AMERICAN BULLDOG

Written by

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TEASER:

EXT. WEMBLEY STADIUM - DAY

Packed, raucous, FANS sweating and mopping their foreheads under a bright sun, some waving soccer-type scarves in fawn, cream and blue plaid, with BULLDOGS on them in red.

TITLE: WEMBLEY STADIUM, LONDON, SEPTEMBER. OPENING HOME GAME FOR THE LONDON BULLDOGS, VS. THE NEW YORK GOLIATHS. FOURTH QUARTER, 21-21, TWO-MINUTE WARNING.

The roaring crowd suddenly gasps, and we FOCUS on worried faces, some mouthing the words, "What happened?" And "Is he all right?", women with their hands over their mouths.

ANGLE on the face of Bulldogs QB BRENDAN McBRIDE (No. 3), early 20s, tall and muscular on his side on the turf, curled around the football, crushed under Goliaths DEFENDERS, eyes wide, gasping for breath. As the DEFENDERS pile off, a TRAINER is shouting in Brendan's face, but all he hears is the sound of his own gasping.

EXT. WEMBLEY STADIUM, DAY

In a wide TV-broadcast shot of the field, TRAINERS and OFFICIALS are huddled around Brendan, who is now sitting up, as other Bulldogs PLAYERS stand nearby. Over the action, we hear the voice of two announcers: British NIGEL TRICKLE and American KEN COSENTINO.

NIGEL (O.S.)
The hit really knocked the stuffing out of quarterback Brendan McBride.

KEN (O.S.)
Looked to me like a huge hole opened up in the O-line, and Goliaths DT D'Andre Folls just sailed through it for the sack.

INT. MCBRIDE LIVING ROOM, DAY

TITLE: MCBRIDE FAMILY HOME, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

A large but silent family -- two parents in their 60s (the man is wearing oxygen), SHEILA MCBRIDE and BRIAN MCBBRIDE -- five adult men ranging from their late 20s to around 40 (the McBride BROTHERS), with WIVES and a scattering of GRANDCHILDREN -- is gathered on couches and chairs around a huge TV set playing the game from London.

Remnants of a pancake breakfast are strewn across tray tables and a large coffee table. Between the parents is the youngest McBride brother, developmentally challenged 18-year-old SEAN McBRIDE, the smallest of the bunch, slight build, innocent face. Tears in his eyes, he looks up at father Brian.

SEAN
I told you, Dad. We didn't say the St. Patrick Breastplate prayer before Bren hung up. He didn't have his holy armor on.

BRIAN
We'll do it now, Sean.

SEAN
It's too late.

BRIAN
Never.

Starting with Brian, one by one, everyone repeats the Sign of the Cross and claps hands around the room.

EXT. WEMBLEY STADIUM -- DAY

Brendan is still sitting on the field, leaning forward. Over the action...

KEN (O.S.)
I don't know, Nigel. With Tommy Jacinto on suspension after being arrested for sexual assault in July, and backup Seth Porterhouse still recovering from a foot injury in the last preseason game against the Jersey City Rattlers, the Bulldogs are almost down to their last QB. If McBride doesn't get up...

NIGEL (O.S.)
It could certainly throw a spanner in the works, Kenneth.

KEN (O.S.)
And a monkey wrench!

NIGEL (O.S.)
Yes, that as well.

Then, helped by trainers, Brendan gets to his feet and waves to the crowd, which roars its approval as he walks unaided off the field.

KEN (O.S.)
The Bulldogs have signaled a time out, and this crowd is collectively holding its breath.

NIGEL (O.S.)
So are the British public, who laid down over five hundred million additional pounds to kit out Wembley for the NFL. There's more than a gridiron win at stake here.

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH -- DAY

Ken and Nigel are sitting side by side in front of the logos of the Bulldogs (large brown-and-white dog paw with sharp blue nails) and the New York Goliaths (a huge hand holding a war hammer), with their names under them. Ken, 40s, is a former linebacker who's kept his muscles but not his hair; Nigel, 40s, looks like two or three actors who've played Doctor Who.

KEN
You're absolutely right. Two new expansion teams in one season is hard enough, but to make the second one the League's first team in London... well, it sounded like an impossible dream last year when it was announced.

NIGEL
Of course, it would have been simpler if Parliament had signed off on it before the Super Bowl, rather than the day after. The Dream Warriors of Orlando had a two-month head start nabbing talent, leaving the Bulldogs in a mad scramble.

KEN
We'll cut to a quick break, and when we get back, we'll see if the Bulldogs -- and their quarterback -- are still in the game.

INT. MCBRIDE LIVING ROOM -- DAY

As the family also holds its breath and silently prays, Sean looks heavenward and closes his eyes.

SEAN
(under his breath)
Come on, Bren. You can do it.
You're my hero, always.

DISSOLVE TO:
OPENING CREDITS

INT. COLLEGE LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

TITLE: UNIVERSITY OF THE KEYS DEVIL RAYS LOCKER ROOM, TWO YEARS EARLIER

Several very large YOUNG MEN, Devil Rays players, in black tee shirts, with their last names stenciled in white on the back, and black pants, are standing in a circle. They're gesturing and chanting in unison.

PLAYERS
Take it down! Take it down!

Brendan, wearing a UKeys Devil Rays TEE SHIRT(burgundy with gold lettering), pushes through the circle to see what's going on in the center. Player DARNELL HARRIS, 20, objects.

DARNELL
What are you doing here, QB?

BRENDAN
(holding up a TABLET)
Forgot my playbook.

DARNELL
You got no place here. Takedown
Club is linebackers only.

Ignoring that, Brendan then sees what's going on, and he's shocked. Freshman linebacker NASH HOLDER, late teens, beefy, wearing only boxer shorts, is on his knees with his wrists and ankles lashed together behind him. Standing over him are upperclassmen linebackers LANDON "LANDO" ROYCE JR., early 20s, and Darnell. Lando holds a tube in Nash's mouth, with a funnel at one end, into which Darnell pours from one of two large beer cans (there are more at his feet).

BRENDAN
Lando, what the hell's going on
here?

Lando removes the tube from Nash's mouth.

LANDO
Harmless fun, McBride. Just a little initiation ritual.

Brendan ignores him and looks at Nash.

BRENDAN
You all right, Nash?

NASH
(voice a little slurred, thick Southern accent)
Yeah, QB, I'm fine. It's just some beer. I've had beer.

BRENDAN
You here of your own free will? Did you agree to this?

NASH
Sure, BMcB, I'm all good here. Just some fun.

Brendan looks around the circle of players, whose black tees all have large white TCs on the front of them, with a red lighting bolt between the letters.

BRENDAN
Does the coach know you're doing this on school property?

LANDO
Why don't you go tattle?

Brendan swallows a reply, gives Nash a hard look, then nods and backs away. As he's walking away, he hears...

LANDO (CONT'D)
See that, Darnell? Heisman boy thinks his shit don't stink.

DARNELL
And he don't even work it to get laid...

Brendan stuffs down his reaction to this, but when he reaches the door, he does bang it open, and his fists are clenched as it closes behind him.

INT. BRENDAN'S COLLEGE DORM ROOM, DAY

The bedside clock says 7 a.m. Brendan is sound asleep. His phone (an early model iPhone) starts buzzing, and he opens his eyes, looks at the screen (which says "Dad") and answers groggily.

BRENDAN
Hey, everything OK?

Brian sits at the kitchen table in his home (not wearing oxygen).

BRIAN
We're all good here. Sorry to call so early.

BRENDAN
'S OK. I needed to be up for Mass anyway.

BRIAN
So you haven't seen the news?

Brendan is more awake now.

BRENDAN
What news?

BRIAN
That country-boy freshman from the Panhandle you told us about...

BRENDAN
Nash Holder?

BRIAN
Sorry, son, but he passed away. The news said he choked on his own vomit. They found him on the grass outside a party early this morning.

Brendan, wearing PJ pants and a crucifix on a chain, sits up all the way.

BRENDAN
(crossing himself)
May God have mercy on his soul.

Then he goes silent for a few seconds, thinking.

BRIAN
You there?

BRENDAN
Yeah, Dad. It's just... I may know something about this.

EXT. VINEYARD -- DAY

TITLE: ABBEY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, NEAR NAPLES, FLORIDA. TWO MONTHS LATER

It's an early-spring day, and Brendan is spreading manure around grapevines in a vineyard, with Spanish-style buildings visible in the distance. He's joined by DOMINIC RYAN, handsome but haunted, mid-40s, who's wearing a rough gray hooded robe, pushing a wheelbarrow containing a couple of large bags marked "manure." Brendan looks at him with a resigned smile.

BRENDAN
Boy, Uncle Dominic, you sure do know how to show a guy a good time.

DOMINIC
What were you expecting, a weekend of meditation and prayer?

BRENDAN
Actually, yeah.

DOMINIC
What's more prayerful than working in the vineyards of the Lord?

BRENDAN
I have a list.

INT. ABBEY KITCHEN, DAY

Dominic and Brendan sit in the kitchen, an airy interior with a rough-hewn table with benches, underneath bunches of drying herbs. Brendan shells peas, while Dominic peels potatoes. From time to time, as Brendan speaks, Dominic pauses, flexing the hand that holds the potato peeler as it repeatedly begins to tremble.

BRENDAN
... so the university chancellor announced that Darnell and Lando were expelled, and the Takedown Club was disbanded.

DOMINIC
Your mother said no one supported your decision to go to the police.

BRENDAN
No. Even though the chancellor never released my name, the whole campus knew it was me.

DOMINIC
The right thing isn't always the comfortable thing.

BRENDAN
I know, but that's not what bothers me. If you'd heard what was said about Nash... drove me nuts. If he had been Black or Asian or Muslim or gay, he'd have had a ready-made team of defenders. But he just was this big, dumb, Bible-thumping cracker whose drank himself to death and nearly took down the Devil Rays. Lando and Darnell are being touted as the real victims.

They go silent for a moment, Dominic flexes his hand again and then changes the subject.

DOMINIC
How's the draft chatter?

BRENDAN
Quieter than it should be. Nobody likes a snitch. Maybe the Miami Surge, which my family would like, but more likely D.C. Fire, which they wouldn't. Either way, I can't be there for Sean like I have been. Mom's having trouble handling him when Dad's on a job site.

DOMINIC
He's got so many hormones and feelings he's trying to process.

BRENDAN
Yeah. He cried when Mom said I was coming here for the weekend, but she knew I needed a break.

DOMINIC
Appreciate the company. Haven't seen you much lately.

BRENDAN
I know. Sorry to dump my stuff on you. After Africa, Ebola, all that, you don't need my problems.

DOMINIC
Look, if the League falls through, you'll just hit seminary a few years earlier.

Brendan eyes him.

BRENDAN
Speaking of problems, how's the hand?

DOMINIC
Comes and goes. The only thing that ever steadied it was Jack Daniels.

At Brendan's startled look, Dominic smiles.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I don't even sample the wine.

Brendan smiles at him, but there's no real joy in his expression.

EXT. WEMBLEY STADIUM -- DAY

Brendan's at the sidelines during a timeout, talking to coaches and trainers. When he stands up and puts his helmet on, the crowd roars its approval. Again, we hear the voices of Ken and Nigel over TV scenes of the sideline as the time out runs down.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Word from the sideline is that McBride just got the wind knocked out of his sails, and he'll be fit at the end of the timeout.

KEN (O.S.)
Had us going there for a minute, didn't he, Nige? That's a heckuva quick recovery. That kid's got a lot of bounce in him, I'll say that.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Indeed he does. And it's *Nigel*, if you please, Kenneth.

KEN (O.S.)
Just plain old Ken, thanks.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Right you are.

HEAD COACH HAROLD SAWYER, 50s, can be seen talking intently to offensive lineman J.L. HARRIS (No. 8), who's gesturing in a defensive manner.

KEN (O.S.)
I see Head Coach Harold Sawyer confabbing with J.L. Harris. He's the lineman that ran way right at the last play, leaving McBride open. From the looks of it, Harris is getting an earful.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Well, the replay did show that there were no defenders in the direction he ran, so I don't know what his intent was.

The Bulldogs start to head back out onto the field, with Brendan and Harris among them. Brendan signals a huddle.

KEN (O.S.)
Don't know if this has any bearing on the situation, but Harris' cousin Darnell Harris was one of the University of the Keys players expelled after the hazing scandal a couple of years ago that cost a Devil Dogs freshman his life.

NIGEL (O.S.)
And the other player was Landon Royce Jr., son of the Bulldogs' offensive coordinator, Rolls Royce.

KEN
Right. Small world! Sawyer was a standout cornerback at Grambling, but he started out his coaching career at a high school in South Florida. Bet he went to a few UKeys games! OK, teams are in position, it's third and long at the twenty-yard line, with only fifteen seconds left on the clock.

As the crowd howls, Brendan takes the snap, rolls back and lets go with an arcing “Hail Mary” bomb, that lands in the arms of wide receiver GABRIEL ST. PIERRE (no. 16), early 20s, tall, rangy, who pirouettes in mid-air, just managing to land in-bounds in the end zone. The ref signals touchdown. The Goliaths players look dejected, and the Bulldogs players begin celebrating. Brendan runs to Gabriel. When he gets close, kicker COLIN TODD, mid-20s, lanky, joins them from the sideline. In a well-rehearsed move, the three face each other, crouch down like linemen, and then burst into the air and fall backwards on the turf (the names on the backs of the jerseys are all visible at some point).

INT. BULLDOGS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Amid the general celebration, huge defensive lineman TANA TUA, a long-haired, tattooed Samoan, early 30s, wearing only a towel, saunters up to Harris and leans on his locker.

TUA
I want to tell you a story.

Harris, half-dressed and putting on deodorant, gives him a dismissive look.

HARRIS
Yeah?

TUA
There is a mighty Samoan named Tana Tua, very handsome, very strong. He joined the League, and his passion, aside from his beautiful wife and four sturdy sons, is crushing quarterbacks. His enemy is the offensive lineman, like yourself.

HARRIS
What’s your point?

Tana, who’s a head taller than Harris and outweighs him, leans forward, grinning but menacing nonetheless.

TUA
As I was saying, men such as you are his enemy. But he respects his enemy, because they’re just doing their job, as he is. But one thing Tana Tua cannot stand is a traitor. If a man deserts his position, abandons his teammates, he is not worthy of respect, nor being called a man.

HARRIS
(bristling)
You accusing me of something?

TUA
Not at all. I'm just telling a story. I hope to never meet such a man, and such a man had better hope he never meets me.

With that, Tua walks away, leaving Harris fuming.

INT. BULLDOGS PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

REPORTERS are gathered in front of a table where Brendan is sitting between Sawyer, and OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR LANDON ROYCE, late 40s, (they have cards with their names in front of them). Brendan has his head down; the coaches look tense.

REPORTER 1
(American Southern accent)
But the sack happened because J.L. Harris ran wide, apparently intentionally. Are you telling us that his connection to what happened at UKeys had nothing to do with this?

ROYCE
You might as well be saying mine did. Harris' cousin was expelled, but so was my son. Are you saying that?

REPORTER 1
I'm asking questions.

SAWYER
I'm going to put an end to this right now. We're a strong team, with bonds formed during camp and the preseason. And, by the way, Brendan is also our offensive captain -- voted as such by his teammates. Nothing from the past is getting in the way of our goal, which is playing hard and winning games, like we did today.

REPORTER 2
(British accent)
When did McBride become O-Cap?
(MORE)

REPORTER 2 (CONT'D)
We understood that to be Seth Porterhouse.

ROYCE
Making Brendan offensive captain was Seth's idea. And before you ask, we expect to have Seth back next game.

REPORTER 2
As starter?

SAWYER
We'll announce that before the next game.

REPORTER 3
(American accent)
Brendan, what do you have to say about all this?

BRENDAN
(finally looking up)
I'm honored to take the field with my teammates, who are great players and great people. London has embraced us, the past is behind me, and I'm only looking to the future.

REPORTER 3
(sarcasm sotto voce, to REPORTER 2, who's next to him)
Brendan McBride, boring soundbite generator. Just like UKeys and the Fire.

Reporter 2 chuckles and nods.

REPORTER 2
At least he played a whole game for the Bulldogs. That's more than he did for D.C.

REPORTER 3
Yeah, after everybody else went out. So much for the Heisman candidate.

Sawyer's had enough.

SAWYER
OK, if that's it, we've got an away game to prepare for, and as you all know, that's FAR away, against the Miami Surge. See you in Florida, then Boston, then back to Wembley.

Over the reporters' objections, the three get up and exit the press-conference room. Offstage, Brendan comes up to Sawyer.

BRENDAN
Can I go, Coach? I'd like to call my family.

SAWYER
Sure. Good job out there, QB.

BRENDAN
Thank you, sir.

Brendan exits. Royce starts to go, but Sawyer holds him back.

SAWYER
Don't take the bait, Rolls. They'll drop it if they don't get a rise out of you.

ROYCE
It's an affront to my professionalism.

SAWYER
We knew this was coming when we picked him up.

ROYCE
As a third-stringer.

SAWYER
Things change. We change with them. By the way, we'll hold this until right before we get on the plane, but he's now our starter.

ROYCE
Harold, I have to disagree. Seth is an outstanding player and far more experienced.

SAWYER
I know, but Brendan just led this team to victory over the division champs for the last two years, in our first game, despite getting pancaked.

ROYCE
And never finished a game in a whole season with the D.C. Fire.

SAWYER
That had nothing to do with that coach being a UKeys alumnus, did it?

Royce wants to respond but thinks the better of it. He just nods.

ROYCE
OK. Brendan's our boy.

Sawyer returns the nod and walks off.

INT. BULLDOGS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Brendan pulls out his tablet, puts in his earpiece and makes a Skype call. Brian appears on the screen, wearing his oxygen.

BRIAN
Congratulations, son.

BRENDAN
Thanks, Dad. Only got a minute; can I talk to Sean?

BRIAN
OK. Hang on.

Sean appears, looking surprisingly serious.

SEAN
We didn't say the prayer. You didn't have your armor on!

BRENDAN
St. Pat looked out for me anyway.

SEAN
I told everybody at the group home you'd win! Wait'll I go back tomorrow.

BRENDAN
Do you like it there?

SEAN
(hesitating)
I gotta learn to be independent.
That's what Mom says.

Sheila leans in and blows a quick kiss to Brendan. He waves back and wants to say more, but at that moment, Gabriel taps him on the shoulder and jerks his thumb toward the door. Brendan nods in return.

BRENDAN
Seanie, the bus is leaving, but I didn't want to go without talking to my best buddy.

SEAN
And your good-luck charm!

BRENDAN
That's right. Call you later, before you go to bed.

SEAN
OK, Bren. Love you. Bye now!

BRENDAN
Back at you double. Bye.

He hangs up, pulls out the earpiece, stuffs the tablet into the bag at his feet, slings the bag over his shoulder and follows Gabriel out the door. The last two out are Tua and Harris, who exchange looks and give each other a wide berth.

INT. TEAM BUS -- DAY

As the jubilant Bulldogs are driven back after the game, Gabriel sits next to Brendan up front.

GABRIEL
Thought you had your bell rung but good, brother. Don't do that to me again!

BRENDAN
You know I'm tougher than that.

GABRIEL
You are one hardheaded Irishman.

BRENDAN
And you are one hot-handed Haitian!

GABRIEL
Fleet-footed fellow Floridian, please. No one waves the flag harder than my folks.

BRENDAN
Wait until you meet mine.

The two laugh, and from the row behind them, Colin leans forward over their seats.

COLIN
(British accent)
I should have been a football star in my native land, but instead I became a soccer star in America. Now I am a punter. Did you know that's another word here for a patron of prostitutes?

BRENDAN
For the fifty-sixth time, Colin, you're a kicker, not a punter.

COLIN
Refrain from raining on my drama, if you please. And speaking of which...

He holds out his phone and begins reading aloud.

COLIN (CONT'D)
The British press has dubbed you, O Captain, my Captain, as the "Irish Bomber" and "McBoom."

BRENDAN
Is that bad?

COLIN
Suffice to say, London will either fall in love with you or want to set you on fire on Guy Fawkes Day. Or both.

They laugh.

INT. COLIN'S SUITE, BULLDOGS APARTMENT HOTEL -- NIGHT

(Establishing shot of multistory urban building)

TITLE: BULLDOGS' RESIDENCE HOTEL, LATER THAT NIGHT

Colin sits in his suite, wrapped in a robe, drinking wine and watching a kung fu movie, his foot soaking in a tub of ice water, when there's a knock at the door. Drying his foot quickly, he answers the door, to find a BELLHOP holding a bouquet of lavender roses. Colin takes the flowers, smiling, then puts them on a table.

COLIN
Ah, the lovely Annabelle.

Then he reads the card, which says, "Nick: Congratulations and love always, David," and the smile fades from his face.

COLIN (CONT'D)
Bloody bugger.

INT. HARRIS' SUITE, BULLDOGS APARTMENT HOTEL -- NIGHT

Harris Skypes with Darnell, who looks rough around the edges and like he's gained considerable weight. He's wearing a tee shirt that says Burrell Bros. Construction.

DARNELL
You tried, man. That matters a lot. But don't screw yourself up on my account.

HARRIS
Don't worry, Darnell, I can take care of myself. Next time, they won't know it was me.

INT. BOSTON BAR -- NIGHT

TITLE: McSWEENEY'S BAR, DORCHESTER, BOSTON

Lando (heavier, rougher looking) sits at the bar, nursing a whiskey, when a MAN spots game highlights on the TV, announcing that the Boston Rebels prevailed in their home opener over the Cincinnati Rivermen, 28-7. He steps up to the bar next to Lando for a better view.

MAN
(elbowing Landp)
Hey, we won!

LANDO
Yeah.

MAN
We should be celebrating!

Lando hoists his whiskey and downs it, then slams the glass on the bar.

LANDO
There. I celebrated.

He gets up and starts to leave, and the man looks at him, puzzled, then calls after him.

MAN
Gees, buddy, what's your problem?
You from Cincy?

Lando keeps going and gives him the finger as he exits.

The man looks at the BARTENDER, who shrugs.

BARTENDER
Lando Royce, Rebels practice squad,
second season. Hasn't actually
played yet.

INT. COACH SAWYER'S OFFICE, BULLDOGS HQ, LONDON -- DAY

Legend reads: Bulldogs Headquarters, London

Sawyer sits at his desk, clicking through news stories on his screen. He pauses and reads one, then shakes his head.

SAWYER
Altar boy, avowed virgin and future
priest. Lordy.

An email pops up on his screen, with the heading, "Have you called the doctor back yet?" He opens it, and it says, "He needs to discuss the test results with you to set up the remote treatment program. Just because it's a slow-growing cancer doesn't mean it's not growing at all. Please Skype him. Make me happy, Harold. Love, Della." Sawyer heaves a sigh and is about to reply when his phone rings, and he hits the speaker button.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Yeah?

ASSISTANT
(voice over, British
accent)
(MORE)

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
There's a Mr. Cameron Ochoa here to see you. He doesn't have an appointment, though.

SAWYER
Doesn't need one. He's the owner.

ASSISTANT
Oh, dear. I'll send him right in, Mr. Sawyer. So sorry.

Sawyer closes the email, clicking back to his browser with the news headlines.

EXT: OUTSIDE THE HOUSE OF LORDS, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, INNER LONDON -- DAY

TITLE: HOUSE OF LORDS ENTRANCE, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, INNER LONDON

A reporter waits in the Old Palace Yard. CLIVE MOORE, mid-30s, disheveled, spies his quarry, LORD PETER BOSWELL, tall, mid 30s, very posh, heading toward his car, sprints toward him and buttonholes him. Boswell recognizes him and slows down, composing himself.

MOORE
Lord Boswell.

BOSWELL
Mr. Moore, how lovely to see you... again. The London Sentinel is truly always on duty.

MOORE
(holding out his phone for recording)
I think you know why I'm here. You refuse to return any of my calls or messages.

BOSWELL
I don't think of it so much as refusing as simply not bothering to, since the subjects that have so transfixed you are utterly without merit.

MOORE
If that's the case, then why do I keep having people raising questions about how the Wembley improvements and the practice facility were financed, and how the permits were pushed through, not to mention how some of the players got visas despite having criminal records?

BOSWELL
I've no idea. People do like to talk. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to get to a meeting.

Boswell starts to walk off, but Moore calls after him, loud enough for some other people in the area to hear.

MOORE
And why do I keep hearing that Cameron Ochoa personally saved you from bankruptcy? Was there *quid pro quo*?

Boswell looks back, smiling.

BOSWELL
Quid pro quo? How did I never see you at Oxford?

MOORE
Because I went to Leeds.

BOSWELL
Ascendo tuum.

MOORE
What?

BOSWELL
Ah, well.

With that, Boswell gets into his waiting car, leaving Moore being stared at by a few irritated people.

INT. COACH SAWYER'S OFFICE -- DAY

Sawyer rises from his chair, and a moment later, CAMERON OCHOA enters, athletic looking, early 40s.

OCHOA
(extending his hand)
Harold.

SAWYER
(shaking the offered hand)
Mr. Ochoa, what a nice surprise.

OCHOA
Cam, please, I've told you before. In Palo Alto, everyone from my CFO to the groundskeeper called me Cam.

SAWYER
Fair enough. I'll remember.

Ochoa leans in and sees Sawyer's computer screen.

OCHOA
That's my personal favorite. The writer is Clive Moore. God, are people really named Clive? It says an Irish pub owner is selling a new drink, Guinness and a rum chaser, calling it the "St. Brendan and the Archangel Gabriel."

SAWYER
The tabloids are having fun.

OCHOA
On top of everything, one of them says Gabriel St. Pierre is from a Black Catholic family in Coral Gables. What's all that about?

SAWYER
His parents are Haitian immigrants.

OCHOA
Oh, well, that explains the rum.

Ochoa gets off the desk and settles into a chair.

OCHOA (CONT'D)
They own a store or something?

SAWYER
Doctors. Dad's a neurosurgeon, and mom's a pediatric oncologist.

Ochoa laughs.

OCHOA
And I’m a college dropout, and I own the team their son plays for. Ain’t America grand?

SAWYER
Indeed.

OCHOA
Hey, as long as McBride’s not arrested for rape like Jacinto, all publicity’s good publicity.

Ochoa stretches in his seat.

OCHOA (CONT'D)
Well, I’ve got to go take some meetings. Then the missus and I have lunch at Ten Downing Street with the PM and Lord Peter Boswell. God, I sound like such a pretentious douchebag!

Ochoa laughs at himself, and SAWYER smiles.

OCHOA (CONT'D)
You know Boswell?

SAWYER
Only by reputation. He’s the House of Lords member who pushed through our licenses and visas, right?

OCHOA
He’s very pip-pip Cheerio, but he knows how to get things done. But don’t worry about all that. That’s MY job.

SAWYER
Yes, sir.

Despite saying he had to leave, Ochoa isn’t moving. Sawyer is puzzled but waits patiently. Finally, Ochoa speaks.

OCHOA
By the way, Harold, what the hell was up with our guy that let McBride get sacked?

SAWYER
Coach Royce said it was just a miscommunication.

Ochoa nods but doesn't seem convinced.

OCHOA
Can we cut the guy? Love him or hate him, McBride saved our bacon. I don't want to take any chance of losing him.

SAWYER
Cam, to be honest, we have rookies in our starting lineup. We need every experienced man we have, unless you want to go to Canada or Europe.

OCHOA
If this guy ditched his post for no good reason, I'd rather have a field-hockey girl on the line. He needs to go.

Sawyer stiffens.

SAWYER
I'm sorry, sir, I can't do that. It would hurt the team.

OCHOA
Which I own.

SAWYER
And for which I'm the coach. But as the owner, you're free to replace me at any time.

Ochoa sits there a moment, taking Sawyer's measure. Sawyer returns his gaze silently. After a long beat, Ochoa makes a "whatever" gesture.

OCHOA
OK. It's your call.

He rises, grabs his stuff and heads for the door, and as he reaches it, he turns back with a smile.

OCHOA (CONT'D)
Bet your girl knows who I am now, eh?

Sawyer shrugs.

SAWYER
Everyone's new.

OCHOA
Yes, yes. Got it. You know, Harold, if this flies, we can write our ticket with the League and Parliament. But if it flops, I'll be back in Palo Alto, counting my money, but you'll be coaching high-school in East Buttscratch, Arkansas.

When Sawyer just smiles in response, Ochoa heads out with another wave. After he's gone, Sawyer drops down into his chair.

SAWYER
(sotto voce)
Douchebag... mmm-hmmm.

He reopens the email and studies it pensively.

INT. LORD PETER BOSWELL'S CAR -- DAY

Boswell closes the privacy screen separating him from his DRIVER and places a phone call.

BOSWELL
Hello, Vishnu... What's all the noise? Are you still in court at the Old Bailey?... Can you go somewhere private? I'll wait... Good. I just had an unpleasant encounter with Clive Moore. He asked some very pointed questions about the team and about Ochoa, as regards finances... Yes... We need to find out who's talking to him... Yes, I will... Please do. Give Amita and the boys my love... Yes, thank you. Good-bye.

He's about to put his phone away when it rings.

BOSWELL (CONT'D)
Juliana, my dove, how are you?

On the other end of the line is LADY JULIANA FINCH, early 30s, elegant, sitting in a silk nightgown, propped up on pillows in a lavishly appointed bed.

JULIANA
Lounging at the Royal Crescent in Bath. I'm lunching with your mother.
(MORE)

JULIANA (CONT'D)
We're going to Sally Lunn's. You know how she is about the buns.

BOSWELL
Thank you for doing that.

JULIANA
She'll ask if you've proposed.

BOSWELL
Tell her I have, and you refused me... again.

JULIANA
It's not me, dear, it's the bankers. They do insist you get back in the black before Lady Finch becomes Lady Boswell.

BOSWELL
Regarding that, Mother has been reading entirely too many stories about the team and my finances. Keep her on other topics, would you?

JULIANA
Of course. I plan to discuss wedding dresses... and honeymoon lingerie. Consider it an incentive.

BOSWELL
(smiling)
Consider it considered. Got to go, another call coming in.

JULIANA
Until later, love.

Juliana hangs up, and Boswell takes the other call.

BOSWELL
Guten tag, Gunter. Did the deposit go through? Was it in time?... Good. Thank God... Yes, I know. I'll let you know about the rest of it as soon as I do... Yes, I will. Danke, Gunter.

He hangs up and reopens the privacy screen.

BOSWELL (CONT'D)
We're swinging by my broker before we head to Downing Street.

The driver nods. Boswell closes the privacy screen again, leans back in the seat and rubs his hands over his face.

INT. BULLDOGS TEAM BUS, DAY

The bus turns onto the entrance road for the practice facility not far from Wembley Stadium, and the players gawk out the windows at the huge crowd of FANS that has gathered behind barricades along the road leading up to the gate, carrying a variety of signs, “GO BULLDOGS,” “DOG POUND,” and a selection devoted to love for Brendan.

Colin is excited to see the enthusiasm and is cheering along, popping up and then crossing the bus aisle and leaning over Brendan and Gabriel to see out the other side.

Tua just rolls his eyes, trying to keep his eyes on his tablet. The rest of the defensive line cheers around him, especially when some of the female fans spot Brendan looking out the window and suddenly pull up their shirts to flash him. Brendan covers his face in mock horror, as Gabriel laughs.

Back on his own side of the bus, Colin suddenly spots a GIRL in the crowd, dressed in black, with bleached-blond hair, a half-shaved head and blue stars tattooed on the left side of her face. They meet eyes for a moment, share a tentative wave, and then she vanishes into the crowd. Colin drops back into his seat, shocked and suddenly silent. At that moment, Sawyer stands up at the front of the bus and takes the intercom mike.

SAWYER
Settle down, now. *Settle down.*

The players quiet down.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
We’ve all had our fun enjoying our new fans, but that’s the last time I’m going to tolerate this kind of ruckus on the bus. Am I clear?

The players grumble but nod in assent. Colin is silent, lost in his own thoughts.

EXT. BULLDOGS PRACTICE FIELD -- DAY

The players are running drills on the field. Brendan is in fine form, hitting his receivers with precision, especially Gabriel, who seems to know exactly where to be.

On the sidelines, Sawyer walks up to stand next to team physician DR. THOMAS BAINBRIDGE, a Brit.

SAWYER
Dr. Bainbridge.

BAINBRIDGE.
Thomas, please.

SAWYER
OK, Thomas, do you see any issues with McBride?

BAINBRIDGE
No. Nothing significant showed up in the exam Monday or the tests, and I can't detect any lingering effects from that hit. He's got a couple of bruises, but that's to be expected.

SAWYER
Good. But he's not going to show you anything if he can avoid it. That's the mentality of these guys.

BAINBRIDGE
Oh, I know. I've been a doctor for rugby teams, and not only do they shrug off injury as if it's nothing, they don't even wear pads, unlike gridiron players.

SAWYER
Ah, yes, gridiron.

BAINBRIDGE
(shrugging)
If I say football, I tend to confuse myself and others.

SAWYER
I'm sure.

Sawyer sees Royce and Harris in conversation on the side of the field between drills. It looks intense, so after Harris heads back to the field, Sawyer strolls over to Royce.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
All OK on the O-line, Royce?

ROYCE
Sure. We're good.

Sawyer looks around to make sure they're alone.

SAWYER
Just so you know, and strictly between us, in my personal opinion, the UKeys situation should have been handled internally. I understand McBride's motivation, but there was no need to derail the careers of two young men over a case of youthful excess. Is your boy doing well?

Surprised, Royce is caught off balance.

ROYCE
He's, he's fine. He did his last year at the University of Oregon, got some playing time. He's with the Rebels right now.

SAWYER
I know the Rebels' coach, Tom Nesbitt. Good man.

ROYCE
He is. Lando's coming along.

SAWYER
Glad to hear it. Maybe we'll face him on the field one of these days.

ROYCE
Maybe.

Sawyer smiles and heads off, leaving Royce pondering the conversation.

INT. 10 DOWNING STREET HALLWAY -- DAY

Title: 10 Downing Street, Residence of the British Prime Minister

Boswell stands in the hall, adjusting his cufflinks, getting ready for the big meeting. Ochoa sweeps in, smiles at some waiting UNDERLINGS, then takes Boswell's arm and smoothly but firmly moves him away from the group. He looks all smiles, but he's all business.

OCHOA
(sotto voce)
Tell your lawyer to stand down.

BOSWELL
Whatever could you mean?

OCHOA
Nothing gets into the press if I don't allow it to. And if by some miracle, something did, I have ways, and people, to deal with it.

BOSWELL
Oh, really?

OCHOA
I made billions doing Internet security, and I can undo it just as well. Now, call off your poodle.

BOSWELL
But the rumors...

OCHOA
That's my job. Yours is to smile, drink tea and grease the wheels.

At that moment, the double doors leading into the hall are opened. Ochoa winks at Boswell, tucks his arm through Boswell's elbow, and they enter, the picture of solidarity.

EXT. BULLDOGS PRACTICE FIELD -- DAY

Split into two practice squads, the team lines up against each other for a scrimmage, with Brendan as the QB, and Harris on the line in front of him. Just before he goes into his crouch, Harris looks over at Royce, who shakes his head almost imperceptibly. Harris gives him a small nod back -- noted by Tua, who's sitting out this scrimmage -- and the play proceeds without incident.

As the team goes off the field to let the second string come on -- including backup QB SETH PORTERHOUSE, 30ish, who high-fives with Brendan as they pass (the name on his jersey is visible). Right after that, Harris is in front of Brendan and makes an exaggerated leap to one side to avoid him. Instead, he blunders into a WATERBOY, then over a bucket and lands on his butt.

As the players laugh at that, Harris gets up and turns on the much smaller waterboy, getting up in his face.

HARRIS
Watch the hell where you're standing, moron. Next time I'll flatten you.

When the waterboy stammers, trying to reply, Harris leans into him and pushes him back, causing the water bottles he's holding to spill on the ground. At that point, Brendan steps in and gives Harris a shoulder shove.

BRENDAN
You wanna muscle somebody, Harris? Muscle me.

HARRIS
(shoving back with his hands)
Any day.

Brendan steps back into Harris' face, and Harris looks ready to swing, but then Tua just shoves his bulk between the two of them, pushing each one back with one arm.

TUA
That's enough, ladies.

Sawyer walks up and steps between Brendan and Harris, with Royce behind him.

SAWYER
Someone want to tell me what this is all about?

Brendan looks at Harris, who glares back.

BRENDAN
Just a misunderstanding, Coach. We're all good here.

SAWYER
I saw the misunderstanding from beginning to end. Harris, hit the showers. You're done for the day.

Harris fumes but doesn't object and, with a last glare at Brendan, runs off.

BRENDAN
Coach, I got in his face first.

SAWYER
I know you did, and I know what prompted it.

Sawyer turns to the waterboy, who's gathered up his bottles and is standing, head down, silent.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
You OK, son?

The waterboy nods.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Good lad. You didn’t do anything wrong, and that nonsense won’t happen again.

The waterboy nods again and smiles. Sawyer pats him on the shoulder.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
(to BRENDAN)
Grab some wood.

Brendan nods and walks off to take a seat at the sidelines. Sawyer looks around at the rest of the team.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Show’s over. Back to work.

As the players move off, Sawyer turns to Royce.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
Make this go away, or Harris may be finding a new home. He’s on thin ice with the owner already.

ROYCE
Understood.

Sawyer walks over to Brendan and sits on the bench beside him.

SAWYER
You’re aware of what’s going on, right?

BRENDAN
I’ve been aware, ever since I did what I did -- first at the draft, then at D.C. and now here.

SAWYER
Do you want me to cut Harris? The owner does.

BRENDAN
We’re low on experienced men. Your best bet would be to make Seth the starter in Miami. Problem solved.

SAWYER
Do you have a martyr complex, son?

BRENDAN
No, but I don't want to cost Harris his job, and the team needs him to do his job. It'll look like I've been taken down a peg, and that may satisfy him and Coach Royce.

SAWYER
But we'll lose and lose big. The Surge has a huge defense, and Seth's strength is the ground game, not the deep ball. That's why we picked up Jacinto -- and you. You're the starter. Stop being a white knight and start being a leader. Rise above, while you still have the chance.

Brendan ponders this for a moment.

BRENDAN
OK, Coach.

Sawyer stands up.

SAWYER
And since you started the confrontation, five-thousand-dollar fine, which will be announced to the team before we leave today.

Brendan's rocked by the sum, but he tries not to show it.

BRENDAN
OK, Coach. But what about Harris and the waterboy?

SAWYER
That's Royce's problem, not yours. Understood?

BRENDAN
Understood.

INT. THE TEAM BUS -- DAY

The Bulldogs' bus exits the gate to a very different scene than when it entered. Two POLICEMEN in riot gear hold up the bus just at the entrance, as they clear the road. The players are quiet as they see injured FANS being treated. Seeing the bus, some fans rush toward it and run into a line of police that pushes them back.

Brendan and Gabriel, horrified, cross themselves almost in sync. Brendan pulls out his phone and begins flipping through it. Gabriel just stares, shocked.

A bottle is thrown and smashes into a POLICE OFFICER's helmet, and a swarm of police descends on the crowd from whence it came, which shoves back. One YOUNG MAN in a Bulldogs jersey, swinging a glass bottle by the neck, is clubbed and goes to the ground, head bloodied.

GABRIEL
What the hell is going on?

Brendan holds up his phone.

BRENDAN
Twitter says some football -- British football -- fans came up and were taunting our fans, and a fight broke out.

GABRIEL
This is insane.

Colin is up on his knees on his seat, scanning the crowd on both sides. Not seeing any familiar faces, he sinks back down, head in his hands.

COLIN
(muttering)
Bloody fecking hooligans.

At the back of the bus, Tua texts his wife from his tablet. She writes, "We saw a riot on the news. Are you OK?"

Shaking his head, he writes back, "Honey, this place makes people crazy."

EXT. ROUGH GREATER LONDON STREET -- NIGHT

TITLE: BOROUGH OF HACKNEY, NORTHEAST LONDON

Deserted, late-night street in a tough neighborhood. Colin, dressed in dark jeans and a black hoodie with the hood up, hands in his pockets, walks through an alley and around a corner like a man who knows where he's going. He gives a group of transvestite HOOKERS a wide berth, as they holler and blow kisses in his direction.

Arriving at the door of a tumbledown row house, he knocks. An eye looks out through the peephole, and Colin briefly lifts up his hood.

The door is opened by a SEBASTIAN, a small, dreadlocked Jamaican in a grimy tank top, standing in a hall leading to a messy living room with a TV blaring.

COLIN
(entering and pushing his hood back)
Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
Well, the prodigal return. Where's your Sugar Daddy, mon? I thought you be still ridin' that train, or that train be ridin' you.

Colin sees Sebastian's hand behind his back. With a savagely swift move, he grabs for the arm, wrenches it around, pulls the butcher knife out of it and hurls it into the opposite wall. Sebastian lunges for it, and Colin grabs him and pins him against the wall, with his knee in his groin and his left arm under Sebastian's neck. With his right hand, he pulls a switchblade out of his jeans pocket, flicks it open and holds it very close to Sebastian's eye.

COLIN
Where's Fiona?

SEBASTIAN
I... I... I don't know, mon. Come on, Nicky, we old friends, right? We old mates?

COLIN
Fiona.

SEBASTIAN
She don't come around here anymore. Couple years now, I don't see her.

Colin moves the knife a hair closer, and Sebastian is sweating profusely and shaking.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)
Nicky, I got a family, mon.

Colin hears a noise and glances over, where he sees a WOMAN nursing a baby peering around the corner. Not moving his leg or left arm, he clicks back the switchblade, puts it away, and pulls out his wallet. Putting it in his left hand, he fishes out two 50-pound notes and stuffs them down the front of Sebastian's shirt.

COLIN
You find out where Fiona is, and there'll be more where that came from.

Carefully, Colin releases Sebastian, making sure to step back and grab the knife out of the wall. As he stows his wallet, Sebastian sags against the wall, holding his throat.

SEBASTIAN
You got big, plenty strong. I see you on TV on Sunday.

COLIN
Focus. Fiona.

SEBASTIAN
I'll ask around.

COLIN
Don't use my name, any of them, or you'll regret it.

SEBASTIAN
Yes, yes, mon. Understood. No Nicky, no... *Colin*. If I find her, how do I tell you?

COLIN
I'll find you. Don't ever try to contact me directly.

With a last look at the woman and baby, Colin backs out, taking the knife with him. Rubbing his fingerprints off with his sleeve, he tosses it away in the gutter when he gets outside. Pulling his hood back up, he hurries off by a different route.

INT. BULLDOGS APARTMENT HOTEL -- NIGHT

TITLE: BULLDOGS RESIDENCE HOTEL, WEST LONDON

Colin enters the via a stairwell door he'd managed to keep unlocked on his way out. Sprinting several floors up the stairwell, he comes out into a hotel corridor. Turning a corner, he meets with Tua, dressed in slippers and hotel bathrobe over plaid boxer shorts and a tee shirt, holding a large trash bag at arm's length. He takes in Colin's appearance.

TUA
Diapers. Going to the trash chute.

COLIN
I, uh...

TUA
(shaking his head)
Don’t want to know, man. Friendly reminder, breaking curfew is a five-hundred-dollar fine for each ten minutes.

COLIN
Right.

With another head shake, Tua heads on his way. Colin shimmies out of his hoodie, tucks it under his arm and heads up the hall to his flat.

INT. COMMON ROOM AT SEAN’S GROUP HOME -- DAY

TITLE: ST. LUKE GROUP HOME FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY CHALLENGED ADULTS, FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Several RESIDENTS are sitting around the common room, working on computers, drawing, reading or doing crafts. SEAN, wearing an oversized Bulldogs jersey, is hunched over a laptop, laboriously writing Brendan an email, mouthing the words silently as he’s typing, “Dear Brendan: This is your brother Sean. I’m at the group home, and I’m very happy here. It’s nice to be on my own at last. How do you like London?”

Another male RESIDENT walks up to him and pokes him in the shoulder.

RESIDENT
I saw the game.

SEAN
(looking up)
I know. Brendan won!

RESIDENT
My brother said it’s only because the Goliaths had to travel so far. They were tired.

Sean stands up, angry.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
My brother said Brendan was a third-stringer who only got lucky.

SEAN
You take that back! Brendan won fair and square!

RESIDENT
Why should I? It’s true.

SEAN
It’s a lie.

The other resident pokes Sean hard in the middle of the chest.

RESIDENT
No, it’s not. Your brother is a big nothing.

When Sean pushes his hand away, the resident pushes him. Sean gives the resident a hard shove, knocking him back into a table and sending a FEMALE RESIDENT’S painting project flying. Sean then throws himself on the male resident and begins swinging away, as the man howls and puts up his arms to protect himself.

SEAN
My brother is not nothing! You take that back! You take that back!

The HOUSE MANAGER, a tall, stout woman in her 40s, comes in and lifts Sean up off the resident, and drags him over to a couch, where she deposits him.

HOUSE MANAGER
Sean McBride! What are you doing?

SEAN
He started it! He poked me! He said Brendan was nothing.

HOUSE MANAGER
And you were *hitting* him.

Sean looks at the resident, who’s standing now and has a bloody nose. Putting his hands over his mouth, Sean starts to cry.

HOUSE MANAGER (CONT'D)
You know we have a zero-tolerance policy for physical aggression. We’re going to have to call your parents.

SEAN
No, don't do that. I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

INT. COACH SAWYER'S OFFICE, BULLDOGS HQ -- DAY

Sawyer and Brendan are sitting in his office, with Brendan looking very upset.

SAWYER
What is it you're asking me?

BRENDAN
Could Sean could come back here with me after the away games? I have an uncle that can come too, to look after him. But I only have a junior suite in the residence hotel, so I need permission to move out and find a bigger place.

SAWYER
The team's still on temporary work visas, so we can't allow outside rentals. It's a delicate political issue as it is.

BRENDAN
Understood, sir, but he needs to be near me. My folks can't deal with it, and my brothers all have families.

SAWYER
If he doesn't come, will it distract you from your work?

BRENDAN
I have to be honest, sir. It will. Sean means the world to me.

SAWYER
OK. I'll talk to the owner and see what can be worked out.

BRENDAN
Thank you, sir. Really appreciate it.

INT. OCHOA'S HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

TITLE: SAVOY HOTEL, CENTRAL LONDON

Ochoa is in a hotel room, talking to Sawyer on a Bluetooth headset as he fiddles with a bow tie.

OCHOA
Doesn't the residence hotel have a penthouse suite, like, three bedrooms?

SAWYER
Yes, we kept that on reserve for you, at your request.

OCHOA
Oh, forget it. I prefer the Savoy anyway. Let him have it, if it keeps his head in the game. We're already paying for it, right?

SAWYER
Yes.

OCHOA
Well, hell, it's a bargain then. But shit, what's next? He won't want a hooker, so do I have to buy him a puppy?

SAWYER
I don't think so, sir.

Ochoa waits a moment, then...

OCHOA
By the way, I've been reading about that bullshit with McBride in college.

SAWYER
(carefully)
Yes, sir.

OCHOA
You're the coach, OK? I get that. I'm not trying to tell you your job, but I should have been told about this, especially if this shit's going to spill over onto the field.

SAWYER
It didn't. I assure you.

OCHOA
It'd better not. I let you talk me into taking Jacinto, and look where we are. I don't want my financial ass to be hung out to dry because somebody's got hurt feelings.

SAWYER
Understood.

OCHOA
I don't want to hear anything more about this.

SAWYER
It's being handled.

OCHOA
All right. We done?

SAWYER
We're done.

Ochoa hangs up the phone and looks at his wife LISA, late 20s, model-pretty. She's wearing a cocktail dress and is putting finishing touches on her face.

OCHOA
Ready yet, Lisa?

LISA
As I'll ever be.

OCHOA
Remind me to hire a general manager. I don't have time for this petty bullshit anymore.

LISA
I told you to hire one when this began, but you like to micromanage.

OCHOA
Well, if I have to babysit the QB's retarded brother, it's time to hand it off.

Lisa stands back and surveys him.

LISA
I do like you in Hugo Boss.

OCHOA
(leaning in)
I like you in nothing at all.

LISA
So you say.

They walk out of the bedroom into the hotel-suite living room, where a DOG HANDLER is coming in with an American bulldog puppy (fawn and white, same as the team colors, wearing an ocean blue collar). Ochoa crouches down the gives the puppy a tussle, and then plants a kiss on its forehead.

OCHOA
That’s my bully boy! That’s my Tuff-Tuff.

Then, to the handler...

OCHOA (CONT'D)
Can you stay until we get back? Tuff howls if he’s left alone in the crate.

The handler nods.

OCHOA (CONT'D)
Give him a bath and feed him, too.

As the handler leads the puppy into the suite’s second bedroom, Lisa looks at her husband.

LISA
You love that dog more than me. You definitely love it more than the idea of having a baby.

OCHOA
Don’t be ridiculous.

LISA
I gained ten pounds and can’t fit into any of my clothes to make conception easier, if only you’d finally toss the rubbers for good.

OCHOA
I’m not there yet.

LISA
Then when?

INT. BULLDOGS LOCKER ROOM, DAY

Sitting in a whirlpool tub, Brendan Skypes on his phone with Sean, who is teary-eyed.

BRENDAN
It's going to be OK. Uncle Dominic is going to take you to Miami to see me play, since Dad isn't feeling well.

SEAN
Really? They were saying we might not be able to go.

BRENDAN
And after Boston, you and Uncle Dominic are coming to stay with me in London through the rest of the season, so you better start packing!

Sean looks thunderstruck.

SEAN
What? *What?*

BRENDAN
Yeah, buddy, it's true. I got a place on the top floor of our building.

Sean puts his hands over his face for a moment, and when he pulls them away, he's crying again.

SEAN
Oh, Bren. Oh, Bren. I've missed you so much.

BRENDAN
(tearing up)
I've missed you, too.

INT. BULLDOGS LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

In another part of the locker room, Harris waylays Royce and pulls him into a corner.

HARRIS
The penthouse suite.

ROYCE
It's a family thing.

HARRIS
Yeah, we know about those.

ROYCE
Let it go, J.L. The only way we win is if the team wins, and right now, that means McBride. The time will come. Just trust me.

INT. MIAMI SURGE VISITOR LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

TITLE: VISITORS LOCKER ROOM, MIAMI SURGE STADIUM

Side by side at their lockers, Brendan and Gabriel kneel next to their chairs, as other players look on, some in curiosity, some in varying degrees of disapproval. Colin watches from a locker at the end of the row, looking both uncomfortable and with longing.

Then Tua rolls up to the two and kneels down next to them without a word. He nods, and the three make the Sign of the Cross and bow their heads. Following Tua's lead, many (but not all) of the other players kneel down to their own prayers, in different positions and with different styles, with Colin left standing.

The locker room goes quiet for a few long seconds, and finally Colin sits on his chair, head down. As Brendan and Gabriel make the Sign again and raise their heads, Brendan catches Colin's eye and gives him a smile and nod, and Colin nods back. Then Tua rises and they all rise with him, but he looks to Brendan...

BRENDAN
(looking around)
Time to let the Dogs out.

The players roar their approval and chant breaks out, led by Tua.

ALL
WOOF! WOOF! WOOF! WOOF!

The players suit up and begin to head up to the field. Brendan stops Tua for a moment.

BRENDAN
Thanks, man.

Tua nods, claps Brendan on the shoulder, then puts on his helmet. As he leaves, Brendan then goes to Seth.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
Just wanted to say I appreciate the support, Seth.

SETH
I was second string to a guy who throws the deep ball, and that’s where I still am.

BRENDAN
Even so...

SETH
Just do what you do, and we all stay employed. And if the bomb doesn’t work, it’ll be time for the ground game.

He grins and winks.

SETH (CONT'D)
No pressure, man.

Seth puts on his helmet, as Brendan takes a long breath. Then he also puts on his helmet.

EXT. PLAYER FRIENDS AND FAMILY SEATING, MIAMI SURGE STADIUM

SEAN is sitting one empty seat over from Tua’s wife MAGDALENA, about 30, Filipina, who is unselfconsciously nursing a baby. Sean is staring, wide-eyed. She sees him watching and smiles placidly.

MAGDALENA
I’m Magdalena Tua, sweetie. What’s your name?

Sean just blinks at her. Magdalena is amused.

MAGDALENA (CONT'D)
The baby is named Joseph Natano.

When that doesn’t get a response, Magdalena just shakes her head. At that moment, Dominic, wearing a short-sleeved black shirt with a Roman collar, comes back with a two cardboard trays containing hot dogs, French fries and drinks, and edges into the seat between Sean and Magdalena. He glances at Magdalena, gives her an unruffled smile, she smiles back, and then he looks at Sean and pokes him hard with his elbow. Sean finally looks away and up at Dominic.

DOMINIC
You staring at anything in particular?

SEAN
(flustered)
No, Uncle Dominic.

DOMINIC
How about grabbing your food and paying attention to that instead?

SEAN
OK.

As Sean takes his food and starts digging in, Dominic puts his tray in his lap and turns to Magdalena.

DOMINIC
I'm Brendan McBride's uncle, Dominic Ryan, and this is his brother, Sean. I apologize.

MAGDALENA
It's all right. Are you a priest?

DOMINIC
Yes.

MAGDALENA
Would you mind blessing my son?

DOMINIC
Uh... not at all.

Dominic balances his food on his knee, and then puts out his hand, mouths words in Latin and makes the Sign of the Cross over the baby.

MAGDALENA
Thank you, Father.

DOMINIC
My pleasure. Beautiful boy.

Dominic looks back at Sean, who looks sheepish through his mouthful of hot dog. Dominic smiles, and gets a hot-doggy smile back.

EXT. MIAMI SURGE STADIUM, DAY

A shot of the scoreboard reveals it's the 4th Quarter, with 3:15 seconds left, and the Bulldogs are down 17-7. At the Bulldog bench, everyone looks a dispirited and tired.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Miami has signaled for a time out after the prior sack of their quarterback, but it seems that Bulldogs are the ones that need a quick kip. They've looked knackered all day.

KEN (O.S.)
Maybe we're seeing what kind of a toll this transatlantic travel takes on a team. There was concern about it early on.

EXT. BULLDOGS SIDELINE, DAY

Brendan and Gabriel stand side by side.

BRENDAN
Dunno, Gabe. Maybe jet lag is an issue after all.

GABRIEL
No more than if San Francisco plays a Boston home game. We're just psyching ourselves out.

BRENDAN
(exasperated)
Single digits.

GABRIEL
We need to snap out of it.

Brendan looks around and spies TUA.

BRENDAN
Didn't Tua used to do a Samoan war dance when he was with the L.A. Condors?

GABRIEL
I think so.

Back to the TV coverage. Brendan walks over to Tua and says something that makes him smile. Tua then starts walking up and down the sidelines, hands in the air, shouting something.

KEN (O.S.)
Ha! I think we're about to see a return of the Condor Swoop.

NIGEL (O.S.)
If it works, it'll be the dog's bollocks.

KEN (O.S.)
Is that good?

NIGEL (O.S.)
Indeed it is.

Tua plants his feet, hands on his knees, sticks his tongue out, screams and then begins a Samoan war dance. A few players who've see it before join in, as Tua chants, stomps and pumps his arms into the air. At first, Brendan watches, then, when Tua points at him, he comes over and stands beside him. He tries to follow Tua's movements, but winds up looking awkward and laughs at himself. But after a few seconds, he begins to get the hang of it.

Brendan then motions for Seth, who's been hanging back on the bench, to join them. Brendan, Seth and Tua wind up finishing the dance at the same time, causing the team and the fans to roar approval.

NIGEL (O.S. CONT'D) (CONT'D)
The Bulldogs may have a new tradition.

KEN (O.S.)
We'll see if it breathes some life back into this team.

The Bulldogs and the Surge (in black, orange and teal) head back onto the field.

EXT. MIAMI SURGE STADIUM -- DAY

TV coverage looks at the scoreboard, which shows three seconds left, and the score unchanged. Brendan and the team stand on the sidelines, as the special teams squad takes the field, along with Colin. They settle at the 50-yard line, for a long field goal.

NIGEL (O.S.)
If London-born former football, sorry, *soccer*, star Colin Todd makes this, the Bulldogs could move into double digits.
(MORE)

NIGEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
That could be next best for them, since number-two quarterback Seth Porterhouse couldn’t find the goal under his watch. It’s a testament to the Surge’s Storm Front defense.

KEN (O.S.)
In my opinion, the Bulldogs don’t have anything to be ashamed of. Their Dog Pound defense, led by two-time Pro Bowler Tana Tua, has kept fellow Pro Bowl veteran quarterback Damian Jessup scoreless since the half. This game was all about defense, on both sides.

NIGEL (O.S.)
Todd’s in position.

ANGLE on Colin, who steadies himself, looking very far downfield at the uprights.

COLIN
(under his breath)
No goalie. No goalie. Easy peasy.

The sound disappears, and all we hear is Colin’s breathing. From his POV, the ball is snapped, grabbed by the holder, and Colin, with defenders charging at him, runs in smoothly and makes a mighty kick that soars high into the air. As defenders break around him, still hearing only his own breathing, Colin watches the ball arc through the air and get major hang time.

In the stands, Magdalena, the baby in one arm, grabs Dominic’s hand, who in turn grabs Sean’s hand, as they watch in rapt attention. On the sideline, Gabriel has his hands clasped in front of his face, while Brendan has his on his helmet. The ball sails along, arcing hard to one side. Colin leans over, breathing hard, willing it not to go too far. Then... it clears the uprights, the clock ticks to zero, the scoreboard goes to 10, and the crowd erupts.

Colin, grinning, is grabbed by a Bulldogs LINEMAN and hoisted up, where he pumps his fist into the air. Brendan, Gabriel, Tua and the rest of the team rush onto the field.

KEN (O.S.)
If I didn’t know better, I’d think they won!

NIGEL (O.S.)
It’s another solid outing for this expansion team.

Amid the celebration, Brendan looks up at the scoreboard, realizes they've lost after all, and hangs his head. Gabriel scans the crowd with a hopeful look, but he's disappointed.

INT. TOMMY JACINTO'S HOUSE -- DAY

TITLE: TOMMY JACINTO'S BEACHHOUSE, SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS

TOMMY JACINTO, 30, slickly handsome, tattooed, muscular, sits in a hot tub under an awning on his patio with a WOMAN, watching the game on a large-screen TV. VOICES echo from inside, where a party is apparently going on.

TOMMY
What a joke. That first game was a fluke. You wait until all this legal shit goes away. I'll bury that punk-ass McBride.

WOMAN
Sure, Tommy. I gotta pee.

The woman starts to get up, but Tommy yanks hard on the bow tied into the halter top of her bikini. As she grabs at the falling fabric, she slips back into the water and momentarily goes under. Coming up with a gasp, she sees Tommy laughing.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Tommy! You know I didn't want my hair wet.

Tommy responds by putting his hand on top of her head and forcibly dunking her. She comes up flailing and sputtering. Tommy smiles then looks back at the TV.

TOMMY
If you peed in this tub, you'll be sorry.

She looks scared.

EXT. BOSTON STREET -- NIGHT

A red Mustang is wrapped around a telephone pole on a residential street, with one door pulled off and laying on the ground. Surrounding it are FIREFIGHTERS and POLICE (Boston PD police cars are visible) holding back a curious crowd. PARAMEDICS close the door of an ambulance, which comes to life, siren screaming, and drives off. Two OFFICERS stand to one side, looking at a drivers license taken from a bloodstained wallet.

They exchanged surprised looks.

INT. VISITING TEAM'S LOCKER ROOM, MIAMI SURGE STADIUM -- DAY

Still in his uniform, Brendan, helmet off, walks away from the team and up a service corridor. When he's out of earshot of the team, he paces up and down, fists clenched, face screwed in frustration, puffing like a freight train.

Worked up, angry at himself, Brendan is about to punch his gloved fist into a row of metal cabinets, when a larger hand grabs his wrist.

TUA
Not the hand, QB.

Tua points at the lower row of cabinets.

TUA (CONT'D)
Not the foot, either.

He then releases Brendan, who steps back, still boiling mad.

BRENDAN
Then what?

Tua crouches down, puts his arms out and curls them in to bring his fists together, pressing hard. Then, muscles at maximum tension, he pulls his arms apart, lifts them up, fists clenched, face grimacing. At the apex, he jerks his index fingers heavenward, and then opens his hands, relaxes his whole body and shakes the tension out of his arms. At the same time, his face relaxes into its usual stoic repose.

TUA
Take it in and send it up. Then let it go. Try.

BRENDAN
That actually works?

TUA
Tana Tua has ten pro years on three teams, four children, one wife, all his hair and the blood pressure of a man half his size. What do you think?

With a resigned shrug, Brendan does an imitation of Tua's move. After he shakes out his arms, he looks at the older man and gives him a slight smile.

BRENDAN
Not all better, but better. Thanks.

Tua gives him a nod and walks back to the locker room. After a moment to collect himself, Brendan follows.

INT. VISITING TEAM'S LOCKER ROOM, MIAMI SURGE STADIUM -- DAY

The Bulldogs players mill about in the locker room, getting dressed after hitting the showers. Royce comes in and motions half-dressed Brendan to step outside. Colin, Tua and Gabriel watch him exit. In the hall, Brendan finds Sawyer waiting. Royce and the other coaches move a distance away. Brendan steels himself.

SAWYER
You happy with this result, QB?

BRENDAN
No, sir.

SAWYER
Why did it happen?

BRENDAN
Not jet lag.

SAWYER
No.

BRENDAN
I got picked twice. I scrambled and got pushed back for losses twice, when I should have thrown the ball away. My completion percentage was high, but we didn't convert enough. They didn't beat us. We beat us.

SAWYER
Yes. That can't happen again.

BRENDAN
No, sir.

Sawyer motions to Royce and the coaches, and they all head into the locker room, where the other players see them, pause what they're doing, and assemble themselves. Brendan steps back into the group, between Colin and Gabriel. Hands on hips, Sawyer rakes his eyes over the team.

SAWYER
This was not just a football game. None of our games this season will be just football games. We are unique, and our successes and failures are magnified. In our native land, we are ambassadors for our sport in the U.K., and for London. In our adopted home, we are ambassadors for the League and for America. We are not just a team; we are a dream, an idea, a notion, a proposition -- that the world can become one on the fifty-yard line, that a resolutely American team can flourish on foreign soil.

You were assembled in haste. For some of you, this is the on-ramp; for others, the glide path. But make no mistake, if we fall, if we embarrass ourselves on the field or off, we fail fans and supporters on two continents, and we damage the future of the sport. That's what's at stake here. We may lose again, but we can never beat ourselves again.

They'll say that this was a respectable showing, and it was. But that's not enough. I'm not ashamed of you, but neither am I proud. And I don't think you are either.

The players, downcast, murmur assent.

SAWYER (CONT'D)
My grandaddy hunted wild boar with American bulldogs back in Georgia. They have no fear, and there is no quit in them. They are fast, strong, smart and relentless -- and they guard their own with their lives. Gentlemen, may we be worthy of our emblem. Here endeth the sermon. Amen.

BRENDAN
Amen.

He looks around, and then they all roar in unison...

PLAYERS
AMEN!

SAWYER
Now, on to Boston.

With a curt nod, Sawyer exits. Brendan, head down, goes back to his locker, pulls out his phone and turns it on. As it comes alive, Gabriel leans over from his locker.

GABRIEL
Don’t sweat it, B, I couldn’t find my hands with Seth either.

BRENDAN
Yeah, I noticed.

That miffs Gabriel, who is about to respond when Brendan waves him off to listen to a voicemail from Dominic.

DOMINIC (V.O.)
I know you won’t get this until after the game, but I got a news alert that Lando Royce was in a car accident in Boston. He’s in a coma. They’re not sure if he’s going to make it. Call me as soon as you get this. And no, I haven’t said anything to Sean.

As the voicemail ends, Brendan looks up and scans the room for Royce. He finds him also on his phone, his face frozen in shock. Across the bustling locker room, their eyes meet. Off Brendan’s stricken face...

FADE OUT.