hoss.

Door opens, revealing a young red-headed nymph, (25) wearing only an oversized t-shirt; her hair all mussed up.

VIVIEN

(giggly)

You must be the famous roommate. I thought you'd be younger for some reason..?

FORD, in one swift motion, yanks Vivien, hefting her onto his shoulder, he takes off running down the hall.

VIVIEN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?! Let go of me!

Tommy comes out of his hotel room.

TOMMY

Aw c'mon skip. She's a freakin' Ice Dancer!!!

EXT. HOTEL POOL -- MOMENTS LATER

Ford barreling out the back door, Vivien's little body squirms to get free from his wrangled grip, but it is of no use.

VIVIEN

Let go of me, maniac!

Ford reaches the edge of the pool, heaving the young girl from his shoulders. -- as she half cartwheels through the air, plunging head first into the glassy pool water.

FORD

There's a baseball lesson in this somewhere.

VIVIEN

You're crazy!

FORD

Keep you're hands off of my players when we gotta' winning steak going.

INT. HOTEL HALLYWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Ford walks through the hallway, past Tommy, who wears a hang-dog expression.

FORD

I oughta take you to the vet and get you fixed.

TOMMY

Aw, c'mon coach! I had to see her. She's playing with my mind!

FORD

It's a damn easy thing to play with.
(looking around Tommy's room)
And where the hell's your roomie?!

TOMMY

Church, apparently.

FORD

I told ya' a million times already, I need my catcher bonding with my ace.

TOMMY

Good luck. The two of us are bonding like Malcolm X and Axl Rose.
(beat)
I'm tellin' ya', Lammatta makes water nervous, skip.

Ford anxiously tries brushing off Tommy's comments.

FORD

Aw Christ, Lammatta don't have a curfew.

TOMMY

Don't you think that's a double standard--we're all here and he ain't?

FORD

I've always believed in double standards for pitchers with E.R.A's below one run and a .350 batting averages.

Suddenly a RANCID SCREAM is heard from outside the pool area.

EXT. HOTEL POOL -- MOMENTS LATER

Ford and Tommy bounding out of the door. Look towards pool, but it is empty.

EXT. HOTEL/ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

Ford and Tommy reach the alley. Through the hooded lights glowing in the alley's shadow, lays Vivien; weeping silently to herself.

Turning corner -- both men are thrown back....a MIST OF BLOOD. A dead face staring back at them. Ford recoils with a yell.

FORD

AAAHH!!

VIVIEN

I-I just found him like this, I swear!

A body propped up against the cinder block wall The head almost completely cut off, blood slicking one side of torso.

ANGLE ON. LAMMATTAS POTENTIAL AGENT. DOA.

EXT. HOTEL/ALLEY -- LATER

CLOSE UP ON THE EYES of the headless and mangled agent's corpse as it's zippered up into a black rubber body bag and carried off by forensic technicians.

Players, many, up and out their rooms, now standing outside.

POLICEMAN

How you holding up?

Policeman offers Ford a smoke. Ford takes it in his hand, shaky toward his lips.

FORD

(Looks at cop)

I suppose I seem a bit jumpy to you.

POLICEMAN

Naw, it looks like you're just plain scared.

FORD

That's because I am.

(MORE)

FORD (CONT'D)

(to Tommy)

Is Lammatta back yet?

TOMMY

Got back 5 minutes ago.

FORD

Thank god.

Sudaikis barges through hallway; straight at Ford.

SUDAIKIS

What the hell happened?! What did you do?!

FORD

...Sudaikis?

SUDAIKIS

We're this goddamn close from closing out these Boston snobs and you gotta' go messing up a streak!

FORD

(suspicious)

I thought you weren't coming to Boston until tomorrow.

SUDAIKIS

What?--I gotta' send you an itinerary whenever I travel?--What happened?!!

FORD

We found--I found...

TOMMY

...a dead body.

SUDAIKIS

(to Ford)

Jesus! You just had to go stick your snout where it didn't belong, didn't you?

FORD

What?! No! It wasn't my fault!

Pitching Coach, Branson walks up to Ford.

BRANSON

We got a problem.

FORD

What--

SUDAIKIS
 (interrupting)
 --What is it?!

BRANSON
 Escobar's gone.

SUDAIKIS
 What do you mean, "he's gone"?

BRANSON
 He was on the bus to the hotel but
 never checked-into his room.

COP
 (to Sudaikis)
 We're going to need an I.D of the
 suspect, sir.

SUDAIKIS
 (to Cop)
Suspect?!
 (to Ford)
 I leave you in charge for one night
 and this is how you repay me?!

FORD
 I didn't do anything!

SUDAIKIS
 Exactly! That's why I have to do
everything!

Sudaikis eyes most of his team standing in the alleyway.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)
 (to entire team)
 Unless any of you bozos want to start
 slugging baseballs made of pig guts
 in Cambodia next season, I suggest
 getting your asses back to your rooms
 for a little shut-eye, pronto!

CUT TO:

EXT. BOSTON STADIUM -- 9TH INNING.

CLOSE ON. A cleat propped on the mound. Raindrops.

ANGLE ON. Sparsely filled people flecked in bright parkas, &
 heavy rain gear. Black clouds ram like a battle royal. An
 inevitable monsoon.

Lammatta wet with rain. Lightning bolts curse the skies.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

--top of the ninth and one out away from a stunning no-hitter, as well as the Marauders first pennant in over fifty years...

(beat)

Please Lord, next time just reach into my gut and pull out six feet of my small intestines, I'm so excited!

Lammatta WINDS AND DELIVERS -- An eye-popping fastball. Ball four. Lammatta screams at himself.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Wow. A rare mistake for the Midwestern-Master, who's tossed a masterpiece so far..Trying to hit Lammatta tonight is like trying to eat Jell-O with chopsticks.

(beat)

Let's just hope he can provide one last strike-out vs. mother nature.

Lammatta NERVOUSLY WALKS AROUND THE MOUND. Picks up the rosin bag. Digs a slot for his lead foot to land, as TOMMY APPROACHES, in full gear, mask tipped up on his head.

TOMMY

Hey man, just remember to keep it away from--

LAMMATTA

--get back behind the plate!

TOMMY

What did you just say to me, rookie?!

LAMMATTA

I said the only thing you know about my pitching is that it's hard to hit!

TOMMY RETURNS to the plate. LAMMATTA SCREAMS.

TOMMY

Well fuck you too, ya' primadonna.

PITCHING MOUND.

Ramrod straight, Lammatta tugs twice at the bill of his cap while the opposing batter digs a foot-hole in the batter's box.

Lammatta GETS THE SIGN -- Winds. Delivers.

Batter hits a weak one-hopper towards first base.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 ,,lays grounder towards 1st. This
 could be it!

BRADLEY charges the ball, Lammatta racing to cover first...but ball gets caught-up in Bradley's glove's webbing, fumbling it in his throwing hand; finally tossing it to 1st and....too late. Batter is SAFE at first.

CLOSE ON SCOREBOARD - PLAY IS RULED A BASE HIT.

The rain is now ferocious. Home plate ump racing out.

UMP
 That's it! Ballgame!!!

LAMMATTA
 (screams)
 NO!!!!

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Champagne bottles and wax paper litter the locker room as the players barrel inside; bear-hugging and gang-tackling.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 It's official. Marauders win the pennant on a historic night! Shutting-out Boston with a near-no-hitter.

Lammatta crawls towards Bradley, who totes a bottle of champagne; goes to hug Lammatta.

BRADLEY
 We did it!

Lammatta instead, LASHES OUT A SHORT LEFT -- With lightning speed, effortless. And brutal. BANG! BRADLEY goes down.

LAMMATTA
 You ruined my no-hitter! I'm gonna'
 kill you!

Bradley hops to his feet, shoving back at Lammatta as the pushing becomes more spastic.

ANGLE ON. Press arriving inside locker room, stunned. Anticipating a jovial bunch, instead witnessing a violent brawl. Slack-jawed, they begin snapping pictures.

INT. FORD'S OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS

Ford sitting behind his desk, lights a cigar. Smiles.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL -- the ensuing brawl.

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- SECONDS LATER

LAMMATTA, eyes wild with glee. Whipping back in his right arm to his locker for something, as players try stopping him, when: -- WHACK! -- Slashing BRADLEY across the neck. The motion is neither smooth, nor slick, but jagged.

There, dangling in his right hand, a pair of silver SCISSORS. Bits of shredded brown skin now coating the tips.

There, clutching his own throat, BRADLEY, blood oozing from a 2-inch gash into his neck. The players screams insanely as Bradley lays holding his neck in the circle of light.

FORD

What the hell is wrong with you two?!
...We just won the pennant!!

BRADLEY

Psycho muthah'fuckah' stabbed me!!!

Ford stares at Lammatta with scissors in his hands; stunned.

FORD

(confused)
Well, you probably deserved it.
Karma and all that shit...

BRADLEY

(dumb-founded)
Coach, how can you say something
like that?!

FORD

Because you're an asshole, Bradley!
Now go see the trainer and stop your
bitching, ya' big baby.

BRADLEY

(to LAMMATTA)
You're fuckin' nuts Lammatta!

A woozy Bradley exits with the aid of other players.

Ford eyes the reporters and camera crew now...All taking photos at a blood-soaked Bradley and his nemesis, Lammatta-Scissor-Hands.

FORD

Get out of my locker room!!!

Back to players/Lammatta.

FORD (CONT'D)

Goddamnit Lammatta, what wrong with
you?!

(MORE)

FORD (CONT'D)

This is the greatest moment of your life and you're getting into knife-fights! There's no "I" in "T-E-A-M"!

CLOSE ON. LAMMATTAS FACE. It is no longer familiar to Ford. There is something inhuman now about his features.

LAMMATTAS

I am the team, you corny old geezer!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEVELAND DOWNTOWN STREET -- DAY

We PICK UP three Teenage Girls walking down the street wearing T-shirts that reads, LAMMATTAS #33. A Black Kid comes by wearing a Marauders baseball cap. As he passes, he holds up one finger signifying Number One. The Girls return the signal.

ANGLE ON. NEWSSTAND. Headline reads "CLEVELAND WINS PENNANT THRASHING BOSTON FOUR GAMES TO NONE!" (Photo of Lammatta scissor-stabbing Bradley.)

CUT TO:

INT. REFRIGERATOR -- NIGHT

Magnetized to refrigerator is same exact NEWSPAPER HEADLINE/PHOTO.

A hand opens refrigerator; revealing, A SEVERED HEAD.

PULLBACK REVEALS:

Linus, Kincaid and police officers, at the scene, checking for evidence. In b.g. the words: "JESUS DOESN'T LOVES ME". The letters have been smeared on in blood.

The detectives look over DOCTOR THOMAS MARLOW, 52, the medical examiner, who is looking at the headless body.

MARLOW

Yep. He's dead.

LINUS

(sarcastic)

Thank you, Doctor.

Kincaid reviews another poem from killer.

KINCAID

(reads)

"You sold your bro' for a bag of gold, The shame that you must have had."

(MORE)

KINCAID (CONT'D)

(beat)

*"The scribes of greed now turns your
faith, Into a mound of slab,,,"*

Kincaid drops note back into evidence bag.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

DOA had I.D. on him.

(beat)

,,,Name's Bobby McBride.

MARLOW

(recognition)

"Mcbride". -- As in...?

KINCAID

-- as in, big brother of Darren
McBride, aka. The St. Louis Bomber.

LINUS

(all Greek to him)

...Who?

MARLOW

(almost insulted)

Are you serious? -- Six years ago,
our DOA's baby brother was baseball's
home-run king...

KINCAID

(to Linus)

...And eighteen months later, Capital
Hill's whipping-boy on widespread
doping allegations.--Kept telling
congress, "I'm not here to talk about
the past."

MARLOW

I gotta' say, for a home run king,
he's a pretty big pussy.

LINUS

-- um,,so how come Darren's brother
is missing a head?

KINCAID

(reviews DOA)

Best I can gather,- bankrupted big
bro' here, was trying to shop-around
a tell-all memoir about baby brother's
doping habits.,,wanted him to atone
for all his steroidal sins, yadda,
yadda.

MARLOW
 (talking to DOA)
 Ratting your own brother out for a
 little scratch. Man, that's low.

MARLOW'S Phone rings. Answers; walks off camera.

KIINCAID
 (to Linus)
 Think of it as a self-help book
 intended for an audience of one--

LINUS
 --but if our DOA was somehow able to
 cash a few checks in the process...

Kincaid, grimacing at the site of DOA.

KIINCAID
 ...you know what they say: God can
 be scammed in mysterious ways...

LINUS
 (joke)
 John Updike, eat your heart out.

Kincaid jerks up.

KINCAID
 ...Who?

Marlow hangs up cell.

MARLOW
 (to Detectives)
 -- Just got back the final toxicology
 reports on those two DOA's from the
 computer lab...

KINCAID
 (bad joke)
 Don't tell me. They died of
 carpal tunnel before they got their
 heads chopped off.

MARLOW
 (nerd excitement)
 Worse.--Found traces of tetradyzine
 in both victims.

LINUS
Tetradyzine?

MARLOW
 It's a neuromuscular paralytic.
 Hard to trace, and even tougher to
 find in the states.
 (MORE)

MARLOW (CONT'D)

(beat)

You find the drug supplier, and you'll
find your killer, Detectives.

CUT TO:

WORLD SERIES: GAME 1

ANGLE ON

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Welcome to Game One of the Fall
Classic. The New York Yammers, a
heavy favorite with the odds-makers
to wipe out the out-of nowhere-
Cleveland Marauders and their merry
band of miracles.

Lammatta pitches, ball right back at him, he throws to 2nd
base for one, and then on to 1st for double-play.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Got him! Double play! Cleveland
takes game 1. -- Lammatta moving his
pitches away from the New York batters
all night like he's Lee Harvey Oswald
and the catcher's mitt is J.F.K limo.

GAME 2:

Yammers' pitcher on the mound. Delivers pitch.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

After blowing a 4 run lead after
seven, the Yammers are now one strike
away from winning game 2.

Strike three. -- Game over.

P.O.V. SCOREBOARD READS: YAMMERS 6, MARAUDERS 5.

GAME 3:

Yammers' second baseman at the plate. Digs in.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Bottom of the ninth, tie game.

Yammers's third baseman hits a deep fly ball. Way back.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Rodriguez hits a deep one...Gone!
And New York wins two straight on a
walk-off homer by Rodriguez.

GAME 4:

Lammatta delivers. Fastball. STRIKE THREE!!!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The Marauders win game 4 on the good, easy gas of Lammatta. Tying up the series, two-games-a-piece. It's so quiet in New York right now, you can almost hear Boston...

GAME 5:

Yammers' pinch-hitter; blasts a shot; doubles off the wall.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

A pinch hit double off of Weaver in the 12th inning, gives New York a 3-2 lead in the series.

GAME 6:

Bradley at the plate; bases loaded. Grand slam homer.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And Bradley's grand-salami closes the door on the Yammer's. Tying the series at 3 games a piece!

(beat)

One game left to decide the World Series champion, and the Marauders with a clear advantage for Tuesday night's Game 7 with Lammatta, who has been literally unhittable so far in this series, set to start...

CUT TO:

INT. SQUAD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A large room; very busy, many officers at work. Various known sexual offenders, small-time criminals have been rounded up.

ANGLE ON. Detective LINUS passes Kincaid, heading towards his office. Kincaid grabs the CLEVELAND TRIBUNE from desk, falls in stride through the crowded scene.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

What am I wasting my time with this shit for?

LINUS

Maybe it's something you did in a past life, how the hell do I know.

Linus now at his desk. There is a pile of messages on his desk, mostly from REPORTERS.

Kincaid tosses the newspaper on Linus's desk.

KINCAID

You see this shit yet?

P.O.V. HEADLINES READ: "SPORTS VIGILANTE?"

ANGLE ON. Opposite front page column reads: "LAMMATT A HOPING TO SHUT THE DOOR ON YAMMERS IN GAME 7."

LINUS

(off newspaper)

What happened to not giving this sociopath the attention he's begging for?

KINCAID

Who knows? The coroner hates you, all the technicians, and idiots in general..

The desk table has been cleared and its surface is now covered with various forms, reports and 8" by 10" photographs of all the murdered victims.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

Maybe we'll get lucky. This sicko runs a red light, and a dead body is inside the trunk.

PHONE RINGS.

LINUS

This is Linus....Yeah.
(starts writing address)
Yep, thanks Frankie.
(hangs up)

KINCAID

What's up?

LINUS

That was my inside guy from DEA.
(reading from notes)
Got an anonymous tip a few weeks back on an illegal shipments of narcotics moving in from Mexico to this, "Benzo Laboratories" in town.

KINCAID reviewing murder photos: disinterested.

KINCAID

Oh yeah?

LINUS

DEA finally raided the lab a couple nights ago. Got the owner in custody as we speak.

KINCAID

(bored)
Okay.

LINUS

Guess what particular drug they found
at his lab.

KINCAID

(light bulb)
....Tetradyzine.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM -- LATER

BENNY, (40's) a smarmy-looking man with a circus barker
mustache; sits across from Linus and Kindcaid.

BENNY

Fuck you. I want my lawyer.

KINCAID

What is this a charity? We're here
to trade, Benny. Give us a line on
this guy & we'll see what we can do.

BENNY

Eat shit cop.

LINUS

Look scumbag, we got you for accessory
to multiple homicides with your
connection to this drug,-so unless
you enjoy the thoughts of your future
ex-wife seeing you behind glass as
you're dodging dicks for the next 40
years, you start talking now.

BENNY

....You give me immunity?

LINUS

Depends on what you got for us. We
could make the accessory to murder
rap, disappear. Maybe even get the
DA to show some leniency on the drug
trafficking charge.

KINCAID

-- if your information checks out.

Benny smashes out cigarette butt.

BENNY

Look man, I ain't out to kill nobody.
I'm strictly a medicine man.,,A
supplement guru, you follow...

Benny nervously lights another smoke.

BENNY (CONT'D)

Trainers drop me a line. Needing some untraceable-junk for their hot-shot athlete clients. HGH, ZMA, a bit of the clear, methenolone, whatever. Like I said, I'm the guru.

LINUS

Keep going.

BENNY

So this cat calls me,- says he needs this tetradyzine, shit. Said he'd pay big bank if I can find it.

KINCAID

The cat give you a name?

BENNY

No man. Sent me straight cash in the mail. Told me to deliver on a specific time, specific day. Like clock-tic-toc, man.

(beat)

But the address he gave me to send his shit to, is in the city.

Kincaid throws Benny a pen.

KINCAID

We're gonna need that address, Benny.

INT. SQUAD CAR -- LATER

Car is in pursuit. Kincaid talking on phone.

KINCAID

Right, okay. Call me as soon as you got something.

Hangs up phone.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

The house is registered under, Frank Beamer. Guy's owned the place for the last 12 years but never lived in it. Strictly a rental property.

LINUS

It checks out?

KINCAID

Yep. Beamer been in Hawaii for the last 6 years. Hired a property management company to handle any new tenants.

LINUS

-so who's renting Beamer's house?

KINCAID

The property management office is closed.

(beat)

Trying to get in contact with the office manager but we probably won't hear back on anything until morning.

(pause)

What do you wanna' do?

INT. HOUSE -- HALF HOUR LATER

Front door explodes open. Shattered fragments of the door crash the floor. Linus and Kincaid walk in after.

LINUS

(to Kincaid)

....Looks like a break-in to me.

KINCAID

A break-in. Sure.

Kincaid's flashlight comes on, illuminating the two men.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

Hello?

As they move through the house CAMERA TRACKS with them.

Suddenly Kincaid stops. He trains his flashlight on a small object in the corner of the room.

LINUS

What is it?

Kincaid steps closer to the object.

KINCAID

A dog...Pit Bull.

Both men look down off screen at the animal. Kincaid bends down to it.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Pit Bull growls, snaps at his hand.

INT. BEDROOM

A littered room. Clothes, magazine, loose food-trash all cover the floor.

ANGLE ON. Various bondage-instruments and chains scattered throughout the room.

-- Quotes of religious proverbs pinned to every wall.

Kincaid sifts through the ground, kicks at a leather mask on floor.

KINCAID
...Mr. All-American.

Linus picking through a trash can. Finds something.

LINUS
Hello pretty.

KINCAID
What cha' got?

LINUS
(holds up)
Purchase receipts for a pair of Wells
Lamont Handyman Gloves and duct tape.

KINCAID
...Could be nothing. A coincidence.

Linus reviews disheveled apartment.

LINUS
This guy look like he's handy with a
paint brush & a ladder to you?

KINCAID
...Got a name on receipt?

LINUS
(digging)
Nothing yet.

ANGLE ON. BEDROOM WINDOW -- Blown loose by the wind, the
rain gutter swings down and smashes through the window with
a CRASH of broken glass.

Kincaid jumps back, reaches in coat and draws a .357 magnum
revolver.

Linus stares at him. Kincaid sees Linus's reaction and slowly
re-holsters the revolver.

Kincaid turns his gaze; spots something, reaching for the
corner of night-stand.

KINCAID
An address. 187 La Salle. Second
home?

LINUS
I know it. It ain't no house. It's
a storage facility.

Kincaid looks down at bed covers. Shock and awe.

KINCAID
You gotta be kidding me....

LINUS
...What is it?

ANGLE ON. A BIBLE. ON JACKET COVER, "LAMMATT", HANDWRITTEN
IN BRIGHT ORANGE MAGIC MARKER.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

SUDAIKIS
Let me get this straight. You think
our star pitcher's this city's serial
killer?
(laughs)
Are you out-of-your heads Detectives?

LINUS
At this point, he's the prime suspect
in an ongoing investigation, yes.

SUDAIKIS
He's a simple farm boy from Missouri!
Not the next Dahmer!

LINUS
Do you wanna tell me where Lammatta
is or do you wanna' have this
conversation downtown?

SUDAIKIS
Excuse me?

LINUS
Look asshole, you're either going to
obstruct justice or you're going to
put us in touch with your sycophantic
pitcher...

SUDAIKIS
Is that a threat, Detective?

LINUS
When it's a threat, you'll know it.

SUDAIKIS
(a beat)
...Is that a threat?!!

LINUS
Fuck you. I'll find him myself.

Linus moves to the door.

LINUS (CONT'D)
Attention all units I need--

SUDAIKIS
--you of course, got a search warrant?

LINUS
....Excuse me?

SUDAIKIS
I know my rights too, detective.

KINCAID
Fuck you. We got probable cause.

SUDAIKIS
Nada--whether it's a organic deli or
a major-league baseball stadium, ya'
need a proper warrant to search
private property, hmm?

Linus; shocked, pissed off. Moves at Sudaikis, ready to
fight. Kincaid holds him back.

KINCAID
Not worth it pal. They're like
cockroaches, outlast ya' every time.

LINUS
We'll be back.

Linus, Kincaid exit.

SUDAIKIS
(pause)
It's all clear kid.

From the equipment closet in the corner, Lammatta peeks his
head out. Ford is horrified, shocked.

Lammatta steps to Ford.

LAMMATTA
Coach, I--

FORD
--Get out of my sight.

Lammatta just nods lamely, walks out of locker room, towards
ball field, presumably.

SUDAIKIS
(yells at Lammatta)
Go knock 'em dead tiger!
(to Ford)
Okay, minor setback.

FORD

You're nuts.

SUDAIKIS

(excited)

-- I understand the urge to go ballistic, but we can't let these threats stop us from our goal. We're this close!

FORD

I'm not letting him pitch tonight.

SUDAIKIS

...sure, sure, sure...I understand, but listen to what I'm asking you-

FORD

--Lee, he's out.

SUDAIKIS

--because...hold on...hold on a second, before we get to that...Have you always hated me?

FORD

No.

SUDAIKIS

Some secret...?

FORD

No.

SUDAIKIS

Ever doubted my commitment to you?

FORD

--Look Lee, you've always had my respect okay, but this thing--

SUDAIKIS

--I don't want your respect. You're respect stinks on ice. Are you getting old? What is this? Menopause?

FORD

Lee, I'm scared!

SUDAIKIS

We're all scared! What?, you think any GM these days got himself a secure visa out of Casablanca?

FORD

Lee--

SUDAIKIS

--I read this thing about the Panama Canal, right. The death toll, take a guess. Twenty-five thousand people. Just to dig a goddamn ditch!

FORD

Died with their heads on I bet.

SUDAIKIS

Like that's any great consolation?! The kind of suffering, Christ, reminds me of our fans...

FORD

And you honestly think that justifies--

SUDAIKIS

--Shut up! I'm not done speaking, when it's your turn, you can speak--

FORD

--What's wrong with you?!

SUDAIKIS

Fuck you...Fuck you...

(he hits Ford)

Get up.

(he hits him again)

I'll fuckin' kill you right here in this locker room. You wimp! You coward. You squat to pee!..five years now, I've been eating your shit!--and now you're gonna be some fuckin' wimp, cost me my...title? No way. Not in this life!

Ford; lays motionless; shocked.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

-- You want somebody to take charge, I'll take charge. You need an excuse to cop out, I'll give you a fucking excuse!

Ford is dumbfounded. Slowly, he takes a step back.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

(parental)

...I'm not upset with you. I'm only doing my job. My capacity to make decisions. Decide, decide decide. — the definition of the modern GM.

(beat)

It's how I earn my food-pellets from this dark universe, ya' see?

Sudaikis, lurches forward in a fake-out, baiting him, scaring him. Ford takes another step back--petrified.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

(pause)

Now listen to me: Some people get elected, try to change the world. Our job isn't one of those jobs.

(beat)

So we can either keep talking purity or we can turn the page.

Sudaikis exits, a "Patton-esque" stride.

SUDAIKIS (CONT'D)

(drifting off)

- 'Cause it's a big thing to win, baby! -- Lots of pressure, but lots of rewards too!!!

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS BOX - MOMENTS LATER

ANNOUNCER

So here we are folks, the Cleveland Marauders vs the New York Yammers in the 7th game of the Fall Classic. Prison riots having safer conditions than the City of Cleveland, tonight, because this is no longer a baseball game, folks. -- It's a battle for survival.

INT. TUNNEL -- MOMENTS LATER

The Cleveland player coming out of tunnel, where several thousands of fans wait in the stands for the game to start.

Ford walks through the tunnel. Two dozen police officers standing by.

FORD

(to cop)

Not much of a view from here.

COP

Good luck coach.

FORD

What's it look like?

COP

No word yet. But I should tell ya', when the word comes down, they want us to go get him no matter what.

(MORE)

COP (CONT'D)

(pause)

Told us to go grab him right off the field if we have to. Don't want to take any chance that he might flee.

FORD, views the playing field. Taking a long look at LAMMATTA.

FORD

Can you do me a favor?

COP

Anything skip.

FORD

If you see our GM trying to get inside my dugout....Shoot him.

EXT./INT. DUGOUT -- MOMENTS LATER

A calm silence pervades...The players hug and smack each other in the back. A sudden unification and affection; a savage release of tension.

Ford sits on the bench, alone. Looks out to the bullpen.

ANGLE ON. LAMMATTA -- WARMING UP IN BULLPEN.

Ford looks to the end of his bench. Spots BUTCH.

FORD

Butch!

Butch turns.

FORD (CONT'D)

Start getting loose.

BUTCH

(puzzled)

...now?

FORD

Yes now! You're starting! Tell Lammatta to shut it down...

P.O.V. FORD

Butch gets to the bull pen. Taps at LAMMATTA, points to dugout.

Lammatta racing back towards Ford.

DUGOUT.

LAMMATTA

What's going on?!

FORD
I'm sitting you down today.

LAMMATTA
Sitting me down?!

FORD
You've had a busy year. Take a day off.

LAMMATTA
A day off?! This is Game 7 of the World Series?! Have you lost your mind?!

Lammatta; tears after Ford. Players grab him, his muscles like rope cords, his eyes fixed.

FORD
Maybe. But at least I still got my head...

EXT. PRESS BOX -- LATER

ANNOUNCER
In a strange set of unspecified events, The Marauders scratching Lammatta from tonight's start in the most important game of Cleveland's Hallowed history.
(beat)
It's like The Stones performing without Jagger, the Beach Boys without Brian Wilson....What for the love of mother, is going on folks?!

CUT TO:

EXT. PITCHING MOUND -- LATER

Two down in the first. Butch looking sharp so far... Bouncing ball to third. Morningstar up with it.

BUTCH -- Throws a pitch. The YAMMER HITTER grounds one back at Butch who throws him out.

CUT TO:

TUNNEL

Sudaikis; racing through. Mad as a hornet.

COP
Sorry sir. I have direct orders not to let you through.

SUDAIKIS

Ya' fuckin' rent-a-cop, get out of
my way!

COP disarms his pistol; fires a warning shot at his feet.
Next aims at Sudaikis's head.

COP

I got strict orders.

Sudaikis can only move back. Retreat.

SUDAIKIS

(mumbles)

A tree falls in the forest, and what
did we accomplish!

BACK TO:

P.O.V. THE SCOREBOARD READS: 0-0 IN THE 3RD.

MORNINGSTAR -- striking out on a curve ball.

WILLIS -- robbing a Yammer of a home run by making a leaping
catch over the fence.

BUTCH -- picking a Yammer runner off first.

THE SCOREBOARD -- 0-0 in the 5th.

BRADLEY -- striking out on a curve ball, trying to check his
swing. -- Umpire emphatically punches him out.

FORD -- Looking past Lammatta to the field. Butch is on the
mound. There's a runner on second.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Still nothing -- nothing, top of the
seventh, two down. Butch has been in
trouble all night, but has battled
his way out.

Butch comes set and delivers. The Yammer hitter, CRANIER,
swings and gets all of it.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Uh oh, this one's tagged. Deep center
field. Way back. Way back.

Willis climbs up on the wall, but it's long gone. Home run.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's off the reservation, home run.
And New York lead it 2-0.

A silent pall falls on the stadium.

ANGLE ON. Ford looks in corner of dugout. Lammatta; a stone cold zombie.

As the "2" goes up on the scoreboard, we...

CUT TO:

WILLIS -- popping up and flinging his bat away in frustration. We take CUTS of the worried fans, chewing fingernails, wadding up programs, hanging their heads, etc.

TOMMY -- grounding out, obviously having trouble running.

MORNINGSTAR -- stepping into the batter's box. The crowd is practically sitting on its hands now. Hope draining away.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Morningstar up now, two down, bottom
of the eighth. The Marauders running
out of chances.

Morningstar swings at the first pitch and lines a sharp single to left. The crowd and the Marauders bench suddenly come alive.

Bradley moves to the plate.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That'll bring on Bradley, hitless
tonight.

The crowd and bleacher band begins to clap as Morningstar takes his lead.

BRADLEY
(to himself)
Come on, CJ. No money, no baby's
mommas, no distractions, just mash.

Bradley swings at the first pitch.

C.U. BASEBALL -- A moon shot.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Long drive, deep left-field. Way
back. It might be! It could be!
The ball is...Gone! The game is
tied!

The fans go crazy as Bradley circles the bases, we go to the scoreboard as the NUMBER, 2 goes up.

CUT TO:

INT. A STORAGE FACILITY -- CONTINUOUS

An entry door clicks open. Linus and Kincaid walk through dark, barren open hall.

A night manager leads the way; reviewing his storage records.

MANAGER

The name's right.--Dugan Lammatta..

Manager points his flash light at a unit.

MANAGER

Here it is. Unit 345.

Manager takes cutters and rips the lock open.

INT. UNIT 345 -- MOMENTS LATER

Contained inside: A bean bag, a thick stack of Playboy Magazines, latex masks, wigs, duct-tape and nylon cords.

ANGLE ON. Photos hang from storage walls. Clemens, Barry Bonds, A-Rod & Madonna holding hands, Jim Rome, Bud Selig.

Kincaid shines flashlight above.

KINCAID

...Looks like he didn't wear gloves.

Kincaid flashes light; spots a spray canister.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

(opens; sniffs)

Smells like bleach. Possibly used to remove blood evidence.

Linus turns around, spots something in the corner, shines his flashlight, it is.....a portable freezer. Linus whistles for Kincaid to look.

Linus, Kincaid move slowly to freezer's door. Opens it, peer inside.

KINCAID (CONT'D)

Winner winner, chicken dinner.

ANGLE ON. FREEZER--In a white metal pan, canted on one ear. A liver-spotted head.

CLOSE ON. MAUREEN WELL'S HEAD.

BACK TO:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Two down in the top of the ninth,
still tied at 2, relief pitcher,
Morrow still in the game after
pitching the last half of the 8th.

YAMMER HITTER -- lining a single to right field. Morrow mops his brow, obviously tiring.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ,,Morrow, the Marauders' fourth
 different pitcher of the last one
 and a third innings, as the bullpen
 slowly starts to dissolve like a bad
 marriage before our eyes. Which begs
 the question, where has Lammatta
 been all night?!

CUT TO:

ANOTHER YAMMER HITTER -- smashing a double off the wall, the
 lead runner stopping at third. Ford signals to the bullpen
 to get somebody warm.

MORROW -- on the mound, looking like he's out of gas.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Morrow has really digged himself a
 hole now. He got the first two
 hitters, and then gave up a single
 and a double and has now gone 3-0 to
 Kotsey.

Morrow comes set and fires to the plate. Ball four.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 High. Ball four and Morrow's stuff,
 looking as flat as a year-old bottle
 of Tab.

Ford looks to opposing dugout, sees opposing hitter Jetz in
 the on-deck circle smiling at him.

Ford has seen enough. He makes his way to the mound; signals
 to the bullpen with his left hand.

CUT TO:

FBI CAR

The advance vehicle. TWO AGENTS. The agent in the passenger
 seat speaking in hushed tones into a radio mike:

FBI VAN

Linus and half a dozen agents. Quietly checking their gear,
 passing looks to one another, while the VOICE drones softly
 from the radio...

AGENT
 In pursuit of the suspect. Coming
 up on the stadium in five.

BACK TO:

LAMMATTA -- striding in from the bullpen. He doesn't look
 relaxed.

Meanwhile, the CROWD has gone nuts at the sight of Lammatta.

FORD

Okay, Lammatta, Jetz likes the hard stuff in. Split him on the hands, bust him away.

(beat)

You listenin' to me?

No response from Lammatta.

FORD (CONT'D)

I understand this is a difficult situation. It's not lost on me, kid.

Lammatta alone on the mound, the SCREAMS of the crowd ringing in his ears.

FORD (CONT'D)

Look kid, right now, I don't care if you lick windows, vote Liberal, or occasionally chop people's heads off. Just get this bum out.

Ford hands Lammatta the ball. -- Lammatta smiles. While Ford trots back to dugout.

Lammatta steps up on the rubber, his face hardened into fierce resolve. There's nothing nervous about him now. This kid is gonna make somebody pay.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Derron Jetz steps in, so far in this series, batting .341, with 4 homers, and 10 R.B.I.'s.

Finally, Tommy puts down one finger. Lammatta nods; winds and delivers a hissing blur toward the plate.

Jetz takes a ferocious swing and misses. Strike one.

We see the number 97 come up on the digital readout of the SPEED GUN.

Tommy puts down one finger. Lammatta nods and then winds and fires again, another blazing rocket. Jetz takes a wicked rip, but doesn't get it. Strike two. 101 comes up on the gun.

The fans are all standing now, yelling for a strikeout. Lammatta gets back up on the rubber with the look of an animal sighting prey.

Tommy wiggles his fingers around and then puts down the big No. 1.

Lammatta goes into his windup and unleashes a screaming bullet toward the plate. Jetz pulls the trigger, but it's already by him. Strike three! The fans are going berserk.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Wow! Three straight heaters and the Yammers are mowed down. No runs, two hits, three left on, and, are you ready, Cleveland fans? We go to the bottom of the ninth, still tied!

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

EXT. STADIUM -- CONTINUOUS

SWAT MEN AT THE DOOR: THEY SMASH THE LOCK AND CHARGE IN.
LINUS AND KINCAID CLOSE BEHIND.

BACK TO:

WILLIS -- walking up to the plate.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

One down in the ninth, Willis, trying to get something going for the Marauders.

Bradley and the others yell encouragement to Willis as he digs in at the plate. The Yammer pitcher delivers and Willis hits a high bouncer toward short....

The shortstop waits for it to come down and then fires to first. Willis streaks across the bag.....but still a half-step behind the ball. OUT!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And Willis is out by a micro-hair.

The Yammer Manager comes to the mound and waves for a new pitcher.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

,,,with two outs and Lammatta due up, New York manager, Torborg, who looks about as jittery as a circus animal on Crystal Meth, wastes no time. He's goin' to the bullpen.

Out of the pen comes SAMMY "SMOKING" WOOD, a good facsimile of Wood is Randy Johnson, only bigger and meaner.

Lammatta starts for the plate, as Wood finishes his warmups.

The crowd, electrified by Lammatta's prescience, remains on its feet.

Wood stares in, comes to his stretch and then lets go a steaming fast ball right at Lammatta's head.

Lammatta goes down in a swirl of dust, the ball missing him by inches. -- As soon as Lammatta picks himself up, the crowd begins to ROAR again.

THE STADIUM

Everything from here on will continue to be in SLOW MOTION.

The crowd is on its feet again. The "GO" chants start; - punctuated by thousands of hands punching the night air.

CUT TO:

FBI -- In military teams of two; flank thru PLAYERS' TUNNEL.

BACK TO:

We go to SLOW MOTION as WOOD kicks and comes to the plate.

LAMMATTATTA swings and BOOM!--hits a monster shot.

Dead-eyes the ball, almost forcing it to stay fair, using his body- English to will it inside the left-field foul pole. (Is it fair, is it foul, is it fair, is it foul?)

Baseline UMP signals. Fair!

SLOW MOTION ENDS

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Fair ball! The Marauders win it!
The Marauders win. Oh sweet heavens,
the Marauders win it!!

Pandemonium breaks loose in the Stadium. Everywhere people are hugging and kissing each other, fireworks ablaze.

QUICK CUTS -- of our other fans. We see...

A) Lammatta rounding the bases; raising his hands in victory.

B) Elsewhere in stadium; the joyous exultation continues unabated; vibrating like an old lawn mower.

C) Bradley pulls Lammatta to his feet at home plate, and they hug, as both are swallowed up by the smear of their respective teammates' arms and legs.

We HOLD on the celebration as it swirls all around them, as...

Lammatta sees something that catches his eye.

Standing by the field rail is an ARMY OF POLICE OFFICERS & FBI coming right for him...

FEDERAL AGENTS, SWAT TEAM, AND FBI all wear bulky flack jackets, suddenly racing from all points of the compass.

ASSAULT WEAPONS snapping up, patrons scattering, everybody screaming at once: Chaos. Dozens of FBI, converging against the sea of loony fans swarming the playing-field.

SMOKE OBSCURES EVERYTHING. Mob psychology taking over.

ALL THE FEDS
(chaotic, ad-lib)
FBI!...FREEZE, MOTHERFUCKER!...DON'T
MOVE!...FREEZE OR YOU'RE A DEAD
MAN!...HANDS IN THE AIR!

Every single FBI WEAPON HAS A LASER SIGHT, all of them now activated, RED LASER BEAMS CONVERGING.....

...on LAMMATTa, stunned, GLOWING RED DOTS dancing up and down his body from all directions, people screaming and diving for cover, stampeding for the dugout exits.

...while CAMERA DOES A QUEASY 360 AROUND LAMMATTa, hands shiver in the air, suddenly the loneliest man in the room.

LAMMATTa
DON'T SHOOT ME!

...except nobody can hear him with ABBA THUNDERING IN THE STADIUMS' SOUND SYSTEM.

The FEDS SHOUTING, the CROWD CELEBRATING AND SCREAMING.

THE FEDS -- are closing in on LAMMATTa, everybody amped-up and screaming.

LINUS
ON YOUR KNEES!...NOW, GODDAMN IT,
NOW!...FACE-DOWN, ASSHOLE!

Lammatta quickly reaches for object tucked inside his pants.

LINUS (CONT'D)
Don't do it Lammatta!

Lammatta grab for object.

...and BRRAAAAP! Detective Linus FIRES HIS 9MM; a single shot BURST into Lammatta, nailing him in the shoulder.

Lammatta is taken right off his feet, a look of incredible surprise on his face.

CLOSE ON. LAMMATTa'S HANDS; inside -- a PHOTO.

ANGLE ON. Lammatta hugging and kissing another man.
(Apparent lover, boyfriend.)

LAMMATT
 ...my demons.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM -- SEVERAL HOURS LATER

Ford sits at desk, a small tv is on.

VIDEO FOOTAGE: -- highlight clips showing Lammatta rounding the bases, as pyrotechnic smoke clogs the chaotic video images of fans as well as FBI agents; all seen simultaneously charging baseball field in pursuit of a panicked and retreating, Lammatta.

WENDY (O.S.)

In one of the most horrific sequences in the history of sports, World Series MVP, Dugan Lammatta, immediately following his World Series winning walk-off home run, was apprehended in dramatic fashion in connection to a string of nationwide ritualistic serial murders.

CAMERA LENS OPENS TO: -- Kincaid stepping into frame.

KINCAID

Upon being asked to desist, the suspect attempted to flee the scene, possibly to destroy incriminating evidence. He was apprehended after detective Linus fired upon him, wounding the suspect...

VARIOUS REPORTERS

Detective Kincaid, how did police--

KINCAID

--No, no more questions at this time.

BACK TO WENDY:

WENDY

Lammatta's ignominious fall representing the biggest murder scandal in the history of Cleveland. -- Providing us again, with a stunning example on hypocrisy, lunacy and the fun-house mirror of American Sports.

(beat)

Representative Henry Wexell, chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has planned a hearing--

CLICK. -- TV shuts off.

WIDE PAN INTO:

INT. FORD'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

FORD
Only in America.

He looks around, opens some desk drawers and takes out a bag of potato chips, gathering the food and beer into his arms.

PAN ACROSS DESK: C.U. -- WORLD SERIES TROPHY.

Shuts desk drawer with his elbow. He turns to sit back down.

OUCH! He steps on a sharp can opener, accidentally on the floor. The beer falls on the floor along with the chips and peanuts.

FORD (CONT'D)
Goddammit.

Ford leans down to pick up spilled items, his head down, intent on cleaning up the mess.

BANG - BANG- BANG! A SLAMMING NOISE coming from across the locker room.

EXT. OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Slowly, Ford gets to his feet and stepping out of his office; looks around the spacious locker room.

ANGLE ON FORD

He finds a switch. CLICK. A light bulb overhead comes on, barely lighting the large hallway.

FORD'S P.O.V. -- LOCKER ROOM

The locker room is empty. Only un-opened cases of Great Western champagne remain.

FORD
,,,Is that you, Sudaikis?

Nothing.

He turns from the locker room, back to his office, when....

A LOUD SQUEAK coming from the equipment closet door. Ford Freezes.

Floorboards CREAK inside. -- Throwing equipment door open. He moves into a...

DARK EQUIPMENT CLOSET

He manages to pull the door open just enough to slide through, finds the light switch.

CLICK! -- The room is illuminated. Random baseballs, helmets, gloves and bats scatter the closet....EMPTY.

FORD backs up right into --

FORD (CONT'D)

AHHH!!

...AN ARMY OF BASEBALL JERSEYS, dangle from hooks on racks.

FORD catches his breath....THEN, the equipment room light burns out.

INT. EQUIPMENT CLOSET -- CONTINUOUS

Now pitch black. The only sound in the room is his own terrified breathing.

FORD spots a bat nearby. Grabs it, retreats back into jersey rack.

FORD

(weakly)

Come on out, asshole.

Silence. And then.....BARK!

Ford jumps, spinning around just in time to see, JOHNNY BENCH, his precious GOLDEN RETRIEVER, meekly poking his head out through the rack of jersey.

FORD (CONT'D)

Johnny Bench! You scared me half to death, pal. Come on out of there.

VOICE (O.S.)

Okay.

...a pair of black cleats stepping off the jersey rack.

Before Ford has a chance to scream, the FIGURE jumps down and shoves the rack hard, sending him into a splintering wall. The bat goes flying out of his hands.

Ford races towards the equipment closet exit door.

But FIGURE intercepts, lunging forward, grabbing his wrist hard, Ford yanks harder, releasing his hold when a flash of silver catches her eye, cutting into his forearm.

The FIGURE advances on him--knife out, ready. Ford staggers backwards, holding his bloody arm.

The MASKED FIGURE lashes out with the knife. FORD dodges it, leaping back against the wall.

A MOUND OF BASEBALLS clutter a spare table. Ford reaching down, grabbing for weapons, next slinging baseballs into the face of the FIGURE. Temporarily knocking him down.

Ford opens exit door, racing out when:

CLOSE SHOT -- FORD

The last thing Ford sees, the last thing he remembers, is a BLURRED FACE staring in front of him and the feel and smell of a chloroform RAG pressed against his nose and mouth.

WHAT FOLLOWS IS A BLUR:

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM BASEMENT -- SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Ford comes to in darkness, hog-tied and blindfolded.

THE CAMERA TAKES A MOMENT TO ADJUST TO THE DARKNESS as the outline of a FIGURE appears...

Ford continues to fight. Pulling into the gaze of...

PAUL

Paul stares back at him, eyes wide, lips curled in a subtle smile.

PAUL

It'd be customary at this point to start praying.

His VOICE sounds more affected now...the VOICE of the killer.

Ford tries to speak. It's impossible.

Paul pulls the GAG from his mouth, just long enough for Ford to say:

FORD

,,,Where's my dog, asshole.

Paul jams the gag back into his mouth, angrily.

With that, Paul produces a hunting knife. It is RED-HOT. Even looking at it is painful.

Ford struggles against these ropes, to no use.

Two things hit at once: 1) This monster is about to torture me to death. 2) Please, God, don't let me give him the satisfaction of seeing me cry.

PAUL

But it's not quite over yet. We've got one more surprise--Pal, I believe it's your turn.

VOICE (O.S.)

Okay.

A NOISE comes from b.g. A low dragging sound.

MATTHEW appears...wrestling with something...

CLOSE ON Matthew...he has a body in tow, he thrusts it forward and it rolls into room. Ford looks down to find...

JOHNNY BENCH

Whimpering and bloody. His eyes wide in fear, very much alive.

PAUL

I can't decide if torturing your dog makes me feel worse about myself or better about Michael Vick...

Ford looks to his dog, sees the tears in his eyes. He looks back to Paul, unflinching...a determined look on his face.

FORD

You son of a bitch, I'll kill you!

PAUL

My, my. Must be extremely satisfying to watch yourself say something so heroic...

FORD shuts his eyes tight - can't watch this anymore.

MATTHEW

(infuriated)

Open your eyes! Open your eyes
Goddammit or I'll cut the fucking
lids off!!

Ford opens his eyes. Deep sobs shudder through him, as...

PAUL

(calm)

That's always the rub, isn't it,
Skip.--Even when things are going
great, us sports fans fear the
worst...--If we won the lottery,
we'd immediately assume 20 other
people had the same number...

MATTHEW

We're rarely happy. We're also insane.
(beat)
It's a tough combination...

Reacting to the pain, FORD twists his torso.

FORD

You'll never get away with this!

MATTHEW

Tell that to your hick pitcher.

FORD

...What--?

PAUL

You honestly wouldn't believe how easy it is to frame an manic-depressive, drug addled, Jesus-Freak, sports-star, for multiple homicides, nowadays...

MATTHEW

Yeah, we just watched a few episodes of Forensic Files. Took a few notes. It was fun.

PAUL

Come on, skip. Think about it.

(beat)

We get Lammatta's autograph before a game, and forge his signature at a local storage facility...

MATTHEW

-- dump a couple dead bodies inside.

PAUL

-- Have an easily traceable, paralytic drug mailed to Lammatta's apartment...

MATTHEW

--pickup drug-package at Lammatta's pad when he's out of town pitching,- then plant some incriminating evidence there...

PAUL

Inject some dead bodies with same paralytic drug...

MATTHEW

--Next, make an anonymous call to DEA about illegal drugs being trafficked out of Benzo Laboratories..

PAUL

,,and wait for the cops to connect the dots.

MATTHEW

The evidence is all there, skip.

Matthew and Paul relish their madness, proud of themselves.

FORD

Why would you--kill those people?

PAUL

Why? WHY? Did you hear that, Matthew?
I think he wants a motive. Hmmm

PAUL plays with hunting knife, off in his own perverted world.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Because--for the most part--it really
sucks to be a sports fan anymore.

MATTHEW

Yeah. It's a total one-way street.

PAUL

(continues)

I mean, we now live in a culture
where bottom-feeders like Pac-Man
Jones and Terrell Owens never go
away.

(pause)

Where an abject failure, like Jose
Canseco can crack the New York Times
Bestseller list!

MATTHEW

-- forgetting about the \$500 parking
passes and \$12 Bud-Light beers for
the moment...

Paul spins around, skipping in circles around Ford.

PAUL

(crazed)

Let's begin with the "build-'em-up-
to-knock-'em-down", vampires of sports
media, shall we?

MATTHEW

(giggles)

Yes. We shall!

PAUL

-- These "hysterical moralizers" who
create, embellish all our favorite
sports stars with the speed and
efficiency only dreamed of on an
Asian factory-line.

MATTHEW

,,acting-out of nothing more than
their own desperation to grab
listeners or generate Web traffic.,,

PAUL

,,Until things get a little too hot,--
 (beat)
 --then destroying everyone's buzz by
 ratting them out for being "dumb
 jocks".

MATTHEW

(sarcasm)
 ,-as a nation of tax cheats, drunks
 and adulterers, mourn.

Paul smiles.

PAUL

Next topic. -- Our big, bad, pro
 athletes and their precious steroids,
 hmm,,?
 (beat)
 -- blamelessly stating to us,-how
 they only took 'em to get over some
 career-ending injury,,,

MATTHEW

--Implying that *whatever* it was they
 were shooting up their dump-hole,
 was being bought down at the local
 mall--presumably while waiting for
 an Auntie Anne soft pretzel to come
 out of the oven, hmm..?

PAUL

--I'm not sure when the statute of
 limitations runs out on being "young
 and naive."

MATTHEW

(continues)
 -- But age 25 is definitely pushing
 it, dummy...

PAUL

,,,But no sir. - All this "naughty
 behavior", not to be outdone by, our
 Team Owners--Aka. "*The Great Pirates
 of the World*",-who keep trying to
 explain to the average middle-class
 fan how they're merely "*reacting to
 market-place realities*",-with their
 obscenely-priced, corporate sky-
 boxes and their Personal-seat-
 licensing mandates...

MATTHEW

(raging)
 Tell me--How-the-Fuck can someone
 get away with selling the same seat
twice to one person?!!!

PAUL

-,,I've seen some pretty smooth
scams in my time, but only a rich
white man could come up with that
line of b.s.

Paul takes a gun from his pocket. Reviewing his bullet stock.

PAUL (CONT'D)

So what about us? - "The fan"? Mr.
and Mrs. John Q. Public, hmm?--What's
our fault in this, you might ask?

(beat)

With everyone else having done their
sad work already, it's now up to us,
a nation of drooling voyeuristic
geeks,-to continue doing ours:

MATTHEW

--By confusing our favorite athletes
with heroism and moral virtue, as we
continue to imagine our happily-ever-
after lives with them...

PAUL

--by obsessing over what they eat
and what they drive and whom they're
sleeping with,,,

MATTHEW

(continue)

,,,wearing what they wear.

PAUL

,,,rejoicing in the perfection of
their slugging percentage,,,

MATTHEW

--buying their shoes and posters and
commemorative dinner plates,--reading
their books and seeing their shitty
movies and playing their video games,,

PAUL

--and to absolutely keep doing all
these things,,, -right up until the
very moment when they can't turn on
an inside fastball anymore,,,

MATTHEW

,,,until the second they test positive
for taking a drug we begged 'em to
take for the good of our sacred team.

PAUL

,,Until they grow fat, grow old,
grow dull,,,

MATTHEW

--Until we take them down by selling
an incriminating photo of them smoking
from a glass bong...

Matthew holds his gun up near his face, speaks to it as to a
sympathetic friend.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

(airy; nostalgic)

--But good news is ahead, skip.
(breath)

Because we no longer buy any of these
people's love for the game anymore
than we buy the sanctity of their
marriage or the purity of their
bloodstream...

FORD, wide-eyed. Reviews the crazed men.

FORD

,,,What do you want from me?

PAUL

(screams)

We want 1984 back, asshole!!!

FORD

1984? What are you talking about?!

MATTHEW

This is the best part, skip. Why do
you think we kept you alive so long?

PAUL

(sincere)

Do you know what day it is, Skip?

FORD

Tuesday.

MATTHEW

(crazed)

Wrong! It's your anniversary!

FORD

,,,anniversary?--what?

MATTHEW

(sincere)

-- 25 years ago today, your team
lost the Pennant. -- Seven gut
churning, heart-wrenching games...

PAUL

C'mon-don't tell us you don't remember
that series! It was a classic!

MATTHEW

The "Ali/Frazier" of playoff baseball.
 (beat)
 We lost in the 12th on a squeeze-
 play.,.,,Unbelievable!

PAUL

(beat)
 ,.,,Ya' see, our pops really loved
 that '84 team...

MATTHEW

--Memorized every pitch count, every
 at bat, every foul ball.

PAUL

--He'd recite it to us every night
 for the next 3 years with masochistic
 relish.

MATTHEW

--Pops was, to put it bluntly, "a
 drinker", you see...

PAUL

,.,,And after every loss during that
 series, his rage grew more and more
 intolerable...

MATTHEW

--His beatings becoming more and
 more perverse...

PAUL

(empathy)
 ,.,,All the times daddy died a little
 more inside whenever we lost an
 important game we should have won...

MATTHEW

(anger)
 ,.,,All the awful things he said and
 did to our pitiful and sad mother...

PAUL

,.,,Loses so devastating, it will
 shatter your soul and cause the most
 unmanageable psychic heart-ache...

MATTHEW

(thoughtful)
 Because there's something fascinating
 about what moral suffering can do to
 someone...It's more insidious even
 than what any physical illness can
 do.--There's no morphine drip or
 radical surgery to alleviate it.

PAUL

--once it's in your grip, it's as though it will have to kill you for you to be free of it...

(beat)

It's raw realism like nothing else.

Paul and Matthew now both stare at Ford with a fixed grin of crazed recognition.

MATTHEW

Think about it. On the off chance we get caught--a motive like that could hang a jury for years, don't you think?

(beat)

Sports murdered our family's life, and so we go on a murderous rampage against the evils of sports...

PAUL

Big sympathy factor. Paternal abandonment and abuse causes serious warped behavior...

Paul sits the gun down on the table near a locker. And then moves to Ford with the butcher knife in hand.

FORD

You're crazy--both of you.

Matthew looks at him, bent over, crazed.

PAUL

The official term I believe, is "whacko".

BEHIND HIM A SHADOWY FIGURE DARTS FROM HIDING SPOT TO A VANTAGE POINT: WE CAN'T MAKE OUT THE FIGURE... FORD SEES BUT MATTHEW & PAUL DO NOT.

FORD

If you let me go, I can--.

MATTHEW

Oh, spare me. I know what's coming, now. "Let me help you."

Paul leans toward Ford with the knife. This might be the moment.

Behind him, FIGURE steps out of the shadows, HAVING NOW A CLEAN SHOT.

FORD

Do it!!!

SHOTS FIRES.

PAUL IS SPUN AWAY FROM FORD BY THE IMPACT, STANDS THERE,
SHAKING WITH THE SHOCK OF THE HIT.

PAUL
(surprised, like a
child)
You shot me.

His body violently shuttering. Collapses.

Ford squints, confused by who the shooter is, as Matthew aims the gun at Figure and pulls the trigger.

The BLAST throws figure's body against the wall, sliding to a heap on the floor...still.

FORD, his hand, barley reaching down on the ground, grabs for something.

MATTHEW TURNS TO FORD...

Who stands only feet away. Sticks his tongue out and slowly licks the blood dried from his knife...tasting it.

MATTHEW
Good-bye coach.

Matthew lunges with the knife.

Ford suddenly jumps backward, raising his arm instinctively, striking from within, with:

C.U. The WORLD SERIES TROPHY; it's sharp-ends slicing him in the chest as metal shards fan-out deep into MATTHEW'S CHEST.

Matthew stumbles back, stunned...and he goes down.

Clawing, rolling his head back and forth. Then suddenly he freezes, hands outstretched, motionless.

Ford sits there. The shape doesn't move.

BARK!

ANGLE ON. JOHNNY BENCH -- HURT BUT NOT DEAD. LIMPING OVER TO LICK FORD'S WOUNDS.

FORD
Johnny Bench! Good boy!

Ford, exhausted; hits the floor; rolls over, holding his dog...suddenly a flash of silver appears above Ford.

B.G. Paul has grasped the butcher knife; blinking up at Ford, blood bubbling from his lips. He's not yet dead...he rises knife high above Ford ready to strike...when a bullet RIPS THROUGH THE ROOM. -- KABLAM! -- Paul's eyes bulge. BLOOD flies out forward from his head.

Paul reaching behind his head and feels there's a HOLE BLOWN OUT THE BACK.

Paul's eyes glaze over and he falls backwards, DEAD.

Ford looks up to see...

LEE SUDAIKIS, holding the gun in a death grip as smoke rises above the gun's chamber.

SUDAIKIS

Nobody kills my manager except me.

Ford sits up as Lee hobbles to him, helping him. Their eyes meet. A life truce.

FORD

You own a gun?!

SUDAIKIS

Of course I own a gun, you idiot.

(beat)

You're welcome by the way, asshole...

BARK! -- JOHNNY BENCH continues to bark at Matthew's dead body.

FORD

,,,What is it boy?

P.O.V. FORD

INSIDE MATTHEW'S SHIRT. Remnants of a BOMB beneath, strapped along his upper torso.

FORD

OH. OH GOD.

Ford; cuts through his loosened hog-tie with the knife.

FORD (CONT'D)

Come on!

CUT TO:

Ford and Sudaikis and Johnny Bench take off out the locker room doors, when suddenly KA-BOOM!

A HUGE CONFLAGRATION!

Both men & dog diving into an empty METAL JACUZZI. Using it as a bunker, as debris rains down, as FRAGMENTS of MATTHEW'S BODY rains over both men.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAINER'S ROOM - LATER

FORD sits with HIS BANDAGED, but HEALTHY DOG, as paramedic pulls off SUDAIKIS'S SHIRT, reviewing bullet.

SUDAIKIS

You think my shoulder is busted?

PARAMEDIC

You got lucky. The bullet when clean through. -- Looks like it's just gonna' be bad bruise.

The medic turns to his medicine bag.

PAN OVER TO. Many cops. In the LOBBY area between the Locker room proper and the big exterior doors to the trainer's room (now the worse for wear from the concussion of gasoline grenades).

DETECTIVE LINUS AND KINCAID EMERGE THROUGH THE CHAOS OF SMOKE AND LIGHT AND SHADOW.

When Sudaikis sees Linus he takes out his gun and hands it to him.

Linus smells the gun's muzzle. Nods to Sudaikis.

LINUS

Don't waste a second thinking about those psychopaths.

B.G. the cops pull PAUL'S BODY BY THE FEET, LETTING HIS HEAD GO BUMPITY BUMPITY BUMPITY down the steps.

Outside, through the glass we SEE: A MEDIA CIRCUS.

Ford and Sudaikis SQUINT AGAINST THE LIGHT, AND TURN...

THE EQUIPMENT ROOM EXIT DOOR (POV).

EXT. STADIUM - NIGHT

It is dark where they step out into the night. Around the corner of the building we see the light from the MEDIA CIRCUS.

FORD & JOHNNY BENCH STEPS OFF DOWN INTO THE DARK PARKING LOT. SUDAIKIS CATCHES UP TO HIM.

SUDAIKIS

You better get somebody to drive you home.

FORD

I can drive home.

SUDAIKIS

Look at you. How about we start calling dog shit money, and park benches mansions. You need a ride home. I'll drive ya', "champ".

FORD (beat)

If I hadn't mentioned it yet, thanks for saving my life tonight.

SUDAIKIS

You see, all ya' had to do was eat my doo-doo for the last seven years, and eventually the wheel comes around.

The two men continue down toward Sudaikis' car, just outside the circle of media. CAMERA RISES AND RISES TO A HIGH FULL.

EPILOGUE:

EXT. LAKESIDE SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

A LOVELY EVENING, people drinking on a deck that faces Lake Erie and Cleveland's towers beyond.

ANGLE ON. A young woman stands leaning back against the wooden rail, her back to the lake. A young man faces her, talking, laughing. HE LEANS CLOSER; whispers in her ear as she leans back, drawing him closer. As he whispers he can see OVER HER SHOULDER INTO THE WATER BELOW.

REVERSE, C.U: YOUNG MAN: His face registers horror: and the GIRL turns to look down and sees what it is he's looking at, and begins to....SCREAM!!!!

CLOSE ON. Below, floating in the water is ESCOBAR, except it's not all of Escobar. HEAD IS SEPARATED FROM HIS BODY. FLOATING ON A ROPE TIED TO HIS LEG.

A LOVELY PSYCHO-ESQUE close up of the dead Escobar's eye as blood swirls into the pupil, as we.....

CUT TO:

EXT. CELEBRATION PARADE -- AFTERNOON

Main Street; crowded to capacity. Fans gawk and yowl at the various open-trailers filled with MARAUDER BASEBALL TEAM...

PAN BACK TO. -- A PARADE FLOAT.

P.O.V. FORD.

Atop a PARADE FLOAT. Waving out into massive street crowd.

ANGLE ON. -- JOHNNY BENCH, a bit banged up. But still very much alive & well. - Barks in harmony with Ford's waving.

FORD turning around; behind him is:

LAMMATT. Jovial, relieved.

Celebrating with the rest of his teammates. His left arm wrapped inside a big sling as his free hand (pitching hand) waves wildly at the shrieking fans.

All is virtuous in the world of Cleveland Sports, just as:

CLOSE ON. FORD'S FACE. Stoic. Uneasy.

P.O.V. FORD.

ANGLE ON. -- Behind a row of happy fans. -- AN ISOLATED MASKED FIGURE looks on. Beady-eyed; staring dead at him.

Stoic, absolute, maddening.

FADE OUT: