

**YES, MY  
BEST FRIEND  
WAS A  
DREAMER**

“Time is short and art is long. It seems to me that you should let yourself be instructed. Associate yourself with some poet, and let that gentleman’s thoughts go roving: have him heap all noble qualities upon your honored pate, the lion’s courage, the stag’s fleetness, the Italian’s fiery blood, the Northerner’s steadfastness. Let him find for you the secret of combining magnanimity, and cunning and how, with warm youthful desires, you can fall in love in accordance with a plan.” [Mephistopheles (the Devil), from Goethe’s *Faust*]

*Before the Internet, before DVDs, and before Tiger Woods, there was only Herman America.*

My name is David, and Herman ‘Captain’ America was my best friend.

Before we start this story, I should tell you a few important details that Herman never mentioned, or didn’t get the chance to. Most importantly, that he’s gone now. Missing. Disappeared. Poof! Herman vanished without a trace back in early Ninety-four. The official word is that Herman was in a small car that slid off a snowy cliff in Colorado. But—and not surprising to me—his body never turned up with the others. I’ll tell you more about that in a minute.

I want to introduce my friend Herman to you, and to anyone else that might not know him, because I have to, in case you never get to do it for yourself. In a minute, I’ll tell you about the things Herman has done, and about what happened in Colorado. I’m going to tell you a whole bunch of things. And then, before long, you’ll get to hear from the man himself, from this one very unique American kid. If you lend the two of us an ear for a little while, you’ll hear just about everything. First, I will give you my big Introduction. Or both my introductions, as it turned out. In a way, my two introductions add up to something like a mini-biography of Herman, but they’re nothing compared to what Herman says for himself later on—the real reason we’re here. Very careful, very eloquent, very honest—the stuff at the end is straight from Herman’s historic personal journals, and periodically I’ll pull a few excerpts, but only a few, to save paper of course, but also so you don’t have to read the entire thing twice. *And . . .* so I don’t just up and kill you with Herman right off the bat!

Oh, and I should mention that Herman was only twenty when he began all this business. And now, years later, if he's still alive, Herman would be somewhere into his thirty-second year. A precocious son of a bitch, indeed he was.

So, here here, come quickly. Like that scene in the King Arthur legend, when young Arthur is told to pull the sword out of the stone for a second and final time: "Let the boy try! Let the boy try!" And then, with a little help from Merlin, young Arthur became king. Well, with Herman, we're talking about a guy who actually figured out the Meaning of Life, and wrote it down, in rather convincing terms.

Herman moved to southwestern Colorado about three months before the accident. One of the last entries in the journals is from just days before he was reported missing. He'd been hitch-hiking in and out of Telluride for several months, getting to and from work, and you'll see that as the winter weather started to get bad, he made note of which kinds of drivers he trusted more than others. He told me over the phone about how Colorado license plates are always better. It means the driver probably has at least some experience with the snow and black ice.

Herman described some of the drivers who picked him up, some that came from warmer climates and had only recently migrated out (up) to the San Juan Mountains. He wrote a bit about a woman from South Carolina—who was later questioned—who had lived in Telluride for less time than he had, which means she may have pulled into town for the very first time just before she picked Herman up that day. Anyway, Herman was apparently uncomfortable in her small car, some "lipstick-colored Korean compact," which is far from what you might call designed for the mountains. Here's an excerpt:

"She said, 'All my friends tell me I drive too fast, but I'm a city driver and I can never get anywhere fast enough. I just can't slow down—you know, old habits. I'm probably making you nervous, huh?' And while she drove she stared at me and not at the road ahead. We were winding