

4th & 15

"Pilot"

Written by
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FADE IN:

INT. P.S. 283 MIDDLE-SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

Middle school KIDS of mixed races talk and fool around while sitting in grimy auditorium in Jamaica, Queens. The PRINCIPAL (45), a pudgy and bald man in a suit, walks up to the stage.

PRINCIPAL

Good morning, eighth graders!

Kids continue talking and start snickering.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Before we begin, a quick announcement in preparation for graduation. The superintendent was very clear that he won't have the band's equipment replaced again. Now, the main event!

The students chatter and clap.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

I promised that we'd have a sports star speak if you sold enough candy bars. You didn't quite make the quota, um, again this year, but you tried – and that's what matters. So to celebrate your effort we have New York Knights Punter Chris McCarthy!

The curtain is pulled, revealing CHRIS MCCARTHY (mid 20s) clean cut, tall, with an athletic build. He smiles at a sexy, big-busted woman, CRYSTAL, who is on the side clapping. Chris walks to the center of the stage. It's soon obvious that Crystal and the Principal are the only ones cheering.

KID 1

Boo!

KID 2

What is this doofus doing here?

KID 3

You suck, McCarthy!

CHRIS

Hey, kids! Thanks for having me.
(trying to ignore the booing)
You know, being a pro football player is a lot like being a student: You have to work hard every day to make sure you're ready for the big game.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

For me, the game is on the field - and for you, the big game is maybe like becoming a lawyer or doctor or a police officer. But if you stay off drugs, listen to your teachers and study, you can accomplish anything.

KID 1

Boo!

KID 2

You lost the big game, ass-face!

CHRIS

Wow. Well, the replays of that playoff game against New England don't tell the whole story.

KIDS

Boo!

CHRIS

Hey, I was just trying to get our team in a better position to win, and that's what life really comes down to, kids, taking a chance.

The kids pause their booing.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sometimes, of course, those chances don't quite work out as you hope, but life is a highway, and the only way to get where you want to go is by riding it all night long.

KID 1

Ride this!

KID 2

Go punt yourself!

The kids escalate their behavior.

CHRIS

Hey...

(to Principal)

...are you going to stop this?

Principal shrugs. Chris stares him down.

PRINCIPAL

Okay, that's enough, kids. I think the lesson today is that even if you screw up and a whole city hates you...

KID 1

He said we were going to be cops!

The kids begin throwing their brown lunch bags and the candy bars they were supposed to sell. An open juice box hits Chris in the head, spraying apple juice on him.

KIDS

Lo-ser! Lo-ser!

Chris dashes offstage toward Crystal. The Principal follows.

CRYSTAL

What the hell was that?

PRINCIPAL

Sorry about this, but I think you should leave.

CRYSTAL

(really irritated)

This is not how I imagined my morning after finally hooking up with a UFL player.

CHRIS

I didn't think they'd do this again.

CRYSTAL

You mean this has happened before?

PRINCIPAL

Not exactly. Those were my sixth graders. They were brutal.

CRYSTAL

Great job, Crystal - another prince.

Crystal storms off.

PRINCIPAL

She was nice.

CHRIS

She was the sweetest date I've had in months.

Title card: 4th & 15

Opening credits.

ACT 1

FADE IN:

INT. CHRIS'S SUV - DAY

Chris is driving and listening to morning zoo style sports talk radio show THE DINGER and THE DUCK while holding an iced coffee rather daintily, with his pinkie pointing out.

THE DINGER O.S

Good morning New York City - and what a lovely day it is, as both of NYC's pro football teams are finishing up their voluntary mini camps and getting ready to start training camp.

THE DUCK O.S.

What the heck is the difference between the two? These guys work out all year long anyway, there's no more off-season, like back in the good old days.

THE DINGER O.S.

Yeah, when they had to move furniture to earn a living wage to fix their busted spleens?

THE DUCK O.S.

Precisely.

(quacking sound effects)

Chris gets closer to the practice facility.

THE DUCK O.S. (CONT'D)

So the Knights' new stud, their first-round draft pick, is fullback Matt Stone out of USC. Is he the real deal? Jason from Staten Island, you're on.

JASON O.S.

Yo Dinger and Duck, first-time caller longtime listener. I was so psyched when we got Stone, he is a friggin beast. All that stuff about him not being tough enough is bull.

Chris eyes his pinkie and adjusts to a more powerful grip on his iced coffee and takes a sip.

THE DINGER O.S.

So you're excited?

JASON O.S.

I'm cautiously optimistic. But why is this piece of garbage McCarthy still even on the roster?

Chris chokes on his coffee.

JASON O.S. (CONT'D)

My 12-year-old nephew can kick just as far, and he ain't fumbling in the friggin playoffs.

EXT - GAS STATION - DAY

Chris pulls into a gas station. He spots an elderly woman fumbling with a pump. Chris jumps in to help her out. Her husband, wearing a Knights hat, walks up to them, looks Chris up and down, shakes his head in disgust and spits on the ground. The couple get in the car and drive away.

CHRIS

Really?

EXT - CAR - DAY CONTINUOUS

Chris answers his phone as he drives into the Knights large training complex. It's his dad ANTHONY (65). Chris talks to Anthony O.S. while entering the building.

INT - KNIGHTS FACILITY - DAY

ANTHONY O.S

Chrissy my boy, ready for training camp? How's your leg feeling?

CHRIS

Pretty good, Pop. I made sure to ice it before bed last night.

ANTHONY O.S.

No wonder it's been tight - you haven't stopped training since last season. Everyone needs a break, son.

Chris walks through the heavily trafficked corridors of the building, past a full trophy case and corporate offices.

CHRIS

I can't afford a break. Did you get my last check?

ANTHONY O.S.

Yeah, well, your mother and I were thinking about tearing it up.

CHRIS

What? Why?

ANTHONY O.S.

Now, son, you've already given us so much. Heck, if it weren't for you, the bank would've already foreclosed on the gas station. But enough's enough.

Chris walks through security with a sign that reads "Authorized Personnel Only."

CHRIS

Dad, you worked your whole life to own that gas station.

ANTHONY O.S.

It's just too much pressure on you.

CHRIS

Don't worry about me - just make sure you don't switch the diesel and unleaded pumps again, and everything will be fine.

ANTHONY O.S.

Oh boy, that was a doozy.

CHRIS

Gotta go work out. Speak to you later...

ANTHONY O.S.

Wait Chris - do me a favor and check in on your sister. I can't get ahold of her, and who knows what she and that strange friend of hers are up to.

CHRIS

Sure thing. Bye Dad.

INT - KNIGHTS TEAM GYM - DAY

A huge, hangar-like indoor space with an endless amount of gym equipment next to a full indoor football field.

Series of shots of Chris intensely training: leg presses, squats, sit-ups; punting balls into a net. The gym is packed at first and eventually thins out until Chris is the last one left, sprinting on the treadmill at top speed, dripping with sweat and grunting loudly.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM BATHROOM - DAY

Loud grunting as a well-built young black man, MATT STONE(22), is vomiting into the toilet bowl. The Dinger and the Duck are on the radio. Matt gets up to brush his teeth.

THE DINGER O.S.

So Duck - will fans turn on Stone if his rep for pussyfooting on the field rears its ugly head?

THE DUCK O.S.

Oh c'mon, the kid has two college rushing records and hasn't even played a snap of preseason football. Can't he get a break?

THE DINGER O.S.

Sure. Let's just hope he doesn't break a nail.

(duck quacking sound)

Matt throws up again. O.S. We hear a commotion and then a SCREAM. A figure runs in, shuts off the radio and starts hugging Matt. Matt looks up to see his boyfriend, TERRY ROGERS, (25) a tall, thin male model.

TERRY

Oh baby, why do you listen to those jerks? Look at you, they're making you sick again.

MATT

I think they know.

TERRY

They don't know anything. And if they do why's it such a big deal anyway?

Matt exasperated pushes Terry away, heads to the sink and washes his face.

TERRY (CONT'D)

If Doogie Howser can come out and host the Tonys why can't you play football?

Matt stares at himself in the mirror.

MATT

How am I going to do this? Everyone's going to find out. All this Mr. Debutante crap - they're halfway there already.

INT. KNIGHTS' LOCKER ROOM - DAY

We open into the Knights high-end locker room packed with players. Some of them have equipment or sweats on, others are in towels. There are several flat-screen TVs. Matt, who is carrying a large box of equipment, bangs into Chris.

CHRIS

Hey, watch it!

MATT

Sorry. Ryan is making me carry his equipment everywhere I go. Half the time I don't know where I'm going or what I'm doing.

CHRIS

Yeah, well...

(loud so everyone can hear
him)

...be more careful, rook.

Some players snicker, but most just shake their heads.

MATT

Whatever.

Matt begins to walk away and Chris follows.

CHRIS

Hey, man, sorry about that. I'm really bad at pretending to be a douchebag.

MATT

Not from where I'm standing.

Chris begins to walk away, when Matt stops him.

MATT (CONT'D)

I know who you are.

CHRIS

Yeah well, I've already heard it all so at least try to be clever.

MATT

Nah man, I transferred to Hamlin High School my junior year. Your picture and trophies were all over that place. You were the QB. What the hell happened?

CHRIS

Tore the labrum of my throwing
shoulder my freshman year in college.
I begged the coaches to try me at any
other position. Coach Connolly gave me
a shot at punter.

MATT

QB to punter?

CHRIS

Living the dream.

Two of the veteran players approach Chris: quarterback JAKE
RYAN (29), a Tom Brady-esque surfer dude and MAX PRESSURE
(30), an intimidating black linebacker.

JAKE

Hey, punter, why don't you short-bus
special-teamers leave the offensive
rookies to players on the actual
offense, okay?

CHRIS

Sure, Jake.

(beat)

Hey, great practice today. Like the
little subterfuge on the play action.

JAKE

No comprende Espanol, jackass.

MAX

And while you're at it, stay away from
the defensive guys too. They got
enough crap to worry about without
having to deal with you and...

(snarls)

...your world of garbage.

CHRIS

I get it guys, but we're about to
start a new season. In the interest of
the team can't we bury the hatchet?
How's about we grab some drinks after
practice tonight? I know this great
new club, it's called Karma.

MAX

(snickering)

Can't, got church group.

JAKE

Yeah, punter, I've got Max's church group too.

CHRIS

You guys go to the same church?

MAX

What, a black man and a white man can't go to the same goddamn church?

CHRIS

No, no! I just didn't take either of you guys for being very religious. Especially when we were hanging at Satin Dolls last season.

JAKE

(to Matt)

Dude! What the hell are you still doing here? Go clean my locker when I tell you to clean my locker.

Matt walks off.

MATT

Man, how long is this crap gonna...

One of the other players turns up the TV. It's showing a *SportsCenter* preseason special on the Knights. You can hear a DEEP VOICED BROADCASTER in the background while scenes play out on the screen. When Chris sees this, he looks horrified.

DEEP VOICED BROADCASTER

With the third-ranked defense in the league, led by all-pro linebacker Max Pressure, and the league's leading passer Jake "The Black Mamba Snake" Ryan, scoring almost as many touchdowns as supermodels, the Knights looked like the team to beat. But did we mention special teams?

Chris looks like he's about to cry.

DEEP VOICED BROADCASTER

(CONT'D)

Flashback to the AFC Divisional game. The Knights are up by one against hated division rivals, the New England Whales with 28 seconds to go. Then punter Chris McCarthy took the field.

The TV screen cuts to the game, and the announcers from the original broadcast are heard in the background.

ANNOUNCER 1 O.S.

To punt on 4th down and 5 from the Knights' own 35-yard line. The snap is good. He's got the ball...

(beat)

...wait, what's he doing? Oh, my God, he's faking a pass and running with it. McCarthy's tackled, and the ball is loose! Whales safety Thomas picks it up, and he's got nothing but daylight. He's gonna run it in for a touchdown! Oh, sweet Mary Jane!

ANNOUNCER 2 O.S.

If coach Johnson called a fake there, it would go down as one of the worst play calls ever.

Shot of Coach Johnson jumping up and down and screaming at Coach Connolly, who vehemently shakes his head.

ANNOUNCER 1 O.S.

I think it was a busted play. I've never seen Johnson so livid before. Now he's screaming at McCarthy, who looks like a deer in headlights as his college mentor Kevin Connolly stands by, shaking his head in disbelief.

INT. LOCKER ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Chris holds back tears while the other players, team doctors and even towel boys shoot him looks of disgust. Special teams COACH CONNOLLY (mid 40s), a funny-looking, middle aged guy with an obvious hair piece walks in.

COACH CONNOLLY

McCarthy – Coach Johnson's office.

JAKE

Looks like it's time to start learning Rugby cause your ass is grass...

(In a bad Australian accent)

Crocodile Choke-ee!

Chris stoically walks past everyone in the locker room who snicker and give him dirty looks.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

FADE IN:

INT. COACH JOHNSON'S OFFICE - DAY

Knights Head COACH ERNIE JOHNSON (late 40s), black, middle aged but still physically imposing. He's sitting at his desk, talking on the phone. He motions for Chris to sit down.

CHRIS

Coach, you wanted to see me?

COACH JOHNSON

(to the phone)

I don't care, Marybelle, if the mower's not working, it's not cause-a me. That dang fool Alton was the last to use it.

(beat)

I know he's my son too, but you're the one who lets him play all those damn video games. I was out busting my ass at two-a-days getting ready to play pro football when I was his age. We got to fix it or the lawn is going to be overrun with crabgrass, and I'm not gonna allow that. Now leave me alone, woman, I got half this damn city about to whip me witta strap.

Coach Johnson slams down the phone.

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

That Marybelle's gonna make my brain bits explode.

CHRIS

Listen, Coach, I...

COACH JOHNSON

What? Almost single-handedly poop-decked this entire organization?

Coach Johnson lights up a cigar and leans back in his chair.

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Of all the stupid, unprofessional reactions to a pressure situation...

(beat)

I'm almost speechless.

(MORE)

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You wanted to clinch the game and be the hero – instead, you screwed the pooch and started dry-humping the goat until you shit yourself.

Coach Johnson walks over to a rack of weights and starts doing dumbbell curls.

CHRIS

Coach, I just wanted to again say how sorry I am about all this. I know I screwed up, but I've been working my butt off all off-season – and if you give me another chance, I swear to you, it will never happen again.

COACH JOHNSON

Wah!

(beat)

You sound like a baby with a two pound diaper. Here's the deal. Ownership feel we need more depth at the position, so we're bringing in two guys to compete for your spot. I said to 'em, "Depth at punter? How many we need, eight?"

CHRIS

Who?

COACH JOHNSON

One of em's this rugby kid from Australia. Think his name is Stowe or Crowe or some such thing. He's never played real football before but he's a freaka nature.

CHRIS

Does this mean I'm getting cut?

COACH JOHNSON

Lots of fans never want to see your ass again. But I still have some pull here and we're keeping you as insurance. If I was you, I'd go and clean Coach Connolly's house, car, shoes, pool, dog, hamster, whatever, for sticking up for your ass.

Coach Johnson walks back to his desk and resumes smoking his cigar.

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But I'm not running some sort of doggie daycare where everyone gets a treat for a piss in the grass and a dump in the doodie bag. You're gonna have to earn your spot. And you're going to have to convince me that you're not going to fold like a Guatemalan maid in a ho-motel when all we need is a damn punt!

CHRIS

I understand. Thanks, Coach.

Chris gets up and begins to leave.

COACH JOHNSON

I didn't dismiss you yet, possum puss!

(beat)

Chris, I know what you've been through. Fans harassing you. Columnists talking smack. Heck, half the team calls you Pussy McGee. That's your penance. But, at least for now, you're a goddamn UFL player, act like it. Someone talk poop to you, you get up in their grill and tell 'em you're gonna punt their damn balls through their chest. Stop acting like Deputy Droopy Snoopy and start acting a man. Feel me?

CHRIS

Yes, sir.

COACH JOHNSON

Now, get the hell out of here or else you'll be managing a car wash for the rest of your life.

INT. CHRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

Chris is doing yoga in his small apartment in Hoboken, N.J. It's a messy bachelor pad. The doorbell rings, and Chris opens the door. Standing there is his older sister ROB (26), AKA Roberta. She has long black hair and is very pretty in a tom-boyish way. She's holding a large duffel bag.

CHRIS

Sis! What are you doing here? Come in!

They hug emphatically and she enters the apartment.

ROB

Good to see you, broheim. I was just in town and wanted to stop by, see if I could hang for a few days.

CHRIS

Totally! Come on in. What's with the bag? What, did Sheila leave you?

Chris laughs. Rob looks down, embarrassed.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh crap, she left you?

ROB

Actually, I left her.

CHRIS

But what about your house, and all those softball trophies?

ROB

She brought home a baby juice baster and I bugged out. So, mind if I stay here for a few days until I find a new place?

CHRIS

Of course, stay as long as you want.

They walk into the kitchen and pop open beers.

ROB

You sure? I don't want to be a distraction. I know you have a lot on your mind and you need to focus.

CHRIS

Hey, to be honest it's been real tough - and to have you here...

ROB

Are you losing your job?

CHRIS

Probably.

ROB

Can't you play somewhere else?

CHRIS

My agent almost dropped me. He literally said my name is mud throughout the league.

ROB
He said that?

CHRIS
He texted it.

ROB
Ouch.

CHRIS
The only thing even keeping me here is
Coach Conolly.

ROB
So what if you're out of football? You
have a college degree – you can get a
job doing anything.

CHRIS
I was a friggin Eastern European
History major and never held a real
job in my life. I'd be lucky to get a
substitute gym-teaching gig back home.

ROB
Doubt that, they're really cutting
down over there. You know Carol
Schulz?

CHRIS
The sexy redheaded cheerleader?

ROB
She's been FaceBooking me a lot since
she lost her job at the high school.

CHRIS
You screw her too?

ROB
That's not the point.

CHRIS
Right, the point is that not only did
I lose out on the cutest girls to my
sister, but I'm gonna be out of
football with zero prospects – and Mom
and Dad will probably lose the gas
station without my help.

ROB
Whoever said it was your job to take
care of the whole family?

CHRIS

You did. Remember calling me from
Burning Man?

ROB

I did a lot of mushrooms back then.

CHRIS

C'mon, let's go grab some drinks. I
know this great new club with tons of
babes I'm sure you can tempt to come
over to your side of the, you know,
playing field.

ROB

You guys must get a ton of tail from
those UFL groupies, huh?

CHRIS

(beat)
I try.

ROB

OK, Mr. Bashful. But it's been a while
for me, so don't worry if I can't keep
up. The only thing I know about girls
these days is they like to text each
other and are into archery.

CHRIS

Rob, considering you're a girl, I'm
sure you'll have something to talk
about. Also, I think you mean *The
Hunger Games*, and you're describing 14-
year-olds.

CUT TO:

INT. KARMA CLUB - NIGHT

Chris and Rob enter the trendy Karma Club. Rob is dressed up,
at least for her, wearing tight jeans and a feminine top. She
notices a group of scantily clad women looking at their cell
phones, texting. She smirks.

ROB

Wow, I'm way out of my league here,
little bro.

CHRIS

Before you met Sheila, you hooked up
with sexy ladies all the time.

ROB

That was when chicks making out with other chicks was the cool thing to do at a bar. Now I have to compete with metrosexual meatheads.

INT. KARMA CLUB - LATER IN THE NIGHT

After several drinks, the siblings are now at the bar talking with two beautiful women wearing trendy outfits.

WOMAN 1

I can't believe you're an actual pro football player! That must be so dangerous!

CHRIS

It can get a little hairy when they come at you, but if you time your plays right, you'll be fine. It's all in the leg.

WOMAN 2

What position do you play?

CHRIS

I'm the kicker.

WOMAN 1

Like field goals?

CHRIS

No, I punt. I'm the punter.

WOMAN 1

A what?

CHRIS

A punter. When my team's offense fails, and we need to give the ball to the other team, I'm the guy that comes in and kicks it back to them. It's a very important position.

WOMAN 2

So you come in when the team screws up?

CHRIS

There's a lot more to it. You have to angle kicks properly.

WOMAN 1

Do you make, like, \$5 mil. a year?!

CHRIS

Not quite, I'm pulling down about
\$300K., plus a bonus if I make the Pro
Bowl.

The girls giggle.

WOMAN 2

Yeah, right, that's what my doorman
makes. Really, how much do you make?

CHRIS

That is what I make.

WOMAN 1

Oh, well I bet you have endorsements
and commercials, like for Nike or
Under Armour, right?

CHRIS

I did a back hair razor commercial on
the radio last year, but they didn't
renew.

ROB

(interrupting)

What he means is, he doesn't want to
sell out like some of the other guys,
so he turned down a bunch of offers.
But he's got something cooking now, he
just can't talk about it yet.

WOMAN 1

Are you his manager?

CHRIS

She's my sister.

The girls whisper to each other.

WOMAN 2

We have to go use the bathroom.

CHRIS

We'll be right here.

The girls leave. Rob stares at Chris.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

What?

ROB

Your rap is horrendous.

CHRIS

Hey, I've tried lying and hyping myself up, but I always freak out. I get into really deep mental crap, like "Does this girl just like me because of what I do?" "What do I care anyway, don't I just want to get laid?" "Do I just want to get laid?" Then my face flushes. I don't want to pretend to be something I'm not.

ROB

Aw, that's really gay - sweet, I mean sweet. But we're going to have to work on how you deal with pressure.

CHRIS

Watch, those babes will be...

CUT TO:

INT. KARMA CLUB VIP AREA - CONTINUOUS

Max, Jake and a few other teammates are behind a roped-off section guarded by a large BOUNCER. The girls who just left Chris and Rob are being escorted in by Max. Max begins to grope Woman 1 as Chris and Rob look on.

ROB

Hey, aren't those some of the guys on your team over there?

CHRIS

Um, yeah, I guess.

ROB

Well, let's go over there!

CHRIS

(hesitant)

Hey, let me just go take a quick leak.

INT - KARMA BATHROOM - NIGHT

Chris is washing his hands when he hears a rumbling in one of the stalls. Out walks Terry who flashes Chris a flirty smile and exits the bathroom. Chris begins to walk out just as Matt leaves the same stall Terry was in. They stare at each other.

MATT

What's going on, punter man?

CHRIS

Nothing, Matt. Having a good time?

Matt washes his hands, while Chris stares.

MATT

Not too bad. Girls are kind of weak.
What's up with the creepy looks?

CHRIS

You know you can get into a lot of
trouble doing that stuff here.

Matt rushes over to Chris and gets in his face.

MATT

What the hell are you talking about?
Doing what?

CHRIS

Back off, man - I'm just trying to
help. I saw that dude come out of the
stall you were in. This is a public
place. The press could get wind of
that.

MATT

You didn't see crap.

CHRIS

Just be careful, they test for that
stuff all the time now.

Matt has a strange look on his face.

MATT

They test for what?

CHRIS

What do you think?

MATT

STDs?

CHRIS

No, not STDs. I mean, I'm sure they do
but...

Chris' face lights up.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh crap, weren't you guys doing coke
in there?

MATT

I never touched a drug in my life.

CHRIS

So why are two guys hanging out in a bathroom stall together?

MATT

Hey, screw you man, you're barely even a member of this team and I'm the number-one draft pick. No one's gonna listen to you...

Matt doubles over.

MATT (CONT'D)

No, no, no!
The door begins to open, and Chris runs over to slam it shut.

CHRIS

Occupied.

END OF ACT 2

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT - KARMA BATHROOM - NIGHT

Matt leans over the bathroom sink, Chris has his back against the door as someone BANGS on it.

MATT

What's the difference, let em in.
You're gonna tell everyone anyway.

Matt dry heaves over the sink.

MATT (CONT'D)

Even the hint of that on my rep and my
pro career is over before I set foot
on the field.

CHRIS

I don't care who you're screwing. I'm
here with my gay sister, for
Chrissakes.

Matt looks up.

MATT

Really? You're not going to say
anything?

CHRIS

No, but wow, you are one horrible
closeted homo. Half the team is here -
and you hook up with another guy in
the men's room? Do you want to get
caught?

MATT

Hell, maybe I do. All the press and
money - I thought college was a trip.
I can't even concentrate during team
meetings because I'm worried someone's
suspicious.

CHRIS

That must really suck. But the way I
see it, you have two choices.

MATT

I'm listening.

CHRIS

Either live in the closet, or on the
down low as you guys call it.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Or come out hard, forgive the pun, and wear it like a badge of honor.

MATT

Is this the Lifetime Channel? Do you have any idea how tough fans, the league, the press, other teams - hell, worst of all our team - would react? I'd never be able to play again.

CHRIS

How's about choice number 3?

MATT

You said there were two.

CHRIS

Yeah, I just thought of a third. You start the season as the best back in the league. Then, after a few games, you have a big press conference and announce who you are. People will think it's heroic. So will I.

MATT

(laughs)

Boy, you really do have balls. Is that how you're dealing with your situation? Going all "glass half full" all the time?

CHRIS

Not really, but it's easier to give advice than to change your life around, know what I mean?

MATT

Punter McSlick, huh?

CHRIS

Just don't try to kiss me.

MATT

That plan seems a little too cute, but thanks. Just promise me you'll keep it quiet.

CHRIS

You got it, man. Now when you're down puking let me buy you a Cosmo.

INT - KARMA - NIGHT

Chris, Rob and Matt walk over to the entrance of the VIP section. The Bouncer stops them.

BOUNCER

Are you on the list?

CHRIS

No, but I have a bunch of my teammates in there, Ryan and Pressure.

BOUNCER

Oh, sorry, man, I didn't recognize you. What's your name?

CHRIS

Chris McCarthy.

Bouncer's smile fades.

BOUNCER

The punter?

CHRIS

That's me.

Max and Jake walk up to the other side of the velvet rope, next to the bouncer. The girls are hanging all over them. There's also CROWE (27), a squat, tough looking guy.

MAX

So, what do we have here? Punter, how did you meet a woman as fine as this?

(gestures to Rob)

C'mon, honey, it's time you left this boy and come play with the big...

(beat)

....boys.

Rob tries stifle a laugh.

JAKE

Who is this, punter, your water girl?

CHRIS

This is my sister, Roberta. She's crashing at my place. Roberta, this is Max and Jake.

JAKE

Really, Roberta? Hey, little lady, the next time you come to this part of town, maybe you should put on some makeup and a dress or something. That way, you may just be able to get to this side of the rope.

CHRIS

Jake, just let us in.

JAKE

Can't do it, punter. Too many people, some sort of fire regulation. Besides, we already got us a punter up in here.

Jake points to Crowe who walks over.

CROWE

Alright mates, what's the word?

JAKE

Hey Crowe, meet your competition.

CROWE

So you're the bloke I've heard so much about? Not much to ya.

CHRIS

Yeah, well you haven't seen me kick.

CROWE

No, but I've seen you fumble.

The whole VIP section starts laughing.

Jake waves at the bouncer to let in three random guys.

JAKE

(to Matt)

Not you either rook, you can hang with this special-teams loser at the Special Olympics.

CHRIS

That's messed up, man. I thought you guys were going to church.

MAX

This is our church! We pray at the altar of almighty pussy!

Max high-fives Jake.

MAX (CONT'D)

Why don't you run away and let the
real players have their fun?

Rob, annoyed, steps in.

ROB

Are you guys drunk or just douchebags?

MAX

Punter, you best tell this sister of
yours to shut the hell up before I do
something ungentlemanly.

CHRIS

Rob, chill out.

ROB

No, they have no right no treat you
like this. They lost that New England
game as much as you did.

JAKE

What the hell are you talking about?
It was this doofus who screwed up.

ROB

You had your worst game of the season.
What was your QB rating, 59? And
Pressure got penalized for 15 yards
with a helmet-to-helmet with two
minutes left. You guys were just as
much at fault.

JAKE

Why don't I show you who's at fault?

ROB

What does that mean?

Jake screws up his face as he tries to think of a retort.

JAKE

Screw you, dyke!

ROB

Wow, I'm impressed. It took you longer
to misfire with that one than your
overtime interception against
Cleveland.

JAKE

Ahhh!

Jake rushes at Rob from behind the velvet rope, but Chris makes a deft move to jump in front of Rob and push Jake in the chest. Jake falls back and trips comically on the rope.

Max goes after Chris but Rob trips Max up and he falls on Jake.

A bunch of onlookers whip out their camera phones. Bouncers and other patrons get into a scrum, and Chris, Rob and Matt sneak out in the confusion.

EXT. KARMA CLUB SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Rob, Chris and Matt are doubled over and breathing heavily. They begin laughing.

CHRIS

Thanks. Now I'm really screwed.

ROB

Bro, you're going to be fine. That needed to be done.

MATT

Yeah I'm with the chick. Those guys are assholes.

CHRIS

They're the biggest sports stars in town and make more money in a week than I did all of last season. At least until my sister-turned-manager gets me a deal with Under Armour because most 16-year-olds wanna wear the shirt the best punter who works at Walmart endorses.

ROB

Yeah, right.

(beat)

Hey, what if I could help you get deals?

CHRIS

Yeah, let's start with Mercedes, then move on to Louis Vuitton.

ROB

I'm serious.

CHRIS

How are you going to do that? I was lucky I kept my job today – who the hell knows if I'll still have it tomorrow? I'm the laughingstock of the UFL. Beside, you already have a job.

ROB

I don't know if you've read a newspaper in the last four years, but Lesbian couples are not buying starter homes in Park Slope nearly as much as they used to. And you know what? Pro athletes are a dime a dozen. You've got something most of those guys wish they had.

CHRIS

Yeah, everyone hates me.

ROB

No, everyone knows you. The only way you're going to conquer this thing is to get ahead of it, make fun of it along with everyone else. Let me at least give it a try.

MATT

Hey man, that advice sounds familiar. Still stupid as shit but making a little more sense.

Chris looks at Rob, nods his head and extends his hand. They shake hands, then hug.

ROB

How's about you Matt? Need any representation?

MATT

Uhm, I don't mean to be an ass at this touching moment, but I've got a team at CAA so I'm cool. But you guys do your thing.

CHRIS

OK, business manager – what's next?

ROB

Let's get out of here. I know a great place to get a rub and tug.

Chris, Rob and Matt strut down the street to rocking music. A good looking couple pass by. Matt checks out the guy while Rob does the same to the girl.

EXT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Several players run through drills while various coaches are yelling at them. Shot of players throwing balls, hitting tackling dummies and running formations. Chris, next to Crowe and Coach Connolly, makes a mediocre kick.

COACH CONNOLLY

C'mon, McCarthy, step into it.

CROWE

Here's how to kick it mate.

Crowe takes the next rep and launches a great punt.

COACH CONNOLLY

Beautiful, Crowe, that's the way to kick it.

Chris looks over and sees a throng of reporters talking to Jake. One of them holds up a copy of the *New York Post*, which has a shot of Chris pushing Jake from the night before on the front page with the headline "Cursed Kicker Punts Playa!" Jake is screaming at the media, gesticulating wildly towards Chris. Everyone on the field looks at Chris.

COACH CONNOLLY (CONT'D)

McCarthy, you're up.

SHOT: In slow motion, it's a virtual shot-for-shot recreation of Roy Hobbs' home run in *The Natural*, with the song from that scene, "The Final Game," playing.

The snapper squats down; sweat drips off Chris' brow; Chris calls "hike"; the ball travels to him; Chris catches the ball; Chris steps into it and the ball explodes off his foot; people look up in awe; photographers snap pictures; teammates start yelling; one coach mouths, "holy shit." The ball travels about 70 yards, and arcs gracefully before it crashes down in regular speed and hits Max Pressure, who's jogging in another practice field, square in the head, knocking him down. A cheer erupts in the stands.

COACH JOHNSON

(abruptly)

What the hell is this crap!

Everyone comes to a stop as the seemingly magical moment is immediately exposed for what it is, a practice punt.

The whole group continues doing what they were doing except for Max, who is still on the ground, knocked out.

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

McCarthy, get your ugly Irish ass over here.

Chris jogs over.

COACH JOHNSON (CONT'D)

So you like to go have a big whoop-de-do at the disco dance club, huh? Drinking your Crystal Light Champagne, grinding with the ladies, am I right?

CHRIS

Coach, I...

COACH JOHNSON

Shut up! If I have to see your mug in any newspaper for anything other than a coffin-corner directional punt in the final seconds of a game, your ass is out of here, feel me?

CHRIS

Yes, sir.

Coach Johnson gives him a scary look, raises an eyebrow and begins to smirk.

COACH JOHNSON

I'm glad you're finally listening to me, feel me?

CHRIS

Yes, sir!

COACH JOHNSON

Now keep practicing your footwork. First preseason game is in two weeks.

CHRIS

Yes, sir.

Coach Johnson begins walking away, stops and turns.

COACH JOHNSON

And McCarthy, that was one nice bean-eating punt!

Chris smiles. Coach Connolly walks over.

COACH CONNOLLY
McCarthy, get over here.

Coach Connolly brings Chris over to the side, out of everyone else's earshot.

COACH CONNOLLY (CONT'D)
How are you holding up?

CHRIS
About as good as can be expected,
coach. I'm fighting for my life over
here.

COACH CONNOLLY
Yeah, I know. But I want you to know I
fought to keep you on this team.

CHRIS
Yeah, Coach Johnson told me.

COACH CONNOLLY
So there you go, you have a shot!

CHRIS
Is that supposed to make me feel
better? Do you have any idea what I've
been through these past six months?

COACH CONNOLLY
Chris, I'm sorry. I never thought that
play wouldn't work, and I never wanted
you to take the fall for something I
called.

CHRIS
I know.

COACH CONNOLLY
It's just...
(beat)
...when the play got busted, and Coach
Johnson went nuts, I froze. I started
thinking about the kids and the
alimony.
(beat)
Next thing I know, he was screaming at
you, and you didn't say anything,
so...

CHRIS
Coach, you brought me here. You've
been like a father to me. I
couldn't...

COACH CONNOLLY

(interrupting)

I'm going to make it up to you, kid.
Believe me, these other punters don't
have a shot. I've got your back.

CHRIS

I hope you're right.

Chris sets up for another punt, gets the ball and makes another monster kick. As we follow the flight of the ball, it descends and hits Max square in the face, just as he stands up, knocking him down again.

THE END