

DO ASK DO TELL: AN AMERICAN EPIC

by
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(fiction)

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FADE IN:

INT. STUDIO CREDITS - DAY

Please view treatment document at
<http://www.doaskdotell.com/aepic.htm> Cannot give a direct
link from a pdf document.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON

OMAR TANYI, 60, lobs a submarine baseball pitch to TOBEY STRICKLAND, 27, who swings and drives the ball off a "green monster" wall (a manual scoreboard atop a chain-link fence). Tobey feigns running the bases, and the camera focuses on him, showing a new beard, v-neck T-shirt with some chest hair, and shorts, with one leg still in heavy braces. ALLISON KEARNS, 50, races with the kid IZIM, 6, in the sloppy snow towards the wall, clumsily retrieves the ball but then throws it towards home plate in good form (the way a pro would). The ball bounces towards ERICH JZZET, 18, who, holding a small camcorder with one hand, fields it perfectly barehanded.

They walk down a residential street, the kid running in front, toward an old rooming house, with a porch, fresh pink veneer, and U.S. Flag in front. SUSANNAH YORK, African-American, 45, gets out of a simonized black Buick and joins them. She is dressed in full Army dress, and has the rank of Colonel. Her legs are heavily scarred. It is starting to rain on the wet snow in the front yard. They enter the porch, past a staircase and living room, and go downstairs to some more rooms. They enter a room that is largely empty except for a desk with PowerBook laptop computer, a Blackberry and some books. Erich clips a firewire from his camcorder to the laptop and turns it on.

INT. TOBEY'S OLD ROOM IN ST. PAUL ROOMING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

TOBEY

(looks around his old room then at
Erich)
I owned the basement.

ALLISON

Looks like they retired your room.

OMAR

Like they could afford to.

TOBEY

Could get cold here, hard on the
bod.

Tobey shows (on the laptop monitor) Jzzet some shots of him taken a few years before, in the living room. In those he is clean shaven and shorts, before his injury. Then, he is standing behind a lectern in a suit, introducing BILL LDZEK, 54, who is in a baggy pin-striped suit and on crutches. Bill momentarily trips on the video wire as he walks to a blackboard. The video stops

ERICH

You look as young as me in those shots. The detail is good. I could blow it up.

TOBEY

These were taken the day Bill gave me a dinner at Embers as a graduation present. And this time I didn't have to ask him to wear a suit!

Tobey picks up Jzzet's camcorder, inserts another miniDV, and a shot of Tobey, six years earlier, getting up from the couch in underclothes, plays on a split screen. It is followed by a shot of a boarded up Embers. Tobey looks at Omar, in the eye.

TOBEY

We gave that place a good swan song. The BLT wasn't very good.

The camera shows a few of Bill's authored "Do Ask Do Tell" books, laid out on a simple cradanza.

TOBEY

Look Omar, it will really all be OK.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRIBECA AREA NYC - DAY - FLASHBACK

Tobey, lightly bearded but well dressed, is stepping out of a bright red Honda. An SUV driven by OMAR passes by, strikes his left leg, and then knocks off the Honda door. Tobey falls against the SUV as it passes, and it apparently runs over the leg.

CUT BACK TO:

Jzzet turns on the computer and clicks the trackball a couple times.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN SALT LAKE CITY, WITH MORMON TEMPLE IN DISTANCE

The sky is still dark, and large number of people, wearing masks, are shoveling volcanic ash into dump trucks.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. - TOBEY'S OLD ROOM IN ROOMING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Erich picks up an album and looks at Tobey's head shots.

ERICH

You're serious, Tobey. I expected a play pen. But that's me. I guess we're all on our way to paying our dues.

Allison takes the hand of Susannah and they both embrace IZIM as he stands in front of them.

ROLL CREDITS

MONTAGE During credits

BILL (54), picks up some books from a cluttered apartment and drives through Minneapolis to the Embers restaurant (overhead shot).

Susannah is pulling a fellow male officer out of the flames before she herself is loaded onto a gurney into an ambulance, that is soon driven up Glebe Road in Arlington, Va. A quick shot of the damaged Pentagon appears.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

Tobey and Erich are engaging in a bit of horseplay, tossing around a whiffleball. At one point, Tobey bunts it over the living room sofa.

ERICH

Well, Tobey, you were be your own best man.

TOBEY

You'll never know what that's like

ERICH

Sure.

They start to play at wrestling, Tobey favoring the leg. His hand brushes across Erich's cheek, the gold wedding ring slightly scratching it.

TOBEY

I'm sorry.

ERICH

Sheila. She's due back from Asset Duty, isn't she?

There is lightning and a clap of thunder, and outside a heavy rain quickly dissolves the remaining snow on the baseball field.

SIX YEARS EARLIER

EXT. STUCCO MEDICAL CLINIC ON THE WEST BANK - DAY

Major Susannah York, much younger looking, dressed in Army olive khakis, walks into the clinic. BABY IZIM kicks his legs in a crib, and one of them is bandaged heavily. He reaches towards Susannah. Gunfire rumbles in the background.

SUSANNAH

Hi little guy.

The ATTACHE, 40, male, and olive skinned, taps Susannah.

ATTACHE

You act like us. That's good.

SUSANNAH

I got the papers. I think our doctors can take him.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The phone, sitting on the rim of a worn, cluttered sofa among a mesh of wires connected to the computer and television, rings and BILL 54 and bald, hobbles on crutches to it, picking it up just in time.

BILL

Oh, Tobey! Thanks for calling back.

TOBEY (O.S.)

We got the auditorium for you set for the 25th. Now make sure your suit is pressed.

BILL

Sure.

TOBEY (O.S.)

You'll be taped. Candid camera.
You'll love the attention.

INT. AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Tobey, in a sweater, adjusts Bill's tie backstage, then leads him on stage and introduces Bill, on crutches but in a suit, to the audience.

TWO YEARS EARLIER

INT. FOSTER CARE SOCIAL WORKER'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is filled with paperwork and filing cabinets and looks out on a crowded street in midtown Manhattan. It's snowing. Susannah, in uniform but her legs in bandages, walks in, followed by Allison, hands lightly touching. The female SOCIAL WORKER, 50, African American, looks surprised. She opens a door to an adjoining room, and helps Izim, 2, in shorts and legs a bit scarred but out of bandages, waddle in.

SOCIAL WORKER

Col. York, you're ready for the terrible twos?

ALLISON

He's ours. We can pretend.

SUSANNAH

He's yours too, Alli.

Izim runs for Susannah.

IZIM

Mama.

SOCIAL WORKER

Boy. Go slow now.

Susannah hugs Izim.

SUSANNAH

My little boy. My.

She sobs a little, and then holds back the tears.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD - DAY

Erich (now younger and just barely beginning to mature) stands in shorts and swings at thrown bardball pitches. Finally he connects with one and hits it deep into the outfield, to the fence. BRIAN Jzzet, 40, his dad, looks on.

ERICH

(voice cracks as it tries to change)

I told you I do this stuff, Dad.

BRIAN

Just don't fall down at church

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER SITE - OVERPASS - DAY

Bill is carrying the camcorder. There is a little wet snow and slush on the ground, and it is raining now. He sees Susannah and Allison in an embrace. He looks over at the sign that says "NO PHOTOS." He looks again at the couple, with the child wandering behind. A SECURITY GUARD looks in his direction. Bill fumbles the camcorder and cocks the camera on and aims it.

SECURITY GUARD.

Don't.

ONE YEAR EARLIER

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

BILL Ldzek (58, bald and mushy though previously ectomorphic) keystrokes on his Sony computer and watches an "FTP" program upload in one second. He glances briefly at a color printout of hate literature, then checks the file that he just uploaded, which is normal text, "Liberty and Terrorism, by Bill Ldzek." He brings up a folder called "hacked files" and drags another file into it. Then he turns off the machine and puts on a Navy hat for the submarine Sunfish. The camera shows his living room and hall as he leaves, and the high-rise apartment looks rather like a messy geek's office, with three desktop and two laptop computers, VCR, TV, and old spinet piano, and lots of books and papers.

EXT. SALOON BAR, MINNEAPOLIS - NIGHT

Bill approaches the Saloon in downtown Minneapolis. There is a light rain melting a wet snow accumulation outside.

At the State Theater next door there is a marquee announcing an Academy Awards benefit party. Bill puts on an Navy cap, ties his tennis shoes, and approaches the night club entrance carefully. He takes out his wallet, fumbles a moment, and locates his driver's license. He looks at the bouncer and offers his ID.

BOUNCER

OK, you look calm tonight.

Bill enters the bar and stands in the coat check line.

INT. SALOON BAR, MINNEAPOLIS - NIGHT

Bill, with his cap on and a visible gray T-shirt that reads "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Believe it!" pays for a Budweiser and turns around and stares at the dance floor. There are three wood stages, and on each stage as well as on the floor, break dancers make typical disco movements and sometimes grope each other.

On the other side of the dance floor, FRANZ, 21, mid-height and muscular, does upside down pushups by holding on to a wooden birm underneath the disk jockey cabin. A security guard approaches him.

About 2/3 of the dancers are male couples, but there are some female couples and in some cases women and men dance in "love trains." The music is "You are so beautiful" and then turns to "Save Me." On the stages, men sometimes reach under their partners t-shirts or and lift them up, or sometimes unbutton sports shirts, revealing usually hairless chests. When this happens, Bill stares intently.

Bill recognizes a familiar face, slightly changed, near the center stage but towards the back. Tobey is dancing with SHEILA DANIELS, 27, a small young woman with hair pulled pack in a pony tail. Tobey has a light beard growth with long sleeve shirt and jeans, both fitting relatively tightly, so he looks fit. A black woman, LORRAINE SMITH, 24, tags along, and holds Tobey from behind, dancing in a train fashion. Then PATRICK GREEN, 28, tall, thin without shirt and hairy chest, takes Sheila from the other side.

Bill walks around the dance floor and stands in the dark, so he can watch the couples closely. Sheila starts to unbutton Tobey's shirt. Bill stares closely. Lorraine approaches Bill and Bill looks away.

LORRAINE

Hey, man.

BILL

Okay.

LORRAINE

You're Bill. You're watching us.

BILL

This is a public place. I think I recognize somebody, though he's changed a bit.

LORRAINE

When's your next birthday?

BILL

In July. July 10. I'm a Cancer. I guess I like to knead like a cat.

LORRAINE

But, what birthday?

BILL

Fifty-nine.

LORRAINE

Tobey's girl friend thinks you're watching him. And that is creating a problem.

BILL

Even with a girl friend?

EXT. SALOON BAR, MINNEAPOLIS - LATER

Bill is leaving the bar when the bouncer taps him.

BOUNCER

You know, you really don't have to come back.

Bill walks along Hennepin Ave in a daze, his bald head quickly dripping from the rain. A black man, in a worn trench coat, approaches him.

HOMELESS MAN

Got a cigarette, fag?

BILL

I don't smoke.

Bill walks by

HOMELESS MAN
 (talking on cheap cell phone)
 A gay man just blew me off.

The homeless black man starts to give chase, but a Minneapolis Police car swings by.

INT. SKYWAY MINNEAPOLIS, DAGWOOD'S COFFEE BAR - MORNING

JOHN McDONOUGH, 31, well built, serves Bill a bacon and eggs breakfast meal with coffee.

JOHN
 Okay, Mr. Burns. Stay out of jail!

CUT TO:

EXT. WISCONSIN COUNTRYSIDE NEAR SPARTA - DAY

Erich Jzzet, in shorts and a T-shirt on a spring day, shags a fly ball swatted to him by Tobey. There is a homemade outfield fence. Tobey waves goodbye as Erich runs uphill, through some unmelted snow patches, past an unfilled swimming pool and then a few racing bikes. With a main residence visible through some bare woods, he goes inside a shed. Inside, it is fully equipped as a computer lab, with real wood furniture and various family pictures and little toys and an N-scale train-set with one passenger train, one freight train, and a textured topography with one city. The trains run.

He presses the spacebar on his computer. The Linux message comes up and then he is surfing. First, he goes through sports sites, reading about a rain-shortened opening day baseball game in Baltimore, and then goes into terminal mode and types a few commands.

The screen shows:

"FEMA THREATS UNDER WATCH" *Volcanoes *Earth's orbit *Screen

Erich leans back in his chair, looks down at his hairy thighs, then leans back again.

INT. BILL'S HIGHRISE APARTMENT, MINNEAPOLIS - AFTERNOON

Bill plugs in an independent Panasonic VCR unit on a dumpy bench near his TV. The apartment is cluttered with three computers, two laptops, various newspapers, magazines, and books, and a few coffee stains on the beige carpet.

Tobey comes onto the picture, as it focuses and gets past the snow.

TOBEY

Gays in the military, and other things that he writes about.

Bill fast-forwards the tape a bit to where he is talking. He is on crutches, in a business suit. There is an outline written on the green blackboard in white chalk, looking like a test on the board. It lists items like "gays in the military," "sodomy laws," "free speech."

BILL

And finally, we come to the Relationship Paradox. In our modern world, you are supposed to be your own man, or woman, before you commit yourself to a relationship.

Bill hunts through some loose stuff behind his 1980s CD player and picks up a miniDV tape.

CUT TO:

INT. SHEILA'S CONDO IN ST. PAUL - EVENING

Sheila takes a pill in her bathroom, which has the decor of a boudoir. The pill reads "R2" and then directions are in French. She walks into her living room, which is surprisingly spartan. She returns to her Dell tower computer.

Sheila types fast and watches text go by on a black and white screen on her big Dell computer. Tobey walks in the room, carrying waffles, soaked in syrup on a large platter. He looks and almost fumbles the food. He pours himself some V-8 and sips. She reaches for her shoulder then withdraws his hand.

TOBEY

I thought work was done.

SHEILA

Oh, I'm just playing with this little file sharing program.

TOBEY

No American Idol..

SHEILA

You jealous.

She turns around and grabs his shirt.

TOBEY
I mean, illegal.

SHEILA
Don't be prissy. You need this for
your high definition of your
prints. You gotta get into the game
again.

She unbuttons his shirt, dragging him toward the bathroom.
She reaches for a bottle of shaving cream.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOM BAR - AFTERNOON

It's late Sunday afternoon in the Boom, a gay video bar. Bill is one of the first customers. The video is playing an unusual feed for a bar. There is a hypothetical icy surface of another planet.

VIDEO ANNOUNCER
You know, we think it is a miracle
to find one microbe on Europa, and
we forget that our own babies are
miracles.

BLAKE, 37, hands Bill a coke, as the feed changes to Ricky Martin.

BILL
No apologies. I have to pick up
Mother at the airport. And they
won't let me in to the gate anymore
without a ticket. Sounds like they
won't let me to the Saloon.

BLAKE
You too old, sure.

EXT. MSP LOW COST PARKING LOT - DAY

Bill and his MOTHER (89) drag luggage from a shuttle bus to his car, marked up with political stickers and dirty, at some distance. His mother struggles.

CUT TO:

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE, L.A. - AFTERNOON

SYDNEY GIBBS, 58, looks at about ten head shots of Tobey arranged on his easel. These shots are generally upscale in nature: men's designer suits, California wine, and "a perfect PC." The MacIntosh computer at Sydney's neat desk is turned on, and several books are stacked on it, including the black-and-white cover "Do Ask Do Tell." There are family pictures on the wall, and a view of Hollywood in the smoggy day below. The buzzer rings, and Tobey, dressed in gym shorts, loafers and well-fitted t-shirt, strides in, uninvited.

TOBEY

Are you Syd?

SYDNEY

You got him. Sounds like you've read about me.

Sydney picks up the black-and-white book.

SYDNEY

So Bill thinks this cover looks like "Schindler's List"? Oh. Well, Tobey, as you see, I got all the head shots from the computer. Sounds like your girl friend did you a favor. You know, a man and a woman.

Sydney looks at Tobey for a moment, hesitates, and offers his hand. After they shake, Sydney looks back at the pictures, then the computer.

TOBEY

You said you had a script.

SYDNEY

There's another novella, it's under the table. Called "Rain on the Snow."

TOBEY

And it's not a weather picture.

SYDNEY

No, it's a symbolic title, all right.

TOBEY

So I don't need a field trip to Mount Shasta.

SYDNEY

No, just like I Love Lucy didn't need to trample grapes in a vat. But look, you know, there's the stuff about Tribunals.

TOBEY

Getting Trumped. Like I'd be your apprentice.

SYDNEY

You look spunky. You take care of your legs, and that's good. But you know, actors are versatile. Especially the movies. Make a choice.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mother is lying on Bill's tattered sofa, and the TV is on, with the Nightline show.

TED KOPPEL

So let me understand this. You and Susannah are definitely going to adopt this kid from Syria.

ALLISON

Yes. One of my clients picked him out when we were in Egypt.

TED KOPPEL

And all that is left

ALLISON

Is the house interview.

TED KOPPEL

And your partner isn't here with you.

ALLISON

She is still in the Army. So because of "don't ask, don't tell," I can't name her in public.

Then the cable link goes bad and the screen is filled with snow.

BILL

Damn!

MOTHER

Bill. Just one more time.

Bill goes over to click on his computer, when the phone rings. Bill reaches across his Mother to pick up the handset, on a leash from the surge protector near his TV and cable connections.

BILL

Tobey? Great to hear from you,
finally!

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Bill turns off his computer (signing out from his own political web site and then from AOL) and approaches the sofa.

BILL

Yes, that's the point. The
government could say I'm promoting
myself in front of children if it
really wanted to. Let you go now.

Bill reaches over and puts down the cradle.

MOTHER

Don't you spend too much time on
this? It's not real life, you know.

BILL

You got it. But it's my real
future.

MOTHER

How old is that friend.

BILL

Oh, about 30, maybe a little less.

MOTHER

That's still too young for you.

BILL

Well, I just visit him. We're not

MOTHER

Even as a friend.

BILL

Well, he's old enough to take the bar soon. Law student.

MOTHER

Just a law student?

Suddenly, Bill notices display on his computer, a picture of a mountain lake, and a headline "E-BOMB ATTACK?" Bill fumbles the remote control, which doesn't work, and has to turn the television back on manually. There is a picture of the same mountain lake.

ABC NEWS REPORTER

That's right, all power is out, and no cars will start within about a mile of the hotel here at Tahoe. But if this is an e-bomb and a terrorist attack, why do it on the California side? The casinos across the line aren't affected at all.

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC PLAYGROUND - DAY

Tobey, FRANK L'ISTESSO (42), and a bunch of other young men (including Erich) are playing stick ball in a large playground, where apartment row houses, one of them with the first three floors painted a pine green, make the outfield walls. Frank wears a T-shirt that reads "CAREER AUDITORS" while Erich and Tobey wear "ELECTRONIC FRONTIER FOUNDATION". Tobey pitches the hard rubber ball to Frank, who swings and misses. He tosses another pitch, submarine, and Frank hits high fly off an apartment building, where it cracks a high window without burglar bars though it is above a fire escape.

ERICH

Over the Green Monster! Home run!

Frank feigns running the makeshift bases.

FRANK

I'm not payin' for that.

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN STREETS - LATER

Frank, Tobey, and Erich walk on the overpass from which the WYC Ground Zero site, now cleaned up, shows.

FRANK

So you're a lawyer, Tobey.

TOBEY

Just a student.

FRANK

So you can't help me about the broken window.

TOBEY

Not without being despised. Better you than Erich. He's stronger by now.

ERICH

What do you do, Frank?

Frankie rumples Erich's rich golden blond hair.

FRANK

For you, son, I'm a kind of guidance counselor.

ERICH

Just for grown-ups.

TOBEY

Frank, me thinks you're a cherry picker!

CUT TO:

INT. RIVIERA CAFE, GREENWICH VILLAGE - LATER

Erich is licking some French cinnamon ice cream off a big spoon, whereas Frank eats a salad with light dressing.

ERICH

So, you say, yesterday's little California border bombing is just a preview. What's the word?

FRANK

Prescience.

ERICH

So, what do you do about it.

FRANK

Yea, we're really lookin' for people who can keep, what you ma' call it, our way of life, going, after a purification. Takes a lot of discipline.

ERICH

I have it. I think I can prove it. I can matter.

FRANK

And your chums and classmates can't. Gee, most grownups can't. You know, to do this, I have to wear several hats. For good kids like you, it's OK. I think your dad would probably say it's unprofessional.

CUT TO:

INT. METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH IN MINNEAPOLIS - MORNING

Bill is playing the piano and the chorus is singing softly the 133rd Psalm. The camera shows the sheet music, handwritten and Bill's own. The congregation is taking communion. At the ends of the composition, Bill goes up and takes a personal communion while his mother watches.

INT. MCC BASEMENT - LATER

Bill has a paper plate with a piece of white cake. Other congregation members are socializing, and the younger men tend to hang together, sometimes holding hands. He drags his mother to meet BOB ARNOLD (65), seated at a table.

BILL

This is my mother. Now how do you like George W now?

BOB

It's still all about oil.

INT. BALLROOM OF MARRIOTT IN TRIBECA, LOWER MANHATTAN - EVENING

Allison, Frank, and Omar socialize at a reception. There is art for sale at a silent auction, and most of it consists of pictures of the Middle East.

There is a wide array of tasty hors d'oeuvres, like crabmeat. Little Izim runs along, and grabs Allison's hand.

IZIM

I want to see the new tower.

ALLISON

I'll show you.

She walks over to another table, presses a button, and a hologram of the new WTC tower comes on. The fundraisers clap.

ALLISON

We have to make our new vision
bigger than before. New York will
be stronger than ever before.

Her cell phone rings. The screen splits to show Susannah in Army dress.

SUSANNAH

Allison. You have Izzi.

ALLISON

Sure. He understands the vision.
Wow.

SUSANNAH

Look, Alli, the General wants to
see me tomorrow.

ALLISON

Did he mention the show?

SUSANNAH

He alluded to it. I think he wants
me to do the same job without a
uniform. That's the deal.

Omar now opens a curtain, and the scene looks out over Ground Zero.

ALLISON

In other words, he wants us to give
in. Or make a tradeoff.

SUSANNAH

Yes, to get what we want.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. PAUL MN SCIENCE MUSEUM - AFTERNOON

The camera shows a few of the science exhibits, especially about the circulatory system, before moving to the cafe, looking out over the Mississippi River. Bill and mother are munching on tortes.

MOTHER

So I told her I'd have an accident
if I didn't go.

BILL

And the SNF told its employees you
weren't supposed to get yourself
up.

MOTHER

You know how nurses aides are. She
just didn't want to be bothered.

BILL

It could have been a washout. If I
had moved back, I'd have given up
the job, the pension, everything.
Conflict of interest. I gave up my
rights to keeping a job like that,
serving military officers, when I
got involved with the gays in the
military issue. So it was almost a
catastrophe Just because they
wouldn't do their jobs. They're
paid. I guess some kinds of care
you can't buy. Of course, that's
what these discriminatory policies
cause.

MOTHER

You want them to.

BILL

Yeah, I want a political fight.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

Show family boyhood scenes as an only child; trips to beach
in 50s car, workshop, backyard baseball, 50s adding machine
and typewriter, garden, yard, baptism with mother in an
actual baptistry, in quick montage (as Chap 1 of DADT book)

INT. ST. PAUL MN SCIENCE MUSEUM - CONTINUOUS

BILL

I don't make people do things. I just give them access to the information. They have to do the right thing on their own. Without emotional access to having my own children, I can't take on the responsibility for protecting others, even my own blood, from enemies. The potential wrongdoing of others can't generate my first priority. Yet, that's why there is a military and why there was and could be a draft again.

CUT TO:

INT. MINNEAPOLIS SKYWAY - MORNING

Bill, dressed in loose, worn jeans and sneakers, is walking to work. He arrives at his cubicle at work, logs on, looks at his work calendar, and sees "1:1" on his schedule for late afternoon. He fidgets and then looks quickly at a stock market site and glances at an essay on "capitulation."

INT. POSTULATE-A FINANCIAL BILL'S CUBICLE - AFTERNOON

SANDY O'BRIEN, 40, casually dressed and with a tattoo on her ankle, comes by Bill's cubicle. She is carrying a mass of notebooks and folders.

SANDY

Bill. You're ready for the assessment?

BILL

I guess I figured this out.

SANDY

Good. You'll meet with a Mr. L'Istesso. You know, he says he thinks he remembers you.

Bill follows Sandy into a conference room with a circular table and UFO-style phones. Frank, dressed in a Navy blue suit, is separating computer listings and personnel files.

FRANK

Have a seat, Mr. Ldzek.

SANDY

I'll leave him to your mercy.

Sandy leaves. Bill hesitates, waiting for a handshake that does not come.

FRANK

Bill, I'm from a company called Career Auditors. What I do is go through your technical background and determine whether your performance and compensation of commensurate with other companies. Of course, the details of your situation stays confidential within the company.

BILL

You're debriefing all of us.

FRANK

No, Bill, just you. Sandy was concerned about your 360 evaluation. Your peers are more concerned about you than she was.

BILL

Well, I guess I can't snow the boss. It's hard to keep up.

FRANK

Oh?

Bill leans forward, then backs up, as if he were trying to speak with body language but can't.

BILL

I support stuff in a lot of the new object-oriented languages. It's hard to pick it up in the trenches when you didn't code anything in the newfangled stuff.

FRANK

Bill, Sandy mentioned her concern about your learning curve. She said you took a couple training courses down on the 494 strip. But I know the problem.

Frank is leaning forward, now seeking eye contact.

BILL

You mean boot camps and
certifications.

Frank forces the eye contact.

FRANK

Bill, you read my hiney well.

BILL

Sandy says you know me.

FRANK

You're the master of fantasy, your
own mind. Look, Bill, have you ever
assembled a computer on your own?
Or changed your own oil?

BILL

I don't think you did that in your
own teen years.

FRANK

You remember.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOTS AND SADDLE BAR, NYC (1980) - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

YOUNG ADULT BILL (somewhat bald) stands next to YOUNG FRANK (20), who kisses him on the lips. Bill prolongs the event, unbuttoning two closely-spaced buttons on Frank's knit shirt and fingering his smooth chest.

YOUNG FRANK

If you didn't move away now, we'd
been something. I'd finish this.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank leans back and crosses his legs, almost in girlish fashion.

FRANK

I'm too old to play with that
stuff, too. Seriously, Bill, I have
the upper hand now.

(MORE)

I have to ~~make a recommendation~~ ~~FRANK (cont'd)~~ recommend. Whether our boot camp could get your career back on track, a good shot in the butt.

BILL

Sandy thought you'd have picked up a lot of this doing your website. But I'm not a pure geek. I write content.

FRANK

Sandy said it's gays in the military.

BILL

Yes, I moved away from the military business center back home in Virginia to avoid conflict of interest when I wrote the book.

FRANK

So you're serious about your writing? That's what your past friend Tobey says. Or are you just a blogger?

BILL

I'd be happy to show you.

Frank stands and points.

FRANK

Not now. I hope it makes you money soon.

BILL

Not yet.

FRANK

Well, I don't know if your heart is in this. You know, nerds like you are supposed to be curious like unaltered cats. You don't need your own agenda.

Frank puts some old greenbar computer listings on the table.

BILL

Those are ancient. See how they look.

FRANK

I ask you this as an old friend.
Why do you need COBOL displays in a
program in production? That's
sloppy, like you have no confidence
in what you did. Like you don't
trust yourself.

BILL

They weren't explicitly forbidden.

FRANK

But they show you're not a
professional any more. You did it
for a paycheck. Like you weren't
good enough to stay legit.

BILL

No, I just want to do a job here.
They call it individual
contributor. I needed a complete
project so I could learn all this
new stuff.

Frank sits back down and visibly crosses his legs again. Bill
stares for a moment at shiny shins, revealed by a garter that
has slipped.

FRANK

I think you just want money out of
this place so you can start a
second career. Or a real career.

BILL

Yeah, for the last act of my life.
You sound like you get to decide.

CUT TO:

INT. BRYANT LAKE BOWL THEATER, MINNEAPOLIS - NIGHT

A full crowd is watching "home movies" in the stadium seats,
interspersed with dining tables, of the Bryant Lake Bowl,
which has the look of a cinema and drafthouse. A handsome
waiter serves Bill his California burger supper and ale. The
movie playing shows a teenager putting together a computer.

INT. BRYANT LAKE BOWL THEATER, MINNEAPOLIS - LATER

Erich Jzzet, in slacks and sport shirt without undershirt, sits on a utility chair on the stage as PETER, 30, interviews him in front of the audience. An older couple, apparently his parents, sits on stage with him.

ERICH

Boy, who was it who said public speaking is easy? A lot of us kids are just curious. If we're gonna make it, we have to know how things work. Do you remember being young?

Bill, seated in the first elevated row and just finishing his burger, raises his hand, and the usher hands him the microphone. Erich's father makes eye contact with Bill.

BILL

As for teenagers who hack, isn't this a kind of red kryptonite problem? They don't know if they'll make it, they see the grownup world as arbitrary and corrupt, so why not compete at what they are good at?

PETER

That's a tough interview question.

ERICH

I think being curious about things is a way to be good enough that you won't want to do that.

CUT TO:

INT. POSTULATE-A FINANCIAL BILL'S CUBICLE - MORNING

Bill is seated at his cubicle, clicking on an internal GUI application (typical client-server, with buttons, panels and graphics) and talking on the phone. Suddenly the screen flashes a Netware alert: "0900 HRS: Your account is disabled. Please log off now." Bill works with the customer a few seconds longer but keeps getting the message.

BILL

I've got a work station problem. Maybe it's the old disk space problem. I suddenly don't have access. Gotta hang up.

Bill hangs up and logs off, tries to log back on and gets "access denied" messages. He dials another number.

HELP DESK

This is Harry. Your employee number.

BILL

Z23111. I mean, 423111. Look, can you check for a mistake. The system suddenly is telling me I am disabled. I got this last night got a moment before I went home but security cleared it up.

HELP DESK

I'll see what I can do. No promises, you know what I mean.

Sandy suddenly is standing over him.

SANDY

Bill, we have a meeting.

Sandy follows Bill to a sunny corner office, where there is a human resources woman with folders laid out on a circular table. A short gray-haired man offers a handshake. Only then does Bill notices the security guard standing in the corner.

CUT TO:

EXT. I-94 WISCONSIN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Bill is driving his cluttered Escort, the back fender covered with political insignia, on a sunny early spring day. He exits and pulls into a family-style restaurant and walks in and sits down.

Bill looks at the menu, the fidgets. Erich, in shorts with conspicuous hairy legs and with longer hair than before and just the beginnings of a light mustache, sits at the counter. The overhead television monitor is showing a CNN report about hunting for Osama bin Laden. Then it shows the explosion site near Lake Tahoe.

Bill stares at Erich momentarily.

BILL

I hate it when nobody comes to take your order.

ERICH

Well, we need to have somebody not pay. You get it.

BILL

You're watching the video, too.
They told me take my severance, fly
over to Pakistan and go for the 25
million dollars!

ERICH

So you were watching me, too. You
have good peripheral vision. No
glaucoma.

BILL

You're pretty good. Now you are..

Erich starts to laugh.

ERICH

Walk out of here and we'll have
enough help.

BILL

And I'll have a job again.

ERICH

Albeit beneath you.

BILL

You're the filmmaker, right.

ERICH

I'll clock in, even though I didn't
dress for it. You wouldn't believe
that this is bike country.

Erich walks over to the time clock. The camera focuses on his
shorts and shaggy legs.

BILL

So you really work here?

ERICH

You want breakfast?

BILL

When I was just a little younger
than you I used to say, never eat
breakfast in restaurants.

INT. FAMILY RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Bill is eating a greasy grand slam breakfast. The CNN feed
shows a map of Afghanistan.

BILL

You know, in Ninth Grade I wrote a geography report on that country.

ERICH

Sounds prescient. Maybe it's my turn.

BILL

You're that young. But you get around.

ERICH

My folks made me a studio down near the bike and ski trails.

BILL

So I can come over. I'm on the way to Milwaukee for the weekend.

ERICH

What for?

BILL

Personal business. You're too young.

ERICH

And you're a senior.

BILL

A man is known by his legs. Give me the land address. I'll pass through Sunday afternoon.

Bill puts down a \$2 bill after he finishes eating.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC - EVENING

The apartment is a high-rise that overlooks Lincoln Center. Insisw it is furnished with a 1930s art deco theme. There are toy trains and trucks on the floor, and Izzy plays with them. Allison watches a video of her kissing Susannah near the World Trade Center site.

SUSANNAH

You took the tape from him. I remember it.

CUT TO:

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER SITE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Susannah and Allison release their embrace near the railing overlooking the World Trade Center site. A security guard walks over to Bill and takes away Bill's camcorder and drops it. Tears come to Bill's eyes.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC - CONTINUOUS

Susannah kneads Allison's shoulders.

ALLISON

ABC said they had seen a tape of us there. But we can't hide like this if we're going to keep Izim.

They embrace again.

CUT TO:

EXT. A STREET IN MILWAUKEE - NIGHT

Bill walks over to the Milwaukee waterfront and takes some shots with his camcorder. Moments later, he walks into a gay bar, the Orbit, with all kinds of alien poster and artefacts in the decor. He takes pictures of the pickled alien in a jar, careful not to take pictures of patrons. A bartender nods.

EXT. WISCONSIN COUNTRYSIDE NEAR SPARTA - AFTERNOON

Bill is driving back through wet snow. He turns up a country road and drives up hill. The snow is starting to stick hard on the roadway. He parks at the roadside rest and starts to walk up a trail. The Spring snow is sloppy and the precipitation is suddenly turning back to a rain.

Bill walks up a hill along the trail, as a chain of overhead flood lights come on. He sees a small rope tow. Bill keeps walking, and the rain starts to poke holes into the snow. Erich, on short skis, sidesteps down. The tow is running.

ERICH

Try it. I brought some skis for you.

BILL

Like I'm still the beginner.

Erich helps Bill with the bindings and boots and tucks in the pant leg. He gives Bill a quick embrace.

ERICH

Unlike mine, your leg has to be like one artificial peg.

BILL

Not a gam.

ERICH

Right. You're the senior citizen now. That's dignified. You think you earned it. I'd didn't call you an old man.

The rope tow moves and throws Bill down.

ERICH

The novice lines were always the hardest to get on.

Bill gets up and tries two more times before the tow holds, and he rides up to the top of the hill. Bill takes off the skis and boots and picks up his tennis shoes.

They walk into a little shed, that is surprisingly nicely furnished early American with two rooms. The place is surprisingly clean and dry. In the background there is now the sound of a drenching rain. Bill peeks outside, and the snow is rapidly being erased.

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Erich hesitates, letting Bill explore, and tags on Bill's shoulder.

BILL

So I guess it's shoes off, too.

ERICH

You want to keep things clean around computers. No bunny suits here, though.

Erich taps Bill at the waist, and they enter a little bedroom where a MacIntosh and a Dell Windows machine is set up.

BILL

You got a whole world set up here.
Two worlds. One Mac and one
Microslop.

ERICH

Actually, I overlaid the Dell with
Linux. Open source. Ironically,
it's safer that way.

BILL

From hackers.

ERICH

Yeah. No more monoculture.

BILL

You're an Ephram or you're a Clark.

ERICH

I hope you believe in me. You know,
you left our family restaurant
without paying.

BILL

I left the dollar tip.

ERICH

But you forgot the bill.

Bill fishes his wallet and finds only 20s, and takes one out.

ERICH

You're crossing my bribery bridge.
It's OK. You liked my film. Come
over here.

Bill stands behind Erich as Erich boots up the machines. He starts his film on the Mac, and then brings up a series of websites on his other machine. The last site is a service to order pre-written term papers.

BILL

Erich, that would be cheating.

ERICH

Good, you want me to be perfect. So
you can be right, you know, about
people. Actually, this page isn't
up yet. I found it on somebody
else's computer. He didn't even
have a high-speed connection.

BILL

So you caught him.

ERICH

Yeah, I can be the good guy. Let me sniff for some more goodies on fibbies' machines.

Some websites about e-bombs come up.

ERICH

I'll save some bookmarks. I bet you could put post-it notes on your thighs. You know, the cold weather.

A weather map comes up. The title is "The Coming Superstorm." The text describes a massive winter low-pressure system moving down from the Arctic to the subtropics and freezing everything.

ERICH

The snows have been awfully late this year. Want to drive? Try this one.

A website "The Collapsing Earth Orbit" comes up. Bill sits down and surfs it.

BILL

Like it's 1% a year and they just aren't telling us.

ERICH

Yet.

Erich puts his hands on Bill's shoulders. He reaches over to the Mac and brings up a graphic of a math quiz.

ERICH

Remember this?

BILL

The algebra problems I gave you when we were petitioning.

CUT TO:

INT. - STATE FAIR TENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

YOUNG ERICH, two years younger (14) and shorter, sits by Bill in a Libertarian Party booth, as Bill works some problems in pencil for him on a newsletter.

Erich's arm drops around Bill's shoulders. Tobey is standing, meeting the public, and Erich gets up and starts collecting signatures on his clipboard again.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ERICH

I really am the same guy.

BILL

I hope you're old enough now.

Erich is now seated at the Mac. Bill gets up and puts his hands on Erich's shoulders, and looks over. DIRECTOR'S LEGAL DISCRETION.

ERICH

Now this is turning into soap opera. You're at the edge, and over.

BILL

You'd be at school in the day time.

ERICH

Except when excused to go do shows.

Erich rests his head against Bill, then pulls away.

ERICH

What are you, Bill, a cat ready to groom? You've kept your paws on long enough.

Bill takes his hands off.

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Bill and Erich are seated at a little table, as Erich makes soup with a propane stove. Erich's shirt is still partly unbuttoned. There are index cards, file boxes, and crayons on the table. The front door squeaks, and a Persian tabby cat comes in through the cat door. The door to the computer lab is now closed. But a small television is on. It shows Omar being interviewed on Larry King Live, playing softly.

OMAR

No, I just want drivers to know about glare. Hitting a pedestrian this way can happen to anybody.

CALLER

You're sure you didn't want to, to
find out what it feels like.

Erich turns off the set.

ERICH

So that's my school work. This is
the life my parents see. Even as
seniors, they make us do term
papers the old-fashioned way. Now
finish your bowls!

Bill savors the tomato soup.

BILL

You still have your life ahead of
you.

ERICH

You could try going back to school,
couldn't you. Train to be a geek
yourself. That is, if I'm not worth
going to jail for.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

With the television on tuned to a second small mystery ebomb
at West Yellowstone, Bill is surfing his own website, when he
finds that his own web essay on 9-11 has been defaced. The
camera shows the words "simultaneous explosions of suitcase
nukes" followed by nonsense characters that, on closer
inspection, may be permutations of the name "Osama bin
Laden." Bill saves the file on his hard drive and quickly
replaces it online (show the computer program WS-FTP).

Bill then reaches for his silver cordless phone but puts it
down.

CUT TO:

INT. SYDNEY'S LIMO - DAY

Tobey rides next to Sydney down a broad boulevard leading to
LAX.

SYDNEY

Well, son, you do get around.
You'll be part of the jet set no
matter what.

(MORE)

Don't fly ~~SOA~~ SYDNEY (cont'd). Even as a young man, watch those legs!

INT. SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT SECURITY SCREENING LINE - DAY.

Tobey, Susannah, Allison, and Izim are going through security together. Allison carries Izim. After they clear the metal detector and carryons, a somewhat wispy looking male screener gives Tobey a pat down. Tobey looks down, quizzically.

INT. 767 PLANE CABIN - DAY

Susannah, Allison, and Tobey are seated on the plane, with Tobey on the window seat. Izim is in Tobey's lap. He looks out.

PILOT

Ladies and gentlemen, we are now passing over Mono Lake, which some say is still the most dangerous inactive volcano in America.

Tobey photographs the caldera and surrounding mountains and the plane on a camcorder. Then he helps Izim do it.

TOBEY

You can stand up, Izzy. They really won't make us return if you do.

Tobey holds Izim and helps him operate the digital camera.

SUSANNAH

After a morning like this, you're glad to be back in Law.

TOBEY

Well, I'll help people. Lawyers face their own tribunals anyway. How did your hearing come out?

Susannah takes Allison's hand, and a tear comes to her eye. Tobey notices only now that her own hands still have burn scars.

SUSANNAH

He really wants me to turn in my silver oak leaf. Would you believe that? Like I can hunt down the terrorists in a civilian suit.

ALLISON

Tobey, yes, you could help with this.

TOBEY

Is that part of the shadow convention? I mean, she can't speak at it and keep her job.

ALLISON

Whereas you can.

TOBEY

Well, now. Actually, though, it's not that easy for showbiz people to go political, either. Until you're really on the A-list already.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTPLACEMENT COMPANY - MORNING

Bill walks into a hypermodern suburban office of his outplacement company, and sits in a small conference room furnished with Ikea chairs and tables. DEE, 45, opens his file. Bill takes out a copy of his own authored "Do Ask, Do Tell" book with its striking black-and-white cover.

DEE

So, I see we have a celebrity in the house.

BILL

I know. My name is out there in public. People will find me on Google. Will employers care as long as I'm not a manager?

DEE

I don't know. Maybe they will. I can have you talk to Frankie L'Istesso. He runs our own consulting services company. Maybe you could stay here for the day, over lunch.

BILL

Oh, like I won't get away with this.

INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE AT OUTPLACEMENT COMPANY - AFTERNOON

Bill walks in to a larger office where there are several small chairs in front of a large oakwood desk, covered with family pictures and trophies. The wall is covered with military diplomas and business school degrees.

BILL

Frankie.

FRANK

Bill? You must think we're a setup.
Well, we are.

BILL

You think I lost my job because I'm not geeky enough.

FRANK

Nerdy but not geeky. All I said that day was not professional enough. But you probably think we could use you.

BILL

I've been around for thirty years. That's longer than you. Yes, I can judge who is dedicated.

FRANK

But you also realize our clients will already know who you are. Now, have your books and your websites made you any money yet?

BILL

It takes a long time.

FRANK

Well, too long. You know you can't make any money without guerilla marketing something. So if they get in the way, why do you keep them up?

BILL

Well, I'm proud of it.

FRANK

Then find somebody to buy it. Then maybe you could help us pick candidates for our training academy.

INT. WHIRLPOOL AND SWIMMING AREA OF BALLY'S HOLIDAY - AFTERNOON

Bill is soaking in the hot whirlpool (replete with posted health warnings including one about diarrhea) when he looks across the pool and notices Tobey's head out of the water in the olympic lanes. Tobey is lightly bearded. Izim is paddling around, and Tobey is lightly holding him up. Sheila comes by and also helps, but Tobey motions her away. Bill makes hesitant eye contact and drops it. Tobey swims a lap to the other side, with Izim following. Tobey then gets out of the pool and turns around. He is in top physical condition; his chest is highly haired, his legs heavily. He takes Izzy in arms, points towards himself, and approaches.

TOBEY

Bill? Same old same old?

Bill climbs out. He blinks as he maintains some eye contact.

BILL

Tobey! Great. So you go here.

TOBEY

And you get to talk to me one on one. Well, law students shouldn't spend too much time behind computers, should they, Bill

Tobey puts Izim down and offers his hand. Bill takes it.

BILL

I'm relieved. Well, I took my package.

TOBEY

You going back to DC, for your mother?

BILL

Maybe, when the lease expires. Jobs are gonna be tough.

TOBEY

Okay, Bill. Maybe you can get your chance.

(MORE)

William and Mary want to do a Bill
 of Rights 2 debate this summer.

BILL
 I'm interested!

SHELIA
 But I'm not right now. Come on
 Tobey.

Sheila leads him away by the waist, leaving Izim to hang
 around Bill.

CUT TO:

INT. EMBERS RESTAURANT, MINNEAPOLIS - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill and Tobey (clean shaven and in shorts and T shirt) are
 sharing dinner, and Bill's authored book is on the table.

EXT. STATE FAIR - DAY - FLASHBACK

Tobey and Erich are gathering signatures onto their
 clipboard. Bill, holding another clipboard, watches and then
 faces the crowd.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. WHIRLPOOL AND SWIMMING AREA OF BALLY'S HOLIDAY -
 CONTINUOUS

Tobey walks toward the deep end of the pool, and Bill
 follows.

TOBEY
 OKay, Bill.

Izzy runs towards Bill and grabs his glassy thigh.

IZZI
 You be a second Daddy? You swim
 too?

BILL
 I'm not sure I remember how.

Tobey offers his hand again.

INT. TOBEY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tobey and Shelia wrestle around in bed. She tickles his beard, backs up, pulls up his pantlegs over sockless slippers and massages his shins and calves.

SHEILA

I've stopped working on that program. No more free songs. Just your beefcake.

TOBEY

So it's just me. You need me that much.

SHELIA

I don't have to worry about being licensed. You do. You really want to be a lawyer, like I really believe it.

TOBEY

And it feels like you're getting to know my legs.

She collapses onto him, and undoes the first button of his shirt.

SHELIA

That millstone Bill never got to, did he.

TOBEY

Well, you know everything about me, and you still love me.

SHELIA

It's not hard.

She finishes the unbuttoning, massages and kisses his lightly haired chest, and then reaches for his belt buckle.

CUT TO:

INT. OMNI HOTEL BALLROOM, SLDN BENEFIT - EVENING

Bill is milling around among about 500 people dressed in business attire, a few in military uniforms. Multi-media images of the US flag and of soldiers in ceremony fill the wall. CHAD MCEHERY, 40 and very slightly paunched, dressed in Navy whites, is having a champaign.

BILL

You couldn't get back in, could you? I thought you were trying for the Reserves.

CHAD

Sure. Like we're still negotiating.

BILL

They need someone who speaks even languages.

CHAD

They do. And your website still reminds them of that.

BILL

Well..

CHAD

I'm still mentioned on it.

BILL

You're not the only subject. But..

CUT TO:

EXT. GAY PRIDE LORING PARK AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Bill is standing at the Libertarian Party tent. Several LP faithfuls are manning the booth, but not Tobey or Erich. Chad, who looks spindly but has a big protease paunch approaches, dressed in shorts and an Aidswalk t-shirt. He offers his hand.

BILL

Chad, you've gained..

CHAD

Language school, we sit in booths with microphones. Worse than sitting before a computer.

EXT. CHAD'S BEACH HOUSE, INTERIOR ATRIUM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Chad's terrier plays with Bill while Chad reads Bill's manuscript, titled "Do Ask Do Tell."

CUT BACK TO:

INT. OMNI HOTEL BALLROOM, SLDN BENEFIT - CONTINUOUS

The national anthem starts to play. Chad withdraws his hand and grips it with his other hand as if it hurts.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL COMPUTER CLASS - DAY

Erich is demonstrating a project as the bell rings. He runs into COREY, 18, slightly dark of complexion and quite large in both height and weight, and GRIFFIN, 18, freckled and also pudgy, follow him from the class as Erich tries to move away from them. Erich, and then the two other boys, enter the gym and locker rooms. The two pudgy boys open their lockers but look reluctant to change, while Erich looks natty in gym clothes. He picks up some bats and a catcher's mask.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD, WISCONSIN - DAY

The field is enclosed with an asymmetrical padded outfield fence. There is a small crowd. BRIAN Jzzet (Erich's dad, 44, bald but tall and lean) sits behind and is egging the boys on. Erich is sitting in the dugout.

The scoreboard shows the home team behind 5-4 with two outs in the bottom of the eighth.

A soft line drive lands in right field. The right fielder immediately picks it up and rifles it to first base, as the slow runner COREY waddles towards first and doesn't make it in time.

ERICH

This just doesn't happen, Corey.
That's supposed to be a base hit.

Another overweight but short boy, GRIFFIN, 18, swings and misses at a pitch. There are tears in his eyes as he walks back to the plate.

ERICH

You really are too old for this,
Griffin. We gave you a chance.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD, WISCONSIN, DAY - LATER

The scoreboard shows the home team behind 5-4 with no outs in the bottom of the ninth. The teams are in gym clothes rather than uniforms. The bases have been moved in for softball.

Corey walks up to bat again.

ERICH

It's OK to bunt this time,
Lazybones.

Core takes one pitch and then swings at one and hits a weak roller around the plate. The catcher picks it up and throws to first wildly. Erich runs and hobbles to first as the right fielder picks it up.

Erich walks up to the plate to bat, right handed. There is a runner at first. The pitcher, left-handed, throws a slow pitch. Erich winds up on it and lofts a fly down the left-field line. He hesitates for a moment, then starts running. The ball is almost caught but hits the fence near the left-field foul pole, and bounces back. The runner at first scores when the outfield relay goes wild. Erich runs home and slides and is safe.

Erich's Dad, DABNEY Jzzet (44) runs out onto the field.

DABNEY

Son, you were supposed to bunt.

ERICH

This time I didn't sacrifice
myself.

DABNEY

You wanted to impress that old man,
didn't you. I bet he drove out
here.

Bill is in the stands, looking down. Erich looks up at him, then at his Dad.

ERICH

I wanted to prove that I can win.

CUT TO:

EXT. US 395 IN OWENS VALLEY IN CALIFORNIA - DAY

Bill drives his silver rented Nissan through Bishop, off the highway, on a dirt road towards a property with one four-story L-shaped building, and an athletic field in the distance. There is a sign that reads "Handyman Academy."

Bill drives along the road to the otherside of the athletic field, where he can see men jogging in the distance. He takes out some binoculars, and he can see the men running, with some electrodes attached to their chests and legs. One of the men is Tobey.

EXT. US 395 AT MONO LAKE - LATER

Bill stops and takes pictures of Mono Lake.

CUT TO:

EXT. A POND IN YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Erich, dressed in an Eagle Scout uniform with shorts, wades into a pool with a calibrated flood pole. Other boy scouts follow him. The day is warm although there are piles of unmelted snow in the piney woods along the pond.

BOYS

Brrrrr.

ERICH

Don't like to freeze my gams either. Look, the pond is one foot deeper than a year ago.

BOYS

Just the snowmelt, stupid.

ERICH

No, I mean the pond has sunk. I've grown those two inches myself. You see me right?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN TRIBECCA, NYC - DAY

Allison and Tobey are walking in sight of the WTC site. Drizzle is falling; the nearby buildings hide behind fog.

ALLISON

But, Tobey, law was still your second choice. I mean, you'd love the limelight, being in Straight Boys.

TOBEY

I want both.

They are crossing the street, when suddenly a turning cab clips Tobey. He falls sideways onto the hood and then onto the street. The cab brakes, appearing to run over Tobey's leg, then backs up. Allison screams and dials 911 on her cell phone immediately. Sirens are heard almost immediately.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBERTARIAN PARTY HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Bill is filming a brown copy of the Declaration of Independence, pasted on the wall, with his Sony camcorder. He turns back to FORREST (42, thin with jowls in his face) who is pounding away at a computer.

FORREST

I mean, if the government clamps down with this Patriot Act, it's fine for us. It just means we get more members.

Bill turns off the camcorder.

BILL

Thanks.

FORREST

You'll really get a release.

BILL

I'll work on it.

FORREST

You'd do it for Tobey. You heard what happened?

BILL

He finally got a movie part? Like that wasn't just my rumor?

FORREST

Not good. He got hit by a car. A cabbie. In New York, walking to work with his boss.

INT. METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH IN MINNEAPOLIS - MORNING

Bill leaves the piano to take communion. The assistant dips the wafer in the wine, and the celebrant puts her hands on his shoulders.

BILL

I don't do this much. I want to pray for Tobey.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Bill is working on the computer. CNN Reliable Sources is talking to an NTSB expert on car crashes.

EXPERT ON CNN

There are more fatalities in New York from right turns than any other maneuver.

Bill looks up, then keeps working. The phone handset, clumsily wired and placed on the sofa head, rings. He races over and picks up the handle, as the cradle falls down on his unplugged Yamaha keyboard.

BILL

Hello.

ERICH (O.S.)

Caught you home. At a bad moment. You know, dropsy.

BILL

I don't get visitors real often.

ERICH

This is your studio, Bill.

BILL

Great. Let me see if I remember how to do this.

ERICH

Sound like you're hiding from process servers. I think its 9 in these apartment buildings.

BILL
You're the geek squad.

Bill presses the phone pad. He walks over and sees his screensaver has frozen his PC mouse.

BILL
Not enough time for scandisk. Damn.

For a moment, there is dead air, except for the street truck traffic. A warm breeze from the open balcony ruffles some papers on the carpeted floor. The door hinge knocks. Bill runs over and opens it.

Erich walks in, in shorts, sports shirt half unbuttoned without undershit, sandals and no socks, a "typical" teenage boy. He slaps Bill's hand with a High 5. Then, he smirks and hugs Bill.

The TV is still on. They show a picture of Tobey in traction in a hospital room, but Bill has missed what he said.

ERICH
I think I know him, too. But turn
it down.

Bill turns off the TV as Eric sits at Bill's computer, which is on an old wooden desk.

ERICH
I see your puter froze before I
could get here. Your hard drive is
no playpen. No Google rainbow
balls.

BILL
You read my mind.

ERICH
It's better than asking and
telling. Try safe mode. You know
how to do that, sport?

Bill disconnects the machine and replugs it into his surge protector. It fails quickly again with the "blue screen of death."

BILL
It won't boot. Damn.

ERICH
So, some hacker attacked your
machine? Like I know who.
(MORE)

ERICH (cont'd). Well, you ERICH (cont'd). Where's your rescue disk? And, by the way, where are your swimshorts? You know, you're at no return.

Erich touches Bill's collar. DIRECTOR'S DISCRETION. Bill's mouth crinkles.

BILL

Old men like me shouldn't wear shorts in public.

ERICH

I get it. Because you went bald in the legs and you don't ride or swim as an excuse.

Bill fumbles around with a cardboard box, looking for the disk, and finally pulls it out.

ERICH

Look. I'll drive. Find a lawn chair from your kitchenette. You know, the Titanic.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Erich is focused on a dump on the screen, and navigates on a black screen with the command prompt.

BILL

So that's the corrupted file? You can really read all this machine code.

ERICH

Yup, I'm super-geek. And I think better adapted, because I can play sports, too. Like Clark Kent.

BILL

Not Jake 2.0?

Erich runs some programs, and the screen flashes by multiple technical websites.

ERICH

Yup, tech support. Well, I see your ISP leaves the Unix Site Command open. And I can find a cache of the corrupted file there. Dangerous stuff.

(MORE)

Be glad you have friends like me.
Geek Squad would charge a few
hundred for this.

BILL

So you work for 'em.

ERICH

You got it. Tech support. Don't
tell 'em I came over for free.

BILL

This is fun. I think they are
talking about the suitcase nukes
stolen from Russia.

ERICH

Three sites. You know, bald men
like you in good clothes smuggle
them. Actually, this looks like it
came the Tooele Depot.

BILL

Oh? Our own government. So that
means this is classified.

ERICH

Well does it matter. Somebody here
is in cahoots. But they look for
accomplices.

BILL

Not like you.

ERICH

Weakies like you. There are plenty
of 'em among my classmates. At my
school. You're right. We shouldn't
trust the Russians.

BILL

George W. Bush never talked about
this. The real enemy still could be
Russia, communism.

ERICH

Well, you're trying to start a war,
all right. Look here, I'll show you
a few tidbits and freebees.

Erich types. Bill's hand gently brushes Erich's hairy thigh.
Eirch keeps typing. Some classified documents from FEMA come
up.

A website comes up showing "Evacuation after a volcanic eruption at Mono Lake."

Then, "Evacuation of the Yellowstone area."

Finally, "infrastructure recovery after a ground-level electromagnetic pulse generation detonation."

ERICH

And you want to know what happens to people who go to that Academy you visited at Mono Lake?

Erich strokes a few more commands at the prompt on the black screen, and a webcam comes up, showing Patrick, his chest covered with electrodes as he runs on a treadmill in an exercise lab. Suddenly, the screen turns blue.

BILL

I know that guy! Shit! Another crash.

ERICH

I guess you weren't supposed to see that. You can take care of it, I taught you. Let's do your swimming lesson.

INT. APARTMENT ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Bill and Erich ride together up the elevator, and Erich smiles at him, then measures himself, now a few inches taller than Bill.

INT. APARTMENT SWIMMING POOL

Bill is kicking in the pool, on his back. Erich is in neck deep and then jumps up, lifting Bill against his chest.

ERICH

Come on. Arch your back! I'm gonna let you go.

Erich backstrokes to the edge, on the 8-foot side, and sits on the edge, his hairy legs dangling.

ERICH

Bill, come and get me.

Bill finally dogpaddles toward the edge and grabs Erich's knees.

BILL
(gasping)
I know. I'm over your edge.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLISON'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

Omar sits in front of Allison, who is set up behind an impressive desk. The view is of lower Manhattan, and there are law degrees on the wall as long as pictures of Susannah and Izum.

ALLISON
So you really want me to defend you.

OMAR
He was...

ALLISON
I am his boss, right.

OMAR
I remember being blinded.

ALLISON
But it was drizzling.

OMAR
I'll do community service. I'll deal. I don't have a family. I can give up my career. Just once more. Give me another chance.

ALLISON
You know, I was about to let Izzy meet you. I mean, if you're going to hang out when we run around. I mean, Tobey already knows about Izzy's real parents.

OMAR
Yeah. You have him running to him

ALLISON
He'd need a daddy, still.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL REHAB THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Tobey walks slowly to his chair with his cast on, while Allison and Izim watch. Soon the doctors are cutting off the cast, revealing the leg. Izim starts to cry.

TOBEY

Well, if I can't model again I can do Bill's debate.

Izim runs toward him.

TOBEY

Izim, if you don't want to look at me, then will Bill?

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Bill finishes restarting his computer, and dials on to AOL. He enters his own domain name into the display line.

INSERT

This domain has been closed. No other information is available.

END INSERT

Bill fumbles his cell phone and then brings in the (new) cordless handset from the bedroom. He dials and gets through the menus.

ISP VOICE

Hello, this is Brett in tech support. Domain name, please.

BILL

Hppub.com. Let me cut to the chase. It comes up as being closed. It's not even temporary!

ISP VOICE

Yes, Mr. Ldzek, I see that we closed it at 11:30 this morning pending a terms of service investigation.

BILL

About what?

ISP VOICE

I'm going to ask a customer care
shift manager to speak to you.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

ISP MANAGER

Mr. Ldzek, I don't know how to say
it. Our attorney's asked me to.
Your material is so controversial
that it attracts too many hackers
and jeopardizes other customers.

BILL

But I count on you for security.

ISP MANAGER

You know you're playing the same
game. Get with it!

CUT TO:

INT. THE PENTAGON, WASHINGTON, PRESS ROOM - DAY

Susannah is standing in full dress uniform, receiving an
award. Allison and Izim are in the audience of about twenty
people who are applauding.

SUSANNAH

And, actually, this is Arlington!

GEN. MEYERS

See, that was best quality, always
so accurate. So, starting Monday,
Col. York will be doing, well,
almost the same job, intelligence,
working for me. You want to say
something.

SUSANNAH

It's going to be public relations.
Trying to keep it from getting any
worse than it has to. Seriously, I
will miss this uniform. You don't
know how proud it make me to wear a
uniform of the Armed Forces of the
United States in front of you as we
make this announcement.

On a credenza near the exit from the press room, there is a single copy of a local gay paper with headlines that read, "JUST A GOOD CIVILIAN."

INT. THE PENTAGON, WASHINGTON, PRESS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They are enjoying hors d'oeuvres at a little reception. Brian Jzzet approaches Susannah.

BRIAN

An odd job for someone in your situation. You can really go public as a civilian? It makes that much difference?

SUSANNAH

We decided it was OK for us. We can go through with the adoption.

BRIAN

And you can raise a kid. Two women.

SUSANNAH

Especially when no one else wants to!

Allison approaches and extracts Susannah from the confrontation.

ALLISON

I think Tobey could have got this put off.

CUT TO:

INT. PHYSICAL REHAB ROOM, OUTPATIENT, HOSPITAL - DAY

Tobey is doing leg lifts, while lying on his back on a tumbling mat. The room opens with a view of lower Manhattan, including the Ground Zero site. There are other various kinds of exercise equipment around the room, such as parallel bars and stairs. Tobey's leg is still in an air cast.

Bill walks in, just as another middle-aged white male patient is starting to walk with one artificial leg between parallel bars. Tobey looks up.

TOBEY

Bill? Hold on.

Tobey watches the man take his first step, and then Bill turns around and watches to. Everyone in the room claps. Bill does so, hesitantly.

TOBEY

Glad you found me again. Not so nice this time.

BILL

You're coming back.

TOBEY

Well, it looks like I'll spend a career arguing before juries after all. You know, actors have to take care of your legs. You said that.

BILL

Well..

TOBEY

You want to do your shadow convention. My boss is helping set up one in Colonial Williamsburg. You know, Bill, you're right. You couldn't have been a trial lawyer, either.

BILL

Because I'd have to leave the debate to those

TOBEY

Well funded organizations.

BILL

So I couldn't even win arguments, let alone converts.

TOBEY

Except in shadow conventions.

BILL

Otherwise you have to be a man who deserves authority, don't you. I mean, to motivate people.

TOBEY

Do I still deserve it, Bill?

Tobey gives him a high five.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG, GAOL GROUNDS - DAY

Susannah is finishing a press conference. Behind her there is a banner that reads "Homeland Security: Shadow Convention Debate".

Brian walks up to her as she steps down.

BRIAN

Kind of a neat stunt, a press conference in front of a 18th Century pillory.

SUSANNAH

I guess we have to hang tough.

BRIAN

You sound tough. You came out of this all right. You don't feel compromised, doing the same work as a civilian.

SUSANNAH

What, you question my integrity Sir.

BRIAN

I don't think people like you should have anything to do with our Armed Forces at all. And your adopting a kid?

SUSANNAH

Someone from abroad who needs parents. From Egypt, through a children's charity.

BRIAN

Well, our own teenage son was accosted.

SUSANNAH

You son did the PBS spot on hackers. I saw that. Good work.

BRIAN

The guy who did it wrote that damn book about people like you in the military. You know, an older man who likes to hang around younger kids.

Brian reaches inside his jacket and shows her an FBI card.

SUSANNAH

You just want to make a point.

BRIAN

I am a computer man, too, like my son. But I made agent. As gifted as Erich is, I don't think he'll make it. He has to stay away from the dark side. I hear you have kids now, a little one.

SUSANNAH

A joy.

BRIAN

So you must know. What it's like to be real good.

SUSANNAH

All of this will take time.

BRIAN

Even the events here.

CUT TO:

INT. GARDEN APARTMENT BEDROOM - EVENING

The camera shows an ordinary suburban garden apartment and then the bedroom, where Bill lies face up on a floor mattress as a middle-aged masseur, BERT, 49, thinning sandy hair, well built, in bath towel with balding legs and not the paradigm of gay sexual attractiveness, leans over, manipulating his pubes. The television is playing Episode 1 of TheWB "Smallville Beginnings."

The television shows Jonathan talking to Clark.

JONATHAN (O.S.)

The truth, son.

Bill starts to rise.

BILL

The good part is coming.

BERT

TV is more important than this?
It's all pretend. This is real.

Bill's cell phone goes off while the television shows Clark vaporizing.

INT. BILL'S FORD ESCORT - MOMENTS LATER

Bill shuffles the newspapers on the seat.

BILL

Boy, if I were a senior home
companion I will have to clean this
up.

Bill dials some numbers clumsily on the cell phone and hears the message.

VOICE ON PHONE

Bill, you need to know this. Your
mother was taken to the hospital.

Bill paces the room and then looks at literature on various eldercare problems, like strokes, CGF, and the like.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - LATER

Bill is sitting by his computer, the television on to "Jake 2.0," as he holds his steel-colored cordless phone.

BILL

I've bought a discount ticket to
come to the Williamsburg human
rights forum in two weeks anyway.

He looks at a site for an SNFs on his computer.

BILL

We have to make some other
arrangements.

VOICE ON PHONE

I guess you will do what you want,
Bill. She is your mother, you know.
Just call if you need anything.

INT. MSP AIRPORT, SECURITY CHECKPOINT - DAY

Bill is going through the security arch, having removed his worn tennis shoes. He is picking up his laptop off the trap where it has been laid open.

TSA SCREENER

Would you start the computer,
please?

Bill pushes the button and gets a blue screen indicating a system failure.

INT. MSP AIRPORT, NWA AIRLINES GATE - DAY

Bill is in line, now without his laptop, but still has the carrying case with personal papers. He is about to hand his boarding pass to the gate agent when a TSA screener approaches him.

TSA SCREENER-2

Sir, we have to do a pat down.

INT. AIRLINE COCKPIT, BOEING 727 - DAY

Bill is seated toward the back, over the wing, where there is a hissing sound. He looks out over the West Virginia mountains and stripmines, very visible on a clear day.

PILOT (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, we now have exactly thirty minutes until landing at Reagan National Airport. In accordance with FAA rules, you must stay in your seats for the remainder of the flight. There are no exceptions.

INT. AVIS RENT-A-CAR COUNTER, NATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Bill, with his luggage and half-empty laptop case, is standing in a consolidated line, next to be waited on. An FBI Agent, dressed in a conservative black suit and white shirt and dark tie, approaches.

FBI AGENT

Mr. Ldzek?

The agent feints offering a handshake.

BILL

This is he.

FBI AGENT

Mr. Ldzek. You are under arrest for violation of US Code 10.41.33, tampering with a federal installation by telecommunications. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to be represented by an attorney. Any statement you make before that may be held against you.

Two more agents, in breakers with "U.S. Marshalls" inscribed, appear. The agent handcuffs Bill and leads him to a gray Ford Taurus outside, license plate, "US Government." As they are walking to get in, Bill suddenly vomits on the pavement.

BILL

That's the first time in forty years.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC - DAY

Allison and Susannah are hurriedly keeping house while Izim plays with a model train set on the living room floor. The layout is sophisticated, with tunnels and several clusters of buildings, many of them made from Brio blocks.

SUSANNAH

Seems like he has adjusted to less TV. But this is baby play!

ALLISON

Let's hurry. The Child Welfare services inspector will ring us any minute. House interview.

The phone rings. Allison picks up the cell phone and sees a picture on it.

HUMAN SERVICES INSPECTOR (O.S.)

We've postponed until next Monday, given what is going on.

ALLISON

What do you mean?

HUMAN SERVICES INSPECTOR

Turn on the idiot box for a change.

Allison points to the television, and Susannah clicks on the converter DVR box. CNN comes on, with a picture of desert scenery and a city. The banner on the TV says "Sparks, Nevada."

CNN REPORTER (V.O.)

That's it. Two cities in Nevada: Sparks and Laughlin, completely out. No power, all electronics fried, no cars starting. Authorities suggest an e-bomb has gone off somewhere in each city. The affected areas are about fifteen square miles, so they either have to be big bombs, or they were exploded in the air. And, of course, we don't know if this will happen anywhere else. Both cities went down about 1 PM today. And this time, it is in areas with heavy gaming.

CUT TO:

INT. ARLINGTON COUNTY JAIL, COURTHOUSE SQUARE - DAY

Bill is driven through Arlington to the Courthouse Square detention center. Show an aerial shot of the drive (to bring back memory of a similar route on 9-11). Bill is shown being fingerprinted and led to his 6 x 9 cell, with a washbasin and steel toilet. He is on the third floor, that looks down over an open concrete space and two lower levels of cells.

A sheriff's deputy, 49 and female, visits his cell. Bill, in an orange jumpsuit open at the chest and loose in the legs line a robe, sits up.

DEPUTY MILLER

Okay, Mr. Ldzek, I came to ask you if you have an attorney to call.

BILL

You're not gonna leave the light on all night, are you?

DEPUTY MILLER

Well, if we can get a lawyer to bail you out, it won't matter will it.

BILL

I'd need to get the number. I can find him on the Internet.

DEPUTY MILLER

Obviously we don't allow that. We have to have a social worker look him up tomorrow. A lot of the Net's down tonight. Like a third of the country.

BILL

What? Hackers?

DEPUTY MILLER

Sort of. Look, they'll help you tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSEMBLY OF GOD, SPARTA WI - EVENING

Under candlelight, teenagers, reasonably dressed, are raising their hands in a religious revival. Brian (the minister) touches a young woman who is babbling baby talk, and she falls down. Erich brings a blanket to cover her, when he babbles and falls down himself.

Then the power comes back on.

CUT TO:

INT. ARLINGTON COUNTY JAIL, COURTHOUSE SQUARE - NIGHT

Bill is tossing and turning on the cot, light on. Dinner is uneaten. He runs over to the toilet to vomit.

CUT TO:

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Erich is burning CD's on both of his machines. The screen focuses on Roxio for a moment to convey this. The door knocks and Brian walks in.

BRIAN

Up here early this morning, son?

ERICH

You can't be too careful. That lights out thing was a scare for me. Everything's all right again here. But not in Minneapolis.

BRIAN

What do you mean, son?

ERICH

Well, if an E-bomb goes off around here we lose everything. But CD's are optical. I even burned Bill's stuff. Good thing for him. A bomb went off near the Fed Reserve Building. I think he would have interviewed there.

BRIAN

Well, he got what's coming to him. He's in jail for the first time in his life.

ERICH

Dad, cool it. You could've trusted me.

CUT TO:

INT. ARLINGTON COUNTY JAIL, COURTHOUSE SQUARE - AFTERNOON

Deputy Miller leads Bill, still manacled at wrists and ankles, to a social worker's office in the jail.

DEPUTY MILLER

Don't worry. She has a work computer. Too bad you don't have better friends.

Bill sits down as DEBBIE MEEKS, 26, thin and black, pounds on her computer, that is visibly just Windows 98.

BILL

There's one guy who can help me. He was setting up the event at William and Mary. But we have to look him up at the U of M.

DEPUTY MILLER

He didn't have a regular lawyer.

DEBBIE MEEKS

Most people don't unless they were slip-fall artists. We don't have to understand them.

BILL

Will you let me talk up through locating him.

DEBBIE MEEKS

That's what we do. Skip trace. Like the sheriff does, for his process servers.

BILL

You have to navigate through Google to find him.

CUT TO:

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Two FBI agents, with the typical blue sweatjackets reading "FBI", pick up all five computers in Bill's apartment (including two laptops and one iMac). Outside, the streets around his building are still closed for police investigation.

FBI AGENT 1

I hope the hard drive still tracks.

FBI AGENT 2

Well, this is the opposite corner. The property manager said some things work on this side of the building.

FBI AGENT 1

So you think the terrorist really wanted to hit the Federal Reserve? Why Minneapolis only?

FBI AGENT 2

That's the closest thing to a casino in Minneapolis.

FBI AGENT 1

Sure, and there's Mystic Lake twenty miles south.

FBI AGENT 2

It closed for the day. Precaution.

FBI AGENT 1

It'll take a while to get back to normal. What next?

FBI AGENT 2

I'll hit the Saloon tonight. Watch for the break dancers.

CUT TO:

INT. ARLINGTON COUNTY JAIL, COURTHOUSE SQUARE - EVENING

Bill is seated in his cell with half-eaten dinner, the slop remaining on an aluminum tray, when Allison appears. Deputy Miller lets him in.

BILL

You're appointed as my lawyer.

ALLISON

It's as you hoped. Tobey called me. I guess he is a good friend again.

BILL

I thought he always was.

ALLISON

Well.

BILL

Look, you're going to be my lawyer. What are the charges.

ALLISON

Well, Bill, do you realize that you make enemies?

BILL

Maybe I have that tendency. So somebody wanted to take me out.

ALLISON

Who do you think would, Bill?

BILL

Oh, average Joes. People who think I am neglecting them, relegating them, and therefore against them by definition.

ALLISON

I get it. You ever got hostile communications before?

BILL

One guy didn't like what I said about The Perfect Storm, that it was a movie about average fisherman, that the book made the reader identify with people like that. But what's the charge? I mean, how can they hold me and not be more specific.

ALLISON

They say you passed on information to terrorists.

BILL

How.

ALLISON

You didn't hear. There were three e-bombs set off late yesterday around the country. One near your apartment.

BILL

Sure, after I was arrested.

ALLISON

They've picked up the computers in your apartment. We haven't heard yet whether they were damaged by the blast.

BILL

So there must have been contamination on my website.

ALLISON

The government is saying that you provided pointers and codes to activate the bombs.

BILL

Steganography.

ALLISON

You know the word.

BILL

They must have been put on my website by a hacker. I just overlaid the file when I found it, but the ISP shut me down two weeks later anyway. Look, though, why am I in a county jail, anyway. The fibbies usually prefer Old Town.

ALLISON

Be careful what you ask for. There's another little charge that we ought to get rid of. A misdemeanor in Wisconsin. Indecency with a minor. Named Erich Jzzet?

She looks surprised.

BILL

Oh. Let me think. As long as we were in my apartment in Minneapolis it was OK. It could always happen. Meet somebody on the road.

ALLISON

Yeah, you mixed 'em up. Like a history test.

EXT. ALEXANDRIA OLD TOWN - DAY

A government car transfer to the federal jail in Alexandria.

INT. ALEXANDRIA JAIL - DAY

Bill is transported from his new cell, which is somewhat larger, to a conference room, where Allison is present.

ALLISON

You'll have a bail hearing tomorrow. Of course. The government wants one million. That means you need a hundred thousand cash.

BILL

What am I supposed to do, raid my IRA? I've got two months until the 10% penalty goes away. It would take ING several days to set it up. And then, your fee.

ALLISON

One hundred seventy five an hour.

BILL

And what do I do with my life if I get off. Just be a good person to be around? They shut me up.

ALLISON

We can still get you down to the debate in Williamsburg. Maybe. They may want to do the arraignment quickly, and the thing with Erich doesn't help now.

BILL

That could make me legit, all right.

ALLISON

Well, we don't have much time.

INT. BANK OF AMERICA LOBBY - DAY

Bill, a plain clothes escort, and Allison sit in a banker's office as they sign papers for Bill to set up a large withdrawal. They are leaving for the car to go to court.

ALLISON

And your mother doesn't know about this?

BILL

She comes back home tomorrow. This trip was a two for one.

ALLISON

Well?

BILL

A mild one. This will be hard.

INT. FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT ALEXANDRIA - AFTERNOON

Bill, dressed still in a jumper, stands with Allison, with the prosecutor on the other side. JOHN MANDIBLE, 36, redhead and stout, is the U.S. Attorney, and stands overdressed for his own presence.

JUDGE HURLEY

Mr. Ldzek, you are charged with aiding a terrorist act by computer. Now the purpose of this proceeding is to set an arraignment date. Now first, Mr. Ldzek, you may enter a plea if you like. Counsel?

Allison looks at Bill and shakes her head.

BILL

Not guilty, your honor.

JUDGE HURLEY

Does the government have any comment?

PROSECUTOR MANDIBLE

Truthfully, there is no criminal record, your honor, and no real flight risk. However, the damage from the attacks to the communities affected is enormous. Many homes and small businesses have lost all of their computerized records forever. This is not just a power blackout, your honor.

JUDGE HURLEY

You're going to have to show that his acts really contributed to this damage. You'll be able to take this up in a pre-arraignment conference. Bail is set at one million dollars. Now the terms of release are that you not have any access to a computer until the trial, and that you accept home detention monitoring. We can work out where you may go in my chambers.

CUT TO:

INT. SANDLOT BASEBALL FIELD - AFTERNOON

Erich, in shorts and t-shirt, is fungoing baseballs to Corey and Griffin on a late spring day. Griffin lets a grounder near second base go through his legs, and then Corey comes in too far and a fly goes over his head and bounces toward the fence.

ERICH

Okay, you guys. Just one more chance to pay your dues.

INT. BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Griffin and Corey tag along as Erich walks along the field to the dugouts.

ERICH

You guys don't even try. You don't care about making a baseball team, do you.

GRIFFIN

We don't. We want the jibberish files.

COREY

You know what we want them for.

ERICH

Sure, cause you don't measure up. You don't get the point. God decides who is better, after all.

Erich pushes the boys away, and then walks up into a small press box, where he turns off his DV cam.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXANDRIA JAIL OUTPROCESSING - DAY

Bill signs some papers in front of Allison and a young male clerk. Another plain clothesman, young, approaches.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN

I'm going to put on the ankle monitor now. Can you pull up?

Bill hesitantly pulls up a pantleg and down on a white sock, revealing hairless leg.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN

This is going to feel cold now. Good thing you're an older man. You don't need to shave.

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE - DAY

Bill takes his house key and lets himself and Allison in to the house, and they walk down the steps to the recreation room. The room is paneled with many family pictures, biblical maps and paintings. There are two computers on an aluminum table along the wall. There is informal furniture and an undersized, chartreuse ping-pong table. There is a miniature, varnished plywood baseball stadium model on a coffee table. It is a bit crude, as if it had been a high school shop project.

BILL

I want to tell you my story before
Mother gets here.

ALLISON

Well, let me tell you a little of
mine first. If you listen, I can
save you some money.

BILL

I promise not to turn on the
computers. My AOL is taken away.
It's back to people.

The doorbell rings upstairs, and two plain clothesmen appear when Bill answers.

PLAINCLOTHESMAN

We're here to pick up your
computers. In the basement?

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Now the computers are missing. Allison walks around and puts her hand on the empty, clean space on the aluminum table.

ALLISON

Susannah called me at 8:55 AM that
morning.

CUT TO:

EXT. IWO JIMA MEMORIAL - FLASHBACK

This is a video clip at 7:30 AM on 9-11-2001. Susannah, in uniform, talks to a reporter.

SUSANNAH

When I grew up I heard the idea
that all people should be exposed
to things military. Even females.

REPORTER

So you thought it was unfair only
women were drafted.

SUSANNAH

You're an objective reporter? Right
on. It was insulting. Ever see
"Never wave at a WAC"?

INT. PENTAGON WEST SIDE, OUTER CORRIDOR OFFICE - MORNING -
FLASHBACK

Susannah, in full dress, quickly rearranges objects on her
desk, fitting in a picture of Allison and Izim. She picks it
up and ponders for a moment, touching the image of Izim.
SPECIALIST MUNOZ (female) walks in with some paperwork.

MUNOZ

Here are the rogue emails, Ma'am.

SUSANNAH

From AOL?

MUNOZ

Yes, ma'am. G2 says were lucky.
Ldzek read the email while he was
in Canada, so they have the
authority to capture.

Susannah manipulates her computer and looks at some code.
GENERAL AUGUST, 55, white-haired, walks in.

AUGUST

There is something to watch,
Colonel. Something has happened at
the World Trade Center.

A large television flat screen shows the North Tower burning.

INT. PENTAGON WEST SIDE, OUTER CORRIDOR OFFICE - MOMENTS
LATER

Susannah is on the phone with the door closed.

SUSANNAH

Allison. Don't listen to their advice. Get out now... For our son's sake.

INT. WORLD TRADE CENTER SOUTH TOWER - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Allison is on the phone in her 80th floor office and can see smoke coming from the North Tower.

INT. PENTAGON WEST SIDE, OUTER CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Susannah, dressed in Army Greens (she is a LTC with silver oak leaf) is talking on a phone, motioning a female private away from her family pictures of Allison and Izum.

SUSANNAH

No, get out now, Allie. I know.

ALLISON

So ignore them? They told us to stay put, that it was a small accident. I've got a deposition in twenty minutes on Omar's accident.

SUSANNAH

Think about it. How could it be. That was a big plane. I can go home and check on Izim's placement after the meeting.

Allison hangs up and heads for the stairs. On split screen, Susannah heads for a conference room where she sees a feed on the second plane hitting the WTC South Tower. She puts her hand over her mouth but says nothing.

INT. WTC STAIRWELL - DAY

Allison and others march calmly down the stairwell as the lights go out. Thuddy noises of things falling drown the background.

INT. PENTAGON WEST SIDE, OUTER CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Susannah pulls a young male officer out of a fire and puts out a fire about his legs, before a wall, burning, falls down on her legs.

INT. ARLINGTON HOSPITAL NEXT DAY - MORNING

After a quick overhead shot of ambulances running through Arlington, Susannah lies in bed, her legs in bandages, with iv's in her arms. Allison walks in quickly, crying. She wants to take her hand and the nurse pushes her away.

NURSE

Infection. She is going to San Antonio tomorrow. She's a real hero

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

BILL

But you got out unharmed.

ALLISON

I heard the boom as I passed about the 60th floor. I was relatively by myself as I got into the lobby, but the panic came very quickly. I saw the bodies plop. I was horrible.

BILL

And that was you when.

CUT TO:

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER SITE - OVERPASS - DAY - FLASHBACK

A security guard takes away a camcorder from Bill just after he takes a video of Allison kissing Susannah, dressed in business casual, with Ground Zero in the background. Izim, still a toddler, grabs at Susannah's leg. The camcorder drops to the ground in water.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

ALLISON

It was none of your business.

BILL

But you were in a public place.
Believe it, Sony replaced the
camcorder anyway. They called it
courtesy.

ALLISON

You were lucky.

BILL

But you're making the system work.
You're gonna raise a kid.

ALLISON

Yup, deal with real life. Even if
it takes some force.

Allison wipes some light tears from her eyes.

BILL

It's my turn. I've been still for a
while.

ALLISON

We almost missed the point. You
really did get rogue emails. And
your friends. But you want to tell
me how it all got started.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY BROWN HALL DORM ROOM 1961 - EVENING -
FLASHBACK

The room is narrow, with a bunk bed and two adjoining desks
and two clothes chests. There are rolaidis, neo-synephrine and
iodine bottles on Bill's chest. YOUNG SYDNEY (18), in shorts,
his arms and legs only very lightly haired, sits and writes a
theme in bad "masculine" penmanship. It is titled "MY CLOCK
RADIO." Bill has a bright green shirt and blue pants on.

BILL (V.O.)

Sydney used to say I had a great
future. Until all this.

The Romanza from Schumann's Second Symphony plays, somewhat
muted.

YOUNG SYDNEY

Hey, fine fella, how do you spell
"receive." Why way is it?

YOUNG BILL

Am I allowed to help you? Honor system, you know. It's r-e-c-e-i-v-e. I before E except after C.

YOUNG SYDNEY

You gotta change that music. Boring, slow. No wonder they won't allow that fag classical station in Roanoke. I want my kind a music.

Sydney plays with the dials and gets "Beulah Land" on the clock radio.

YOUNG SYDNEY

Good old fashioned Negro gospel music. That old time religion. Good enough for me. Now, Bill, what I recollect is this. That camper was fifteen years old and smooth faced. Younger looking than you. He screamed twice. And I knew instantly that he was ruined for life.

YOUNG BILL

That doesn't mean anybody would have attacked him. The counselor must have been a real homosexual. Not latent, not somebody who likes bright clothes like me.

YOUNG SYDNEY

You want to jump to conclusions.

YOUNG BILL

No, Sydney, I think you do!

YOUNG SYDNEY

Look, any queer would suck this kid off. They just can't help themselves. They take on this super strength, after midnight, when men sleep. They drain men of their manhood like vampires.

YOUNG BILL

Sounds like I'm Tarzan looking for male semens. And my father says I'm gullible.

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY BROWN HALL PORCH 1961 - AFTERNOON -
FLASHBACK

College boys are scampering on fours around Bill, like the apes in 2001. Bill reaches towards one of the boys' knees.

YOUNG BILL
Gettin' friendly?

The boys scatter like roaches.

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY BROWN HALL DORM ROOM 1961 - EVENING -
FLASHBACK

Bill walks from the empty porch up to his dorm room. He finds a handwritten note scotch-taped to the unlocked door.

INSERT:

In recent room inspections we have noticed excessive patent medicines like rolaids and nose spray and throat paint. Please report to the Dean of Men about this today.

Bill walks into his room and looks at his chest of drawers and picks up the nose drops and rolaids and stuffs them into his trouser pockets. He gently closes the door and runs downstairs and outside. He strolls through the fog across Richmond Road onto the main campus. The early evening drizzle gives the scene a black-and-white look out of place for a colonial campus. He pauses for a moment in front of the Wren Building, walks astride and looks at the sunken garden. He looks at a sign proclaiming the building to be the oldest in North America. He walks up the steps of the building, now deserted for Thanksgiving Friday. He quickly navigates to the Dean's office on the second floor. It is sealed by a milkglass door that seems illuminated from the inside. The door reads:

INSERT

Carson W. Barnes

DEAN OF MEN

Bill knocks, timidly.

CARSON
Bill, come in. I'm waiting for you.

Bill opens the door and sees the Dean seated at his power desk. The only color in the room comes from the green lamp.

There is one wooden chair in front of the large varnished desk. Bill sits down without an extra invitation.

YOUNG BILL

Dean Barnes, you really called me late on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

CARSON

Well, Bill, at least you didn't say Sir. Manners.

YOUNG BILL

If it's just the medicines, I can explain.

Bill wiggles his pocket, reaches for the nose drop bottle in his pocket and then stops. Dean Barnes holds up a bottle of dark red liquid that reads (in elite type) "iodine and glycerine."

CARSON

Mr. Ldzek, this is yours.

YOUNG BILL

For painting my throat. They use metaphen here in the infirmary.

CARSON

Bill, I know you have some allergies. By the way, you do go to the Baptist church.

YOUNG BILL

Yes, sir, it's a bit southern.

CARSON

Rev. Pugh speaks well of you. We can let the campus doctor check out all this on Monday.

They look past each other, and then Carson makes eye contact.

CARSON

Bill, if I may ask, how are you getting along with the other boys in your dorm? You're in Brown. I know it's a bit cramped.

YOUNG BILL

Most of the boys are fine. Good character. Manly.

There is a quick montage of dorm scenes, the porch, the communal bathroom, the showers with Bill muttering to himself.

YOUNG BILL

To tell the truth, my roommate Sydney makes some outrageous statements. They're wrong.

Dean Barnes looks back.

CARSON

Bill, you can talk in flowers all you want to. You do write good.

YOUNG BILL

The boys say I don't 'write regular.' You know, penmanship. God, we got graded on handwriting in elementary school.

CARSON

Hardly anyone makes an A in freshman English. Once every two years. You did it as a freshman, Straight A's at midterm. A couple of B's wouldn't hurt.

YOUNG BILL

I wrote a provocative, controversial essay defining the concept of 'friendship' as my first theme. I think it upset Sydney.

CARSON

Well, Bill, I hope that's all there is to it. A couple of the boys say that you put..

YOUNG BILL

No, I never put my hand on another boy's knee.

Bill puts his hand underneath his mouth, as if nauseated.

INT. UPPERCLASS DORM ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

(Split screen) Boys, including Young Sydney, are crowded in a dorm room. Some, including Young Sydney, are in skivvies.

FAT BOY

Bill, what do you think sixty-nine means.

YOUNG BILL

That's where they do it sixty-nine times in sixty-nine minutes.

The other boys cackle and roll on the floor.

FAT BOY

Bill, what do you think of homosexuality?

YOUNG BILL

I don't approve of it.

Bill's hand flails and brushes Young Sydney's knee.

INT. DEAN OF MEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - FLASHBACK

Bill swallows hard.

CARSON

You with me, Bill?

YOUNG BILL

My chum Michael last summer was right. I'm naive about these things. He's at VPI instead of here. Hope they don't shave him. That's another thing. I didn't go to the Tribunals. I didn't get hazed. So I guess that's another reason I'm a sissy. But I had never heard of all this until living away from home. Of all the untidy things homosexuals are supposed to do.

Now the Dean puts his hand over his mouth.

CARSON

So what are you getting at. You can drop all this if you want and move on.

YOUNG BILL

Okay, as a matter of definition, like for an English theme, I would say that I am a latent homosexual.

(MORE)

Some men--~~YOUNG BILL~~ (cont'd) in my senior class last year, but not Syd--
 -make me feel sexually excited when I am around them. They have to have certain secondary sexual characteristics. They have to have it. They can lose it.

CARSON

So it's something that happens to you. You don't control it. You can't control it.

YOUNG BILL

I'm just trying to follow the Honor System.

CARSON

So you are. Or is that a ruse?

YOUNG BILL

It makes me classify as different. Now it doesn't bother me.

CARSON

Sure.

YOUNG BILL

It never happens in the room. I turn it on and off. Look, aren't you glad that I leveled with you? The day after Thanksgiving, no less. We should all be home.

CARSON

I'm very glad that you confided in me that you think you're a homosexual. Now, are your parents home?

YOUNG BILL

No, they were here yesterday. They're in North Carolina visiting family friends.

CARSON

Bill, I did hear about the singing in the shower. When you talked to yourself, you called yourself a 'homosexual on the loose.'

Bill leans over but controls himself and sits upright.

YOUNG BILL

That was a private joke. Intra-personal.

CUT TO:

EXT. JAMESTOWN VA SETTLEMENT COLONY THANKSGIVING DAY -
AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Bill, his parents (JACK, 59 and MARGARET, 48), and JOHN JUNEAU (18, a bit soft-looking) are walking past the straw huts of the settlement. The James River is in the background. Squirrels, ferrets and otters are running around. There is still some residual brownish orange and yellow in the trees. Leaves are blowing around.

YOUNG BILL

The Schubert B-flat Sonata. Heart-rending.

JOHN

Bill, sometimes I wonder if music is really in your blood. The incredible things you say and do.

BILL'S FATHER

He learnt it. He got that from me.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DEAN OF MEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS - FLASHBACK

CARSON

Bill, come back. I will have to call them. Your parents. Long distance. It will be a big deal. Don't worry about it all weekend. It will be all right. We aren't going to ask you to leave school or anything like that. You just don't want to slide into anything like homosexuality.

YOUNG BILL

OK. It will be a surprise. Or a pop quiz.

INT. FAMILY LIVING ROOM, CHARLOTTE NC - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill's parents and Mr. And Mrs. Jzzet (50, 45) are chatting in the living room of a rambler suburban house with a bit of Frank Lloyd Wright kind of furniture. The black-and-white television is a Sylvania with a Halo Light and silent images of the Berlin Wall.

MR. JZZET

I sometimes think Barbara had too much television. Like Bill, she kept to herself. But she went away to college knowing much more about how dangerous this free country of ours is getting.

The rotary phone rings. Mr. Jzzet walks over to the nightstand in the hall and answers.

MR. JZZET

Hello.

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Mr. Jzzet, this is the long distance operator in Williamsburg, Virginia, calling for Mr. Jack Ldzek.

MR. JZZET

Sure, interesting. Jack, long distance for you.

BILL'S FATHER

Huh, honest a Pete. From Bill?

MR. JZZET

I guess. The operator had to connect us.

Bill's father (bald, trifocals) picks up the phone.

BILL'S FATHER

Bill?

TELEPHONE OPERATOR

Mr. Ldzek, I have the Dean of Men from the College of William and Mary on the phone.

CARSON

Mr. Ldzek, this is Dean Barnes. How are you this evening?

BILL'S FATHER

Look, I'm a traveling salesman. I know the techniques of talking to people. Anyway, not poorly. What's up. It's Bill, but he never gets in trouble. We were just there. He must have told you...

CARSON

No, he's fine. Look, we can take care of this. I guess you're visiting friends over the weekend, that's what Bill said. Can you drop by Monday morning on your way back?

BILL'S FATHER

Can I see Bill first?

CARSON

Sure. Make it my office in the Christopher Wren Building, Second Floor, at 9 o'clock in the morning, Tuesday November 28. Sorry to bother you long distance on a Friday night.

INT. DINER IN WILLIAMSBURG - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill and his parents eat. The diner looks like a 50s family establishment with coin-operated jute boxes on the table. Outside is Duke of Gloucester Street, with a movie theater and the marquee "Splendor in the Grass."

YOUNG BILL

You both taught me that I would never be punished for telling the truth. Good character guidance.

BILL'S FATHER

It's more than just that.

YOUNG BILL

The Dean of Men asked, and I told.

BILL'S MOTHER

You don't want to tell us now. I can tell. If you tell, you should tell willingly.

YOUNG BILL

You remember Michael last year. The tennis games, the ping pong, the movies.

BILL'S FATHER

I know. Your chum. You let him win, didn't you. It was tantalizing.

BILL

Nothing ever happened. That is the truth. But the issue for the Dean is what sensations I felt.

BILL'S MOTHER

You don't need to talk about this at all.

BILL

Then I would have to quibble. That violates the Honor Code.

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY BROWN HALL DORM ROOM 1961 - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Bill lies on his lower bunk and studies his English anthology book for class.

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY ROGERS HALL, CHEMISTRY LECTURE ROOM 1961 - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Bill leaves the lecture hall five minutes early as the class continues. He picks up a lab test that reads "79 C+".

EXT. WILLIAM AND MARY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER STREET - MOMENTS LATER - FLASHBACK

A Ford Galaxie turns the corner onto Richmond Road. Bill is walking on the corner. (Show the campus from the air for a moment.) Bill opens the door and climbs in.

BILL'S FATHER

This is going to come as a blow to you, Bill, but we have to take you out of school.

YOUNG BILL

The Dean lied. He specifically promised he wouldn't ask me to leave school. He broke the Honor Code.

BILL'S FATHER

Well, he talked to the President of the College last night. He has no choice. You know, the College has to think about the other parents, not just us.

INT. DEAN OF MEN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER - FLASHBACK

Bill is standing with his father, and his mother is seated on a hard wood chair.

BILL

I said I never did anything.

CARSON

Bill, it's going to be easier on you to leave anyway. You have certain anxieties. You and your parents have to work this out. If a certified psychiatrist writes us that it is all right for you to come back and live in a boy's college dorm, then we will welcome you back for the Spring Semester.

YOUNG BILL

But my courses.

CARSON

You can retake them. If you study your subjects at home by yourself over Christmas, maybe you can place out of them, or take the finals. We all now you can write your themes and term papers. Dabney Stuart will pass on you.

YOUNG BILL

There's Eastern State.

CARSON

Believe me, Bill, you don't want to deal with Eastern State psychiatrists. They have no class. They would just warehouse you.

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY BROWN HALL DORM STAIRWAY 1961 - LATER -
FLASHBACK

Show a Vertigo view of the stairway. Bill and Dad are carrying down the mattress. Dad is trying to fold it. He points to a wet gray stain.

BILL'S FATHER

Now, Bill, look, look. You see how
I know that you are not a homo.

Father points to the stain again as John suddenly starts up the steps.

JOHN

Bill, what's up? You're going.

YOUNG BILL

They are making me leave school. To
get medical advice. That's how they
put it. Mildly.

JOHN

It's a shock. You talked, didn't
you?

BILL

I'll write soon and explain.

BILL'S FATHER

No you won't. You do what we say if
you want to get out of this.

JOHN

Look, just send me one communique.
I look forward to it.

INT. FORD GALAXIE - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Bill sits in the back seat, as they cross the Yorktown River driving back to Arlington on a cold late fall day. Bare trees show now.

BILL'S FATHER

We'll call the Dean of Admissions
at GW tomorrow. But if you ever
mention homosexuality again, not a
college in the country will take
you.

YOUNG BILL

It's fair enough.

BILL'S MOTHER

Daddy means it. If you ever tell anybody something like this, your college days are over. And you can't make it by yourself in the real world.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

ALLISON

So you took your turn with oppression.

BILL

And yet I was the spoiled only child.

ALLISON

What was the sequence? Where did this go?

BILL

I went to school and lived at home. My parent paid the way and I never had student loans. But there were bumps. For six months, I was a patient at National Institutes of Health, mental health unit, where frankly they tried to investigate my homosexuality, and repair it.

CUT TO:

INT. NIH CLINICAL CENTER, MENTAL HEALTH WARD - AFTERNOON

Montage: The NIH Clinical Center from the outside, patients playing ping pong in a day room, Bill playing piano in the solarium, Bill and his parents drawing on easels in an art therapy session.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

I had to explain this just to get
my first job, in a government
chemistry lab.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE AT A U.S. GOVT AGENCY 1963 -- MORNING -
FLASHBACK

There is a quick outdoor day shot of a brick building campus with the label "National Bureau of Standards, Washington". Then the camera is inside. Bill is filling out a form about his medical history (show). There is also a shot of "Form 171: Application for Federal Employment". Harold Pincock, MD, 59 (short and thin), dressed in medical white, stands in front of a government-issued metal desk to make eye contact.

YOUNG BILL

Dr. Pincock, why I had to see a
psychiatrist is irrelevant now. I'm
back in college at G.W. With all
A's. So I can't say.

PINCOCK

You can't go to work without my
giving you a satisfactory medical.
So go call your daddy.

Bill picks up the black rotary phone to call his father.

INT. DORM ROOM, HIGH RISE, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, 1966 - NIGHT
- FLASHBACK

The room is larger, and the two beds are arranged in a Y for space and privacy. There are numerous books and a stereo. The view looks out on the Kansas Prairie beyond Iowa Street in Lawrence (aka Smallville). BOBBY SIEVERS, 27, slightly overweight and crusty blond, stands up as the song "Summer in the City" finishes.

SIEVERS

Well, the greatest fun in Kansas
City was rolling queers. I could
make fifty bucks a night.

YOUNG BILL

And you really want to be in the
Peace Corps. I'm not naive.

SIEVERS

You let them approach you and as
they go down on you hit them with
the lead pipe.

YOUNG BILL

You could kill one and never know
you did it.

SIEVERS

Then there is one less queer in the
world.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

Then I took the draft physical
three times.

CUT TO:

INT. U.S. ARMY INDUCTION STATION, RICHMOND 1964 - DAY -
FLASHBACK

A lot of men are standing around in one large drafty hall in
their skivvies. The men, mostly white, are typically varied
in their appearance and build, but a few are obviously unfit
and even underdeveloped. The camera focuses on Bill's medical
history form, upon a block to check for "homosexual
tendencies." The block is not checked, but there is a
longhand explanation.

SERGEANT

Okay, Ldzek, go explain this to the
psychiatrist.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

But by 1965 they stopped asking. It was already "don't ask, don't tell." The second time I was 1-Y and then 1-A. I would enlist for two years and get my good deal.

CUT TO:

INT. ARMY RECRUITING STATION, ARLINGTON 1967 - DAY -
FLASHBACK

A red-haired Army recruiter sits behind his desk and looks Bill in the eye.

ARMY RECRUITER

95%. If you get drafted, it's a 95% chance that you'll get infantry. They call it 11 Bravo. They need men in combat.

BILL

Leaders of men in combat.

INT. RECEPTION STATION QUONSET, FT. JACKSON, S.C. 1968 -
AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Show a quick montage of Bill's being sworn in, then on a bus entering Ft Jackson, then in formation. Then show Bill in fatigues, filling out forms and turning them in.

FIRST SERGEANT

Sir, you missed a college grad.

The company commander comes over and picks up his paperwork.

Show another Montage of a tent city on base, of Bill in PT, on a forced march.

INT. MILITARY QUONSET, FORT JACKSON, NEAR RIFLE RANGE, 1968 -
MORNING - FLASHBACK

Bill, in Army dress greens and poplin shirt, stands in front of three field grade officers seated in wooden chairs. The building is a bit decrepit with loose wooden boards on the floor, and there is a coal pile visible through the window. Rifle fire, staccato, punctuates.

There is faint radio talk of peace talks in North Vietnam, but one of the officers turns off the radio.

OFFICER NO 1

So, Private Ldzek, tell me at least one leadership activity in school. Like run for Student Council? Have you ever been in charge of others?

YOUNG BILL

Well, the Science Honor Society. I was initiated literally in my own basement. I organized the event. By my application for direct commission is based on technical skills.

Bill picks up a black bound, hand-type Master's thesis and quickly flips through it. He tries to show it to an officer, who shakes his head.

OFFICER NO 2

Computers are filled up. We don't need that. Private, I am a lawyer, but you see that I wear the infantry crossed sabres. We need leaders of men in combat. They become brothers, and then democrats.

EXT. FORT JACKSON S.C. RIFLE RANGE - DAY

Bill is on the rifle range, firing at popups with a nearby coach. He keeps adjusting his ear plugs.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

No, I didn't get the direct commission. I was in the Pentagon for three months, then mysteriously transferred to Fort Useless. I spent fifteen months tucked away as a mathematician, doing nothing. But the Army was somehow a more hospitable place than the civilian world.

(MORE)

They used Bill (cont'd) to go through
the tulips" in the barracks in love
trains.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS FT EUSTIS - EVENING

Men in fatigue pants and GI v-neck underwear march around the day room, chanting "fifty thousand yards of d__k on this post..., and they still out"

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Allison leans back.

ALLISON

You got a good story. Self-serving, maybe.

BILL

I had to come out again. A fallen male, and proud of it.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUB BATHS 1975 - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Bill sits in the lounge, watching TV while other men sit around in towels. He gets up and wanders into the orgy room, where there is a violet lit hall, leading to a dark room with one large mattress and men, scampering ape-like with sounds of sucking and smacking. Bill stops, and looks down at an attractive man going down at him, and rubs the man's lightly haired chest hard.

INT. NINTH STREET CENTER 1975 - EVENING - FLASHBACK

First show an outdoor evening shot of the NYC East Village.

Bill sits in a circle of other men in an orange-and-brown paneled basement, sipping coffee. The room is very smokey.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

So when President Clinton raised the issue of the military gay ban in 1993, you could see how I would jump in.

ALLISON

From the outside. I actually took a partner in the military. You just wrote about it.

CUT TO:

EXT. NORFOLK NAVAL BASE, SUBMARINE PORT 1993 - DAY -
FLASHBACK

There is a sign, "no political buttons." Bill passes the sailor MP, in whites but with a pistol, down the Rama staircase into a submarine, and quickly sees the cramped quarters and Northhampton bunks.

Chad, now much thinner, shows him around quickly, all the way to the entrance to the nuclear power bay. They come back to a simple table and eat ice cream and cake. Chad sells him a navy blue hat that reads "Sunfish."

CHAD

There are no secrets here. I know everything my bunkmates are thinking.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

BILL

They called it hot bunking. But you do get the parallel. A civilian college punished me with the same arguments that the military uses against gays.

ALLISON

Would a jury get it? I doubt it. And is it real?

BILL

Guys like Sydney, Sievers. They think that my freedom emasculates them. It's weird.

ALLISON

It's just mentality.

BILL

But, the coup de grace. I moved out to Minnesota because I was working for a company that sold life insurance to the military. That was a conflict of interest.

ALLISON

If you say so.

BILL

It was good for a time. That's when I met Tobey, through the Libertarian Party, right after I was on the ground

CUT TO:

NIKOMOS CAFE, MINNEAPOLIS - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Tobey, then 21, in a blue sweater, waltzes into a coffee shop where there is a reception with hors d'oeuvres--the scene looks out momentarily on autumn over one of the Minneapolis lakes--and passes Bill a phone number; Tobey introduces Bill as a speaker on crutches; Bill greets Tobey at an Embers restaurant as they enter together; Bill pays Tobey's bill and taps Tobey on the shoulder, but Tobey backs away slightly.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Bill stands.

BILL

When I was Tobey's age then, I was teaching as a graduate student. They said I was a hard math teacher. Once, I caught a student cheating, and he came up to my room to beg.

CUT TO:

INT. KANSAS UNIVERSITY DORM ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Bill, in underclothes, his legs exposed, sits on his twin bed, arranged with his roommate's as a Y. He looks up at a tall lanky undergraduate who kneels down in the hallway.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ALLISON

That sounds like the peak of your life.

BILL

Until the military ban came up, and then, yeah when I met Tobey.

ALLISON

You like him.

BILL

Sure.

ALLISON

Doesn't do too much good now. You know, he's getting married soon. Funny, he caught Sheila downloading music from Kaaza, lectured her, and they drew closer after that.

BILL

See.

ALLISON

You told me so.

BILL

So I had taken the transfer to Minneapolis when the company got bought. Which separated me from my mother when she had the problems.

Allison sighs.

ALLISON

So you've told your story, and I've told mine. Almost.

The doorbell rings again. Bill runs upstairs. LINDA MARSHALL (68, thin, energetic) is at the door.

LINDA

Well, Bill, welcome back.

BILL

You haven't heard.

LINDA

Your mother is out in the car. I
picked her up at the nursing home.

Allison follows upstairs.

LINDA

Why, Bill, it looks like you have a
girl friend. What timing.

ALLISON

Pardon me. You just don't know.

Bill walks out to the car, following Linda, who helps Mother
get out of the car with a cane. Bill faces his mother.

BILL'S MOTHER

Now take my hand.

Bill walks slowly, holding his mother's hand, and the brace
drags on the ground.

BILL'S MOTHER

Who's that dragging behind your
foot into the house?

BILL

Allison. She is a lawyer. My
lawyer. She'll explain when we get
inside.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLISON'S OFFICE, LOWER MANHATTAN - DAY

A plainclothesman BRAD McCLAIN (38, redhead, freckled) visits
Allison at her office, decorated with diplomas and family
pictures of her and Susannah (in uniform) with Izzy.

BRAD

Well, I have to congratulate you,
ma'am, for not moving to Jersey
City.

ALLISON

I'm on the New York bar. I have to practice here. But I do mostly federal defendants. Some accidents.

BRAD

I understand that you took the case of William Ldzek. The bill of rights guy.

ALLISON

So you've read about him. You do him a complement.

BRAD

So he spilled his guts on his own website. Now, the parents of the Jzzet boy. Brian.

ALLISON

Oh, yes. He rather stalked me.

BRAD

Okay, he's down with that religion stuff, Assembly of God, and all. He says his boy Erich was involved.
(THIS PASSAGE EDITED FOR DISPLAY,
LONGER IN DIRECTOR'S CUT)

CUT TO:

EXT. DINKEYTOWN, MINNEAPOLIS, AND BELL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Start with an aerial shot of the University of Minnesota area. h rides a motorcycle down University avenue into Dinkeytown and parks. He gets his backpack, and goes into a bar. No one checks his ID. He goes into a restroom and changes, coming out looking spruced up in his shorts and loose sports shirt. He jogs quickly over to the Bell Auditorium area, near the University Amory. Tobey approaches, also in shorts, still on crutches.

ERICH

I'd pick up.

TOBEY

Don't think I can hold on to you.

ERICH

Bill can.

They walk in and get waived into the auditorium to watch Erich's short film called "Do Ask Do Tell."

INT. ANNIE'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Erich and Tobey are having a cheeseburger dinner.

TOBEY

You were 15 then. That's old enough to know what's going on.

ERICH

Like kids over 14 would throw their pennies into the Yes jar for legalizing marijuana.

TOBEY

That's how it was for me. I grew up mentally at about 14.

ERICH

And you did the debate club, student council...

TOBEY

Football in high school, everything. I quarterbacked.

ERICH

Then modeling, movies, and law school. Like that's your backup.

TOBEY

Tell me, why did you use Bill's title for your film. You think you help him out?

ERICH

Well, hacking is one of Bill's hot topics. Hot a strength. I mean, a moral issue. Yes, moral, like your Plato. Young men find it the one way to build their egos.

TOBEY

Were you like them? Did you break computers apart just to find out how they work?

ERICH

I did. Sounds like you didn't.

TOBEY

Didn't need to. Too busy.

ERICH

That's how you compete. Be good at everything you try.

TOBEY

Not everybody can do that. That's why...

ERICH

I could go to medical schools, or your law school. Don't think I need film school. Well you tried several things.

TOBEY

Yeah. Bill caught me. Found me in Straight Boys, and movie parts. I never confronted him. He took me to dinner when I graduated. He's been enough places that his story matters.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMBERS RESTAURANT, MINNEAPOLIS - EVENING - FLASHBACK

A slightly younger Tobey, clean shaven and in shorts, walks from a coin phone box towards an Embers restaurant as Bill meets him, holding up some books, including DADT.

TOBEY

Literature!

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ANNIE'S RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The waiter brings ice cream sundaes.

ERICH

Like your own boss, even she's not pre-history. Pig out now?

TOBEY

I guess I ran from all that attention. He wanted to see me in the movies.

ERICH

I'll interview you in the update of my film. Like now. You mind?

Erich pulls out his camcorder from his pack.

TOBEY

I've been on camera many times before. Looking better than I do now.

ERICH

Tell me, if I know that two guys ...

TOBEY

You're hesitating.

ERICH

Put up instructions on their computers for setting off a bomb. And they thought it was a joke.

TOBEY

And you knew they thought it was a joke? I'm a law student. You need to talk to a real lawyer?

CUT TO:

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Erich stops playing a syncopated piano rag on the (new) electronic piano attached to his MacIntosh, as his cell phone rings. Outside, it is warm and sunny.

ERICH

Hi, this is Erich.

ALLISON

Erich Jzzet? This is Allison Kearns, an attorney in New York City. You have a minute.

ERICH

Sounds important. I talked to Tobey.

Music comes on, the gentle appoggios of the Beethoven Tempest Sonata in the background.

ALLISON
Your in high school aren't you?

ERICH
Graduate in six weeks. Columbia
next year.

ALLISON
Can you come to Washington over the
weekend? I'm there. I can get you
on my Northwest frequent flyer
pass.

ERICH
I've got to sneak out against my
dad. He screams when I miss church.

ALLISON
You could be back Saturday night.
Don't have to have a stayover.

ERICH
We have revivals then, too. I'm
starting to see things in them.
I've never fallen down like the
girls. Well, now, except just once.

ALLISON
We can get you back. Pack your CD's
in carryon. In fact, dup them and
Fed-Ex them ahead of time. You're
not on any lists?

INT. MSP AIRPORT, NWA AIRLINES GATE

Erich, with no carryon luggage, walks up to the gate.

ERICH
Here is the account number. There
is a pass for me.

NWA TICKET AGENT
Okay.

She makes a few keystrokes at the computer, then walks back
to the supervisor's area. A uniformed policeman comes forward
with her.

AIRPORT POLICEMAN
Sir, your name has come up as
flagged. You won't be able to fly
today until we check this out.

INT. MSP AIRPORT CONCOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Erich is talking on his cell phone.

ERICH
I'm on CAPPS after all. They won't
let me fly now.

ALLISON
Red?

ERICH
Yup.

ALLISON
I got your stuff.

ERICH
Let's set up a video conference at
Kinkos.

CUT TO:

INT. BOYHOOD HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bill is sitting in the living room, watching "Smallville" and adjusting his leg bracelet. His mother walks in, slowly, grabs an armchair, and sits down.

MOTHER
Look, Bill, if you're really in
jail, you can't stay here.

BILL
I don't have any other place that
is allowed.

MOTHER
This house isn't yours.

INT. ALEXANDRIA JAIL - MORNING

Allison visits Bill back in jail.

ALLISON
You get your deposit back. Look,
about Erich.

BILL

We never did anything. He gave me a swimming lesson. I touched him.

ALLISON

Really touched him?

BILL

PHis chest, his legs. Body Parts that matter to me. But not to the law.

ALLISON

And I bet you say he tempted you. Or made it easy. Like with him you really could read body language.

CUT TO:

INT. ASSEMBLY OF GOD, SPARTA WI - EVENING

Erich is leading Corey and Griffin into the revival hall.

ERICH

You can play with me again if you just go to the service and let the minister touch you. This is going to be your truth serum.

INT. ASSEMBLY OF GOD, SPARTA WI - LATER

Erich leans down as Griffin and Corey, both fallen, babble. The minister walks by with a blanket and covers them both, barely leaving their faces visible from the nose up.

ERICH

These are still boys. You don't need to worry about modesty.

INT. KINKOS STORE - MORNING

Erich works with the KINKOS EMPLOYEE to set up the video conference feed. They dial in and quickly get Allison on the video.

Allison sits in her office, and logs on to her own computer, an extra Mac brought into her office.

ERICH

That's good, Allison. You need access to Linux to see the steg seeds. The Mac gives you that. I'll talk you into getting into terminal mode.

INT. KINKOS STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Allison double-clicks on a link, and a map of downtown Minneapolis, the riverfront, comes up. Then she clicks on another link, and a public storage locker in Northeast Minneapolis comes up.

ALLISON

So, Erich, you can piece together what happened.

ERICH

So can you.

ALLISON

So, you say one of the boys placed the steg on Bill's domain, where to find the device. And this B-bop figure and two of his sons actually found them and set them off. You know why?

ERICH

The boys, they can't do much. Computers, rock, and TV. They don't do sports. They don't do their chores. They do like to play church.

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Erich sits at his Mac, in terminal mode with black and white text on the screen, and types in complicated strings. Then he swivels to his Linux machine and watches more strings.

ERICH

It works against CAPPS. Good old buffer overflow.

Erich runs outside with a baseball bat and fungoes a "home run" into the night.

INT. ALEXANDRIA JAIL - NIGHT

Bill is back in a rather barren cell, when Allison appears. She slings a duffle bag packed with clothes and books, and carries Bill's blue pin-stripped suit over her shoulder.

ALLISON

It was that bad at home.

BILL

It was. She feels I deserted her.
Put my own politics above family.

ALLISON

You want to come up to New York and
see my family?

BILL

What's up?

ALLISON

The government is willing to drop
the criminal case and go just
civil. But they will want you to
agree not to publish in an
unsupervised fashion again.

BILL

I'm knocked off the net anyway.

ALLISON

I know. But do they? Actually,
they're being generous. They've got
even more. They found classified
stuff on your hard drive. And
possession of classified
information is a crime.

BILL

Erich found that when he came over
for that surprise inspection. I
think they got some other
webmasters with anthrax papers.

ALLISON

They mean it. In this era of
asymmetry. I talk like that more
that Susannah, and she's the gal in
intelligence.

BILL

So I play along. Passively, like usual.

ALLISON

You call it psychologically feminine, don't you.

INT. RENTAL CAR, DRIVING IN OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA - LATER

Allison drives, Bill sits on the driver's side.

BILL

They used to have a hole-in-the-wall gay bar there. The French Quarter. Good old days. Look. If I take it, I still get a trial.

ALLISON

This is going to sound strange. If so, they really want a jury. They don't want to be accused of forum shopping on a case like this.

INT. ALLISON'S COOP APARTMENT, TRIBECA, NYC - AFTERNOON

Izzy is playing with his trainset on the floor. A Serval cat starts chasing the train when Bill gets the battery to work and the train runs along the tracks. Bill has built a couple more play cities on the layouts with lego blocks. Bill plays with the cat, who starts grooming him.

Allison walks into the room and stoops down and kisses Bill lightly.

BILL

You really did that? Where's Susannah? I thought we were getting ready for a house interview.

ALLISON

You think you can play surrogate dad for me when the human services department arrives? Or would you hide in the closet?

The door knocks, and then they keys on the triple Medeco locks turn. Susannah walks in with Omar and a black woman.

SUSANNAH

Boy, it looks like we've got two daddies now.

EXT. CAFE IN TRIBECCA AREA, WTC SITE VISIBLE - AFTERNOON

Bill, Susannah, Tobey, and Omar enjoy an outdoor mid-eastern meal of flaffels and similar food. Izim has a more "normal" sandwich brought. Tobey is limping now on his own.

BILL

So Omar they let you off with community service. Again.

ALLISON

Bill!

OMAR

That's OK. I know it's my second time. It's easy. I help teach the defensive driving course. No wearing orange jackets and scrubbing nursing homes like in Smallville.

TOBEY

But you can't make it go away. Like, I won't wear shorts again.

OMAR

You said you'd let me off the hook, Tobey. Then God does.

BILL

That's all right. Performers change their bodies.

TOBEY

Yeah, Bill that was the risk you took with me. With Erich it won't matter.

BILL

I think we know why Erich's friends did this.

ALLISON

And can you say that on the witness stand, Bill, without poking your fingers into the jurors' eyes?

TOBEY

Can he say it at his forum first?

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC - DAY

Allison is on her computer, going through a zip disk of Bill's former website, looking at the corrupted file. Bill stands over.

ALLISON

Well, I wouldn't want Izzy to read this on his own myself. But that's me.

BILL

You know your profession.

Allison stands and takes Bill by the waist, and kisses him.

ALLISON

Just once. You can give in to temptation just once, Bill.

Bill reaches for her breast, as a black woman enters the room, holding Izim's hand.

IZIM

Daddy!

ALLISON

Oh! You're from Social Services.

Susannah then walks in, without knocking.

SUSANNAH

Honey. Come on

INT. ASSISTED LIVING CENTER, ARLINGTON - DAY

Bill walks around the public areas with the RENTAL AGENT, an elderly woman herself. These include the dining room and library. The agent shows him the two bedroom apartment, which consists of three tiny rooms.

RENTAL AGENT

It's \$3500 a month. And you say your mother doesn't know you're here?

BILL

If you saw The House, you'd understand. It's a Drohega.

INT. RALEIGH'S TAVERN, WILLIAMSBURG - AFTERNOON

Bill, Tobey, Frankie, Allison, Susannah all sit around a dinner table with many attendees, wearing name tags. Bill picks at the Cornish game hen with rice pilaf. Tobey limps to the podium. Sydney walks in late.

TOBEY

So, in a moment, Mr. Ldzek will take the podium. I hope that you will purchase his books. He may soon need to find an outside publisher, but I believe that your support for a new debate on the Bill of Rights Two will help him get going.

Bill takes the podium.

BILL

I'm not going to give you the jazz, like Always Be Closing. No sales pitches. But I'm going to pose several questions. Each team will debate. Let's have a good time with this, all right?

INT. RALEIGH'S TAVERN, WILLIAMSBURG - MOMENTS LATER

BILL

So, if I have the right, the freedom, to marry a man, how does that affect your family?

OLD BLACK AUDIENCE MEMBER

Bill, you can't be serious. You hang around young men like Tobey.

BILL

If I had been allowed to date men when I attended the oldest college in the country in this city..

OLD BLACK AUDIENCE MEMBER

But you would have dumped him when he got older. You wouldn't have picked somebody who looked like me.

BILL

But did you answer the question?

OLDER WHITE WOMAN

Kids need to believe in having a mother and father or there will be no young men like Tobey growing up!

Sydney stands up, holding the hands of a woman and two children.

BILL

I think others want me to become socialized so that I will at least try to play by their rules. Try to marry and have children, and then compete the way other people do, and band together with them in solidarity against the evil rich, or try to look others in the eye with the self-confidence of a Nick-Apprentice-like salesman. Because others would depend on me. It's real life, to take one's part in a world where bad things happen and people have to back each other up. That, and raising kids, is largely what adult socialization is for. But one can do wrong things for good motives, and good things for selfish or questionable motives. Both betray integrity. In the end, being forced to play by other people's rules doesn't promote integrity. Of course, if I succeed competing the way I do, there are implications. My story shares a bit of the rich young ruler, the prodigal son, the talents. I don't seem to need other people for lawful civility, but I do need it to matter to others. Otherwise-- Maybe the people I have looked up to aren't so Clark-like after all, and on the other end, maybe a lot of people who fail when forced to compete on their own will wind up out in the cold. The bottom line is that we have to have our cake and eat it too.

SYDNEY

Give me that old time religion.

The crowd starts to half-clap and chant.

OLDER WHITE WOMAN
It's good enough for me.

INT. SPORTS BAR, ALEXANDRIA VA - MORNING

Allison and Bill are having breakfast when a CNN news feed comes on one of the large TV's

CNN REPORTER
A lesbian couple is getting final adoption papers today to adopt their son as a couple. One of the parents, Susannah York, saved the lives of two male officers on 9-11 during the attack on the Pentagon before being burned herself. But she agreed to leave her post as an Army colonel and accept a similar job as homeland security liason when publicity about her relationship surface.

BILL
Go on, Allison. You've got a shuttle to catch.

ALLISON
I'll be back, love. You can count on me.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MORNING (NEXT DAY)

The litigants are sworn in.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

The jury pool moves in for the voir dire. JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS (34, tall and pucker-faced) presides. BALE DARTZ (32, blond, fattish) is the prosecutor and questions the candidates.

JOHN HARDER (26, tall, brown hair, well built) is questioned.

BALE DARTZ
So, Mr. Harder, what do you do?

JOHN HARDER

A lot. I'd say I'm not a pack person.

BALE DARTZ

I mean, what is your profession?

JOHN HARDER

I am a software engineer. I travel and install Linux on Unix servers.

BALE DARTZ

So you obviously understand the Internet and computer.

JOHN HARDER

More than you would want to know, Sir. I've got multiple clearances.

BALE DARTZ

So you work a lot with computer worms and viruses. What kind of customers.

JOHN HARDER

Mostly other consulting firms. Job recruiters. And entertainment companies, because they become targets. Even the movies.

BALE DARTZ

Yours.

ALLISON

Linux. Isn't that the free operating system?

BALE DARTZ

Yes. The call it open source. There's another legal fight over it, now.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS

Counsel will you approach please?

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - MOMENTS LATER

The young judge reclines in his chair; his office is equipped with law books and an entertainment center. Judge Matthews looks at Allison.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS
Counsel, are you comfortable with
the juror. He's got quite a
background.

ALLISON
An educated juror won't hurt us.

BALE DARTZ
His questionnaire doesn't mention
working for the government
directly. Mostly these search
firms.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS
Okay. Up to you. He just sounds
like a guy with an agenda. But then
again, so does the defendant.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MOMENTS LATER

The attorneys question FRIDA SMITH, 58, black.

BALE DARTZ
So, Ma'am, you don't have a
computer.

FRIDA
No. My son's not teached me yet.

INT. COURTHOUSE LUNCHROOM - DAY

Bill is eating a full plate hot lunch of Salisbury steak and
mashed potatoes. Allison has a salad, and picks at it.

BILL
I voir dired for a medical
malpractice trial once.

ALLISON
And I bet you played smart ass like
that Mr. Harder and got to be
foreman.

BILL
I did. Another juror complained
that I was staring at him and
threatened to report me to the
judge!

ALLISON

I bet. Harder sounds like a friend.
You know him?

BILL

Maybe the Bryant Lake Bowl. Maybe
Erich. Maybe the Academy Awards
Party.

ALLISON

He's the only winner. You don't
exactly attract sympathy from the
average person on a jury. I'm
amazed the government didn't blow
him away.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - AFTERNOON

Bale Dartz is doing an opening summary.

BALE DARTZ

The government will show that the
defendant ran a website that he
knew would attract hackers, that he
knew was a public nuisance.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

Frank is on the witness stand.

BALE DARTZ

So would you state your position at
Handyman Systems?

FRANK

Educational and Technical Director.
We serve as a third party to help
companies evaluate the performance
and career paths of their technical
employees.

BALE DARTZ

So how does your company work with
FEMA?

FRANK

We provide very specialized swat-team training to computer specialists and other engineers so they can go into a place on short term notice and solve a problem in a crisis. We call our systems engineers asset persons. We're kind of a corporate fire department. Since our specialists are called in if there is a real emergency, they are also called in to do drills. We sometimes call them Bible sword drills.

ALLISON

Objection. Religious reference.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS

Overruled.

FRANK

We have very rigorous rules for selecting and training our candidates. We often tell our candidates that there is no "they." Our candidates are the client's last resort.

BALE DARTZ

So how did you discover the compromise of FEMA?

FRANK

But it was in a drill on April 15 that we found the worm. It was very simple. It had simply ordered the system to misdirect all of our relief supplies to camps forty miles away, so that if we had an evacuation from the Hoover Dam area, we would have had no medical supplies or treatment facilities for our evacuees

BALE DARTZ

And where did your investigators find that it came from?

FRANK

It had been loaded twice in two stages. One from the defendant's domain, hppub.com.

(MORE)

But we found that the trigger
Trojan had actually been loaded
from his own home computer.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

ALLISON

So, Mr. L'istesso, you audited the
company, Postulate-A Financial,
where Mr. Ldzek once worked?

FRANK

Yes.

ALLISON

Can you explain how you did it?

FRANK

We would go into a company and do
adaptive testing of the skills of
all of the techies. They call it
adaptive testing. We give people
online multiple choice tests and
problem tests of how well they know
the languages and software packages
they claim on their resumes. A lot
of people know only what they use
everyday on the job. We encourage
our client companies to make sure
that they keep their employees
trained on all aspects of the
packages they use

ALLISON

You tested the defendant?

FRANK

We looked at his work. He got his
pretty hard by the guessing
penalty. He had not kept up well
with the technology, he wasn't
curious about it, and although his
immediate boss was satisfied, a lot
of his work was technically
substandard. It can be easy to fool
a non-technical boss if you get 'em
on your side. We stop that.

ALLISON

Well, thanks for the synopsis.
Isn't it true that you had known
the defendant before?

Frank puts his hand to his mouth, and nods.

FRANK

You want me to go into that. It was more than twenty years ago. In a bar.

ALLISON

What kind of bar?

BALE DARTZ

Objection!

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MORNING

Brad McClain sits with an African-American female agent, BRENDA SYPES, 39, short and well dressed in a suit.

BRENDA

Well, actually we found two kinds of compromises. We found pointers to the relief allocation system run by Handyman systems, and to the locations of six storage lockers in the United States.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

ISP MANAGER

We removed his account because we were asked to.

BALE DARTZ

By the FBI?

ISP MANAGER

By the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

BALE DARTZ

Did you do an internal audit of the actions of your own employees?

ISP MANAGER

Yes sir, and we found no unauthorized access.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MOMENTS LATER

ALLISON

So, sir, you deny that you left
your Unix Site open. You know, the
Site command as you explained it.

ISP MANAGER

That's correct, ma'am. At FEMA's
request we did a complete audit,
and found no violations of our own
company policy.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE LUNCHROOM - DAY

John Harder pays for a rather hearty lunch and wanders away
from the other jurors, and sits by himself at a table, hiding
behind a USA Today. At the next table Erich is having a
rather healthful lunch with his parents.

BRIAN

So, son, you say you know those two
boys did this?

ERICH

Yeah. It's true. I collected the
overflows off of their systems and
sieved it. I can prove it.

BRIAN

But, son, you knew.

ERICH

I told them if they couldn't play
catch with me I'd turn them in. I
knew they couldn't.

BRIAN

Like the hard math teacher not
taking attendance, just giving
tests people don't pass. But, God
bless us all, you knew. You wanted.

ERICH

So do a lot of other people, Dad,
and you know it.

As he finishes his dessert, John walks past Allison,
Sussanah, and Omar as they look up at him.

SUSANNAH

Omar, you remember how we got Izzy.

OMAR

I don't think they covered that in the news. They had to protect you.

SUSANNAH

There was an accident in your country. It was when we were down near Luxor with Save the Children. We learned of a man who was prosecuted for hitting a passenger and he claimed he didn't remember the accident. I tried to get the child as a single parent. Didn't fly. My being in the military made it too big a deal. Then two weeks after I get back, Allison is defending you for your accident.

OMAR

I never knew.

SUSANNAH

Like a cat, so you did it again.

OMAR

Yes, just to spare Bill. Allah did not place him in high esteem.

John walks back to Erich's table, stands off and avoids eye contact.

ERICH

Yes, it's better to see something happen. I want this stuff over with before I'm on my own. No goose stepping for me!

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - AFTERNOON

Allison, Erich, and his parents are seated around a table with two laptop computers, a router, and a projector.

ALLISON

I call Erich Jzzet.

Jzzet, still dressed in sport shirt and shorts with hairy legs, takes the oath from the witness stand.

There is buzz in the courtroom and jury. He steps down to the table. Then he operates the demonstration, which is projected overhead on a screen opposite from the jury.

ERICH

This is a buffer overflow. Now I will show you how to add an invisible ink icon to a website. Now I do not have the password for this website.

ALLISON

And you can do this without the website's owner knowing anything.

ERICH

Absolutely. He is dependent on his ISP, unless he runs his own server.

ALLISON

And what ways could you get in?

ERICH

Many times ISP's live the SITE command open on Unix. It could be an inside job. Or if I was very determined, I could get in just as I described, on buffer overflow.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

Bill now stares at Erich from his defendant's table as Erich continues to testify.

BALE DARTZ

But you acknowledge that Bill visited your lab.

ERICH

Yes, we met at the screening of my film. I invited him, kind of. Well, he dropped in from one of his runarounds.

BALE DARTZ

And you visited his apartment.

ERICH

I dropped in one Sunday afternoon.

BALE DARTZ

Unannounced.

ERICH

I think he wanted me to come. But I didn't plant anything on his machine.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - LATER

Allison looks at Bill and whispers at the defendant's desk. She slaps his hand lightly.

ALLISON

I know you think you just have Asperger's, that people think you're peculiar. But try to look alive.

Griffin is testifying. He looks immature and cherubic.

ALLISON

So, what happened when Bill brought in his computer to your store to be repaired.

GRIFFIN

We ran a different virus scan than he used. We ran Norton. We found one virus and then replaced his CD drive anyway as a courtesy.

ALLISON

But you could have charged him.

GRIFFIN

My boss told me to go ahead and do it under his Silver plan anyway. Saved him five hundred.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN HARDER'S CONDO - EVENING

John sprints up the different levels of his condo in Arlington, filled with modern sculptures, entertainment centers, and servers, and two large cats. He searches around himself on the Internet until he finds Erich's computer through an IP address. He starts typing.

CUT TO:

INT. ERICH'S CABIN, LIVING ROOM

Erich is typing on his Dell machine when he is interrupted by a message, which he reads. He access his other machine, and after some more surfing and access to Kaaza, he starts a download of another file. He checks his cell phone for messages.

BRIAN (O.S.)

Okay, son, even you have to do your chores!

He jogs outside to his parents' house, climbs the stepladder to a roof, finishes nailing in a few tiles, puts the ladder away, and goes back to his own study. He finds the download done.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC

Allison, and Bill watch a movie on Allison's computer. Susannah takes Izim to his room to play with the cat, out of sight of the movie, while they watch it.

BILL

Thanks, for getting my AOL access back.

Bill kisses Allison once, on the lips. Then they really pay attention to the movie, separately.

CUT TO:

EXT. WILLIAM AND MARY ANOTHER COLONIAL DORM 1961 - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A group of college boys, including Young Sydney, lead eight freshmen, blindfolded, in skivvies, towards a door in the basement. The camera moves from the sunken garden back to the door and into a basement with a simple stage and folding chairs.

YOUNG SYDNEY

Stagecraft is ready. Oh, the ways of college boys.

The freshmen walk onto the stage, and without protesting, sit down in unison on count to "Hip"

YOUNG SYDNEY

You all came in your shorts. Just what the Hippopotamus ordered. Skin's so tight he blinks his eyes when he masturbates. Don't throw sand in that poor beast's eyes!

Sydney picks up a pail of flour and throws it at the boys, and it lands on them like a dusting of snow.

The sophomores and other upperclassmen in the audience laugh.

YOUNG SYDNEY

Recite after me. I do this for my class!

The boys remain silent, and shake a bit as if shivering.

YOUNG SYDNEY

I do this for the team! Let the Tribunals begin!

Now a sophomore brings a pail of soapy water, and a second brings a tray filled with razors. The first sophomore kneels before the first freshman, and lather's the freshmen's super hairy legs, and then starts scraping.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT, NYC - MOMENTS LATER

Allison now brings up a picture of Erich, live, on her computer.

ALLISON

And you won't say where you got this.

ERICH

You don't want me to, really. But I found Sydney, too. He's now head of the drama department at OldSouth in Mississippi. It's from Tobey. You know, those file shares he despises.

ALLISON

It's interesting, not really relevant. I guess it's what Trump would call teamwork today.

BILL

Tobey just reads my mind, that's all. That's what I'm all about. But don't I have a right to proclaim it, publicly?

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT MINNEAPOLIS - NIGHT

Bill puts on his Sundance hat as he leaves his apartment, which is now much neater, with rented furniture and no computers.

INT. TWINBIES DANCE BAR, MINNEAPOLIS - NIGHT

Bill stands in the crowd and watches gogo boys dancing, while Griffin massages the chest and legs of one of the dancers. Just as he is about to insert a tip in the dancer's g-string, a plainclothesman grabs him from behind.

GRIFFIN

I thought you could here.

DETECTIVE

This is no vice. But we have to make the example of you.

INT. COBALT BAR, WASHINGTON, DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Men are break dancing on the intimate but colorful dance floor as the song "Beautiful" plays. The dancing still includes the lifting up of T-shirts of men and the rubbing of smooth chests.

There is a barber chair on the elevated part of the dance floor, towards the back wall. A young man has his shirt unbuttoned, and his boyfriend gently shoves him into the barber chair.

Tobey and Sheila walk in. Tobey still limps slightly. The camera focuses on her sparkling engagement ring. They migrate towards the chair. Lorraine follows.

Bill walks in, and Lorraine sees him and approaches.

BILL

I'm in another city now. So I can gawk again.

Another elderly man with thinning hair approaches.

LORRAINE

Bill, this is Sydney. You remember him, from your explusion.

BILL

And K-2.

Bill offers his hand, but Sydney does not reciprocate.

Suddenly the barber chair area explodes. Screaming ensues, and the sprinkler system showers everyone. The crowd forces Lorraine and Sydney against a post. Sydney falls down.

Tobey forces his way through the crowd. As Tobey quickly gives CPR to Sydney, flames graze his pants, and Lorraine spansks them out. Fire engine sounds come.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA

Bill walks up to the stand to testify, as Sydney, somewhat limping but well dressed in a plain gray suit, steps into the courtroom, and makes eye contact as he sits in the back. Bill looks away and out into space as he takes the oath.

Bill is finally dressed in a dark suit although he doesn't have long socks and he crosses his legs, womanish. As the scene progresses, he tends to look up as he talks, avoiding cues of the body language of others.

ALLISON

So, Bill, would you state your perception of your writing business, in your own words.

BILL

Well, I'm almost famous. I'm not a Chloe Sullivan writing a high school ledger.

Sydney chuckles and catches Bill's glance.

ALLISON

So anybody on this entire planet can read anything you've written, from your website, free of charge.

BILL

Almost anyone. Even Saudi Arabia. But not China or Cuba. But I agree. It's profound.

(MORE)

A self-published website can be accessed from anywhere, in 1-1/2 seconds from the moon if there was a wireless connection there. This wasn't possible until just a few years ago. It's profound. Some people think it's bad.

ALLISON

So what do you think you're accomplishing with your writing?

BILL

I call it the "Do Ask, Do Tell" paradigm. It means learning to walk in another's shoes, to know how he thinks and what makes him tick. Maybe it's family, blood lines. Maybe it's an aesthetic fantasy. We have to learn to reveal the implications of ideas rather than just cover them up not to hurt people's feelings. I think playing Devils' Advocate publicly gets respect, say of Supreme Court law clerks when they write opinions. It's my kind of public prayer.

ALLISON

You can prove that.

BILL

I can tell from the logs. I think they read them for both the COPA case and for the sodomy laws, which were completely overturned, even on due process.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS

Mr. Ldzek, this is not a place for your legal theories.

ALLISON

What is COPA?

BILL

The Child Online Protection Act, which is enjoined. It could have made it a crime for me to put writings dealing with homosexuality in a place where children can find them, if I was selling anything.

ALLISON

So you sell books on your site.

BILL

I did, indirectly. I didn't take the credit cards, because that was too dangerous. I pointed to Amazon. Until IP pulled the plug, I sold books under my imprint name, High Productivity Publishing. A registered imprint with the Books in Print people.

ALLISON

You still have your stuff up anywhere?

BILL

Only on AOL Hometown. And for a few days, I wasn't even allowed to have a computer. I still don't have my Personal Publisher back.

Tobey now walks in to the courtroom, hobbling.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MOMENTS LATER

BALE DARTZ

Isn't a fact that you didn't process credit cards because you didn't sell enough to afford it?

BILL

I think it doesn't matter. Look, if I didn't do this, who would? Corporations and organizations don't say everything. When people work for somebody else, they never tell the complete truth.

BALE DARTZ

And when you found the hacked file, Exhibit A, isn't it true that you replaced it before you told your ISP.

A copy of the hacked text is projected on the screen.

BILL

I did re-ftp it immediately.

BALE DARTZ

Is it not a fact that you feared
that if they told you about it,
they would pull the plug
immediately.

BILL

What I thought can't be a fact can
it?

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MOMENTS LATER

ALLISON

Just for the record, Bill, when did
you get your first threat?

BILL

It was about a year before
September 11. Somebody took offense
at what I wrote about Perfect
Storm, that it was surprising to me
that a story about ordinary
fishermen would get the audience
sympathy. He wrote all over AOL
message boards that I should spend
my time with a therapist than sit
in a movie theater.

ALLISON

And his name was Bbop.

BILL

Yes.

ALLISON

The same as in the exhibit of the
hacked file.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN HARDER'S CONDO - EVENING

John is surfing around, while watching "Queer Eye for the
Straight Guy." He logs on to the BuildMyComputer server,
switches to a text-based screen and keystrokes around, and
then finds the list of employees, including Griffin. His
lover, a much shorter man, comes up and massages his
shoulders as he keeps working.

LOVER

How's my super geek.

JOHN

I'm not gonna tell.

John logs onto Erich's computer through file sharing and watches some of Erich's movie, fast forwarding in Premiere until he finds a shot of Griffin. He picks up his hands-free cell phone.

JOHN

I'm calling Erich. Don't be jealous.

LOVER

He's only a perfect 10 for TheWB.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MORNING

The government is summing.

BALE DARTZ

What we have here is a web operator who was an amateur, who even admits on his own website that he is an amateur, who knew that he was reckless and that he would endanger others by attracting attention to himself. What is at issue for you, ladies and gentlemen of the jury to decide, is whether he knew he was reckless.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - MOMENTS LATER

ALLISON

What is at issue is whether his methods, given his motives, are constitutionally protected. He just explained to you that no one will do this for money when somebody else pays the bill to make him credible. You have to do this all on your own. It's not a democracy. And Bill explained to you that this is part of the new trend towards open source.

CUT TO:

INT. JURY ROOM

The twelve jurors sit around the table, with John at the head. The sheriff pokes his head in.

SHERRIF'S DEPUTY
Lunch is served.

He brings in twelve pizza boxes and lays them out.

JOHN
Thanks. We may have a vote soon.

SHERRIF'S DEPUTY
Don't talk to me. It's all in secret.

The jurors start eating, although two of the female jurors do not partake.

FEMALE JUROR #1
I think what Bill did is outrageous. Just a flake. No family. Deserts his mother.

FEMALE JUROR #2
That matters. It's whether he knew he was breaking the law.

JOHN HARDER
The judge explained that under the Patriot Act, it can't be just happenstance. There has to be some recklessness in his intentions.

FEMALE JUROR #1
No there doesn't.

JOHN HARDER
For the kind of person he is, I don't think we can vote on that. I think we should write a note to the judge and explain the narrowness of our decision. That he knew what he was doing. It doesn't even matter if we could prove conclusively that somebody else did it. Didn't you wonder about that computer store employee?

John picks up a sales brochure from the store with the name "Bbop" written on it in black letters.

JOHN HARDER

Nobody mentioned this. But it doesn't matter. The meaning of the Patriot Act goes back to the judge.

FEMALE JUROR #1

Where'd you get that? It's not an exhibit.

INT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA

Bill and Allison stand in front of the judge, as he receives the verdict from the jury and spends a moment reading the note.

JUDGE HARRY MATTHEWS

Mr. Ldzek. The jury has found as a matter of fact that you knew that you create a reckless hazard with your operation of the website. The foreman has written a note that it cannot assign damages and that it is up to the court to decide on the law. It also says it is clear that others perpetrated the acts. This court is willing to forgo all monetary damages if you do a period of community service and stay away from computers for a period of one year. And you must not comment on the verdict with reporters.

BILL

You can really do that?

EXT. COURTHOUSE, FEDERAL, ALEXANDRIA VA - DAY

It is starting to rain with thunder, as a few reporters approach Bill.

ALLISON

He's gagged.

They sneak into a four door Saturn driven by Susannah.

INT. MACDONALD'S RESTAURANT, ARLINGTON - DAY

Bill is standing behind the register, taking orders as Erich, Allison, Tobey, and Sydney walk in to order.

BILL

Well, pop quiz! I paid my dues.

ERICH

4 Big Macs, 4 fries, 4 cokes, we'll
make it easy.

Bill enters the appropriately marked keys and commits the order on the register. Erich gives him a new Twenty, and the right change comes out automatically.

A new television is on CNN.

CNN REPORTER

In a new test of the Patriot Act,
an amateur web operator was told to
stay off computers or face fines
yesterday.

The four parties take a seat.

BILL

Don't I get a debate?

Bill puts up his smock and comes over and sits down.

ERICH

Welcome to your final station in
life, old timer. You see the
government upgraded me to Yellow.
It's a miracle that I'm here.

SYDNEY

And, Bill, I once said you had a
great future.

BILL

You're..

SYDNEY

You remember.

Bill offers his hand but Syd doesn't reciprocate.

BILL

You mentioned us in your movie, K-
2. That stuff about friendship, you
know, how one guy throws himself to
save his friend.

Sydney pulls out a copy of Bill's DADT book.

SYDNEY

You feel proud of this.

BILL

It's my one accomplishment. But you know why I'm here. I wanted to enlighten and I wasn't the right messenger.

SYDNEY

Until you were loyal to family.

BILL

Did they say that in Splendor in the Grass? I remember the day you emoted when you came back to the dorm. That was the one day we got along.

SYDNEY

You had a record with you then. You had been over at the student union listening to records. You had seen the movie the night before.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLIAM AND MARY STUDENT UNION - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Bill, at the checkout desk, looks at a record of the Schumann Second Symphony. There is a handwritten warning, "This record is badly worn."

BILL

Well, I need to emote today. I'll listen to this before my roommate comes back. He said I have one more chance to go to Tribunals.

GIRL BEHIND COUNTER

Isn't that where they shave the boys' legs?

BILL

And for at least one boy it never grows back.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. MACDONALD'S RESTAURANT, ARLINGTON - CONTINUOUS

BILL

You were as caught up in the sensuality of that movie as me. You forgot about the tribunals.

SYDNEY

So you forgot to have a family.

BILL

No, I was just wired differently from you, and you all saw me as a threat. An enemy. Isn't that more like it?

TOBEY

You didn't get away with it. If you did, it would negate what you say.

ERICH

So I set your trap. You wanted me to, right, Bill?

TOBEY

If you couldn't be like us, you could still pick us out.

BILL

And Sydney, you thought that was cheating. How I could have led a regular life, career, advancement.

Erich, Tobey and Sydney make a toast with their coffee cups.

TOBEY

The power behind the throne.

Bill hears some commotion behind him. His boss approaches.

SUPERVISOR

Bill, back on your feet. No more breaks. I mean it.

INT. BALLY'S HOLIDAY SWIMMING AREA - DAY

Tobey, Sheila and Erich stand on the edge of the pool. Sheila jumps in. Allison, Susannah and Izim walk in and also jump in. Tobey's legs are in bandages.

He glances at Erich, who pushes Bill in the water. Bill screams and thrashes, but starts paddling and staying up.

CUT TO:

INT. NURSING HOME - AFTERNOON

Bill is walking down the hall with MARY ELKINS, 60, and glances into the various semi-private rooms of elderly (and not so elderly) people sitting or lying down in their rooms.

BILL

I'm back living at home again.

MARY ELKINS

So it sound like you need something to do, if they won't let you keep your computers.

BILL

I still have my three self-published books in print. I mean, published.

MARY ELKINS

Maybe you could read to them. Not your books, but, you know, popular books. Romance novels. By the way, how old are you?

BILL

59.

MARY ELKINS

We can start paying you when you're 60. Oh, did you clean your car out yet?

INT. HEAD-START ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Small children, African-American, are studying their coloring books, and a few are trying the kids-safe computers. Bill walks with KARIM BLOGGINS (African American, 32) to an office.

BILL

Yes, 8 hours a week as a second volunteer assignment meets the requirement. It's OK to work with the kids on their computers. I just can't have my own for two years.

(MORE)

You know, ~~Bill~~ (cont'd) government can do anything it wants when it decides to.

KARIM

Well, you can peek at the webcasts. That is one of the perks.

His large web-TV is showing CNN, when Tobey comes on with Sydney.

CNN REPORTER

So we have a real life hero. Where did you learn CPR?

TOBEY

Boy scouts.

Suddenly CNN feeds its BREAKING NEWS with a shot of the California desert with smoke and fire coming from a pit of mud.

CNN REPORTER

We have just learned of a volcanic explosion in the California Owens Valley, about sixty miles from the town of Bishop. We believe that this may have come from the cone of Mono Lake.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLTOP ABOVE MONO LAKE AREA - AFTERNOON

The camera moves from a series of lava tube hills to a small field, colorful with the frozen flows of lava. There is a small assembly of people, including Bill, who handles a wedding ring to Tobey, who then puts it on Sheila's hand. A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE reads some text, and then Sheila kisses the bride.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEMONADE STAND, BISHOP CA PARKING LOT - MORNING

Bill, Allison, and Susannah set out lemonades, and Bill prepares the cash register. The surrounding street is covered with a thin layer of ash that workers are sweeping up. Bill wears a t-shirt that reads "Pay Your Dues."

Tobey, Sheila approach and open their wallets. Then Erich brings Izim into the scene.

BILL

I forgot. We don't charge any more.
This is volunteering.

A pickup drives by, with Erich standing in it, operating a tripod HDCAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ACADEMY GROUNDS IN BISHOP CA - MORNING

The camera follows the grounds. First, it shows a fenced baseball field, jogging track and gridiron (few stands), and outdoor swimming pool. Then there are two buildings at a right angle, forming an L around a small well-sodded yard. One building is long and narrow and looks like a dormitory. The other is four stories, concrete and small. The air is a bit dusty and hazy, and an orange sun is out. Barren mountains rise in the background.

Frank and Bill walk along the jogging track towards the buildings. From a distance, Frank looks like a young man. Both are dressed in gym clothes. The camera migrates from Bill's eyes to Frank, who in close-up looks visibly middle aged.

FRANK

So you came by to check me out?

BILL

You gave me a last chance out of this.

FRANK

And you still like to stare at me.

BILL

Well.

FRANK

Like you did once before.

BILL

Those were the days of innocence, before AIDS. I was a young vigorous man then, like you, well, just barely.

FRANK

With our lives ahead of us. Well, I'm an old married man myself now.

Frank manipulates his clothing, pulling up his tee shirt and now it appears that some object is taped to his chest.

They approach the building.

FRANK

And proud of it, you bet!

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD AT ACADEMY - CONTINUOUS

Tobey, Sheila, John Harder, Sydney, and Erich watch Bill and Frank. Erich picks up a DV camcorder and takes another shot of the two men talking. Then he turns to Tobey and Sheila and picks up the sparkle of their (now) wedding rings.

Sheila puts her arm around Tobey, who now longer has the bandages.

TOBEY

Sure, without a wife.

SHEILA

Careful with your own ring.

SYDNEY

You feel different, Tobey?

TOBEY

Being married? Not really.

SHEILA

He did better than a lot of men. He kept most of himself.

ERICH

I'll take the camera inside the building so I can follow the interview.

SYDNEY

Let's see Bill practice what he used to preach.

TOBEY

I don't think he'll have time for our little reunion. But then, neither will you, Sheila.

INT. WORKOUT ROOM AT ACADEMY - MOMENTS LATER

There are multiple workout stations and some medical monitoring equipment, like an electrocardiograph, with diagrams showing men doing stress tests.

Frank and Bill approach one corner, where there is a fancy desk with chair in front of it. Frank motions to Bill to sit down, and then keystrokes on his computer.

The camera quickly shows Frank browsing news reports on the volcano cleanup and then doing a Google search.

FRANK

Well, I see they've gotten most traces of your blogs off. I guess no girl friends -- pardon me, boy friends, can google you for dates now.

Frank leans back.

BILL

You know what I've given up.

FRANK

You're gonna be challenged here. You'll feel tired a lot, like you were in Army Basic. You'll learn to work, literally, to stay on your feet eight hours a day without bathroom breaks and balance a cash register at the end of a shift. You'll even take a turn at waitressing.

Tobey, Sheila, Erich, John, and Sydney enter now. Tobey nods at Frank, who makes a few keystrokes.

TOBEY

John, you may be the best subject. Syd is too old.

John strips to his shorts and stands on the treadmill. Sheila creams chest, covering any hair and then wiping it off, then covering John's chest with electrodes, as he starts to jog.

FRANK

Postulate-A Financial, no. We suggested they cut you loose. And there's no commission for me now in this. No ponzi scheme.

BILL

It's your agenda now.

FRANK

And yours. You know as well as I do that the country needs a SWAT team to fix things, get things going after the next purification.

BILL

Suitcase nukes, or more explosions at Mono Lake.

FRANK

That's sure to happen.

ERICH

Or solar flares, or pole shifts. Or super storms.

BILL

I give up my own voice. On my own claims to social equality. I now surrender the debate to well-funded organizations.

FRANK

Bill, there won't be anything more to debate. And you were never equal, you enjoyed your submission. Even to Erich. The only way for you to rise up is to speak someone else's words. We'll give you the words. If you come to Handyman Academy, it will be your whole life. But you'll get on camera, make movies. That's what you've always wanted.

The computer screen shows Tobey, Sheila and Erich setting up stuff and John doing the run. Some of the electrodes fall off his chest.

FRANK

You'll be handy with setting up this stuff. Even if you don't make it here, we'll use you in training films. You'll leave the showbiz to others.

BILL

But I chose them. I got to decide
who was best. Who could father.
That is good enough.

FRANK

You chose me once, and that was
good entertainment. Now see this.

Frankie pulls out a large photo of men floating face up in a bubbly natatorium, broken into sections. The men are covered with electrodes. Two of the men are Griffin and Corey.

Erich starts to set up the tripod.

FRANK

Erich, we get to film you on the
treadmill yet. You've got nothing
to lose.

INT. ST PAUL ROOMING HOUSE, TOBEY'S ROOM

Tobey, Erich, Allison, Susannah, Izzy, and Omar watch a shot of the World Trade Center site. There is a shot of Bill, ready to pull the switch. The hologram comes on. Outside the sky is still dusky.

TOBEY

I guess they'll always need a lot
of volunteers out west.

ALLISON

That's where Frankie will send
Bill. He'll pay his dues some more.
They expect two or three more
explosions. But we've got a
groundbreaking next week. You'll
all come. You are all my friends.

The closing shot shows the hologram of the new World Trade Center.

FADE OUT.