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 #!
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 LAMMATTA, (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 LAMMATTA 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 you're 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.


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.


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. Limps 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" bullsht?

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 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 PERVADAE.

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 bullsht!? (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,,jeeez 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 & LAMMATTAA. 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 LAMMATTIA 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...

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

...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)
Schizophrenia--...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


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.


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 an 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-MAKED 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 sooo 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 Lama?

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, sexists 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 bulls**t? You bench me for a rookie she**thead?!

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 LAMMATT. -- Strangling the lectern with his massive palms. His lips hovering miles above microphone.

LAMMATT
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?

LAMMATT
(shy)
Nope, still single.

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

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

WENDY
Aw...That's so sweet.

Lammatta twisting a goofy smile.

LAMMATT
(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-psychic 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.

RECEPTIONSIT (O.S.)
Mr. Sudaikis, there's a Detective Linus and Kincaid here to see you..?

SUDAIKIS
Detectives? What do they want?

RECEPTIONSIT (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
(bitng)
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 messing 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.

GRANDESEN...
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.
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 teams' 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. -- LAMMATTA 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 LAMMATTA!

3) Crowds of fans wearing LAMMATTA 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 hustle 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:

NORTHRUP 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 game.

CLICK. -- FORD SHUTS OFF TV.

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

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY -- 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 HALLWAY -- 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?
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. LAMMATTA'S POTENTIAL AGENT. DOA.

EXT. HOTEL/ALLEY -- LATER

CLOSE UP ON THE EYES of the headless and mangled agent's corpse as it's zipperred 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!


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 an 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)
CLOSE ON. LAMMATTAA'S FACE. It is no longer familiar to Ford. There is something inhuman now about his features.

LAMMATTAA
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, LAMMATTAA #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)
"The scribes of greed now turns your faith, Into a mound of slab,"

Kincaid drops note back into evidence bag.

DOA had I.D. on him.

,, Name's Bobby McBride.

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

-- as in, big brother of Darren McBride, aka. The St. Louis Bomber.

...(all Greek to him)

...Who?

Are you serious? -- Six years ago, our DOA's baby brother was baseball's home-run king...

...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."

I gotta' say, for a home run king, he's a pretty big pussy.

-- um,, so how come Darren's brother is missing a head?

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 steroidial 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.

KIINCAID
...Who?

Marlow hangs up cell.

MARLOW
(to Detectives)
-- Just got back the final toxicology reports on those two DOA's from the computer lab...

KIINCAID
(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: "LAMMATTA 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.
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, "LAMMATTA", 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.

LAMMATT
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 you're 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 LAMMATT.

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. LAMMATT -- 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 LAMMATT, points to dugout.

Lammatta racing back towards Ford.

DUGOUT.

LAMMATT
What's going on?!
FORD
I'm sitting you down today.

LAMMATTAL 
Sitting me down?!

FORD
You've had a busy year. Take a day off.

LAMMATTAL 
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)


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 flashlight 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.


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:

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.

LAMMATTA 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 re-presenting 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

Between'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
(calming)
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. Hmm

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:

LAMMATTA. 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: