



CRASHED

***BLAS
VALDEZ***

I see you pass by in the crowd with banners walking down Pine Street, a mix of workers, activists and students shouting «Jail 'em, don't bail 'em», the march moves across Wall Street up to the AIG building and the neighboring Bank of America, where barricades and dozens of police are waiting, «Jail 'em, don't bail 'em», I look for you in the ever-angrier chorus, «Jail 'em, don't bail 'em», the chorus is so loud that the suits above peer out their windows and look down in fear, they see a young woman grab a megaphone and rail in her own sweet way against the bank bailout, and when I hear your voice my heart leaps up, and I leap and float up to the front just as you lower the loudspeaker and the barricades come down, everyone scrambles and the beatings begin, I sidestep one two three bodies but can't find you, I desperately look for you till I feel a blow on the back of my head, till I fall and see the megaphone lying on the ground among the scrambling feet, the warm blood runs down my back and I can just see the AIG logo on the door, *the AIG logo emblazoned on the Manchester United jerseys, on the red chests of the faithful pouring into the Theatre of Dreams, Cristiano Ronaldo and company come out on the field, the match is about to start but I'm still in the tunnels waiting outside the Reds museum, waiting for you as I stroll down the rows of trophies, the pictures of the Man United legends, outside... the first whistle followed by the loud cheering, outside... everything gets underway, the ball rolls and bounces while inside my little-game-of-waiting-for-you comes to an end, you won't come, I know, just like Byrne, Jones, and Colman didn't make it, I mechanically read the names of the 1958 tragedy, Taylor, Whelan, Pegg, Bent, the Reds lost in the Munich disaster, there's a snowstorm outside but I'm happy, the pilot informs us of the delay but I'm smiling, I still can't believe I'm sitting just a few rows away from Charlton, from the whole United squad and I'm dying to grab a napkin and start asking for autographs left and right, and I put the peanuts aside and finally get up, but a voice coming out of nowhere asks me to sit down, the flight attendant walks up behind me, stick 'em up, and defenceless like that I fall in love at close range, your voice blends with the captain's words as he finally announces the takeoff, you walk down the aisle handing out smiles and I forget about United, I forget and just watch you like an idiot, oblivious to the fact that once, twice, and on the third attempt at takeoff the plane almost skids off the frozen runway, it barely gets off the ground when a house crosses its path, a wing is destroyed and the captain turns*

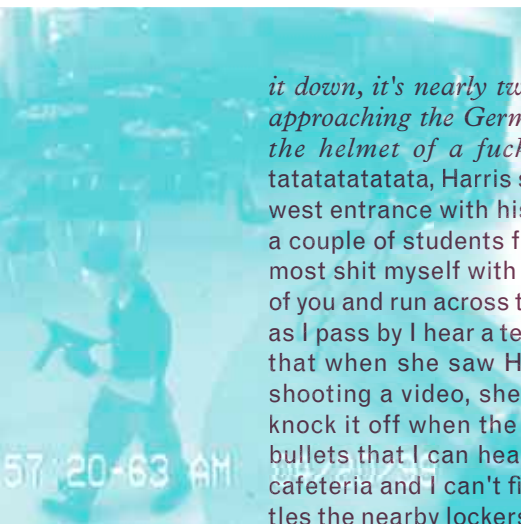
right, everything turns and turns violently until I see you fly down the aisle, your body passes like a blur towards the back of the plane, this tiny little plane that looks like a toy crashing against a wall, another wall, a whole building and I look for you in the flames, I look for you among the United squad trapped in this hell with me, while we all die in Munich, *the poster with Eric Bana that I catch out of the corner of my eye as I walk into the cinema, I'm late for the movie and look for you row by row sucking a Frapuccino, just as back on the screen the Fedayeen enters the Olympic Village and are mistaken for athletes sneaking back in from a night of partying, I'm not a big Spielberg fan but I still wanted to see you, especially in the dark, a woman tells me to take a seat 'cause I'm blocking the screen as the Palestinians leave their sweatshirts behind and silently walk down Connollystrasse, and as soon as my eyes get used to the darkness of the theatre I look for you again, row after row, just as the masked Fedayeen are now holding AK-47s and open the first door, kill the first person, almost the entire Israeli team is caught sleeping, and past midnight I get an SMS from Barak's army, a pretty little message telling me to leave my home, to leave and run away 'cause the fighter jets are coming and my home is in their sights, a small detail, of course, is that I'm not home, you're the only one there, wounded and dying on the living room floor as you wait for the medicines, as you wait for the pretty little pills I haven't managed to find, but all the same I run back across Gaza protected only by the night, this long night pierced by Israeli bombs, one after another after another and the screams mark my way home, a nearby explosion crushes a building and bursts my eardrums, it deafens me so much that I can't hear myself shouting when I see the rubble of my living room, when I see my entire house engulfed in a strange rain of fire and white smoke, the images clearly show white phosphorus falling on Fallujah but the general denies it nonetheless, the scene is so absurd that I turn up the volume on the television, the BBC anchorman then asks him about Abu Ghraib and the photos that have recently come to light, the general covered with medals keeps tiptoeing around the subject while we see on the screen the prisoner wearing a dog collar, the pyramid of naked bodies, the hooded man standing on a box, a series of pictures that stuns all of us sitting in front of the television, the anchorman has him against the ropes and now asks about the new accusations coming out of Guantanamo, and cut to the footage of a group of men in cages wearing orange jumpsuits, but that is*

something I can't see 'cause they cover my head with a cloth and pour water on my face, flooding my mouth, my nose, my life and I kick and scream, and try somehow to free myself from the torture table until I fracture my wrist, until I end up breaking a bone and I swallow the pain along with the stream of water that's drowning me, *the general defends himself against the accusations of torture, shielding himself behind the war on terror, telling the CNN anchor-man about the post 911 world*, the plane crashes into the building crashes into the building crashes into the building, the image I see over and over again in a never-ending loop, the people on the streets of New York look up in horror, the buildings then collapse collapse collapse and I still can't believe what I'm seeing, *and the song by the Pixies begins in that romantic last scene, Edward Norton and Helena Bonham Carter holding hands as they watch the financial sector collapse all around them, where is my mind and another blast, the office buildings of the credit card companies collapse, you met me at a very strange time in my life, they collapse, they collapse*, and not long after the Twin Towers a plane flies towards the Pentagon, I don't see it but I imagine it that September 11, *a fighter plane flies over La Moneda and an explosion breaks the windows of the palace, the building burns engulfed in white smoke, in black smoke, I see you under a parked car not far away, hiding from the tanks involved in the coup, the tanks that take-aim-and-fire, more fire in La Moneda, but Allende doesn't surrender, I look out the window of the shop I'm hiding in and desperately wave at you, but you don't see me 'cause another Hawker flies by at full speed and everything shakes, I shudder and run out of the store shouting at you as the soldiers fire tear gas through the windows of the palace, I run towards you half-crouching, but after a few steps a bullet splits my spine in two, a soldier comes up behind me and a tank rolls down the middle of the street*, a row of Chinese tanks against an ordinary, everyday man, defying them in the middle of Beijing, challenging them and blocking their way down the Avenue of Eternal Peace, the first tank in the column tries to go around him, but the solitary man in the white shirt moves and block its path again, armed only with a couple supermarket bags and a tank-stopping gaze, and from a window in a nearby building, I adjust the tele lens and point the camera towards that man in the dark trousers, I zoom in zoom in zoom in *and the Google Earth image moves in closer and closer to your country, your city, your street, click click click and as easy as that I can see the roof of your*

house on my screen, the sidewalk where you crushed my heart, the house of the neighbour who went to school with us, remember him?, the fat kid who was spying on us from his window when you broke up with me, when you told me you liked that asshole from ninth grade and something burst inside me, I move the image with the mouse three and a half streets down till I see the house where I grew up, the tiny back garden where I spent hours kicking a busted soccer ball against the wall, mom calling out to me from the kitchen, coming out and asking me to go buy a couple of cokes, the alphabet soup, the homemade flour tortillas and all the images that flood my mind, that start to lead me down a path I don't want to take and I twice click zoom out, I stare at the screen like an idiot, the aerial image of the old neighborhood, that green stain, the rundown park where we first kissed and a pain starts to run through my body, I see your school uniform again, your sexy little skirt and I zoom out zoom out zoom out, I want to leave this fucking world, zoom out of life, kick the digital globe on my screen against a wall, kick it over and over again until it bursts, deflates, that globe and the military satellite image moves closer and zooms in on North Africa, on that city, on that empty lot not far from the mosque, the image keeps closing in at a dizzying speed till it has in its sight a man walking away from a truck, an invisible voice says something in English with feedback induced noise in the background, another man's voice gives the order and a missile falls from the sky and blows the man up into a thousand pieces, that man who is now just a black charred smudge on the ground, like a very sad Rorschach blot, a dark inkblot on a test card the psychiatrist shows me before asking me again what I see, I'm sick of this and the strait-jacket is too tight, but I keep playing the game, I look closer and tell him what I see, near the upper part of the card I'm lying on the street bleeding to death, with several broken bones, but even so I drag myself towards the bottom of the blot, where my girlfriend is lying on the ground, also bleeding to death, the motorcycle we were riding is far away, smashed up somewhere outside the card, my girlfriend doesn't even move anymore, she just bleeds, and I know very well that she'll die in a few seconds and I have this corny idea, this hollywood-film-like idea of going over to her and whispering in her ear that I love her, a final I-love-you that sums it all up, so I drag myself down to this beautiful dying woman, I turn her head towards me, I clean the blood off her face a bit and try to tell her that I love her, but the words don't come out, my mouth feels like

jelly, full of blood, and only then I realise that I have no tongue, that I had bitten it off when I fell, when I hit the pavement, I had bitten it off myself and now I can't tell my girlfriend what I feel, I look around in despair and manage to see my tongue lying a few feet away, grotesque, as if it was laughing at me, then I look back at my girlfriend and don't recognise her anymore, the blood has covered her face again and her eyes are now lifeless, the psychiatrist jots something down in his notebook and shows me the next card, the next blot, a smudge on a canvas, lots of smudges on a Pollock hanging in the MOMA, I make a face and move on to the next room, then I look up and smile when I see the starry night on the wall, the whirls of color in the sky, the radiant moon, the thick textures, and a couple of tourists standing next to me mention Van Gogh's ear, the mutilated ear that Kyle MacLachlan finds in an empty lot, but I'm not looking for that scene and I push fast forward, the VHS player squeaks as I hum Blue Velvet and almost pass the scene I want, but I press play when Isabella Rossellini begins taking off her clothes as we watch her from the closet, I see her and I can't help but glance at the Casablanca poster hanging on my wall, Isabella definitely with her mother's face, Ingrid and Bogart at the airport fleeing from the nazis, that black and white farewell, like the snapshot I discreetly take out of my pocket, the two of us standing in front of the ferris wheel, happy, floating, I see your face, your smile, and for one... two... three long seconds I'm filled with peace, I manage to relax till a wave smashes against our boat and I drop the wrinkled photograph, the soldier in front of me steps back and accidentally stands on it, I'm about to bend down and grab it, but the sergeant gives the order and everything moves so fast, the hatch opens and a rain of German bullets overwhelms us, a hail of bullets bursts the chests and faces of the first men to jump into the water, the same men that now float face-down to the beach, I push a button on the PlayStation joystick and switch to third-person shooter, I follow my landing on Omaha from an over the shoulder view, I manage to reach the beach surrounded by corpses floating in and out with the tide, bullets whistle over my head, the surround sound is turned way up as tatatatata, tatatatata, the sweet noise of my Browning automatic unleashing its light fury against the German artillery sweeping the beach from the bunker above, I get an incredible adrenaline rush and go back to first person shooting, tatatatata, tatatatata, my neighbour starts banging on the wall trying to get me to turn





it down, it's nearly two in the morning and I'm still in a trance approaching the German defences, my Browning blows a hole in the helmet of a fucking nazi who sticks his head up, and tatatatatata, Harris sweeps the grassy knoll beside the school's west entrance with his 9mm semi-automatic, tatatatatata and a couple of students fall like rag dolls as if in a video game, I almost shit myself with fear and run back into the building, I think of you and run across the maze of hallways, Columbine so big and as I pass by I hear a teacher call 911, a teacher who later tells me that when she saw Harris and Klebold she thought they were shooting a video, she was just about to go out and tell them to knock it off when the bullets shattered the windows, the same bullets that I can hear in the distance, a teacher evacuates the cafeteria and I can't find you, the blast wave of an explosion rattles the nearby lockers, I desperately look for you in the hallways until someone tells me you're in the library, the same library that I see Harris go into firing left and right, tatatatatata, a group of gunmen armed to the teeth enter the lobby of the Taj Mahal as I wait for you to come down from our room, the men open fire without any warning, and out of nowhere a hail of bullets riddles the open newspaper of the guy sitting next to me, a man in a suit who was calmly reading something about Obama when tatatatatata, tatatatatata, scared to death I jump out of my chair and run to the nearest staircase, while the men dressed in black behind me shoot at everything that moves in the lobby, and just as I'm running up the steps I realise I've been shot in the arm, but it doesn't really matter, I run up as fast as I can thinking about you and this honeymoon, this trip that had started like a dream and now I hear an explosion in the background, I reach the fifth floor with my arm covered in blood, panting, and walk into the hallway just as you disappear into the elevator, I scream your name and run towards you, but you don't hear me, you can't hear me because of the earphones, because you have a million things on your mind and our first child in your womb, the doors close just before I get there and hit them, I desperately push the button again and again, but the elevator has already started its descent into that lobby-hell, I scream at the top of my lungs and without catching my breath go back to the staircase, maybe I can get to you in time, and I start going down until I run into several panic-stricken tourists who push me aside, who scream and I look down, I look and catch a glimpse of a gunman spraying bullets all around as he walks up the staircase, and

I barely manage to get out and into the third floor corridor, I barely take a few steps when an American woman opens the door of her room and looks at me in horror, I unceremoniously shove her back and we fall inside just before the hallway is flooded with bullets, and I close the door as another blast shakes the building, I try to explain everything to her but soon the smoke starts sneaking into the room, we assume the floor below is on fire and the woman begins to get hysterical, repeating again and again that she doesn't want to die, she mumbles something about the terrorists and tries to jump out the window, the camera zooms in on one of the smouldering Twin Towers and shows a woman jumping out of a window, then follows the fall of that somewhat-pixelated body as it comes hurtling down and disappears behind another building, speechless I change the channel just as someone else also jumps into the void, pushed out by the flames that engulf the building, the camera follows the man as he free-falls towards the New York sidewalk, a banker driven mad by the never-before-seen Wall Street crash throws himself out of a 23rd floor window, and just as I read about the collapse of the stock market standing on the sidewalk, just as I see President Hoover's picture on the front page of the Herald, a man in a suit falls from the sky and lands on top of a brand new Chevy Coupe, the roof caves in and the car immediately comes to a halt, and among the New York passers-by who turn their heads in disbelief, among that multitude of cloche hats, I see you for the first time and fall in love...