

God on Our Side

By Tom Moran

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Settings:

Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, Missouri, including the football field, home locker room, visitors' locker room, hallway, coach's office, press box, conference room, press room, owners' office, and training facility

Other pro football stadiums

A hospital room

Brady Hobbs' living room

A Kansas City, Missouri radio studio

A Buffalo, New York radio studio

Hotel rooms

With the exception of the football field, settings are suggested. The field occupies a strip of forestage, and incorporates gym mats for "tackling." A net offstage left and/or right enables the quarterbacks to throw across the stage. Crowd noise should be incorporated throughout where appropriate.

Characters:

BRADY HOBBS, late 20's - early 30's. Starting quarterback for the Kansas City Chiefs. Tall, muscular, and smart, but unsure of himself and not a natural leader.

KYLE BENJAMIN, early 20's, backup quarterback for the Chiefs. Also tall and muscular, a born leader, a quiet and respectful man, and a devout Christian fundamentalist. Slight Southern drawl.

ALICIA HOBBS, late 20's - early 30's. BRADY'S wife. Intelligent and forceful.

COACH BILL ELTON, 40's - 50's. Coach of the Chiefs. A thoughtful man and a good coach.

REVEREND JACOB BENJAMIN, 40's - 50's. KYLE's father.
Domineering, demanding and full of old-time religion.
Southern drawl.

MANDEE LYLE, 20's. Chiefs cheerleader. Provocative and
perky.

ANNOUNCER #1, "Dan"
REPORTER #1, "Jessica"
RADIO HOST #1, "Tom," dressed in Chiefs gear
ANNOUNCER #2, "Curt"
REPORTER #2, "Carl"
RADIO HOST #2, "Marty," dressed in Chiefs gear
RADIO HOST #3, dressed in Buffalo Bills gear
ESPN ANNOUNCER
RADIO SHOW CALLERS

OPPOSING LINEMAN
CHIEFS RUNNING BACK, "Warren"
CHIEFS LINEMAN (non-speaking)
CHIEFS SAFETY (non-speaking)
BILLS RUNNING BACK

A note on casting: The show can be performed with a
cast of as few as 10 (9m/1w). Casting would be as
follows:

BRADY HOBBS
KYLE BENJAMIN
ALICIA HOBBS/MANDEE LYLE/REPORTER #2/RADIO SHOW
CALLERS
BILL ELTON/JACOB BENJAMIN/RADIO SHOW CALLERS
ANNOUNCER #1/REPORTER #1/RADIO HOST #1/RADIO HOST #3
ANNOUNCER #2/RADIO HOST #2/ESPN ANNOUNCER
OPPOSING LINEMAN/RADIO SHOW CALLERS
CHIEFS RUNNING BACK
CHIEFS LINEMAN
BILLS RUNNING BACK/CHIEFS SAFETY

Costumes should be suggested whenever possible to
avoid extensive costume changes. The cast can also
include more non-speaking football players if desired.

ACT I

(The football field at Mile High Stadium in Denver. LIGHTS UP on a football sitting in midfield. Along with CROWD NOISE we hear a snippet of Scorpions' "Rock You like a Hurricane.") BRADY, KYLE, COACH, ANNOUNCERS, CHIEFS RUNNING BACK and CHIEFS LINEMAN enter, with BRADY, RUNNING BACK and CHIEFS LINEMAN in Kansas City Chiefs colors lined up against OPPOSING LINEMAN in Denver Broncos colors. ANNOUNCERS sit in press box, COACH and KYLE stand on sideline, upstage of action. KYLE carries clipboard and wears headset.

ANNOUNCER #1

And the Kansas City Chiefs offense again takes the field, with the ball on the Denver Broncos' forty-three-yard line. Quarterback Brady Hobbs hoping to manufacture something here on first down. Hobbs has looked sharp today, Curt, but his Chiefs have been shaky all game.

ANNOUNCER #2

Shaky? They're registering on the Richter scale out there, Dan.

ANNOUNCER #1

That's the story of this season.

ANNOUNCER #2

Sure enough, And unless Hobbs can rattle up some offense in the next five minutes, the Chiefs will head home from Mile High Stadium staring up out of a two-and-five crevasse.

OPPOSING LINEMAN

I'm taking you out, Brady!

BRADY

Great, I know a little Italian place! (to teammates) Green thirty-two. Ranger, left out, blue right. Hut! Hut! Hike!

(BRADY takes the hike, fakes a handoff to RUNNING BACK, backs away from the line, looks for open receivers, finds none. OPPOSING LINEMAN pursues.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Five-step drop. Hobbs scans for an open man, can't find anybody. And now he's flushed out of the pocket.

LINEMAN #1

Come to papa!

(BRADY scrambles but is taken down by OPPOSING LINEMAN. WHISTLE blows.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Hobbs is sacked! And he went down hard.

ANNOUNCER #2

Bet that one showed up on seismographs.

ANNOUNCER #1

I think we can kill the analogy now, Curt. That being said, Hobbs looks shaken up.

(BRADY cradles his left shoulder and makes pained noises.)

BRADY

Aw, hell.

COACH

Aw, hell.

KYLE

Oh, heavens.

(COACH and KYLE run onto field and kneel by BRADY, help him remove helmet.)

COACH

You all right? How's that feel?

BRADY

(groaning)

Kinda like a three hundred fifty-pound man just threw me to the ground.

COACH

Can you play on it?

BRADY

(laughs)

Yahtzee, maybe.

(KYLE hovers over BRADY's shoulder.)

KYLE

May I? (not waiting for response) Oh Lord, in your infinite mercy grant that these bones may knit and that this flesh might feel your healing-

(KYLE gently places hand on BRADY's shoulder. BRADY recoils and screams in agony.)

BRADY

Aiiiigh! Kyle what the hell are you doing?

KYLE

I just wanted to-

COACH

Kyle! Quit laying on hands and start laying on - helmet. (To BRADY) All right Brady, c'mon, let's get you looked at.

(COACH helps BRADY up and walks with him offstage.)

COACH

You know what this means.

(They look toward KYLE.)

BRADY

Aw, Jesus.

COACH

Well, Kyle Benjamin. Close enough. (To KYLE) Benjamin! Get in there!

KYLE

Sure thing, coach!

(KYLE kneels, looks down, points to the sky with one index finger and crosses that finger with his other index finger, simultaneously pointing toward heaven and making a crucifix. [For the remainder of the script this gesture is referred to as 'Benjamining.'] He does this for a long moment, stops, and does it again.)

COACH

Stop - genuflecting already! We're gonna get a delay-of-game here!

ANNOUNCER #2

That could be the end of the season for Hobbs. Let's keep him in our prayers.

ANNOUNCER #1

Yes, let's keep him in our *thoughts*, Curt. And we'll of course keep you updated on his condition.

(LIGHTS DOWN on field, UP on hospital room. BRADY lies in bed, his head and shoulder bandaged. A remote sits near the bed. ALICIA sits beside him, reading Science magazine; the issue has a photo of a chimp on the cover. BRADY stirs.)

BRADY

(groggy)

Blue 32. Blue 32. Mnumh hut hike (wakes with a start)
Yah!

ALICIA

Honey! You're awake! How do you feel?

BRADY

(holds head)

You know how Wile E. Coyote would walk out on a cliff edge, and it would break, and he'd fall like half a mile, and then the cliff edge would break off and fall on him?

ALICIA

Yeah.

BRADY

I wish I felt like that.

ALICIA

Ouch.

BRADY

What the hell happened? I don't remember anything.

ALICIA

You were playing the Broncos. What do you think happened?

BRADY

We got our asses handed to us?

ALICIA

(evasive)

I mean what happened to you.

BRADY

Oh. Was it Maxwell again?

ALICIA

Flattened you like a pancake. But a pancake with a concussion and a separated shoulder. You passed out in the locker room. Docs figure you'll be out three to four weeks.

BRADY

Okay. (Pause.) Okay, I've had worse. Hey wait, what are you doing here? Shouldn't you be back in KC?

ALICIA

I wasn't gonna leave you knocked out in some weird Denver hospital, getting fed pureed Rocky Mountain oysters or something.

BRADY

(joking)

You say that like it's a bad thing.

(ALICIA playfully shoves him. He winces.)

ALICIA

Oh, sorry. I'm flying back tomorrow. It's an in-service anyway, so there's no school.

BRADY

Okay.

ALICIA

Don't worry, babe, I'll be back on the job in time to keep pulling in the big bucks.

BRADY

Well, someone has to support this family, and how am I supposed to do it on the pittance afforded an NFL quarterback?

ALICIA

And now you'll get paid for a month off.

BRADY

Yeah, a month of Kyle Benjamin taking my snaps. There goes the season.

ALICIA

Uh, yeah, maybe.

BRADY

Maybe? What do you mean, maybe?

(ALICIA grabs the remote and turns on an unseen TV.)

ALICIA

Hold on, let me see if these guys get Sportscenter.

ESPN ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

...And our Boosters Player of the Week honors go to someone we never expected ... Chiefs rookie Kyle "the Messiah" Benjamin, who lofted two touchdown passes in

the final five minutes to stun the Denver Broncos, twenty-eight to twenty-four. Boosters: Where the waitresses have massive, pendulous breasts.

ALICIA

They have what?

BRADY

He did what?

(ALICIA turns off the set.)

ALICIA

Yeah.

BRADY

The Messiah?

ALICIA

Don't get me started. I bet they're showing highlights on the 700 Club too.

BRADY

Yeah, but I mean, the guy throws like a, like a...

ALICIA

...giraffe caught in a blender?

BRADY

I was thinking more like a flamingo with Tourette's.

ALICIA

Well, the Chiefs did win. You should be happy about this.

BRADY

Do you remember my first start? I threw incomplete on fourth down with a minute left. We lost by two. The talk shows were calling for my head on a platter. After *one game*. That's how fast the tide turns in this league. One minute you're a national hero, the next you're hocking the Super Bowl ring for the rent.

ALICIA

Plus he's got God at his back.

BRADY

Right. And who do we atheists have at our back?

ALICIA

Each other. Hey, honey, you earned your job. You deserve your job. And you're just gonna have to make Jesus-boy fight for it, the same way you did.

BRADY

Survival of the fittest?

ALICIA

(smiles)

That's the spirit. (Waves magazine.) Go all Darwin on his ass, baby. That would make me happy on so many levels.

(LIGHTS DOWN on hospital room, UP on RADIO HOSTS in STUDIO.)

HOST #1

I mean, on the one hand you've got Brady Hobbs, the franchise guy. He's had a rough time of it. Never even started at Northwestern. Drafted in the seventh round, fifty picks after the Chiefs' punter.

HOST #2

Well, he's a heck of a punter.

HOST #1

Sure, he's doing Azerbaijan proud. But, Hobbs gets here and claws his way up to starter after three years as clipboard monkey and piss-boy-

HOST #2

And does a lousy job of it, Marty. Two and four. Then Saint Kyle comes in and wins two games in a row, both on the final play.

HOST #1

Saint Kyle?

HOST #2

Hey, I saw his face, and I'm a believer.

HOST #1

Well, I saw his arm, and I'm not.

HOST #2

How about we take a call. Jim in Independence, you're on Jock Talk with Tom and Marty.

CALLER

Yeah, hi. Hey, Tom, why are you so rough on Benjamin? I heard he tithes twenty percent of his salary. And that in high school he once prayed over a puppy and cured it of puppy cancer.

HOST #1

Nobody likes puppy cancer, Jim. But who's being rough? We're just not ready to canonize anyone after two games. Well, I'm not, anyway.

(LIGHTS UP on LOCKER ROOM. BRADY and KYLE watch the show on unseen TV. BRADY holds remote.)

HOST #1(cont.)

I mean, football isn't about moral character, it's about which number is bigger after four quarters. And just because Hobbs isn't getting shout-outs from Pat Robertson doesn't mean he worships Satan or something.

HOST #2

Well, if Hobbs were in the thrall of Beelzebub, I expect he would've at least beaten the Lions in week two.

(HOSTS snicker. BRADY hits button on remote. LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO.)

BRADY

Anyway, look. (BRADY plays with remote.) Third quarter. See what the free safety is doing there?

KYLE

No.

BRADY

(coughs)

Watch it again.

KYLE

Are you all right?

BRADY

Just a cold. There. See that step? He's shading to
midfield. That means it's a zone, probably three-deep.

KYLE

You can tell all that from one step?

BRADY

Everything on the football field happens for a reason.

KYLE

Just on the football field?

BRADY

See, look, you should have thrown it short there.

KYLE

Lucky I didn't get intercepted, praise Jesus.

BRADY

It was actually Pearson who knocked it down. Pretty
sure Jesus hadn't been subbed in for that play.

KYLE

Jesus' hand is in everything, Brady.

BRADY

Sure it is.

KYLE

Brady, have you accepted Jesus as your personal
savior?

BRADY

(to himself)

Oh, here we go.

KYLE

Brady?

BRADY

I once accepted Jesus (pronounced Hey-ZOOSE) Montoya
as my personal trainer. Does that count?

KYLE

No.

BRADY
So when did you?

KYLE
When did I...

BRADY
Accept Jesus.

KYLE
I was eleven.

BRADY
Eleven?

KYLE
Yeah. My father announced it before his whole congregation.

(COACH enters, unseen.)

BRADY
Huh. So were there other options out there for your personal savior?

KYLE
What?

BRADY
You know, Baal, Moroni, Ganesh. Or was it more a Jesus or nothing kind of decision?

KYLE
I just knew. It was as clear as the blue sky and as plain as day. And you haven't answered my question.

BRADY
I don't think this is appropriate to discuss in the workplace, Kyle.

KYLE
Why not? It's who I am. Why shouldn't I talk about it?

BRADY
Well, you don't see me going off about who I am, do you?

KYLE

And who are you?

BRADY

(growing irate)

All right, you want to know? I am a -

COACH

(interrupting)

You are a pair of pro quarterbacks having an existential debate on game day. Knock it off. (to Kyle) Kyle, your father is looking for you.

KYLE

Okay, thanks.

(KYLE looks at BRADY, exits.)

BRADY

You think it's weird his dad follows him everywhere?

COACH

Half of our offensive line is on probation, Brady. Anyone on this team comes complete with chaperon, it's fine by me.

BRADY

Good point.

COACH

So the quacks tell me there's some good news on the shoulder.

BRADY

(rotating arm)

I'm cleared for full-contact for Friday. So I'm good for Sunday.

COACH

Sounds like you've made a miraculous recovery.

BRADY

No such thing. (coughs) See? Not better yet.

COACH

Well, listen, we don't think you should be moving so fast.

BRADY

What?

COACH

We're not ready to take you off the inactive list for next game.

BRADY

What? Why not?

COACH

We want to play it safe.

BRADY

Play it safe? This isn't about my shoulder, is it?

COACH

It's about your shoulder. Of course it's about your shoulder, what else would it be about?

BRADY

Coach. You want to start him for another week.

COACH

No, that's not it. (Pause.) All right, it is. He's winning, Brady.

BRADY

The Chiefs are winning. What was he last week, two for twelve?

COACH

Two for ten.

BRADY

Two hundred! That's not even a good batting average! What were my stats when I went down?

COACH

You know what they -

BRADY

Ten touchdowns. Sixty-five percent completions. Top ten in the league.

COACH

This isn't about numbers, Brady. The guys, they're all rallying around him. He's just got the fire in his eyes.

BRADY

Brimstone too.

COACH

You know what I mean. He makes people want to believe him. To believe *in* him. Good players inspire themselves, Brady, great players inspire others.

BRADY

And what about you?

COACH

(throws up hands)

I'm acting on orders from above here.

BRADY

Oh, now God is talking to you, too?

COACH

Close. The owners are.

BRADY

Oh.

COACH

God doesn't sign my paychecks, Brady, the Clayton brothers do. Look, I know you can do everything Benjamin is doing. Plus you can throw the frikkin' ball straight too.

BRADY

Not from the bench I can't.

COACH

This, too, shall pass, as soon as he loses a couple. Which he will. Now get down to the locker room, Benjamin's leading the pregame prayer.

BRADY

I thought that was your job.

COACH

Yeah, but he's way better at it. Come on.

(Light down on COACH'S OFFICE, up on LOCKER ROOM. COACH, BRADY, KYLE and RUNNING BACK all kneel. BRADY looks bored. He coughs and sniffles.)

KYLE

And what maketh us victors? It is because we are blessed with power, and with agility and skill. We carry these strengths with us into heavenly battle as soldiers of the Lord Jesus, that we may spread his glory and smite unto his enemies. It was the Lord who guided my arm as we toppled the mighty Broncos, who share their image with the harbingers of the Apocalypse. It was God Almighty who pried the ball from Jumbo McAllister's death grip to redeem us against the fearsome Raiders, their uniforms black like their shriveled hearts. Verily, it was none but the Lord of hosts who-

(BRADY has a coughing fit.)

BRADY

Excuse me.

KYLE

Are you all right?

BRADY

Yeah, I'm fine. (looks at watch) But can we wrap this up? The Army paid like 80 grand for our opening ceremony so we probably ought to be there.

KYLE

(masking annoyance)

Of course. Would you care to conclude for us?

BRADY

Conclude? With what?

KYLE

Your own hard-won wisdom. Some scripture, perhaps.

BRADY

Oh, um, sure. Okay. (Pause.) "Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children."

(COACH looks up. He and BRADY exchange a knowing look. KYLE looks up and notices.)

BRADY (cont.)

"And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who would attempt to poison and destroy My brothers. And you will know My name is the Lord when I lay My vengeance upon thee." (pause)
Uh, Amen.

ALL

Amen.

(All exit but KYLE, who watches them depart quizzically, then walks out. LIGHTS DOWN on LOCKER ROOM. LIGHTS UP on FOOTBALL FIELD and PRESS BOX. COACH and BRADY on sideline. "Livin' on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi plays as KYLE and CHIEFS RUNNING BACK line up behind CHIEFS LINEMAN, opposite OPPOSING LINEMAN.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Tennessee Titans are up four here in Nashville with less than a minute to play. And as the game clock winds down, we remind you to stay tuned afterwards as Jenny McCarthy and Coolio face off in a new episode of NBC's hit, Kickboxing with the Stars.

ANNOUNCER #2

Benjamin's looked spotty today.

ANNOUNCER #1

Like a Dalmatian out there, Curt. But the Chiefs defense has smote the Titans hip and thigh, and to no

one's surprise, this game is coming down to one final play for KC, fourth and eight to go. Benjamin lines up on the Tennessee thirty-four, five receiver set, everyone going deep.

OPPOSING LINEMAN

Where's your God now, Benjamin!

KYLE

Get thee behind me, Titan! Red nine, um, shaft three blue right. Sixteen?

CHIEFS RUNNING BACK

Huh?

KYLE

End zone! Go towards there! Hut hut hike!

(KYLE scrambles and heaves it downfield. He watches and looks disappointed. WHISTLE, and a flag flies onto the field from offstage. KYLE "Benjamins" and runs offstage. LIGHTS DOWN on field, LIGHTS UP on BRADY'S HOUSE. ALICIA reads the Kansas City Star sports section.)

ALICIA

(reading out loud)

"This time, the clock finally ran out on Kyle Benjamin. Until the referees pulled out their pass interference flags, giving the Chiefs one more play from the one-yard line. And like Lazarus long before him" - (pulls down paper) - wait, who's Lazarus? Is that the Jesus-back-from-the-dead guy?

(BRADY enters. ALICIA looks up.)

BRADY

Yeah.

ALICIA

So he's like a Bible zombie?

BRADY

Pretty much. Didn't you ever learn any of this stuff?

ALICIA

From who? My dad the biology professor or my mom the theoretical physicist?

BRADY

I dunno, maybe you snuck downstairs on Sunday mornings to watch "VeggieTales." But go on.

ALICIA

- "and like Lazarus the Bible zombie before him, Kyle Benjamin found himself with a second chance. Who knows what Lazarus did with his new lease on life. But Benjamin used it to punch into the end zone with no time left on the clock and to give his Chiefs--"

BRADY

His Chiefs!

ALICIA

"-another stunning victory, not to mention a winning record for the first time in over a year."

(BRADY picks up paper, scans it.)

BRADY

Miracle catch. Miracle finish. If any of these actually were miracles I might consider believing in this stuff.

ALICIA

Football and religion have a lot in common, sweetie. They're just Americans spending their Sundays trying to get behind a winner.

BRADY

Well, I am a firm believer in the separation of church and sports. All this bullshit about his "intangibles" and "leadership qualities." They believe in him because he thinks God believes in him.

ALICIA

This would be the same God who says gays need to be "cured?"

BRADY

And that adultery is a capital offense.

ALICIA

(joking)

Maybe you should just read excerpts from The Origin of Species instead of the pregame prayer on Sunday.

BRADY

(shakes head)

Yeah, that's a great idea. Three places where there are no atheists, Alicia -

(ALICIA has heard this before.)

BRADY and ALICIA

(chorus)

- Foxholes, hospitals, and the NFL.

BRADY

I can't do it. I can't tell everyone who I am. Not in this league. I'd be risking my career.

ALICIA

You'd be doing it for what you believe in, Brady.

BRADY

Hey, I hold my beliefs as passionately as Kyle does, Alicia. But I believe in reason and in logic. And logic dictates that if I want to win back my job - a job my life has been building to since basically kindergarten- I need to keep my mouth shut.

ALICIA

So you won't even tell the guy off?

BRADY

I wish there were (coughs, voice suddenly drops a little) - I wish where were a way to. (Pause.) Hmmm. (Speaks in a strange, gravelly voice.) Hmmm. How's this sound? Anything like me?

ALICIA

That depends. Do you normally sound like redneck Batman?

BRADY

(in voice)

Only in your dreams.

(BRADY walks offstage, returns
with a book, shows it to ALICIA.)

BRADY (cont.)

(not in voice)

Richard Dawkins. Time to reacquaint myself with The
God Delusion.

ALICIA

Back in college, some friends and I used to put
Dawkins in hotel rooms in place of the Gideon's
Bibles.

BRADY

(in voice)

Straight to perdition with you.

ALICIA

I'll see you there.

(LIGHTS DOWN on HOUSE. LIGHTS UP
on STUDIO. HOSTS #1 and #2
interview KYLE.)

HOST #2

So in the paper today, the Chiefs were referred to as
"God's Team." Do you believe that?

KYLE

I believe the Lord smiles upon the righteous.

HOST #2

Well, he's certainly been grinning ear to ear these
last four games.

HOST #1

Sure, but you hardly needed God's intervention to take
down the Cardinals. You could have probably pulled
that off with Krishna, or Xenu.

(KYLE places his hand on HOST #1's
wrist. With his other hand, he
reaches into his pocket and hands
him a Bible tract.)

KYLE

In all matters, you need the one true Lord at your side. Here's some literature you should take a look at.

HOST #2

Amen to that!

KYLE

It's like Bob Dylan sang: "With God on our side, we'll win the next war."

(HOST #1 politely shoves the Bible tract aside.)

HOST #1

(uncomfortable)

Hey, how about we take some calls. Barney from Mission Hills, you're on the air.

(LIGHTS UP on BRADY'S HOUSE. BRADY talks into speakerphone in husky voice. Arrayed before him is notebook and The God Delusion.)

BRADY

Hi, I had a question for Mr. Benjamin. So, you're familiar with Genesis 19?

KYLE

You mean the story of Lot and his daughters.

BRADY

Right, now I'm confused by this. Lot's daughters get him drunk and go on and have sex with him.

KYLE

Yes...

BRADY

And God don't do nothin' about it. I mean, Lot's wife gets turned into a pillar of salt just for looking back at all them Sodomites. But his daughters get off scot-free.

HOST #2

Um, I'm not sure this has anything to do with football-

HOST #1

No, I want to hear where this is going.

BRADY

So I was just wonderin,' does this mean incest is A-OK with God? (coughs) And getting folks drunk and havin' your way with 'em, that's all hunky-dory too?

KYLE

Why are you asking me this?

BRADY

Just confused is all. I hear you keep saying we need to take the Bible literal, I'm trying to figure out how to do that.

KYLE

It's better to leave these matters to the scholars and to -

BRADY

So it's all fine and dandy then. Hot damn! (yells) Hey Jessie Mae, we in the clear!

KYLE

I didn't say that-

BRADY

It's okay, Mr. Benjamin sir, I ain't doin' nothin' God says we can't do. It's not like I'm going to go have sex with a mature, sober, consenting adult of my own gender or nothin, 'cuz that's right out. Now can I also ask you something about this whole intelligent design thing?

(BRADY coughs again. KYLE gets a quizzical look on his face.)

KYLE

Barney - have we met?

BRADY

Pardon me?

KYLE

You just sound familiar.

(BRADY panics and hangs up the phone, then stares at it.)

HOST #1

Barney? You there? We seem to have lost him.

HOST #2

Gee, that's a shame.

HOST #1

(to KYLE)

So ... um ... speaking of intelligent design, how are you preparing for the New England defense on Sunday?

(BRADY switches off the stereo. LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO. BRADY grabs The God Delusion, slinks down on couch and starts leafing through it.)

BRADY

(shaking head, in voice)

Goldurnit.

(LIGHTS DOWN on HOME, UP on LOCKER ROOM. KYLE and REVEREND JACOB BENJAMIN pray, heads bowed.)

REVEREND

And lord, we thank you for our steady hands, our sturdy loins, our rock-solid offensive line, and our firm grasp of the nickel defense. Amen. (Heads up.) Now what troubles you, Kyle?

KYLE

It's Brady Hobbs, dad. I think he is very angry. And I fear he may (lowers voice) not be a Christian.

REVEREND

What makes you say that?

KYLE

His pregame prayers last week were - apocryphal. And he hasn't come to any of my Monday prayer services. Or my Tuesday ones. Or Wednesday morning or afternoon, or-

REVEREND

(considers)

I see, yes. I have pondered that question myself. You understand Mr. Hobbs has had a difficult life. His father was called home when he was just a boy. We cannot all have caring parents and stable homes filled with Jesus' love.

KYLE

I know. I read about him on Wikipedia.

REVEREND

Nothing good will ever come of the internet, Kyle.

KYLE

I just wanted to learn about him.

REVEREND

Remember he is but lost. And he is your teammate, you must gesture him in rather than turn him away. Petty squabbling will not serve our purposes. Make yourself like unto a city upon a hill. You are keeping yourself free from blemish?

KYLE

Of course, dad.

REVEREND

Then you need fear no evil. Be sure Brady Hobbs' sins, whatever they may be, will find him out.

(LIGHTS DOWN on LOCKER ROOM.
LIGHTS UP on HALLWAY, where BRADY
passes by MANDEE.)

MANDEE

(flirtatious)

Hey, Brady.

BRADY

(smitten)

Hi Mande. You ready for the Patriots on Monday night?

MANDEE

Oh yeah, we've got a new pyramid routine we're going to premiere in the third quarter. I get to be on top. I like it on top.

BRADY

Oh, I remember.

MANDEE

Hey, what's the deal with Kyle?

BRADY

(rolls eyes)

Kyle. What about him?

MANDEE

Well, he's cute.

BRADY

Granted.

MANDEE

But every time I try to put a move on him, he gives me the Heisman. (poses with stiff-arm, like Heisman statue.) Same with the other girls. What gives? Is he, you know...

BRADY

Light in the cleats?

MANDEE

Yeah. I mean, you know how those fundies can be. So deep in the closet they can't even see the door. I mean, he's still a virgin...

BRADY

Really?

MANDEE

Never even been kissed. He told me he's keeping himself pure until he meets the right girl.

BRADY

Huh. How do you feel about that?

MANDEE

The other cheerleaders think it's pretty weird. But not me.

BRADY

Why not?

MANDEE

(starts to walk away, blows a kiss)

Because I am the right girl. See you on the sideline!

(LIGHTS DOWN on HALLWAY. LIGHTS UP on FIELD. COACH and BRADY on sideline. KYLE, CHIEFS RUNNING BACK and CHIEFS LINEMAN line up opposite OPPOSING LINEMAN. A snippet of Aerosmith's "Angel" plays.)

OPPOSING LINEMAN

I'm gonna hit you so hard I'm gonna have to go to confession afterwards!

KYLE

Our god is a forgiving god! Blue 18! Goliath white 31! Hut Hike!

(KYLE takes the hike and fumbles.)

KYLE

H-E-double hockey sticks!

(He falls on the ball as OPPOSING LINEMAN falls on him. WHISTLE. Lights down on field, up on COACH. He is in OWNERS' OFFICE, addressing an unseen figure over the heads of the audience.)

COACH

Mr. Clayton, It was an old-fashioned woodshed whuppin'. I think we need to talk about some major changes. (Pause.) I know, but- (Pause.) Did you even

watch the game? Sorry, that was out of turn. (Pause.)
All right, all right.

(LIGHTS DOWN on office. UP on
PRACTICE FIELD. COACH watches
upstage as BRADY practices. COACH
blows WHISTLE. BRADY throws three
balls offstage in rapid
succession. Three THUNKS as they
hit targets.)

COACH
Nice work, nailed them all.

BRADY
Thanks. So can I get my job back now?

COACH
It was just one game, Brady.

BRADY
It was a Boston massacre! It was like the slaughter of
the innocents out there!

COACH
Benjamin is still four and one. And there are other
numbers too. Like, TV ratings are up sixty percent in
the last month. Ticket sales are up forty. The
moneylenders in the concourses are making a killing.
So you can imagine what the owners are telling me.

BRADY
They're genuflecting all the way to the bank. What am
I supposed to do?

COACH
Right now Benjamin has this shield around him. He can
do no wrong. I mean, people are posing like him (he
"Benjamins") and facebooking and tweetering it.

BRADY
I'm well aware.

COACH
But you know how it works in this league. A few hard
hits, a couple of misplays, and the guys start to look
at you different. All of a sudden you're not looking

downfield for your receivers - you can't see those slamming bodies inching in your direction, and they don't trust you, so you can't trust them.

BRADY

Sure. I see it all the time.

COACH

People will start to question Benjamin's - well, his infallibility. Once he really screws up, then we're going to need you. Bad.

BRADY

And one loss isn't enough for that?

COACH

(shakes head)

They call it blind faith for a reason, kid. Besides, even Jesus can't beat the Patriots. (Calls offstage) Benjamin! (to BRADY) If I have anything to say about it, you'll be my starter again, Brady. In the meantime, how about you work on helping my current starter to, you know, suck less.

(BENJAMIN appears. COACH tosses him football.)

COACH

15-yard target. Go.

(KYLE throws. THUNK.)

BRADY

Where were you aiming?

KYLE

At the 15-yard target.

BRADY

Yeah, but at which side? Hit the right side of the jersey so the receiver knows to cut right after the catch to avoid a defender behind him on the right. Left works opposite. Just aim for one number or the other. It's like a code.

KYLE

Or a parable.

BRADY

Not really. Must everything come back to Jesus with you?

KYLE

Yes. Must everything lead away from him for you?

BRADY

You try.

(KYLE throws once. THUNK.)

BRADY

Bullseye.

(Throws again. No THUNK.)

BRADY

Close.

(Throws a third time. Sound of BREAKING GLASS. COACH and BRADY wince.)

KYLE

Sorry!

(KYLE runs after ball. BRADY looks at COACH.)

COACH

They spend \$80 million on a practice facility, you think they could afford Plexiglas.

BRADY

(irate)

No comment.

COACH

Keep trying, Brady.

(BRADY takes another football and throws it offstage. THUNK.)

BRADY

What for?

(BRADY exits. LIGHTS DOWN on PRACTICE FIELD, UP on HALLWAY. REPORTER #1 waits.)

REPORTER #1

Brady, got a minute?

BRADY

Oh, hi, Jessica. Yeah, shoot.

REPORTER #1

You've been activated but didn't play against the Patriots. What's your future with the Chiefs?

BRADY

I'm just going to go out there and do whatever I can to help us win.

REPORTER #1

So you're altar boy?

BRADY

No comment.

REPORTER #1

Would you describe yourself as an especially religious person?

BRADY

(cagey)

Well, compared to the other guy on our depth chart, Joan of Arc was an agnostic. What's this story about?

REPORTER #1

Who do you think it's about? They're writing hymns about the guy.

BRADY

You want to know about Kyle, go talk to Kyle. Or better yet, talk to some of our cheerleaders, they might have something interesting to tell you.

REPORTER #1

(interested)

Like what?

BRADY

Never mind. Forget I said that.

(LIGHTS DOWN on HALLWAY, LIGHTS UP on PRESS ROOM. KYLE takes questions. REPORTER #1 enters and raises her hand. KYLE calls on her.)

KYLE

Yeah, Jessica.

REPORTER #1

Have you ever had sexual relations with a woman?

KYLE

Excuse me?

REPORTER #1

Are you a virgin.

(KYLE is flustered and laughs nervously.)

KYLE

I'm a gentleman.

REPORTER #1

Is that a 'yes?'

KYLE

It's a yes.

REPORTER #1

And are you currently seeing anyone?

KYLE

I'm just trying to stay focused on football.

(COACH leans in front of KYLE and covers KYLE's mic with his hand.)

COACH

So how about some of you all try to do that too?

(LIGHTS DOWN on PRESS ROOM. LIGHTS UP on STUDIO, occupied by RADIO HOST #1 and RADIO HOST #2.)

HOST #1

As if fundamentalists didn't love Kyle Benjamin already, his revelation that he's keeping his loins in their original packaging has ratcheted the adoration up to eleven. Everyone's getting behind this guy. Marty, you included.

HOST #2

How can you not respect his - fortitude? I mean, he was starting quarterback in college in the heart of the hottie belt. The pressure must have been tremendous.

HOST #1

What do our callers think about his remarkable set of blueballs? Jolene from Lawrence, you're on the air.

CALLER

I want to say I very much admire Kyle Benjamin's stance on fornication. And I think the strength of his faith only makes it more apparent that he has been performing miracles.

HOST #2

Well sure, he's had some amazing finishes.

CALLER

Not amazing. Miracles. Events outside of our realm of understanding brought on by the direct intervention of our Lord Jesus Christ.

HOST #1

I think this is once again a topic for another show altogether. Thanks for calling.

CALLER

All glory be to Kyle -

(HOST #1 hits a button, cutting her off.)

HOST #2

Hey, I think she's got a fair point.

HOST #1

Marty, please. Let's leave this to the theologians, not to us guys with degrees in exercise science.

(LIGHTS UP on HOUSE, where BRADY and ALICIA watch show.)

HOST #2

Well, hey, don't forget the puppy cancer, plus that one guy who says his bursitis cleared up during the Raiders game. It seems like Benjamin's at least in the running for minor prophet status, right? I mean, below Moses, for sure, but maybe up there with Isaiah?

(HOST #1 glares.)

HOST #2

Joshua?

HOST #1

We'll be right back.

(HOST #1 hits the kill switch.
LIGHTS OUT on studio.)

ALICIA

You sure telling the reporter was a good idea?

BRADY

I was just trying to change the subject, she was starting to pry.

ALICIA

It certainly got the fundies fired up. What were you thinking?

BRADY

I just wanted people to see how different he is. How out there.

ALICIA

Out there? You mean, like us?

BRADY

Not the same thing. He's like some whole different species.

ALICIA

Is he?

BRADY

Well, he's apparently never seen Pulp Fiction, if that counts for anything.

ALICIA

You better give me more than that.

BRADY

His church? The one his dad founded? It pretty much incorporates every evangelical fundamentalist belief out there, including all of the ones most of us rejected around about the Enlightenment. You know when he went to college his dad rented an apartment next to campus to keep tabs on him?

ALICIA

Yeah, I know. I read his biography.

BRADY

Kyle has a biography?!

ALICIA

It's just on Kindle right now.

BRADY

What did you read that for?

ALICIA

I was curious. I might assign it in class. We're talking about the Scopes monkey trial and I want to show students how far we haven't come.

BRADY

Sad but true.

ALICIA

You can borrow it if you'd like.

BRADY

Anyway. I guarantee you the guy has never had an independent thought. He's spent his entire life being taught what to think, not how to think. He's a zombie.

ALICIA

Like Lazarus.

BRADY

Exactly.

ALICIA

I guess the worst-case scenario is the status quo, right? He starts, you sit. You get another chance sometime this season.

BRADY

Maybe.

ALICIA

What's wrong?

BRADY

What if he finds out I leaked it? He could go tit-for-tat by announcing my personal beliefs. I'd be finished in this league.

ALICIA

Do you really believe that?

BRADY

We've been over this. How many card-carrying atheists do you think there are in pro sports?

ALICIA

We're supposed to have cards?

BRADY

How many?

ALICIA

Lance Armstrong.

BRADY

Banned.

ALICIA

Pat Tillman.

BRADY

Dead.

ALICIA

Ted Williams.

BRADY

Also dead. Except for his frozen head, I guess, but that really doesn't help my case. I mean living ones. Active ones.

ALICIA

There aren't any. I know.

BRADY

People say they'd sooner vote for a gay or a Muslim for president than an atheist, honey. And that's all the president is, right? A glorified quarterback?

ALICIA

With less prestige and a smaller salary.

BRADY

Exactly. I'd be blacklisted. Lucky to catch on in the Canadian League.

ALICIA

Does Kyle even know about you anyway?

BRADY

Probably. I'm not very good at swallowing my opinions sometimes. (Getting panicky.) Hey, do we have any Bibles lying around anywhere?

ALICIA

What? No.

BRADY

What about that Nativity set your sister bought us that one year?

ALICIA

Goodwill. Seriously? Are we going for Christian camouflage now? Want me to go into the garage and nail together a few crucifixes?

BRADY

Work with me here, honey. I'm panicking.

(ALICIA grabs BRADY'S head and makes her look at him.)

ALICIA

Hey. Brady Hobbs. You're a quarterback. You don't get to panic. They can smell it, right?

BRADY

Okay, right, right.

ALICIA

You're nothing like the rest of this league, baby, and I don't want you to be. You remember when we first met?

BRADY

Philosophy, freshman year. You asked me for help on the semifinal.

ALICIA

Yeah, that was just a ruse.

BRADY

I know. You get hit with a lot of those when you're on the football team.

ALICIA

Yeah, but I didn't even know you were on the football team. You were just the guy who always poked holes in the religious arguments. I remember the day you shredded Aquinas' proofs, and I thought, wow, I really want to meet this man.

BRADY

Not exactly neurosurgery.

ALICIA

Sure, but to a certain starstruck 18-year-old freethinker, it was breathtaking. And you're still that guy, okay?

BRADY

Okay.

ALICIA

Good. Now take a few deep breaths, have a beer, and think about what you can do that doesn't involve inscribing Bible verses on your eye black.

BRADY

Yeah. You're right. Thanks. You're right.

(BRADY gets a beer and pops it open. He takes a swig, grimaces, looks at the can.)

BRADY

Honey, I make \$2 million a year. Why are we drinking this ... effluent? I wouldn't even have drunk this in high school.

ALICIA

You know damn well why.

BRADY

Just because I endorse it doesn't mean we have to drink it.

ALICIA

I'm headed to the store anyway. I'll grab some frou-frou microbrew for ya.

(ALICIA heads for the door.)

ALICIA

You know, it's too bad.

BRADY

What is?

ALICIA

That Benjamin's still a virgin. I bet a good lay would really mellow the guy out.

(BRADY laughs. ALICIA leaves. BRADY watches her go then looks at the beer. He takes another swig, grimaces, then stares at the can.)

BRADY

Hmm. (Pause.) High school. Hmm.

(He takes a final swig, grimaces again, and goes to dump it out. LIGHTS OUT on HOUSE. LIGHTS UP on HALLWAY, where BRADY and MANDEE enter from opposite ends of stage.)

BRADY

Hey, Mande. I have some news for you.

MANDEE

You finally ready for a second go-round?

BRADY

It's strictly business. Well, not exactly. I wanted to pass something along.

MANDEE

Oh yeah?

BRADY

(smiles)

Kyle likes you.

MANDEE

He does? Does he like me like me?

BRADY

He likes you likes you. Oh yeah, he told me. He's just playing hard-to-get.

MANDEE

He's pretty good at that.

BRADY

Yeah, he's setting a new standard in the department. But he told me you should go find him tonight at the team hotel, after we all get into town. Late tonight. He'll be waiting for you.

MANDEE

Thanks, Brady. But what about his dad? Won't he be lying in wait with a crucifix and a 12-gauge?

BRADY

I heard that he's not making this trip. Some kind of obligation back in KC.

MANDEE

Then I guess it's my lucky night.

BRADY

One more thing - Kyle said don't take no for an answer. Be persistent.

MANDEE

Oh, I can be lots of things.

BRADY

And don't tell him I told you this. He'd be embarrassed.

MANDEE

Oh, he is so cute. Really, just like a big puppy.

BRADY

And who needs love more than a puppy?

(LIGHTS DOWN on HOUSE. LIGHTS UP on HOTEL ROOM. KYLE reads the Bible aloud to himself. He's not a strong reader.)

KYLE

"But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die -"

(MANDEE knocks on door.)

KYLE (cont.)

Hold on.

(KYLE opens the door.)

MANDEE

Hey, Kyle.

KYLE

Mandee, right? Can I help you?

MANDEE

I wanted to talk to you. Can I come in?

KYLE

Well, actually, I was just about to...

(MANDEE forces door open)

MANDEE

Thanks. You're a peach.

(She pats him on the cheek and slips into the room. KYLE, bewildered, closes the door. LIGHTS DOWN on room. LIGHTS UP on LOCKER ROOM. COACH and BRADY looking over the playbook.)

COACH

And here are the new set of audibles we worked up for Benjamin.

BRADY

These are the real names?

COACH

He was having trouble keeping the plays straight, so we came up with some mnemonics that worked for him. So the fullback sweep left, that's Ezekiel.

BRADY

Right-side draw here, that's - Ruth?

COACH

Judges.

BRADY

(sarcastic)

Right, of course. How long do we need to keep this up?

COACH

Until Benjamin figures them out.

BRADY

So you're preparing for the worst.

COACH

(long pause)

The worst is in the eye of the beholder, Brady.

BRADY

You're starting to buy it, aren't you?

COACH

I went to church last weekend.

BRADY

Oh.

COACH

First time in 20 years.

BRADY

So you're drinking the Kool-Aid too.

COACH

This has all piqued my curiosity, all right? The universe doesn't need to be black and white, Kyle and Brady. There's plenty of room in the middle. As Vince Lombardi put it, chillax.

BRADY

I'll take it under advisement.

COACH

Brady, listen. Benjamin is a Chief too.

BRADY

I understand that.

COACH

I'm not sure that you do. But you're going to have to - dammit, hold on.

(COACH feels in his pocket for cell phone, looks at it, stands up.)

COACH(cont.)

Excuse me, I need to take this. (Into phone.) You've got the press release drawn up? Okay, I'll meet you in a minute. (To Brady) I'll find you in a little while. We need to talk. Also, team meeting at three.

BRADY

Press release?

(COACH gives a 'talk later' gesture and walks out. MANDEE enters, dressed very modestly. BRADY immediately recognizes the implications of this.)

BRADY

Oh shit what is this getup.

MANDEE

Hi Mister Hobbs.

BRADY

Mister Hobbs? Mande - what?

MANDEE

Oh, Kyle says we should respect our elders.

BRADY

I'm only six years older than you.

MANDEE

And I respect that.

BRADY

What happened?

MANDEE

I spent the night with Kyle.

BRADY

Really? You did?

MANDEE

Oh, not in a sinful way. He was reading the Bible when I got there, and so I joined in, just to get to know him better. And to cozy up next to him.

BRADY

Ah.

MANDEE

But that was the old me.

BRADY

The old you. From yesterday.

MANDEE

Yeah. Kyle read to me, and he talked to me. He showed me. He showed me how wicked I've been, how hollow all my pursuits. He brought me to the light of Christ, Brady.

BRADY

(icy)

You mean Mister Hobbs.

MANDEE

Right, right. I never understood how empty my ways have been, Brady. I listened to him, and I looked into his eyes, his piercing eyes, and he saw right through me.

BRADY

Really.

MANDEE

You listen to him and want to just give in to him. He's so ... certain.

BRADY

And now you are too.

MANDEE

Yes. I'm quitting this sinful business. I've led an immoral life, Brady.

BRADY

Really, no you haven't.

MANDEE

Yes, I have, and I've started to ask forgiveness. Kyle let me confess to him.

BRADY

Wait, what?

MANDEE

Oh, it wasn't official, I mean, he's not ordained, but-

BRADY

Fine, great, whatever. But I mean, did you tell him about our -

MANDEE

Fornication? Oh, yes.

BRADY

Great.

MANDEE

And I told Alicia too.

BRADY

You did what?!

MANDEE

Kyle said the only way to make a clean break with myself was to ask forgiveness of those I've wronged. And I wronged her.

BRADY

(despairing)

Well, yes, but she didn't know about it! What were you thinking?

MANDEE

Kyle said I should let him do the thinking.

BRADY

How wonderfully progressive. (Head in hands.) Great. Great. This helps me a lot.

MANDEE

It's better this way. Kyle said-

BRADY

(looks up)

I don't care what Kyle said!

MANDEE

Maybe I should go.

BRADY

Maybe you should go.

MANDEE

Okay. Good luck, Mister Hobbs. Brady.

(MANDEE starts to leave, then turns.)

MANDEE

Brady? He's on your side.

BRADY

No one is on my side.

(MANDEE leaves. BRADY paces back and forth, despondent. He picks up the phone, gulps and dials. No answer. LIGHTS DOWN on LOCKER ROOM, UP on HOUSE. ALICIA rolls a suitcase as BRADY enters.)

BRADY

You're still here. (No response.) I tried to call. (No response.) Look, I know you know. I ... I dropped the ball. I fumbled on fourth down. I threw a wounded duck into triple coverage. I fucked up.

ALICIA

That's it?

BRADY

It didn't last long, and it's all been over for months now. And there was no one else, before or since.

ALICIA

And now there's no one at all.

(ALICIA exits. BRADY stares after her. LIGHTS DOWN on HOUSE, UP on LOCKER ROOM. KYLE is changing as BRADY enters.)

KYLE

Good morning, Brady.

BRADY

Don't you mean Mister Hobbs?

KYLE

I see you've talked to Mande.

BRADY

She ran down the highlights, yeah.

KYLE

Don't worry. Everything she told me is in strict confidence.

BRADY

How do I know that? You're not a priest. It wasn't a confession booth. You're free to tell anyone whatever you want.

KYLE

Because I wouldn't use her like that. I told her I'll keep it to myself and I will. Everything. About your promiscuity. And about your - godlessness.

BRADY

She told you that too?

KYLE

She had a lot bottled up.

(BRADY is getting more and more worked up, but KYLE is staying cool. The confrontation is starting to look like it might get physical.)

BRADY

And now you've set her free. To do whatever you tell her.

KYLE

Mande and I prayed for you last night. I know you'll come around. She doesn't want to see you burn in hell any more than I do.

BRADY

Hell? Hell is being your backup. Hell is listening to your sanctimonious crap in the locker room, reading it in your interviews, hearing it parroted by every mindless preacher and conservative ideologue from here to Tallahassee. Sitting on the bench, resting my two million dollar arm, watching you chuck balls downfield like an epileptic hippo while everyone praises your "intangibles." I don't believe in "intangibles," Kyle.

KYLE

What do you have against religion?

BRADY

Hmm, let's see. The Crusades. The Middle East. Northern Ireland. Nine-Eleven. Hatred, greed, hypocrisy and bile spewed out under the guise of brotherhood.

KYLE

And atheists aren't guilty of any of those things?

BRADY

Of course we are. But you're the ones who've institutionalized them. Do you ever question God, Kyle? Ever? Not his existence. Just his actions.

KYLE

God has never given me a reason to.

BRADY

Well, then you're one up on me. Maybe if I got handed everything I ever wanted I'd think the way you do too.

KYLE

I have worked for everything I have achieved.

BRADY

You got handed a gift box with my job in it.

KYLE

And now you'll do anything to get your job back. That was you on the radio, wasn't it? And you sent Mande up to my room, too.

BRADY

There are only a few cures for fundamentalism, Kyle, and I suspect one of them is good old-fashioned sex.

KYLE

I do not need to be "cured."

BRADY

Neither do I, so keep your pulpit to yourself. I'm tired of you turning this locker room into a revival meeting.

KYLE

Get used to it.

BRADY

What does that mean?

(KYLE has taken off his shirt and has started to rub himself with bronzer.)

KYLE

You'll find out.

BRADY

What the hell are you doing?

KYLE

I have a photo shoot today. GQ wants to film me throwing balls through a tractor tire or something.

BRADY

Jesus.

KYLE

Don't use that word around me. You know, my daddy told me to be merciful to you. He told me to turn the other cheek. But you don't make it easy.

BRADY

Good. It's about time something in your life wasn't easy. Try it on, see how it feels. And maybe try not listening to everything your daddy tells you. Whether or not there is a God, I'm pretty sure the Reverend isn't it.

(BRADY leaves. LIGHTS DOWN on LOCKER ROOM. LIGHTS UP on OWNERS' OFFICE. The REVEREND talks to an unseen figure, located roughly above the audience.)

REVEREND

Thank you again, Mr. Clayton, for seeing my side of things. I can assure you Kyle is worth every penny. My boy will continue to make you proud. (Pause.) Oh, I guarantee he'll keep it up. And what's more, I have some ideas. I promise you that when it comes to pulling in ratings, this is only the beginning.

(LIGHTS DOWN on HALLWAY, UP on PRESS ROOM. BRADY reads a piece of paper, looking shellshocked. COACH walks in. BRADY glares at him.)

COACH

Sorry I'm late, just dotting the i's and crossing the t's. Speaking of crosses, Kyle will be in here right after he's done with his penitence and all that. You all got the press packet. Questions?

(REPORTER #2 raises hand. COACH points at him.)

COACH

Yeah.

REPORTER #2

So what has the reaction of the team been to the news of Kyle Benjamin's contract extension?

COACH

Oh, I just told them all, and they're excited. They all look up to him and are thrilled to have some continuity at the quarterback position for the next three years. You can't put a price on leadership.

REPORTER #2

Do you agree, Brady?

BRADY

(dry)

Oh yes. Excited. Thrilled beyond belief.

REPORTER #2

Brady, what does this mean for your future with the Chiefs?

BRADY

(looks at COACH)

I'll do whatever it takes to help the team.

REPORTER #1

Brady, another question for you. Do you feel that your religious inclinations have put you at a disadvantage in challenging Kyle Benjamin for the starting job?

BRADY

What do you mean?

REPORTER #1

Well, you don't believe in God, correct?

BRADY

Pardon me?

REPORTER #1

Are you or are you not an atheist?

(long pause.)

BRADY

I'm a gentleman.

(LIGHTS OUT. End of Act I.)

ACT II

(BRADY'S HOUSE. He enters holding coffee and newspaper. He opens to sports page, reads headline, chokes on coffee.)

BRADY

Oh my God.

(Phone RINGS. BRADY looks at caller ID, winces.)

BRADY

Oh my God.

(He answers it.)

BRADY

Hi Mom. (Pause.) Yes. (Pause.) I saw it too. No, I haven't read it yet, I just got up. Look, can I explain. (Pause.) Yes, it's true. No, it's not your fault. Mom, it's not - (Pause.) It's not anyone's fault, it's who I am, it's what I believe - (Pause) Do I want to what? No, mom, I don't want to talk to Father O'Malley. (Pause.) Who? (Pause.) A rabbi? How do you even know a rabbi? Look, that's not the issue, I just- Mom? Are you there?

(BRADY sits and starts reading.
LIGHTS DOWN on HOUSE. LIGHTS UP on LOCKER ROOM, where CHIEFS RUNNING BACK tinkers with his helmet. He sings to himself to the tune of Mr. Mister's "Kyrie Eliason.")

CHIEFS RUNNING BACK

Kyle Benjamin, down the road that I must travel
Kyle Benjamin, through the darkness of the ni-i-i-ight
Kyle Benjamin, where you're going ...

(BRADY enters, and RUNNING BACK stops singing and eyes him suspiciously.)

BRADY

Hey, Warren.

CHIEFS RUNNING BACK
(uneasy)

Hey.

(Pause. Then BRADY makes sudden motion toward CHIEFS RUNNING BACK.)

BRADY

Boo!

(CHIEFS RUNNING BACK jumps a little, then laughs nervously. BRADY slaps him on the shoulder awkwardly and keeps walking. LIGHTS UP on COACH'S OFFICE. COACH reads newspaper when BRADY enters.)

COACH

(gestures to paper)

I was wondering what the hell "I'm a gentleman" meant.

BRADY

Same thing it meant when Kyle said it. "Ain't tellin.'"

COACH

(reads from article)

"You won't believe what Brady Hobbs doesn't believe." Cute. (scans article). "Hobbs' apparent lack of faith in the divine puts him squarely at odds with more than ninety-seven percent of Americans, including the evangelical who so recently usurped him as the Chiefs' starting quarterback." I always suspected, but it seemed impolite to ask.

BRADY

Does Kyle get quoted in there?

COACH

Hell no. I keep a tighter leash than that. So you honestly believe what they wrote in this article? Or, I guess, not believe in it?

BRADY

Yeah. But keep it under your hat, I'm maintaining radio silence on this one. (shakes head.) It's just depressing that anybody gives a shit.

COACH

Of course they do. We're God's team, remember?

BRADY

You buy that?

COACH

(pause)

You know, if God never intervenes in human affairs, then what's the point of having a God?

BRADY

You really want me to respond to that one?

COACH

Naw, don't harsh my buzz. So what did you want to see me about?

BRADY

Something else I saw in the paper.

(He grabs the newspaper and turns to another page, points to article. COACH looks.)

COACH

Oh yeah, I saw that, Wilkins is out for the season. Tough break for the Bills, he's a great QB. Didn't their backup also tear his ACL?

BRADY

Yep. That's why I'm here.

COACH

Brady, are you asking me to...?

BRADY

Yeah, I am.

COACH

Okay, I should have seen this coming.

BRADY

When you locked down Benjamin for three years, yeah, you should've.

COACH

That was not my idea.

BRADY

Nevertheless. This isn't easy for me to say, coach. I've been a Chief my whole career. This is where I learned everything about football. I never thought I'd walk into this office and ask for my release.

COACH

(pause)

And I never thought I'd sit at this desk and tell you, 'okay.' But you're right. You've got the talent to start anywhere in this league. I don't want to see your light hidden under a bushel basket.

BRADY

I hope you're right. Anyway, talent isn't the problem right now.

COACH

Oh, right. The Doubting Brady thing. Worried some teams might shy away from you, huh?

BRADY

They won't want a sideshow. Isn't that what you guys call it? Like when a player gets caught with a glock and a 16-year-old hooker? A sideshow?

COACH

Or a distraction, we use that one a lot too. Well, the Bills are a good start - Buffalo is practically in Canada. I mean, Canada isn't even a Christian nation, is it?

BRADY

Neither is the U.S. It was founded as a secular republic.

COACH

(snorts)

I'll be sure to pass that one along to the owners.

BRADY

You realize we play the Bills in December. Last game of the season.

COACH

Yeah, I know. I can already picture the headlines. "Armageddon at Arrowhead."

BRADY

And who are you going to be cheering for?

COACH

Between you and me? (Leans closer.) If you can't join 'em - beat 'em.

(BRADY offers his hand. They shake.)

BRADY

See you in December, I hope.

COACH

I hope to see both you and Alicia at the game. How are things going with her?

BRADY

Alicia ... Alicia Hobbs is just doing what's best for Alicia Hobbs. But this drive is still alive. We've got a winning tradition, and there's a lot of football left in our marriage.

COACH

What does that mean?

BRADY

(thoughtful)

Third-and-long?

COACH

You'll figure it out. You two are a team of destiny.

BRADY

I hope so.

(BRADY waves and leaves OFFICE.
LIGHTS DOWN on OFFICE, LIGHTS UP
on BRADY'S HOUSE. ALICIA sits
reading the article as BRADY
enters.)

BRADY

You're back.

ALICIA

(holding up article)

Apparently I wouldn't believe what you don't believe.

BRADY

What? Oh, yeah. Secret's out, I guess.

ALICIA

So are you admitting it now? I mean, in public?

BRADY

I am officially declining to comment. I need to put up
a semblance of normalcy.

ALICIA

Atheism is normal.

BRADY

Yeah, to two percent of us.

ALICIA

You hear the Westboro Baptist Church has been burning
you in effigy?

BRADY

Guess I should have seen that one coming.

ALICIA

You know, as much as I hate to admit it, there's a
part of me that admires Kyle.

BRADY

Why?

ALICIA

Because he uses it. He has this belief, deep inside
him, and it's what powers him. Yeah, it's a
nonsensical belief that he's been spoon-fed, but look

what he's getting out of it. Fame, prestige, your job. All the women he could want. If he ever happens to want any.

BRADY

Yeah.

ALICIA

Whereas we're *right*, Brady. We subscribe to the only belief system with any evidence behind it. We've thrown away the crutch. No bending over backwards to conform to a book written by committee fifteen hundred years ago. No supplicating ourselves before some nebulous deity, one sadistic enough to create ethnic cleansing and hurricanes and four Transformers movies and yet egotistical enough to demand we bow down to him. Just us, setting our own terms, making the world as beautiful and meaningful as we want it to be. And what do we get out of it? What?

BRADY

Well, that's sort of the problem with atheism. You die, that's it. The best-case scenario is a bit lackluster.

ALICIA

(pissed off)

See, that's what I'm talking about. Where's your nerve, Brady? You have so much more talent than Benjamin does. But you don't put yourself behind it, and it's like you're throwing a pass without your feet set. You need to believe like he does. It doesn't even matter in what.

BRADY

He's ... different. He's been taught since birth to be who he is. It comes so naturally to him. Just like you. Your parents taught you to be critical in the crib.

ALICIA

(facetious)

Thanks.

BRADY

I meant "critical" as a compliment. Me, becoming who I am has been a lifelong process. It just makes it that much harder to commit to it.

ALICIA

Because you're just human. Flawed like everyone else.

BRADY

Yeah.

ALICIA

(icy)

As I have so recently discerned.

BRADY

Yeah. (Pause.) Listen. I don't even know how to start. I don't know what I can say except I'm sorry.

ALICIA

That's it?

BRADY

I caved in in the clutch. I muffed the handoff. I-

ALICIA

Oh no you don't, no more hiding behind clichés. And if you try to tell me "mistakes were made," I'm leaving.

BRADY

Mistakes were made. By me. I was on the road, I hadn't seen you in weeks, and I started thinking with the wrong brain. It was dumb, it lasted like two weeks, it's been over a long time.

ALICIA

That's it?

BRADY

I wish it had never happened. I know it was wrong and I never meant to hurt you. You deserve better than that.

ALICIA

Damn right I do.

BRADY

I know.

ALICIA

You know what really pisses me off? It's not that you cheated on me. Well, I mean, that does piss me off, you have no idea how much it pisses me off. But it's how I found out. From that tramp, thanks to Kyle's little conversion act. Is she wearing skirts now, I suppose?

BRADY

Yeah. She quit her job. Not much call for a cheerleader who won't show ankle.

ALICIA

But you see? She had the courage to tell me. Like, six hours as a born-again Christian and she found her truth. And you still haven't. And the only reason she was in Kyle's room in the first place is because you sicced her on him, instead of just standing up for yourself.

BRADY

Point taken. What can I do to make it up to you?

ALICIA

Besides keeping it in your pants? Man the fuck up. Go forth and be a leader of men, for Christ's sake. Get your job back. Show me the man I fell in love with, not the child who's spent the last few weeks scheming, lying, and basically being a dick. Then, we can talk.

BRADY

It's too late to get my job back. But I have a chance to beat Kyle Benjamin the old-fashioned way.

ALICIA

What, like with a cudgel?

BRADY

No, I mean on the field.

ALICIA

What?

BRADY

So, how do you feel about chicken wings and blizzards?

(LIGHTS DOWN on BRADY'S HOUSE.
LIGHTS UP on LOCKER ROOM, where
KYLE and the REVEREND watch unseen
TV.)

ESPN ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

...And that play of the game was brought to you by Ford, who remind you: if you don't drive an F150, you might as well be a woman. That 23-yard bullet by Brady Hobbs knocked off the Jets and moved the Bills into position for an improbable playoff spot. Just one obstacle remains: Next week's game against Hobbs' former team.

(KYLE shuts off TV.)

KYLE

Father, I'm feeling overwhelmed.

REVEREND

What do you mean?

KYLE

I've been on the internet again.

REVEREND

(upset)

Very well.

KYLE

Father, people ... they keep saying I'm doing things. Miracles.

REVEREND

You are performing miracles, son. Every game is a miracle. Every minute that you glorify God's name to the masses is a gift.

KYLE

Yes, but - people far away. They're being healed and saying it's because of me. People are starting to call me a prophet. And they're saying that Brady Hobbs consorts with demons.

REVEREND

Hmm.

KYLE

Father, those healings, they had nothing to do with me. I don't even know who these people are.

REVEREND

Does it matter? They're healed. Miracles are being performed in your name.

KYLE

Father, the world is getting big. Bigger than I'm ready for. First all of this. And now playing against Brady Hobbs next week.

REVEREND

Nothing is bigger than you're ready for, Kyle. Next week will be your greatest victory. It will be all of our greatest victory.

KYLE

All of us?

REVEREND

Kyle, you must understand something. You may not agree with some of the conclusions people are reaching about you. But you must not dispute them. Their religious beliefs are their business and we should not stand in their way.

KYLE

And what about Brady Hobbs?

REVEREND

That's different. He has no beliefs. He is a void. He is a vacuum. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so do we.

KYLE

I thought you wanted me to turn the other cheek.

REVEREND

That was when I believed Brady Hobbs might be an ally. Now I know better. So an eye for an eye, son. A tooth for a tooth.

KYLE

I see.

REVEREND

And when people turn to you as an answer, listen to what they say. Remember, their beliefs are valid. There is a time for mercy and a time for judgment, my son. Sunday marks the time for judgment.

(LIGHTS DOWN on LOCKER ROOM.
LIGHTS UP ON STUDIO #1, where HOST
#3 talks.)

HOST #3

...in my judgment, Hobbs deserves a lot of credit. This guy is branded a heretic, practically tarred and feathered out of KC, picked up from the dumpster, now he's led us to two wins in three games and the border of the promised land. What else can you call it but, well, a resurrection? And-

(BRADY enters the studio and sits
down.)

HOST #3

And he's just walked into the studio. Welcome to Bills Bluster, Brady.

BRADY

Thanks for having me.

HOST #3

I think it's fair to say you've been exceeding expectations here in Buffalo. Eight touchdowns, just one interception -

BRADY

That one was tipped, Eric.

HOST #3

Sure, right, and a one-twelve quarterback rating. You're playing like a man possessed.

BRADY

Maybe not the best phrase.

HOST #3

Oh, right. So can we discuss that?

BRADY

No. No religion questions, please, let's talk football.

HOST #3

Well, if I may ask, what's your current relationship with Kyle Benjamin? Any hard feelings?

BRADY

I wish him all the best.

HOST #3

Really?

BRADY

But I'm still looking forward to crushing his dreams next Sunday.

(LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO #1. LIGHTS UP on STUDIO #2, where HOST #2 is interviewing KYLE, who is looking at a photo.)

KYLE

So where is this from again?

HOST #2

Nitrate City, Alabama.

KYLE

And this image showed up on this woman's toast?

HOST #2

Just popped out of the toaster with it.

KYLE

(shrugs)

I dunno. Kinda looks like me, maybe.

HOST #2

She sure thinks so. Apparently there's a little shrine around it in her kitchen now.

KYLE

I don't know if it's really appropriate for me to comment on that.

HOST #2

Of course it is. You're the one who said the Chiefs have God on our side.

KYLE

Sure, but this isn't the Chiefs, it's an appliance.

HOST #2

So here's a question: if God is on your side, who is rooting for the Bills?

(KYLE laughs nervously. LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO #2, UP on STUDIO #1.)

HOST #3

Jim from Rochester, you're on Bills Bluster.

CALLER

Yeah, I wanted to call to say that I've been a Bills fan for 20 years. But I'm cheering for the Chiefs next week.

BRADY

I'm sorry to hear you feel that way.

CALLER

And I'm also spending Sunday morning praying for your eternal soul.

BRADY

Uh, that won't be necessary. Really.

CALLER

Jesus loves you, Brady Hobbs. But I sure don't. Oh, also my daughter wanted to say something.

CALLER'S DAUGHTER

Say it ain't so, Brady!

(BRADY gives HOST #3 a "can we please cut this call off" signal. HOST #3 does so.)

HOST #3

Right, thanks for your call. (hits button.) So Brady, how do you respond to people's general hatred of you?

BRADY

Um, I mean...

HOST #3

Hey, I don't hate you. You're killing it on my fantasy team right now.

BRADY

I'd really rather not comment on that matter, if that's okay. (Pause.) But - so can I say something? Have you ever listened to "With God on Our Side" by Bob Dylan?

HOST #3

Is that the one the Red Sox play in the eighth inning? (Sings to the tune of "Sweet Caroline.") God on our side, bum-bum-bum...

BRADY

Uh, no.

HOST #3

Oh. Well, all Dylan kind of runs together for me.

BRADY

Anyway. The gist of the song is that every war the United States has engaged in, we've claimed to have God on our side. And so have most of our enemies.

HOST #3

Okay.

BRADY

The message is that these were all horrible bloody conflicts, they mostly didn't solve anything, they had nothing to do with religion, and we justified them all by claiming we had divine authority.

HOST #3

Okay.

BRADY

And the final line of the song is, "If God's on our side, he'll stop the next war."

HOST #3

Really. But didn't Kyle Benjamin say something entirely different?

BRADY

Yeah. He did.

HOST #3

Interesting. So are you saying God is on *our* side?

BRADY

No! I'm saying God is not on anyone's side!

HOST #3

So you don't think God cares who wins on Sunday?

BRADY

It's not even a playoff game!

(LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO #1, UP on STUDIO #2.)

HOST #2

Herman from Gladstone, you're on the air.

CALLER

Hey, yeah. Is it true that Brady Hobbs is in favor of burning flags? *In schools?*

KYLE

Wow? In schools? I didn't hear about that..

HOST #2

But I think it's fair to say none of us would put it past him. Now Kyle, can we get back to those health problems we were talking about?

KYLE

Look. Yes, it's true that I missed two games in high school with hand and foot wounds, and no, I don't know where they came from. But I'm no doctor, so, stigmata? Your guess is as good as mine.

(LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO #2, UP on STUDIO #1.)

HOST #3

I've been told we've got a very special caller. Bob from New York, are you there?

CALLER

Yeah. This is Bob Dylan.

BRADY

(stunned)

Oh my God! (Pause.) Mr. Dylan, I'm a huge fan. It's truly an honor to-

CALLER

Go Chiefs!

(DIAL TONE. LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO #1, UP on STUDIO #2.)

HOST #2

And we've got another call from our favorite superfaithful superfan, Jolene in Lawrence. You have a question for Kyle Benjamin?

CALLER

Yes, I wanted to ask Mr. Benjamin how he views Sunday's game in light of Matthew twenty-four.

KYLE

Matthew twenty-four?

CALLER

Yes, Mr. Benjamin. You know the chapter, don't you?

HOST #2

Could one of you please fill in the listening audience?

KYLE

It's about the iniquity of man, the rise of false prophets, the second coming of Jesus - and the end of the world.

HOST #2

Jolene from Lawrence, let me clarify here. Are you suggesting that the matchup between Kyle Benjamin and Brady Hobbs will actually trigger the Armageddon? That the 144,000 righteous will be assumed bodily into heaven while the rest of humanity perishes in a lake of fire?

CALLER

Yes. After the Chiefs win.

KYLE

What if we lose?

CALLER

Don't lose.

HOST #2

Does that make Brady Hobbs the Antichrist?

CALLER

I believe Scripture speaks for itself on that matter.

HOST #2

Wow. Wow. All this from a football game?

CALLER

"In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Verse 44.

HOST #2

You've been pretty quiet over there, Kyle. Response?

KYLE

I...I...I don't want to stand in the way of her beliefs.

HOST #2

Wait, so you agree?

KYLE

It's not for me to agree or disagree.

HOST #2

Well. Okay then. You heard it here first, America. Tune in on Sunday, because this time, it's for all the marbles.

(LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO. LIGHTS up
on HOTEL ROOM. BRADY watches TV.)

ESPN ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Kyle Benjamin's startling refusal to refute that Sunday's matchup will trigger the Apocalypse has triggered storms of speculation among both religious zealots and football ones. In our latest Sportsnation poll, an astonishing 36% of Americans now believe the end of the NFL regular season will also mark the end of creation. So be sure to tune in at 4 P.M. tomorrow, on NBC.

(The phone rings. BRADY looks at the caller ID, turns off the set, answers.)

BRADY

Hi! You're where? Of course. Room 216.

(Knock at the door, COACH enters, shakes hands with BRADY.)

BRADY

Didn't expect to see you here. Consorting with the enemy?

COACH

The enemy of my enemy is my friend, Brady.

BRADY

Really? I thought you had turned true believer.

COACH

I'm just window-shopping, Brady. Benjamin, he's leading the charge off one end of the wacko bell curve. The locker room is starting to feel like Jonestown. Yesterday the whole team got baptized. I'm not sure I can take much more of this. How's it going on your side?

BRADY

There may be a couple guys who boycott the game, but there's nothing I can do about that.

COACH

A couple?

BRADY

Nine.

COACH

Come on, you're the Antichrist. Can't you shoot flames at them from your eyes or something?

BRADY

(laughs)

You know, if the press finds out you're here they'll have a field day.

COACH

Oh, they already know. In fact, the league asked me to come. They want you and Kyle to meet before the game.

BRADY

What? Why?

COACH

Do you know what's going on in the Arrowhead parking lot right now? It's like a Klan rally except the crosses aren't actually burning. Although they do have a nice Brady Hobbs merchandise bonfire going.

BRADY

At least somebody's buying my jerseys.

COACH

The league wants a nice sit-down between you and Kyle, a friendly public appearance, and then maybe people will calm down.

BRADY

So like a weigh-in.

COACH

Sure, except without ... well, everything they do at a weigh-in.

BRADY

Okay, I'll do it on one condition. I also want some time alone with him.

COACH

What for?

BRADY

I'm going to sit down with Kyle, and I'm going to try to reason with him. Reason is the best weapon I have to work with, and the only one I haven't tried.

COACH

Good luck with that.

(LIGHTS DOWN on HOTEL ROOM, UP on STUDIO.)

HOST #2

The latest Vegas odds are out on the Chiefs-Bills game, and they're dead even. Possibly none of the bookies felt like incurring the wrath of an angry God by favoring Brady Hobbs.

HOST #1

Lot of interesting side bets, too. Eight to one odds Benjamin is assumed bodily into heaven before the start of the second half. Twelve to one that God smites national anthem singer Miley Cyrus with a lightning bolt. I put fifty down on that one myself. And twenty-five to one that this game does in fact trigger the Armageddon. Seems like kind of a sucker bet to me, because really, how can you collect on it if you win?

HOST #2

That's not funny.

(LIGHTS DOWN on STUDIO, UP on CONFERENCE ROOM. KYLE and BRADY silently stare at each other.)

BRADY

Before we say anything, I want to apologize. I was obnoxious and underhanded in dealing with you, and it was wrong.

KYLE

Yes, it was.

(Pause.)

BRADY

So.

KYLE

So.

BRADY

All you have to do is refute these people, Kyle. Do you even believe it yourself?

KYLE

It's not my place to judge.

BRADY

Not your place to judge...? You judge everybody, Kyle. Gays. Women. Members of other faiths. Atheists. And now you're turning open-hearted?

KYLE

My daddy told me to respect their opinions.

BRADY

Is this all just coming from your father?

KYLE

This all?

BRADY

What you said on the radio. These Messianic things you keep spouting. Your outing me.

KYLE

Outing you?

BRADY

As an atheist.

KYLE

I didn't do that.

BRADY

Right.

KYLE

I didn't. I wanted to but I got told not to.

BRADY

By your dad.

KYLE

Yes.

BRADY

Your dad is the reason you're a virgin, isn't he?

KYLE

He's the one who has counseled me to stay pure.

BRADY

You ever try to bring a woman home?

KYLE

I was taught that that would be inappropriate.

BRADY

Taught or ordered?

KYLE

Ordered.

BRADY

Have you ever made any decisions on your own?

KYLE

Did you just come here to insult me?

BRADY

No. Sorry. I came here to try to reason with you. To ask you to tell the world it's not the End Times.

KYLE

(shrugs)

The signs are all there. And I've never been wrong before.

BRADY

You haven't, have you?

KYLE

What do you mean?

BRADY

State titles in high school. National championships in college. And now you're what, eight and two as an NFL starter?

KYLE

First one wasn't a start.

BRADY

No wonder you're so devout. Your faith has never been tested.

KYLE

But yours has. Because your dad died. Is that your excuse?

BRADY

What?

KYLE

You haven't been the only one reading Wikipedia. Is that what happened? One stroke of misfortune and you give up?

BRADY

How does Wikipedia say he died?

KYLE

Car accident.

BRADY

And does it mention that I was in the passenger seat?

KYLE

Oh. No.

BRADY

We got T-boned by a drunk driver. 11 AM on a Sunday morning.

KYLE

Oh.

BRADY

We were on the way home from church.

KYLE

Oh. So that's why-

BRADY

No. I know exactly what you're thinking. I blamed God and punished Him by not believing in Him.

KYLE

Well, didn't you?

BRADY

No. You know what did it? Everyone kept telling me the same thing. It was all part of God's plan. Everything happens for a reason. Dad's death served some larger purpose in the universe. And my bullshit detectors went off. And they're still going today.

I am an atheist because I look at the world and try to find answers, and I don't settle for the easy, comfortable ones. Can you say that for yourself?

KYLE

What happened to your father was a test, Brady. It should have strengthened your faith.

BRADY

Don't feed me that Job line. You're so devout because you've never had any reason not to be. But if God is everywhere, then you can't base faith on what happens to you. You have to base your faith on everything that happens to everyone.

(KYLE stands up.)

BRADY(cont.)

The problem, of course, is when you do that, you understand that God's not on your side. Or on mine.

KYLE

I think you've been listening to your wife too much.

BRADY

Nice try. I was a nonbeliever before I ever met her.

KYLE

But she runs things, doesn't she? You even let her have a job.

BRADY

I what?

KYLE

You make eight million a year. Why is your wife teaching high school when she should be at home?

BRADY

Seriously? She teaches high school because she cares about her students and about making the world a better place. Atheists care about the world, you know, because we understand it's the only one we have.

KYLE

(shrugs)

Then may the Lord forgive you for your heresy.

BRADY

(shakes head)

You know, every time I start to think maybe you're really a decent human being, you throw out some shit like that. Let's get out of here before we start talking about gays and Muslims and I really get riled up.

KYLE

Then we're back to square one. Good versus evil.

BRADY

Good versus evil. In the meantime, are you ready to go play nice with the reporters?

KYLE

No.

BRADY

Yeah, me neither.

(LIGHTS DOWN on CONFERENCE ROOM,
UP on PRESS BOOTH.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Clearly there's no love lost between these two teams. I think it's fair to say this is the most anticipated football game of the regular season.

ANNOUNCER #2

In fact, all indications are that this will be the highest-rated televised event of all time.

ANNOUNCER #1

It's not every day you get to watch the Apocalypse, live on N!B!C! What happens to the ratings if half the viewers are exalted bodily into heaven, Curt?

ANNOUNCER #2

I expect all electricity, and possibly all molecular motion, will cease in the path of an angry God, Dan. In which case the Nielsens will be a secondary concern.

ANNOUNCER #1

And speaking of ratings, be sure to stay tuned after the game for a new episode of the hit drama, "Coast Guard Medical Examiners."

ANNOUNCER #2

Presuming, of course, a river of fire has not enveloped the earth at that point.

(LIGHTS UP on FIELD. BENJAMIN, CHIEFS RUNNING BACK and CHIEFS LINEMAN versus OPPOSING LINEMAN. Brief snippet of Bryan Adams' "Heaven" is heard.)

KYLE

Red fourteen Ezekiel Samson twelve. Hut Hike!

(KYLE hands off to CHIEFS RUNNING BACK for a short gain before he is tackled by OPPOSING LINEMAN.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Benjamin is looking red-hot out there. Seems like his play has really evolved the last few weeks.

ANNOUNCER #2

Not the best word choice there, Dan.

OPPOSING LINEMAN

Hey Benjamin! It's the end of the world as we know it! And I feel - like ripping your head off!

KYLE

Jesus loves you! Left sixteen Song of Songs two four!
Hike!

(BENJAMIN takes another hike,
throws the ball offstage, holds up
his arms in exultation, and runs
offstage after it.)

ANNOUNCER #2

Benjamin slings that one downfield - Mathis has got
it, breaks a tackle at the ten - the five - in for a
touchdown! And with the extra point, the Chiefs take a
seven to nothing lead. Truly, hallowed be thy game.

ANNOUNCER #1

A commanding first quarter for the Chiefs. But I don't
hear the fat lady singing yet. Or the seraphim, for
that matter.

(BRADY emerges from offstage
holding a ball and running,
pursued by CHIEFS LINEMAN.)

ANNOUNCER #2

And Hobbs breaks free for an eight yard-run, bringing
the Bills into Kansas City territory.

ANNOUNCER #1

Hobbs is not playing his best right now. Looking a bit
rattled.

ANNOUNCER #2

The fact that about a quarter of the crowd is wearing
white robes and chanting can't be helping his
concentration.

ANNOUNCER #1

Not to mention the ominous storm clouds brewing over
the stadium.

(BRADY returns to stage, lines up
with OPPOSING LINEMAN opposite
CHIEFS LINEMAN. Brief snippet of
REM's "Losing My Religion.")

BRADY

Thirteen Newton left Tesla blue hut hike!

(He sets up, hikes the ball,
throws an ugly pass offstage, then
gives chase as CHIEFS SAFETY
returns it across the field.)

SAFETY

The prodigal ball returns!

(BRADY pursues him offstage.)

ANNOUNCER #1

And looks like Hobbs forgot which team he got signed
by there, because that one zeroed in right on a Chiefs
jersey. Dickinson is down at the forty as time runs
out on the first half. Your score: Chiefs twenty,
Bills seven.

ANNOUNCER #2

And as yet no hellfire has rained down from the skies
upon this pernicious world.

ANNOUNCER #1

Too bad, I had high hopes Miley Cyrus would get smote.
Smited?

ANNOUNCER #1

Smitten?

ANNOUNCER #2

I can never remember that one. Now we'll go down to
our halftime show, presented by Budweiser, which asks:
what would Jesus drink?

(LIGHTS DOWN on ANNOUNCERS. LIGHTS
UP on BILLS' LOCKER ROOM. BRADY,
holding a football, addresses the
team.)

BRADY

I asked Coach Anderson if I could say a few words.

All right, listen. (Pause.) What the papers said is
true. I am an atheist. I don't believe in God. I
should have told all of you that on day one.

I know what some of you are thinking. Why should we listen to this guy? He doesn't think like I do. He doesn't believe what I believe.

But I do think like you do. I look at the world and I want an explanation for it. I want to know why bad things happen to good people, why some of us are born into mansions and others into refugee camps. And I know there's an easy answer, and a hard one.

But you know what? My answer is the easy one. My answer is that we, here, today, are the culmination of billions of years of history. From the Big Bang to primordial soup to trilobites, and we're the end-product. Think how incredible that is. How lucky we are to be alive. Kyle Benjamin, on the other hand, believes it took all of a week to create all of this. And that included a day off!

I am an atheist. I believe there is no world after this one. That this is all we've got, so we need to make every moment count. We need to play every game like it's our last. And it's week seventeen. So unless we go out there and win, this game really is our last. You want an afterlife, go play for it.

So let's climb out of this hole. God will not guide my throws, I will. God will not protect me from their d-line, break tackles or lay out for passes, you will. The only disembodied voice from above will be Coach Anderson. And Kyle fucking Benjamin will not pop open the seventh seal on us, because we're not going to give him the chance.

By the end of this game, I will show you all that Kyle Benjamin is just another man. Me, though? I'm not just another man. I am the starting quarterback for a goddamn playoff-bound football team. Bills! (players join in.) Bills! Bills!

(LIGHTS DOWN. LIGHTS UP on FIELD and PRESS BOOTH. BRADY and OPPOSING LINEMAN versus CHIEFS LINEMAN. Snippet of "Highway to Hell" plays.)

BRADY

Fourteen blue Copernicus three hut hut hike!

(BRADY hikes and sees no one,
tucks the ball and darts
offstage.)

ANNOUNCER #2

And Hobbs scampers downfield for a gain of 12 and a
first down.

ANNOUNCER #1

Hobbs is starting to catch fire out there.
Figuratively speaking.

ANNOUNCER #2

I don't know what happened at halftime, but the Bills
have come out in the second half like a team on a
mission. The Chiefs, meanwhile, are playing scared. Of
course, I'd be scared to line up against a heretic
too.

(ANNOUNCER #1 hits mute button.)

ANNOUNCER #1

All right. Any more Jesus bullshit and I'll shove this
mic so far up your ass they'll hear your peristalsis
in Peoria.

(ANNOUNCER #1 releases button.)

ANNOUNCER #1(cont.)

We apologize, we're having some technical difficulties
up in the booth, but I think we've gotten them all
cleared up.

(KYLE, CHIEFS RUNNING BACK, CHIEFS
LINEMAN versus OPPOSING LINEMAN.
Snippet of "Knockin' on Heaven's
Door" [the Guns N' Roses version]
plays.)

KYLE

Blue thirteen Jericho left! Hike!

(KYLE takes the hike, throws it offstage, runs after it.)

ANNOUNCER #1

And this has turned into a close one, which is what you'd expect from the catalyst to the End Times. Twenty-seventeen Chiefs with just over a minute left.

(KYLE takes the hike. Pressured by OPPOSING LINEMAN, he is knocked sideways and fumbles. OPPOSING LINEMAN picks up ball and rumbles downfield with it.)

ANNOUNCER #2

Benjamin with the snap. Four-man blitz by the Bills. Under pressure, he is - sacked! And the ball is loose! Picked up by Lamont of the Bills! He's rumbling and tumbling downfield. Look at that big guy go! The thirty (pause), the forty (longer pause), midfield (even longer pause) - man, this fella is slow - and brought down on the Chiefs 37!

(KYLE slowly gets up and walks off field in disgust.)

ANNOUNCER #1

And it looks like those storm clouds have begun to clear up. Shafts of sunlight are piercing through. The hordes in the white robes are starting to look disappointed. But no one's going anywhere yet.

ANNOUNCER #2

Still plenty of football left.

ANNOUNCER #1

Plus, most of them gave away their cars in anticipation of the Rapture, so no one's trying to beat traffic.

(BRADY, OPPOSING LINEMAN versus CHIEFS LINEMAN.)

ANNOUNCER #2

First and ten, and the Bills just slightly out of field goal range. Hobbs will probably try to milk the

clock here, pick up a few yards to set up for a game-tying kick.

(BRADY, BILLS RUNNING BACK and OPPOSING LINEMAN versus CHIEFS LINEMAN. Snippet of "Runnin' With the Devil" by Van Halen plays.)

CHIEFS LINEMAN
You better gird your loins, Brady!

BRADY
What does that even mean? Twelve blue Galileo!

BILLS RUNNING BACK
Galileo?

BRADY
Galileo Figaro! Hut hut hike!

(BRADY takes the hike. He drops back and sets to throw. He mimes a throwing motion but keeps the ball in his right hand, mimes throw and slips it around his left side to BILLS RUNNING BACK, who grabs it and takes off. CHIEFS LINEMAN is completely fooled.)

ANNOUNCER #1
It's a pass play. And there's the throw - no, it's a handoff! Statue of Liberty play, Helm has it and he is gone! Nobody within ten cubits of him. Touchdown Bills with 17 seconds left! Perfectly executed play there, Curt.

ANNOUNCER #2
That one was definitely from the non-canonical section of the playbook. And the Bills have really come together as a team out there.

ANNOUNCER #1
But that play came a little too early for the Bills, because Benjamin is going to get one last shot.

ANNOUNCER #1

Gutsy but curious decision there by Hobbs, going for the quick score. We'll find out if it pays off.

(KYLE walks on stage, "Benjamins." Snippet of Europe's "The Final Countdown.")

ANNOUNCER #2

After the kickoff, Kansas City starts from its own 26-yard line with 8 seconds to play. It's first down and a miracle, familiar territory for these Chiefs. The crowd is on its feet.

ANNOUNCER #1

Actually, looks like a lot of them are kneeling.

(KYLE "Benjamins" twice more. Lines up with CHIEFS RUNNING BACK and CHIEFS LINEMAN opposite OPPOSING LINEMAN.)

ANNOUNCER #1

Benjamin with the rare triple cross gesture there.

KYLE

Left crease fourteen alpha omega! Hike!

(KYLE hikes the ball.)

ANNOUNCER #2

And there's the snap! Hail Kyle formation -

ANNOUNCER #1

No, it's still called a Hail Mary, Curt -

ANNOUNCER #2

Everyone is deep. There's a scrum out in the end zone - and Benjamin throws up a prayer! So to speak.

(KYLE throws the ball. ANNOUNCERS both stand.)

ANNOUNCER #1

High into the air. Right into a crowd - and that ball is (long pause) CAUGHT! By Cutler of the Chiefs!

(BENJAMIN raises his arms in triumph.)

ANNOUNCER #2

(crestfallen)

On the ten-yard line.

ANNOUNCER #1

And he's immediately brought down by three Bills defenders.

(BENJAMIN lowers his arms. BRADY and OPPOSING LINEMAN dart across field joyfully, helmets raised.)

ANNOUNCER #2

Game over. Final score, Bills twenty-four, Chiefs twenty. Bills move on the wild-card round. Chiefs go home. The Chiefs faithful are stunned.

ANNOUNCER #1

But perhaps not as stunned as the rest of the faithful. It's a blue-sky day here in KC, as we send you to our postgame show, and to the rest of your lives. Good night.

ANNOUNCER #2

And God bless.

(LIGHTS DOWN on field. LIGHTS UP on OWNERS' OFFICE. COACH speaks to unseen owner.)

COACH

Yes, I realize the Statue of Liberty is a trick play. But calling it the work of Satan on the postgame show is a bit much, don't you think? (Pause) Why? Because I taught it to him! (Pause.) I'm on the fence about religion, Mr. Clayton. Probably always will be. But I do know one thing, which is that I do not cotton to faith-based coaching. (Pause.) I never thought Brady Hobbs would ever come to my office asking for his release. But I understood why he was there. I wish you could make you understand why I'm standing here asking for the same thing.

(LIGHTS DOWN on OWNERS' OFFICE, UP on BILLS LOCKER ROOM. BRADY is packing his things. ALICIA enters, unseen.)

ALICIA

You call that shit an apocalypse? (BRADY sees her.)
Congratulations.

BRADY

I should be congratulating you. I told them, Alicia. At halftime. It was awesome. It made the Gipper speech sound like something off a cereal box. And they listened. You were right. You won this game as much as I did.

ALICIA

Damn right I did.

BRADY

Alicia. There's no God around to forgive me. The only person who can do that is you.

ALICIA

Yeah, you're getting there. But, Brady? (Pats him on the cheek.) Beating Benjamin was the easy part.

(KYLE enters. ALICIA sees him and smiles at BRADY.)

ALICIA

Speak of the devil.

(ALICIA exits, passing past KYLE. She gives him a satisfied smile but says nothing.)

KYLE

Brady.

BRADY

I didn't expect to see you in here.

KYLE

You played a great game.

BRADY

Yeah. You too.

KYLE

I thought we had it.

BRADY

You can't win 'em all, Kyle. So how is everyone responding to the general lack of Rapture out there?

KYLE

Dad said God is testing us.

BRADY

Of course he said that. Will you forget your dad for a minute! What do you think?

KYLE

What do I think?

BRADY

Yes! Has anyone ever asked you that before?

KYLE

I think - he was wrong. I was wrong. I got swept up in something bigger than myself.

BRADY

So you had doubt.

KYLE

Yes, but...

BRADY

But. But. That's all I wanted to hear. That maybe, for some nanosecond out there as Cutler was getting taken down ten measly yards short of victory, you had the balls to question things. Not God's existence, just the absurd notion that he intervenes in freaking football games.

KYLE

God is infallible and omnipresent, Brady. I know that as truth. But I understand now that humans aren't infallible. And my father and I are going to have a talk.

BRADY

Really? I'm ... wow. Great.

KYLE

Now I want to know what was running through *your* head when you didn't just run down the clock. When you gave me another shot.

BRADY

(shrugs)

Touchdown's better than a field goal.

KYLE

Bull pucky.

BRADY

Bull pucky? Okay. I knew we would stop you. I wanted to show that even divine intervention can't come through when you've got seventy-five yards to go and a sixty-yard arm.

KYLE

You did that just to make a point?

BRADY

Some things are more important than a win, Kyle. Like speaking your truth. That was my way of doing that.

KYLE

I really don't understand you at all.

BRADY

But you're trying to, aren't you?

KYLE

Yes. Yes, I am. Can you the say the same?

BRADY

You know what the difference is between you and me?

KYLE

What?

BRADY

To you, God is the answer. To me, it's the question.

KYLE

That's your loss. (He gets up to leave.) Good luck against the Steelers next week. You're gonna need it.

(BRADY has picked up a football.)

BRADY

Thanks. But you know, it's only a football game.

(BRADY tosses the football at KYLE.)

BRADY

It's not the end of the world.

(KYLE exits. BRADY looks around the locker room, shuts out the light. BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.)