

INNOCENCE DIES AT MIDNIGHT

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE - A SUNNY AUTUMN MORNING

A RECEPTIONIST (40s) plays Candy Crush on an iPad. A potted palm gasps for water beside her.

OLIVER THOMAS (18), a malevolent teen in a boy-next-door shell, steps to the reception desk. He rips the iPad from her hand and shoves it into the drooping palm.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh my -- I, you -- Mr. Bartlett's expecting you? I'll call--

OLIVER

--I'll wait.

LILY NELSON (17), a prim girl in designer couture, strides into the office -- and stops dead when she sees Oliver.

Oliver matches her icy stare.

OLIVER

Save the world yet, princess?

Clutching her purse tightly, Lily avoids him and hurries to a computer workstation where the indiffernt MS. HANOVER (50s) paints her nails a sanguine red.

LILY

God, I just hate him.

MS. HANOVER

(preoccupied)

Whom, dear?

LILY

Our bully laureate: Oliver Thomas.

MS. HANOVER

I'm sure he's harmless.

LILY

A lot you know. That degenerate will cut you -- or worse...

Oliver practices free throws with office forms and the receptionist's wastebasket. Waiting.

MOUSE (O.S.)

--Yeah, um, malware can be a bitch. Any time I can help...

The wiry JIMMY "MOUSE" CARTWRIGHT (17) shuffles from the principal's office. Star Trek jacket. Marvel knapsack.

He tentatively shakes the hand of MR. BARTLETT (40s), the buzz-cut, muscle-bound principal.

Mr. Bartlett sees Oliver.

MR. BARTLETT  
I should charge you rent. Stay there.  
(to Mouse)  
You're on your own, kid.

Mr. Bartlett retreats to a kitchenette.

Mouse tries to scurry past Oliver, but Oliver blocks him.

MOUSE  
I, I've got your money--

OLIVER  
--Shut your pie hole and stand there.

He rifles Mouse's pockets. The office staff ignores them.

Oliver pulls an actual white mouse from Mouse's jacket pocket. He holds it up by its tail.

OLIVER  
Mrs. Frisby, I presume.

MOUSE  
His name is Douglas. A symbol of  
innocence.

OLIVER  
Sure it is.

Oliver turns on a paper shredder. Holds "Douglas" over it. Looks to Mouse for a reaction...

Mouse offers no reaction whatsoever.

MR. BARTLETT (O.S.)  
You've had your fun...

OLIVER  
I don't have fun--

MOUSE  
--You don't kill either. Just maim,  
or so I've heard...

OLIVER  
You think you know so much about me.

MOUSE

The Web has its uses.

Oliver considers the white mouse. Then drops it into Mouse's hands.

MR. BARTLETT

(to Oliver)

You're the dog shit on the shoe of this school. And always will be.

INT. EYEBALL ALLEY - LATER

Oliver stalks through Eyeball Alley – the glass-lined meeting place to "see and be seen" between the front entrance and the cafeteria. The sea of students parts before him.

Nerdy LEO (17), balancing a diorama, freezes as Oliver approaches. Turns to avoid him. Crushes the diorama into:

MR. JUNE

Easy, Leo! Lordy, look at this...

WILBUR JUNE (40s), the school's janitor, grimaces at the mangled diorama. His worn overalls and "aw-shucks" demeanor lend him the air of an Iowan farmer.

A piece of the diorama drops into Oliver's path. He squashes it flat.

OLIVER

Smooth move, hayseed. Better find the geek some glue.

Mr. June forces the mangled piece into Oliver's hand.

MR. JUNE

I've castrated bulls bigger than you, son. Word to the wise...

He pats Leo's shoulder and saunters off.

Oliver stuffs the piece into cowering Leo's shirt pocket.

OLIVER

I got two heads or what? Get outta my way.

HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

TYLER STORMBORN (18) – six feet of butch athletic attitude – huddles with two jocks in varsity jackets.

TYLER

Yeah, I can get Mollies. Who you warming up to..?

Oliver distracts Tyler as he storms past. Tyler's eyes linger on the bully.

GUNNER (17), a teddy bear in a linebacker's body, throws an arm over Tyler's shoulders.

GUNNER

We're gonna miss your talented gay ass against Shrine tomorrow night...  
(on Tyler's gaze)  
You wanna hit that, don't you...

TYLER

Morning, noon and night.

Oliver yanks open his locker. Inside, textbooks and a magnet of the American flag.

Oliver uses his locker door as cover. He studies a hand-painted sign: "HOMECOMING DANCE FRIDAY, POST-GAME TO 1 A.M."

His eyes jerk to GINA KLUMPP (16), a purple-haired goth balancing notebooks, a klieg theater light and a handful of transparent colored light gels.

Oliver straightens his hoodie. Checks his breath. As Gina sashays by:

OLIVER

Nice hair...

Gina ignores him. But a pink gel drifts to the floor as she strides away.

Oliver rescues the gel like it's a valentine. Bookmarks a textbook with it. Slams his locker shut.

EXT. RUNDOWN RANCH HOUSE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Oliver kicks a stone up the sidewalk, brooding. Kicks it again. It ricochets off the empty sheriff's cruiser that sits at the curb.

Oliver backs away anxiously, then retreats up the street.

INT. LIBRARY - LATER THAT EVENING

An old city library, sparsely inhabited.

Oliver claims an out-of-the-way table. He enters the stacks and returns with a thick novel: "The Two Towers" by Tolkein.

He kicks off his shoes and shucks his hoodie. Comfortable, he finds a tiny bookmark and settles in to read.

Mouse studies his nemesis from behind a bookshelf as he whispers to his pet mouse.

EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATE THAT NIGHT

Oliver pauses at mid-field. Contemplates the space. Drops his knapsack.

OLIVER  
Fourth down, 45 yard line. Down by  
five. Time for one desperate play...

Oliver squats to accept an imaginary hike.

OLIVER  
His father prepared him for this  
moment. He takes the snap...

He drops back. Rolls right.

OLIVER  
Pressure from the flank. No where  
to go! He chucks a HAIL MARY!

Oliver dashes toward the end zone. Glances over his shoulder. Jumps up. Catches the game winner in a tumbling roll...

Touchdown! He raises his fists into the air.

But the stadium is empty. Oliver snatches up his knapsack and plods off the field.

INT. RUNDOWN RANCH HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Oliver shuffles quietly into the cluttered room, careful not to disturb the WOMAN (late 30s) that sleeps on the sofa.

An empty liquor bottle sits on the coffee table beside an American flag in a funeral flag case.

Oliver gently covers her with an afghan, removes the liquor bottle and slips from the room.

INT. OLIVER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver creeps into the darkened room. Shuts the door. Shoves a dresser against it.

He breathes a sigh of relief and shucks his hoodie.

Suddenly, the light on the nightstand clicks on.

BUSTER (mid-30s), a bearish mountain of a MAN in dirty sweats, sits on the bed.

BUSTER

Alone at last...

Oliver bolts for the window.

Buster grabs him by the shirt, tearing it from his back.

Oliver kicks Buster in the face.

Buster hammers him until he collapses, then presses him face-first onto the bed.

BUSTER

Your momma's too shit-faced to bother  
with tonight...

Buster sets a revolver beside Oliver, ending his struggles. He yanks at Oliver's belt.

BUSTER

Let's face it: you're more my type.

EXT. RUNDOWN RANCH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

OLIVER (O.S.)

Please, don't -- WAIT...

BUSTER (O.S.)

Yell all ya want, boy. Ain't no one  
comin' to save you...

INT. EYEBALL ALLEY - MORNING

The school bustles with homecoming activity. CHEERLEADERS hang banners. JOCKS strut in their jerseys.

Oliver, wearing a desert khaki Army jacket, observes from an out-of-the-way corner.

Flannel-shirted Gina surveys the scene as Lily unrolls a poster. Gina feels Oliver's eyes on her.

LILY  
Homecoming: Barbie and Ken shilling  
a fantasy while thugs and drug addicts  
haunt the halls -- tape...

Gina rips off a piece of Duck Tape.

GINA  
He's never bothered me.

Lily tapes the poster to the wall. It reads: "THE DANCE  
ALTERNATIVE. GSA-SPONSORED PIZZA PARTY. 6:00 P.M. TONIGHT."

LILY  
Avoid him. Like the plague he is.

LAUGHTER drifts from a nearby teacher's lounge.

LILY  
And protect yourself. No one else  
will.

Nearby, Mouse double-knots his red Converse High-Tops. Passes a note to a cheerleader. Nods to a gregarious Mr. June.

Mr. June, a welding mask under his arm, studies the activity. He notes Oliver's chilly presence -- and Lily's poster.

INT. MAINTENANCE GARAGE - LATER

A crowded space of tools, barrels and vehicles. A janitorial office claims the corner.

At a workbench, Mr. June kneads a piece of clay as he reviews several yellow Post-Its. A line of coffee cans sit at his elbow.

BITTERS (17), an intense burnout, sets a spool of wire and wire cutters on the workbench. He jingles a wad of keys.

BITTERS  
I cut that wire for you, sir.

MR. JUNE  
You make work a pleasure, son. Back  
to shop class now.

Mr. June gives Bitters a fatherly pat on the back.

OLIVER (O.S.)  
You fetch his slippers, too?

Bitters glares at Oliver. He leaves the keys with Mr. June and escapes outside.

MR. JUNE

Kickin' a dog gets a man nothin' but a bruised dog. 'Course the bruised ones are meaner, as you know...

Oliver explores the workbench. Animals in formaldehyde. A Beretta gun calendar. A box of rat poison...

OLIVER

You have rats?

Oliver hears something in a corner and investigates.

OLIVER

Your girlfriend wants to discuss last night's performance...

He carries a live trap - with rat - to the workbench.

Mr. June abandons his stool and backs away.

MR. JUNE

Set that down and step away.

OLIVER

What, this? It's just a--

MR. JUNE

--It's a disease-carrying vermin. On the floor, boy...

OLIVER

Ooo, careful -- it's the Plague!

Oliver thrusts the cage toward Mr. June and laughs as Mr. June cringes.

MR. JUNE

You are a demon spawn.

OLIVER

For the hick about school, you're a real coward--

MR. JUNE

--Any of your teachers reported your bruises yet, Ollie? Contacted the police? Social services..?

All levity flees from Oliver's face. He sets down the cage.

Mr. June approaches the cage -- deliberate, as if gathering courage. He brings a fireplace poker honed to a pinpoint with him. Inserts the poker into the cage...

MR. JUNE

You gotta prick them just so...

He stabs with the poker. The rat SQUEAKS.

OLIVER

To kill it quickly -- right?

Mr. June tilts the cage. Blood runs from it.

MR. JUNE

Just so you nick a vein. Then you watch as they bleed out. Like slaughtering a hog -- so satisfying...

Oliver backs away from Mr. June and his tool.

OLIVER

I gotta get a smoke.

EXT. MAINTENANCE GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Bitters smokes with two grungy and tattooed teens -- SID and JOSLYN, both 17. Tyler smokes nearby.

Oliver bursts from the building. Assesses his targets. Shoves Sid against the wall and searches him.

OLIVER

Cigarettes. I'm not asking twice.

SID

Your time's comin', asshole...

Bitters silences Sid with a look.

Oliver steals Sid's cigarettes and saunters away from them.

Sid forms a "gun" with his hand and pretends to shoot Oliver in the back.

Tyler offers Oliver a light.

Oliver avoids Tyler's piercing gaze -- but he leans in, lights his cigarette and takes a long drag.

Tyler pokes at a bruise on Oliver's neck -- Oliver knocks his hand away.

TYLER  
That bastard needs a good take down.

OLIVER  
I was in a fight--

TYLER  
--You're always in a fight. You  
ever get tired of being hated?

Bitters catches Tyler's eye and nods toward the garage.

TYLER  
Gotta improve my inventory. For the  
record, ice works great on bruises--

OLIVER  
--You ever get tired of selling drugs  
to fix your reputation?

Tyler feels the verbal punch. But follows Bitters.

Sid and Joslyn make out for Oliver's benefit. They disappear  
inside.

Oliver smokes. Savors the silence.

Mr. Bartlett throws open the door. Beelines to Oliver.

MR. BARTLETT  
Snuff it, Mr. Thomas.

Oliver blows smoke in Mr. Bartlett's direction.

MR. BARTLETT  
Detention it is. No dance for you  
tonight -- as if you had a date.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - THAT EVENING

The marching band plays. An American flag waves. Fans weave  
through cars in the parking lot. Past tailgaters. Past  
students making out. Past a U-Haul moving van.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - 5:57 P.M.

Oliver plods past the homecoming decor. He pops balloons as  
he goes, resigned to his fate.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Oliver shuffles into detention. He sees Lily immediately.