

THE HAND OF GAUL

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by Jared Michael Delaney

*Jared Michael Delaney
1026 Spruce St Apt 8
Philadelphia, Pa 19107
blackcrowe1027@gmail.com
215-681-1705*

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THE HAND OF GAUL

A Play in 7 Scenes and 5 Interludes

Characters (on stage):

DECLAN, Irish, 20s-30s

DAVE, Irish, 20s-30s

PAUL, Irish, 20s-30s

FALCON, Belgian, 30s

Characters (on film):

MARY MCALEESE, President of Ireland, 40s-50s

NICHOLAS SARKOZY, President of France, 40s-50s

PROLOGUE

Darkness. There is a flickering light as a large video screen upstage center comes to life. A montage of images appears, footage of various persons speaking about the Thierry Henry handball, including Sir Alex Ferguson, Arsne Wenger, David Beckham and Bono, among others. These are interspersed with shots of the handball itself. The montage moves faster and faster, reaching a fever pitch, until the screen turns white. There is accompanying sound with this. The white screen fades slowly to black.

SCENE 1

Darkness. The sounds of a crowd, followed by the voice of a sports announcer (perhaps someone like Ian Darke) saying something like the following:

"It's tense here in Croke Park, as the Irish and French teams are tied at one all."

The following supertitles appear on a large screen, that dominates the upstage center area.

NOVEMBER 18, 2009

IRELAND V. FRANCE, 2010 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

OF THE 32 COUNTRIES WHO WILL SEND TEAMS, THERE IS ONE SPOT REMAINING.

THE WINNER ADVANCES.

THE LOSER GOES HOME.

Simultaneously, lights slowly rise on three Irishmen sitting, facing the audience (as if watching a television) and on the screen, footage from the match is shown. The three men, DECLAN, PAUL & DAVE, all are anxious, biting nails, hands on foreheads.

The lights slowly fade on the trio, as the supertitles appear once more on the screen.

IF THERE IS ONE CARDINAL RULE IN FOOTBALL, IT IS THIS:

**DO
NOT
TOUCH**

**THE BALL
WITH YOUR
HANDS**

Footage appears again on the screen of the match. The French are attacking the Irish net, and a French player named Florent Maldou passes the ball to Theierry Henry, the French superstar. Henry is clearly seen batting the ball down to his feet with his hand and passing it to another French player. The Irish players are screaming for a foul, but they are ignored by the referee. The French score. They win. Footage of the team celebrating. The Irish are crushed.

The screen image crossfades to something like an apartment, the sounds of the crowd also fading out. Light rise slowly on the trio, who are sitting in dumbfounded shock at this turn of events.

Slightly overlapping.

DECLAN: This is- this is-

PAUL: I can't fucking-

DAVE: But did you SEE-?!?

DECLAN: It was SO CLEAR-

PAUL: I CANNOT FUCKING-

DAVE: Where was the ref, for fuck's-

DECLAN: I don't understand, I don't understand, how could he NOT-

PAUL: It's un-FUCKING-believa-

DAVE: They're not gonna let it stand, are they? How could they let it-

DECLAN: French BASTARDS, Henry is such a-

PAUL: FUCKING HELL!

DAVE: Its an- this is just completely outrageous-

DECLAN: Henry just-he just stands there-!

PAUL: Slaps the ball down! I mean didja SEE how plain-

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DAVE: Why didn't they call it? Why didn't the ref call-

DECLAN: Why didn't the bloody fucking linesman call it? He was THERE, like.

PAUL: Henry is a dirty cheater, man. Can youse believe it? The brazenness of it!

DAVE: But the ref, like, why didn't he-

DECLAN: Cause they don't fucking care about the Irish, Davey. That's the fuck why.

PAUL: I could KILL Henry, that bastard. He even looked smug doin' it, didja see it?

DAVE: His back was to the camera, like, Paulie.

PAUL: *(deadly)* ...what?

DAVE: You couldn't see his face, is what Im sayin'.

DECLAN: *(quietly)* Daveyboy-

DAVE: Did his back and shoulders look smug to you? Ooh! Wait! Did you say "shrug", instead? Cause, like, for sure he was shrugging. I totally agree.

Paul whacks Dave in the head. Declan looks on sadly.

PAUL: Shut yer gob Davey, now.

DECLAN: It wasn't even the once, you know? Sure, he touched that ball twice.

DAVE: He did?

PAUL: Jaysus, Davey, do you not have eyes at all in that thick head of yours? Henry hit it with his forearm first, THEN his slaps it down with his hand.

DECLAN: Fucking ridiculous.

DAVE: *A double-handball?* How low can you get, man? That's just...I don't know what- It's a-

DECLAN: It's a fucking travesty, is what it is.

DAVE: Yeah, exactly, like.

PAUL: *(with definitiveness)* Not even. It's a tragedy, not a travesty.

Beat.

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DECLAN: It's the same fucking thing, Paulie.

PAUL: A tragedy is worse, though, isn't it?

DECLAN: How'dya figure that?

PAUL: *(definitively)* Shakespeare.

DECLAN: Shakespeare-? What the bloody-

PAUL: Sure, didn't himself use it in all them titles of his? *The Tragedy of Romeo & Juliet* and that? *The Tragedy of Hamlet? The Tragedy of, ah, of...Cornrows & Anus?*

A beat.

DAVE: I'm pretty sure it's not called that.

DECLAN: So why does that make it worse that travesty?

PAUL: I'm just saying that if yer man used it, in titles like, it must be THE word, isn't it?

DECLAN: Like you've ever read any Shake-

PAUL: I DID! In primary I did, I must've. Plus, the oul' ma, ya know.

DECLAN: You'd be bringing the mother in, now?

PAUL: She used to read me bits to fall asleep.

DECLAN: And when was that, then? Last week?

Paul flips Declan off. Dave has been concentrating this entire time.

DAVE: Is a travesty the same thing as a transves-

DECLAN/PAUL: NO.

DAVE: Awright, I was just curious, is all.

A beat where the stand staring at the "television." Sounds of the French celebrating.

PAUL: Those dirty, cheating-

DAVE: Dose fucking FRENCH.

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DECLAN: D'ya know what I FUCKING hate? That godforsaken "Le Marseilles." Drives me mad, that fucking tune.

PAUL: Yeah, right? Those fucking whiny horns in it and all.

DECLAN: French horns. Hate 'em.

PAUL: It's the worst national anthem of all time.

DECLAN: Oh, there's no question.

A beat.

DAVE: D'ya know what, though? That scene in *Casablanca* where like they stand up and sing it to them Nazis is ripping, though, isn't it?

Paul throws something at Dave, or hits him on the shoulder.

DAVE: OW! Im just saying its a good scene, is all.

PAUL: I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO THE CUP!!!

DAVE: Easy now, though. Maybe FIFA'll do somethin'.

Supertitle appears:

FIFA IS THE GOVERNING BODY OF GLOBAL SOCCER.

DECLAN: Are you joking? FIFA won't do nothin' about. Fucking Blatter is in the pocket of the French, isn't he?

Supertitle:

SEPP BLATTER IS THE PRESIDENT OF FIFA.

DAVE: Is Blatter French?

PAUL: He's fucking *SWISS*. Which may as well be fucking French.

DAVE: But don't they speak a lot of German in Switzerland?

Paul hits him again.

DAVE: Jesus, Paulie, awright, for fuck's sake. I was just sayin, is all. Blatter, or whoever, like they HAVE to have seen that handball, right? It was so obvious. Maybes there will be like a rematch, or something.

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DECLAN: Blatter won't even allow instant replay, or goal-line radar or anythin'. You think he's gonna allow Ireland to replay this?

PAUL: He fucking HATES the Irish.

DAVE: Why do you say-

PAUL: JESUS Davey, have the Irish ever won the Cup?

DAVE: No, but-

PAUL: You tink that's a fucking coincidence?

DAVE: But- but Paulie, only 7 countries have EVER won-

PAUL: DAT'S RIGHT! And has one dem EVER been Ireland?

DAVE: No, but-

PAUL: WHAT MORE PROOF DO YOU FUCKING NEED, FOR FUCK'S SAKE, DAVEY?

Paul gets up a flips over his chair (or whatever he may be sitting on) in a rage. The other two stand , taken aback.

DECLAN: *(Catching his breath)* All right, all right lads, let's just take a moment here-

PAUL: Take a moment? Take a *FUCKING* moment? Are yous serious, Dec? Here we are, made a laughing stock, by the fucking French, of all people! A whole nation who follow the example of the Cowardly fucking Lion, the whole lot of them! They practically gave Eiffel Tower to Hitler gift-wrapped! Didn't stand up like we did, did they?

DAVE: But, Ireland was neutral in the war, Paulie-

Paul hits Dave so hard this time that he knocks him down.

DAVE: For fuck's sake.

Declan helps Dave up from the floor.

DECLAN: It's just a fucking disgrace, it is. There's no denying it.

On the screen now we see close-up footage of Henry's handball, playing again and again.

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PAUL: Jesus, just look at it, will ya? Do they have to keep replaying it like that? Again, and again?!? Henry is a cheating bastard!

DAVE: I liked him when he played in the Premier League.

Paul threatens to hit him again, but Declan intervenes.

DECLAN: *(quickly)* But--?

DAVE: *(with 'uncertain' certainty)*--but I fucking HATE him now. Cheating French bastard.

DECLAN: It's like Maradona, all over again.

Supertitle:

DIEGO MARADONA, ARGENTINIAN, AT ONE TIME CONSIDERED THE WORLD'S GREATEST PLAYER, COMMITTED AN INFAMOUS HANDBALL IN 1986 WORLD CUP, ELIMINATING ENGLAND IN THE PROCESS.

THE INCIDENT BECAME KNOWN AS 'THE HAND OF GOD.'

PAUL: Yeah, but who cares about that, yeah? All he did was knock out England. Bastards.

DECLAN: You've a point there, Paulie. No question.

PAUL: Fucking French. Sure they play dirty all around. Remember what Zidane did?

DAVE: The headbutt?

Supertitle:

IN THE 2006 WORLD CUP FINAL, FRENCH STAR, ZINEDINE ZIDANE, WAS EJECTED FROM THE MATCH AFTER HE HEADBUTTED ITALIAN PLAYER MARCO MATEROZZI.

Footage of the Zidane headbutt is shown on screen.

DECLAN: Fuck, that was nasty.

PAUL: Fucking knocked Materazzi right to the ground.

DAVE: Oh, right! Is he the fella who makes the cars?

PAUL: That's *MASERATTI*, ya eedjit.

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DAVE: Isn't that what you said?

DECLAN: I don't blame Zidane though. Materazzi insulted his sister. I mean, what's a man supposed to do?

DAVE: What did he say about his sister?

DECLAN: Called her a whore, he did.

PAUL: WHOA now! That's not right!

DAVE: That's terrible! I'd bash someone too if they called my sister that.

PAUL: ...you don't have sister.

DAVE: But if I did, like, I'm saying.

DECLAN: Zidane had no choice, though, did he?

DAVE: A choice about having a sister? I suppose not now.

PAUL: *(exasperated)* Christ Davey, It's HONOR we're talking about here, not sisters. When it's taken, you've got to take it back. Like, that's it, right? There's nothing else. Honor, man. I can't really blame him either. Even if he is French.

DECLAN: Nor can I now. When honor is taken, you have to take it back.

DAVE: Like what Henry did, you mean?

A moment of silence, as Paul & Declan look at each other.

DAVE: I mean, like, Henry took Ireland's honor, with that handball, right? Now the French go-

DECLAN: *(completing the thought, quietly)* -the French go to the World fucking Cup. And we stay home.

(He looks over at Paul)

PAUL: And we stay fucking home.

DECLAN: Because of Henry.

PAUL: BECAUSE OF HENRY.

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There is a moment of understanding that passes between Paul & Declan. Dave, is, however, in the dark.

DAVE: Why are you twos repeating each other? Like that's-

PAUL: You were right, Daveyboy.

DAVE: I was?

DECLAN: Yeah, lad, you were. Ireland's honor is gone. Stolen from us.

PAUL: By Henry there.

DAVE: Oh yeah, right then.

DECLAN: This country has lost a lot of late, there's no question.

PAUL: Fuckin' austerity.

DECLAN: But this was *stolen*. And what was stolen can be found. It can be brought back.

PAUL: *(nodding)* Bring our honor back.

DECLAN: The pride of Ireland.

PAUL: *(pumping his fist)* IRELAND!

DAVE: *(imitating his friends)* IRELAND!

A beat

DAVE: Yeah and sure how're we gonna do that, then?

A moment as the trio look at each other, a little unsure.

DECLAN: *(breaking the moment, decisively)* There's only thing for it then, lads. *(He looks them over and their surroundings, dramatically)* Theirry Henry...must die.

Lights fade.

Supertitle appears:

INTERLUDE 1

After a moment, on the screen, footage appears of an empty podium, with lots of microphones and sounds of murmurs and camera-flashes. A press conference is about to begin. Irish president, Mary McAleese (portrayed by an actor) steps up to the mikes.

Subtitle:

MARY MCALEESE, PRESIDENT OF IRELAND from NOV 1997 - NOV 2011

MCALEESE: *(with authority)* Ladies & gentleman, if I can have your attention for a few moments. Clearly, this recent time has been a struggle for us all, myself included. Ireland has been faced with a crisis and we must all stand tall together, in order to combat this...this...heinous outrage. Ireland has undergone incredible generational changes these last years and we must not allow ourselves to be made fools of, by anyone. Least of all, the dirty French and their villainous henchman, Theirry Henry.

(Murmur amongst reporters and more camera-flashes)

To that end, our Taoiseach Brian Cowen, will be in Brussels shortly for the European Economic Summit, where, also in attendance, will be French President, Nicholas Sarkozy. Taoiseach Cowen, at the urging of myself and others, will discuss with President Sarkozy the possibilities for a rematch between our two countries. As a reasonable man, I expect we will receive an affirmative from Monsieur Sarkozy. Surely he understand that a victory gained by cheating is no victory at all.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

She turns and leaves the podium. Shouting of "Madam President!", etc, as cameras flash and the screen fades to black.

SCENE 2

Lights come up slowly on the three friends, in the same position as before.

Supertitle:

THE SAME NIGHT

DAVE: *(incredulously)* KILL Henry? Are youse mad?

PAUL: No, no, it's fucking perfect! Yeah, that will show those cheap cunts you can't fuck with Ireland.

DECLAN: *(over-earnestly)* Exactly, Paul. We're going to teach those bastards a lesson

PAUL: FUCKING HELL YES! We're going to show that pretty-boy Henry a thing or two now!

DECLAN: It was all downhill for him after he started making those stupid ads for them razors with, ah, what's-his-name, the tennis player?

On screen, we see footage of the Gillette commercials that Henry did with Roger Federer and Tiger Woods.

DAVE: Federer. And your man, the golfer.

PAUL: Tiger. Right. That's another bastard who is running right off the rails.

DAVE: Whattya mean, Paulie?

PAUL: Sure, didn't I read online that he's using hookers and porn stars and what-have-you when he's out on the pro golf tour?

DAVE: Really? He seems so stand up.

DECLAN: Eh, those is just rumors, now.

PAUL: Mark my words. lads. His wife is gonna after 'im with one of his own clubs.

DECLAN: She is fine lookin', I must say.

PAUL: Oh yeah, for sure.

Supertitle:

IN FACT, 9 DAYS LATER, ON NOV. 27, 2009, TIGER'S WIFE *DID* SMASH HIS SUV'S REAR WINDOW WITH GOLF CLUB AFTER ALLEGATIONS EMERGED THAT HE CHEATED ON HER.

AND THEN ROGER FEDERER SUFFERED A SERIES OF LOSSES THAT CAUSED HIM TO FALL FROM THE #1 RANKING.

IT'S KNOWN AS THE "CURSE OF GILLETTE."

I'M NOT MAKING THAT UP.

DAVE: That seems extreme to me, though, yeah? I mean, like with his own clubs and all? They're not really built with that in mind, are they? Oh, unless it was the driver, though. Them fat wooden heads would be good a skull-smackin'.

PAUL: Shut up, Davey.

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DAVE: (*meekly*) ...Im not sayin' DON'T go after himself, just that the golf club is impractical, is all.

DECLAN: And what you recommend, then?

DAVE: Well, I'm not much of a golfer, so it's hard to say.

PAUL: I thought you played with your da.

DAVE: Nah, he just made me stand in the water trap to catch balls before they fell in.

PAUL: Was there much call for that?

DAVE: Da's a terrible shot.

PAUL: Ah, right you are.

DECLAN: Lads, can we get back to...dispatching...Henry?

DAVE: Right, Dec.

PAUL: Sure thing, Dec.

A pause.

DAVE: ...how are we going to do it, then?

Declan & Paul look at each other.

DECLAN: ...well, I uh...

PAUL: Right. Well, what we'll do is...uh...

DAVE: Yeah, dat's what I thought.

DECLAN: Hold on now!

PAUL: Yeah, just give us a minute to think.

DAVE: To think? Right, that'll solve it.

PAUL: Like you're one to talk about thinking! For fuck's sake.

DAVE: Oh yeah? Taking shots, are ya? All right den, Paulie. Are you gonna do it then?

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PAUL: ...what now?

DAVE: Are you gonna walk up to Theirry Henry, WHO LIVES IN FUCKING FRANCE by the by, and what? Shoot him?

PAUL: Well now, I, uh, that is-

DAVE: How're ya even going to find him, then? Do think you can just look up a football star in the book, like?

PAUL: Im not sure if that's-

DAVE: Look up Ringo, while you're at it, and Angelina Jolie since they're all just listed for anyone to find.

DECLAN: Now just a minute, Daveyboy-

DAVE: And you Declan- what about you now?

DECLAN: What what about me?

DAVE: Let's say you can even *find* Henry, are you honestly telling me now that you would...what? Beat him to death with a bat?

DECLAN: (*squeamishly*) I imagine that would be a bit of a mess, that would.

DAVE: And where would youse do this now? Right in the street? In front of the stadium after a match? Where anyone could see yas, and sure, wouldn't you be nicked by the guard in short order right afterwards?

Declan and Paul look at each other a little blankly. They were not expecting this.

DECLAN: ...I can't believe I'm even saying this, but he's got a point.

PAUL: Yeah, I'm a bit shocked, to be honest.

DAVE: (*beaming*) Thanks lads, I appreciate that, I do.

PAUL: ..yeah, well, that's all right then. I have to admit, I don't fancy killing Henry myself like.

DECLAN: Nor I, now.

DAVE: Well, then maybe we should just-

PAUL: Hold a moment now! What about hiring someone, right?

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DAVE: What?

DECLAN: An assassin, you mean?

DAVE: An assassin? Are youse serious?

PAUL: That's it, now Dec. Now you're thinking.

DECLAN: Sure, this kind of contract calls for a professional.

DAVE: "Contract"? What're you, like a goodfella now, or somethin'?

PAUL: Maybe we can get like a ninja. Henry would NEVER see that coming. All dressed in black, like, maybe using a blow dart or one them throwing stars dipped in like, scorpion venom.

DECLAN: Now that would be grand. Probably pricey though, yeah?

PAUL: Maybe no venom then.

DAVE: Are the two of you totally off your nut? You want us to hire a ninja?

DECLAN: You know, Davey's right there.

DAVE: Thank you.

DECLAN: I seriously doubt there are any ninjas in Ireland.

PAUL: Not even in the North?

DECLAN: *(hopefully)* Oo! Maybe now!

DAVE: There are NO NINJAS anywhere in all of Ireland!

PAUL: Listen to him.

DECLAN: Like you're an expert on ninjas.

DAVE: I'm not saying that I am, like, just that maybe this isn't the best idea.

PAUL: Yeah, Dec, maybe we should skip the ninjas.

DECLAN: And go for like one them hitmen who do like, political jobs?

PAUL: Yeah, yeah, from a distance. Like them fellas who fire a rifle from like a million yards away.

DECLAN: Yeah, like in *Sniper!*

Supertitle:

"SNIPER" IS A 1993 ACTION FILM.

ABOUT A SNIPER.

IT SPAWNED 3 SEQUELS.

NO. REALLY.

PAUL: Tom Berenger is brilliant, isn't he?

DECLAN: He really is.

DAVE: You want to hire a sniper now?

DECLAN: Well, you proved a point

DAVE: What was that?

DECLAN: Killing Henry ourselves would be a bit of a bollocks, wouldn't it? First of all-

PAUL: --we wouldn't be able to find him. Secondly-

DECLAN: --we don't *quite* have it in us to do the deed ourselves, do we Paul?

PAUL: I have to admit we don't.

DECLAN: This way, there's no mess, no connection to us, clean!

DAVE: ...yeah, but-

DECLAN: Davey, do you want this to sully the honor of Ireland for generations to come?

DAVE: O'course I don't but-

PAUL: Think of your oul' da, Daveyboy. Sure, didn't he play football all his life? With honor & fairness?

DAVE: That he did, certainly now.

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DECLAN: We'd be *heroes*, Davey.

DAVE: But, yeah, but, if people *find out*-

PAUL: No one will know, now, Davey. Me & Dec, we'll make sure of that, we will.

Dave looks uncertainly from Declan to Paul. After a moment, he slowly nods.

DAVE: All right then. I'm in.

DECLAN: Good man.

Paul claps Dave on the shoulder in a hearty, "well-met" sort of way.

DAVE: But how're we going to find this assassin of yours?

DECLAN: Oh Davey now, that's the easy part. We google it, of course.

Lights fade.

Supertitle:

INTERLUDE 2

A podium, as before. Microphones, cameras, etc. After a moment, a man steps up to the mikes. This is French president Nicholas Sarkozy (portrayed by an actor)

Supertitle:

NICHOLAS SARKOZY, French President 2007-2012

SARKOZY: Ladies & gentlemen, if I could have a moment of your time (*flashes a winning smile for the cameras*) While it is true there has been some...controversy over recent events involving the World Cup qualifier, the referee's decision is, of course, final. There will be no replay of the match. That would be absurd!

(Murmurs among the reporters and camera flashes)

France is proud to participate in the 2010 Cup in South Africa, And Thierry Henry is a national hero to the French. Carla, I must say, is quite fond of him. Perhaps I should be jealous, no? *Non.* (*Another sparkling smile. Camera flashes*) Hahahaha. And as far as Madame McAleese is concerned, I find her accent to be...charming...Au revoir!

Lights fade.

SCENE 3

Supertitle:

THE SAME NIGHT.

LATER.

On Screen: An image of the Google Search home screen, with the word "ASSASSIN" seen being typed out.

Lights rise on the trio, (perhaps seated together, perhaps someone standing) looking at a "computer."

DAVE: Yeah, but like, you think that's gonna do it?

DECLAN: What's that now?

DAVE: You think that just searching the word "assassin" is gonna be enough like?

PAUL: Who're you then? Steve fucking Jobs?

DAVE: I'm just sayin' that maybe it would do you some good to be a little more *specific* in the search like.

DECLAN: He may be right, Paulie.

PAUL: Whattya mean?

DECLAN: Well, now, the first thing that comes up is a site called "Asses In", which is, you know, one of dem asses-only porno sites.

DAVE: *(exasperated)* Give it here. I'll do the search.

PAUL: Hold on, Hold on, now! Give us a moment to be making sure that dis isn't the one, yeah?

DAVE: Oh for the love of...

He knocks Declan out of the way and begins a new search, despite cries of "hold on" and "Just a minute now." Now being typed in the search engine we see "Contract Killers. Dublin. Continental Europe. Sniper"

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DECLAN: Add "Hates the French" as well, Davey.

PAUL: Yeah for sure. We dont want some frog-lover who'll end up refusing the job at the last minute or somethin.'

Dave sighs and types in "Anti-French."

DECLAN: "Anti-French". Yeah good. Sounds less...inflammatory that way, I reckon.

DAVE: Yeah, that was my way of thinking anyways.

PAUL: Let's just find the bastard then and get on with it.

They conduct the online search.

PAUL: What about that one, then?

They peer at it.

DECLAN: That's an online petition to ban French's mustard.

PAUL: ..really?

DAVE: That's a shame. French's is good on corned beef, I think.

PAUL: Oh now, I think Coleman's is better. The brown, you know.

DECLAN: All right now.

DAVE: *(affecting a posh accent)* Pardon me, would you have any-

PAUL: *(affecting same)* - Grey Poupon to fill my gob with?

They start laughing.

DECLAN: Shut up, the two of yas. We're trying to find a fucking *assassin* here, no debating the merits of condiments.

Collecting themselves.

PAUL: Right, Dec.

DAVE: Sorry, Dec.

DECLAN: Yeah. So look here. What about this? "*Le Falcon.*"

PAUL: "*Le Falcon*?" What the bloody hell is that now?

DECLAN: According to this, "*Le Falcon*" is a 'smooth operator who can move coast to coast without ever being detected. If you need someone eliminated, *Le Falcon* will get the job done."

Paul and Dave look at each other.

DAVE: "Smooth operator"?

PAUL: "Coast to coast"?

A beat.

DECLAN: (*not getting it*) What?

DAVE: I dunno, Dec, isn't that like from a, I dunno-

PAUL: -a fucking *SADE* song?

Declan thinks about it for a moment. Then starts humming Sade's "Smooth Operator" to himself. Eventually, the other two join in.

Supertitle:

SMOOTH OPERATOR BY SADE

FROM THE ALBUM DIAMOND LIFE

1984

IRISH CHARTS: #17

FRENCH CHARTS: #9

US CHARTS: #5

DECLAN: Fuck. You two idjits are right.

DAVE: An assassin for hire who cribs from Sade is not a good sign. In my opinion, like.

PAUL: I'm gonna have to go with Daveyboy on this one, Dec.

DAVE: Yeah, if it was like, I dunno-

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PAUL: Yeah, what makes good assassin theme music?

DAVE: Maybe like Iron Maiden?

PAUL: Metal's a little obvious, though, isn't it? Im wondering if it shouldn't be more techno-like. The Prodigy, or somethin.'

DAVE: Nah, wait now! You know what it is? It's totally Shirley Bassey!

PAUL: FUCK now, Davey, you've hit it right on the head. *That's* the music for an assassin! All Bond and what-have-ya.

DAVE: It's all about that horn section, isn't it? *Waaaaah-wah!*

PAUL: *Wah-wah-wah-wah-waaaaah!*

DECLAN: *(with frustration)* Shut the fuck up, the two of you. For the love of all that's holy. Can we get back to the business at hand now?

DAVE: Sorry Dec.

PAUL: *(finishing the Bond theme, off Declan's look)* All right, I'm finished now.

DECLAN: Now look, do you want to see Ireland's honor avenged?

DAVE: Absolutely, Dec.

PAUL: No question, Dec.

DECLAN: Can't we get a little focus then? This is literally life and death.

PAUL: Yeah, Dec, we're on-board now.

DECLAN: Good! Now listen, this "Le Falcon" has some good qualifications on this website of his.

PAUL: All right, then. Like what?

DECLAN: Says here he was a sharp-shooter in the Belgian Special Forces.

Dave and Paul exchange an incredulous look.

PAUL: Belgian Special Forces? What does that mean?

DAVE: Is that something made up? Like the Loch Ness Monster?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: It's NOT made up! Sure, doesn't Belgium need a Special Forces same as the rest of the world?

DAVE: ...to do what?

PAUL: Yeah, to do what?

DECLAN: Jaysus.

PAUL: To protect chocolate?

DAVE: Oh, maybe them Trappist monks.

PAUL: That beer is fine, I have to admit.

DAVE: For men of the cloth? Absolutely.

DECLAN: Listen now, the two of ya. The point is, the man is supposedly a crackshot. And isn't that what himself was saying that we needed for this job?

DAVE: I did.

DECLAN: And think now, for a just a moment, right. Who has greater cause to hate the French than the Belgians?

A beat.

PAUL: The English?

DAVE: The Germans?

PAUL: The Americans?

DAVE: The Vietnamese?

A beat.

DECLAN: *(reluctantly)* It's hard to argue with those. But the Belgians see! Their whole culture was stolen by the French! In Belgium, they don't speak "Belgian," they speak "French."

PAUL: And German.

DAVE: And Flemish.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: That's not the fucking point. The point is they don't speak "BELGIAN"! Wouldn't that be enough to drive anyone to hate their oppressors?

DAVE: Yeah, but Dec, *we* speak 'English'.

DECLAN: EXACTLY, Davey. And who hates the English more than the fucking Irish??

Paul and Dave exchange a look.

PAUL: The Dutch?

DAVE: The Pakistanis?

PAUL: The Zulus?

DAVE: The Bangladoush?

A beat. Declan's blank look.

DAVE: Yeah, but it's the Irish, I'm talking about! The Irish!

DAVE: I dunno, Dec. I don't hate the English.

PAUL: Yeah, I gotta say I don't either.

DECLAN: That's not the point-

DAVE: I think it'd be ripping to be knighted, yeah?

PAUL: *Sir Davey?* Right, like that'd happen.

DAVE: You think you're more likely a knighthood, then?

PAUL: More so than you, for sure. There's royal blood in my line.

DAVE: The only thing royal about you is how much of a pain in the arse you are.

DECLAN: Lads...

PAUL: If Elton John can be a knight, so can I!

DAVE: Elton's a knight?

PAUL: Sure, and he gave us the fuckin' Lion King.

DAVE: Oh, I hate the Lion King, so.

THE HAND OF GAUL

PAUL: That "Circle of Life" song drives me mad.

DAVE: It's no Little Mermaid, I'll tell you that.

Paul & Declan stare at him.

DAVE: Not that I've seen it.

PAUL: Ahhh, right.

DECLAN: LADS!

DAVE: Yeah?

PAUL: What?

DECLAN: Can we please stay on point for a fucking second, please?!?

A beat.

DAVE: ...what were we talking about?

DECLAN: For fuck's sake.

PAUL: Something about Belarus.

DECLAN: BELGIUM! THE ASSASSIN! *LE FALCON?!?*

DAVE: Right you are.

DECLAN: I swear to Christ, sometimes you two...

PAUL: Jaysus, Dec, what's all this about then?

DECLAN: Meaning what, exactly?

PAUL: All this yellin' and carryin' on. Like, who died and put you in charge?

DECLAN: And why shouldn't it be me then? I'm middle-management, after all.

PAUL: Oh for the love of-, you run a petrol station!

DECLAN: It's still management, isn't it?

DAVE: *(thoughtfully)* Is it still considered management when you're the only employee?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: There's a chain of command! And that's what we need here, lads. I'm only after establishing that now!

PAUL: Yeah, that's fair enough, like. But don't be yelling like that. You know Davey's fragile.

DAVE: I am not!

PAUL: Oh really? And who here still lives at home with his da?

DAVE: He needs the help, right? And you know, with me being...between jobs at the moment-

DECLAN: Between? You haven't been working for two years! If that's between jobs, what's *unemployed* look like?

Paul snickers at this.

DAVE: I wouldn't be laughing, if I was you.

PAUL: Hey, I've got a job!

DAVE: Washing dishes at an oul folks' all-you-can-eat buffet?

PAUL: It's not that bad! ...cept when they leave their dentures on the trays. That's terrible.

DAVE: Yeah, that is nasty, like.

PAUL: And then trying to find the owners of said mouth-pieces is near-impossible...

DAVE: Well, yeah, sure aren't they all without their God-given teeth?

PAUL: Dental hygiene is serious business.

DAVE: Are you a flosser?

PAUL: No, I'm a water-pick man, meself.

DAVE: Ah right you are.

A beat where Dave and Paul become conscious of their own teeth. Declan looks at them blankly.

DECLAN: So I'll be in charge then, shall I, lads?

PAUL: Hm? Oh yeah.

DAVE: Sure thing, Dec.

DECLAN: Right then. Now, as far as Le Falcon is concerned...

PAUL: All right, Declan, you've made your point, like. Clearly, Le Falcon is our man.

DAVE: Agreed. Let's hire this Belgian bastard.

DECLAN: Good. Excellent. Now, there's an email address. I'll write him, shall I?

PAUL: Yeah, do it then.

DAVE: Do ya want me to write it then?

DECLAN: Are you sayin' I can't?

DAVE: I'm just saying maybe I'm a tad more articulate than you are...

DECLAN: Ha! That's right funny, that is.

PAUL: Christ, you two are like little girls with this.

DAVE: I don't wanna fight now, I'm just saying that I'm a man of letters. I've been published, you know.

PAUL: Posting badly-written *Babylon 5* fan-fiction online does mean you've been "published" for fuck's sake.

DECLAN: All right, that's enough. I got this. I'm gonna write the email to Le Falcon!

DAVE: Fine! Jaysus, can we just help then? Like dictate or something?

PAUL: Yeah, Dec, I'd like to be a part of it too, you know?

DECLAN: Yeah, yeah, fine. We'll all be co-authors, right? Will that keep the peace?

Dave & Paul nod their ascent.

DECLAN: All right then, here we go. *(he starts typing)*

"Dear Mr. Falcon-"

DAVE: Ah--

DECLAN: What is it, for fuck's sake?

DAVE: Well, I'm just wondering if we shouldn't-

PAUL: Yeah, I'm with you on this, Davey.

DECLAN: *(exploding)* WHAT?!?

PAUL: Shouldn't it be 'Monsieur,' Dec?

DECLAN: Oh. yeah, I suppose it should now. *(he types again)*

Monsieur Le Falcon-

We have seen your online ad and we have a job for you-

DAVE: Contract. Call it a contract, Dec.

Declan sighs heavily and types again.

- we have a contract for you. It is high-profile and potentially dangerous, but with your qualifications from the Belgian Special Forces, we feel confident that you would be able to handle it. Please contact us for a meet where we can discuss this contract in greater detail.

yours-

DECLAN: ...how should we sign off? We can't use our own names like.

PAUL: Right, no we can't. We need a *nom-de-plume*.

Dave & Declan exchange a look.

PAUL: I'm just getting in the spirit of it, now. That's how they'd say it in Belgium, isn't it?

DECLAN: All right, whatever. Let's just think of one.

DAVE: How about "The Wronged Party"?

PAUL: That's terrible.

DECLAN: Absolutely. How about this now? "The Irish Avengers"!

DAVE: Like we're super-heroes, or something?

THE HAND OF GAUL

PAUL: It's gotta have some mystery, right? Something slightly vague and menacing. Like "The Trio."

DAVE: Or "The Triad"

DECLAN: That's the Chinese mob.

DAVE: Is it? Maybe that's good then. Keep the scent off of us.

PAUL: Shut up, Davey.

DECLAN: I got it now! How 'bout this? "The Trinity"

A moment as Dave and Paul take it in.

DAVE: I have to admit, I like it.

PAUL: And sure, there's nothing so vague and menacing as the Catholic Church.

DECLAN: Amen to that. *(types again)*

Yours-

The Trinity

And I hit send annnnnnd....we just wait for a reply.

The newly-minted Trinity shakes hands all around and gather around the computer, waiting.

PAUL: *(sheepishly)* Be going back to "Asses In".

DECLAN: No.

PAUL: *(quietly)* ...bender.

Lights fade.

Supertitle:

INTERLUDE 3

Press conference podium as before. Only now we come to a press conference already in progress. McAleese is at the podium, looking a little haggard.

MCALEESE: ...all right, look now, for the *last* time, I DO NOT have a crush on President Sarkozy. His behavior in regards to this football scandal is absurd. To think that batting his eyes and making kissy-kiss sounds at the camera is going to mollify me and the Irish people is mad, isn't it? How he can stand there and deny that Theirry Henry is a terrible, terrible cheater, who has tarnished the world's greatest sporting event. *(a general hubbub from the press)* Ladies and gentlemen, please! I still have hopes that President Sarkozy can be reasonable and see that this sort of thing is simply not acceptable, to not only both our peoples, but the world at large. I have faith President Sarkozy will see the egregiousness of this situation and will act to correct it. Thank you.

Camera flashing, questions, etc.

SCENE 4

On the screen we see the image of an outdoor cafe space, but empty. In walk the newly-christened "Trinity" all dressed in their own versions of "incognito". in other words very obviously standing out in their futile attempts to "blend in." They all sit down, looking around for Le Falcon.

They don't notice a man sitting alone at a table upstage of their position, reading a newspaper and drinking coffee. He is dressed well, but casually.

PAUL: Well...where the fuck is he, like?

DECLAN: How am I supposed to know? This is the place. He said he would be here at two.

DAVE: Well, it's five after now. What does he look like?

DECLAN: How do I know, Davey? There was no picture on the site.

PAUL: That doesn't seem very courteous.

DECLAN: What?

PAUL: I'm just saying that he could have tried to be more helpful with his clientele, you know? Like how are we supposed to know who the fuck his is?

DECLAN: Maybe he will know us. Besides, what is he supposed to do? Post his picture where the guard and Scotland Yard and the FBI and KGB can fucking find it? C'mon now.

DAVE: So how is he gonna know us then?

A pause. Declan says nothing.

PAUL: That's a question now. How is he gonna know? He doesn't know what we look like.

A pause.

DAVE: He doesn't have a picture of us, does he Dec?

A beat.

PAUL: Dec? You didn't send him a picture of us, did you?

A beat.

DECLAN: Well, I mean...he asked for one and I -

On the screen, we see a picture of the lads, looking a little worse for wear, perhaps when intoxicated and at a pub.

PAUL: *FOR FUCK'S SAKE!* You gave him OUR fucking picture?

DECLAN: He had to know us, didn't he? I mean, c'mon, jaysus.

DAVE: *(panicking)* Fucking hell, Dec, what if he gives it to the authorities?

DECLAN: I thought of that! He'd be implicating himself, wouldn't he?

DAVE: What if it's a *fucking sting*?

A pause while Declan considers this possibility.

DECLAN: I have to admit, I hadn't considered that.

Paul & Dave start panicking visibly. Start gathering themselves to go, looking around in a paranoid fashion. The man drinking coffee lowers he papers, looks at them, raises it back up.

PAUL: JESUS fuck fuck, we are fucked, from top to bottom.

DAVE: We need to get the hell out of here. Right fucking now.

DECLAN: Wait now, WAIT! Calm down, it's gonna be fine. Just relax for a minute, all right?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DAVE: You're telling us to relax? That's your answer? Fucking relax?

DECLAN: Yeah, just like-

PAUL: *(to Dec, with a little menace)* I'm *not* going to the fucking clink.

DECLAN: *(with a little menace himself)* Whattya sayin, Paulie-boy?

PAUL: Im sayin' that if your man doesn't show, and we get busted instead, Im pinning it all on youse two.

DAVE: ME?!? Sure, what did I have to do with it?

PAUL: Didn't you lead the google seach yourself?

DAVE: All I did was type!

PAUL: Like dat excuse would fly in court. Please.

DECLAN: Don't be threatenin' him.

PAUL: *(mocking)* Aw...isn't that the thing now? Poor little Davey, cant stand up for hisself.

Dave launches himself at Paul over the table, dragging Declan down into the mix. The three men scuffle and cry, in generally ineffective ways. A comedic fight that becomes more absurd.

As tables and chairs go flying, with muttered curses and cried of "that's not fair" and "fight like a man, ya nancy", the man sitting at the far table puts his paper down, slowly. He watches for a moment, then calmly puts the paper down, takes a sip of his coffee, and stand up. He is dressed very well, a man of refined taste, if perhaps slightly out of style. He has dark glasses on and he has a waxed mustache. He also has a leather satchel with him, large enough to contain a good-sized bottle. This, clearly, is Le Falcon.

He walks over to the the three men, as they continue to scuffle with each other. They don't notice his arrival.

FALCON: *(in a French accent that almost seems fake)* Pardon, monsieurs-

The scuffle continues.

FALCON: Gentlemen-

The scuffle continues.

FALCON: Excuse moi-

The scuffle continues.

FALCON: Are you, by chance, Le Trinity?

The scuffle stops. The three of them freeze instantly.

DECLAN: *(with trepidation)* Who's asking then?

FALCON: I believe that we have an appointment.

A moment passes between the three of them, taking this in.

DAVE: Are you-?

PAUL: IT WASN'T ME! IT WAS THESE TWO BASTARDS!

Declan cuffs Paul one.

FALCON: Gentlemen, it is a pleasure. I am Le Falcon.

The trio stand up quickly, brushing themselves off, trying to appear more presentable.

DECLAN: It's our pleasure, Mr. Falcon.

PAUL: Sorry about that, Mr. Falcon, like. We was just-

DAVE: Just having a disagreement is all. Name's Davey. Dave. David. *(extends a hand)*

FALCON: A pleasure, Monsieur David. I must say, gentlemen, if you wish this association between us to continue, I would recommend being much more discreet in the future, non?

DECLAN: Oui, indeed, Mr Falcon. I, uh, that is, we apologize for that. It won't happen again.

FALCON: Please see that it does not. If so, I'm afraid I would have to...terminate...this relationship.

PAUL: Fuck! "Terminate!" That's right deadly, that is.

FALCON: Deadly, yes indeed. That is precisely it, is it not? Gentlemen, I was led to believe that you may have some work for me. That is why I made the trip here. Please assure me that you have not wasted my time.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: No indeed, Mr. Falcon. We have-

FALCON: Please. *Le Falcon.*

DECLAN: What?

FALCON: I prefer to be addressed as "*Le Falcon.*"

DAVE: Doesn't that mean "The Falcon"?

FALCON: Oui.

DAVE: So you want us to call you "Le Falcon" all the time?

FALCON: Oui.

PAUL: No matter what?

FALCON: Pardon?

PAUL: Like, if we should say "Hey there, The Falcon, how're you today?"

DECLAN: Paulie-

PAUL: *(laughing)* Sounds a bit mad, though, doesn't it? "What's new, the Falcon?"
How's the wife, the Falcon? You know, Mrs the Falcon-

In a blinding fast move, Le Falcon has whipped around Paul, holding him by the throat from behind. A thin knife has appeared from nowhere in Falcon's hand and it is pressed to Paul's neck. Dave and Dec are stunned at the speed of this move.

DAVE: That was *brilliant!*

DECLAN: Fucking Jedi, that was.

FALCON: Merci. *(to Paul)* Perhaps it is not so amusing now, oui?

PAUL: *(managing a tiny squeak and not much else)* eep.

FALCON: What do you zink, eh? Perhaps there you will now respect Le Falcon's wishes?

PAUL: *(nodding)* eep.

Falcon releases Paul from his grasp. Dave and Dec applaud Falcon's prowess.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DAVE: Excuse me, Le Falcon, but do ya think you could teach us that bit, with the knife, like?

Paul, one hand holding his throat, uses the other to cuff Dave on the head.

DAVE: Fuck's sake, Paulie. Sorry. That was just wicked is all.

FALCON: Now, gentlemen, I have travelled quite a long way to get here, as I am sure you understand. I was under the impression that you three, "Le Trinity", had serious business to discuss.

DECLAN: Yes sir, that's right.

FALCON: Well then, please do tell me what I can do to help you.

DECLAN: Yes sir. Well, the thing of it is, we want you to, uh, *eliminate*, a certain French footballer.

FALCON: A French footballer?

DECLAN: Yes sir, Le Falcon.

FALCON: I see. Interesting. A challenge. And his name, *si vous plait*?

DECLAN: Maybe you've heard of him then? Theirry Henry.

There is a moment when Falcon, stands up, staggered. He looks around the cafe, trying to collect himself.

FALCON: Henry...is...the man you want...eliminated? The footballer?

The boys look at each other.

DAVE: Yeah, why?

PAUL: Fuck man, don't tell us you can't get it done. My neck-

DECLAN: What's the problem?

FALCON: *(clearly flustered by something)* Non. Nothing.

DECLAN: Well, there' s clearly *something*. Christ, don't tell me you're an Arsenal fan.

Supertitle:

ARSENAL F.C., FOUNDED 1886, IS IN THE ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

HENRY PLAYED FOR ARSENAL FROM 1999-2007.

HE IS THE ALL-TIME LEADING GOAL SCORER FOR THAT CLUB.

FALCON: *(with sudden venom)* NON! Absolutely not! I *hate* Arsenal.

DAVE: Well, what's the issue then? You really reacted to Henry's name.

At just the sound of "Henry", Falcon flinches.

DAVE: See?!? There it is again!

A beat.

PAUL: Henry.

Falcon flinches again.

PAUL: *(continuing the experiment)* Henry.

Falcon flinches again.

PAUL: *(enjoying a bit of revenge)* HENRY!

The lads have a laugh at this odd behavior.

DAVE: Fucking hell!

DECLAN: Jesus, what the fuck is that about?

FALCON: *(trying to collect himself)* I...just...that was a name I did not expect to hear.

PAUL: *(taunting)* Whass the matter, *Mister The Falcon*? Maybe this bastard's not as tough as we thought...

Falcon, maintaining his composure, launches an attack at Paul, that is so superhuman, that is moves in slow motion. Lights change and music reflects the "bullet-time" affect of this attack. When it concludes, space and time return to normal.

With a quick move that Paul doesn't even have time to react to, Falcon puts him down on the ground.

PAUL: Ah fuck.

DAVE: That was just awesome. Sorry Paulie.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: Yeah no, I'd agree with that.

PAUL: It's hard to argue with. I didn't even see 'im move.

FALCON: Monsieur Paul, perhaps now you refrain from, well, speaking to me at all, really. Or at least as little as possible. *Oui?*

PAUL: Yeah, no problem.

DECLAN: Can we get back to what the issue with-*(catches himself)* with the contract?

FALCON: Yes, of course. I apologize for my unprofessional behavior. It will not happen again.

DECLAN: That's all well and good now, but like, what was that about, for fuck's sake?

FALCON: I would prefer not to discuss this.

DECLAN: Well, I'm afraid that's not a fucking option, Le Falcon. If you're gonna fold like a house of cards at the just the mention of Hen- of *the contract's* - name, then how are you going to get the job done?

DAVE: Monsieur, surely you can understand our concern? We were led to believe that you were at the top of your profession...

FALCON: Indeed, I am.

PAUL: For fuck's sake then, would you just tell us what it's all about then?

Falcon take a deep breath and slowly nods, looking at each of them in turn.

FALCON: Oui, gentlemen. Yes, of course, you are right. I will explain. I trust that what I am about to say will not go beyond you. This is intensely private and personal. Is that understood?

DECLAN: Yeah.

PAUL: Sure.

DAVE: Oui.

The other two roll their eyes at this.

PAUL: *(whispering)* Stop sucking up to him now.

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: Very well then. To begin, I must tell you that Monsieur Henry and I have a...history.

DAVE: A history? What do ya mean? Do you-

PAUL: Fucking hell.

DECLAN: Do you *KNOW* Theirry Henry?

FALCON: ...yes. Indeed I do.

DECLAN: Well, that's it then. Fucking abort, yeah? This is over.

DAVE: Whaddy mean, Dec?

DECLAN: He *fucking knows him!* I don't think you can bloody well assassinate someone when the assassee knows you!

PAUL: "Assassee?"

DECLAN: You know what I mean. Don't start now.

DAVE: Is that even a word, like?

PAUL: Not that I ever heard.

DECLAN: It's not FUCKING IMPORTANT.

DAVE: Im after being curious now, that's all.

PAUL: What do you say, Le Falcon? You must know.

FALCON: "Mark" is the term that is most often used.

DAVE: "Mark", eh? See now, I woulda thought that "target" would be the one.

PAUL: I woulda used "intended."

DAVE: Away with that now. "Intended"? You're gonna kill the person, not marry them.

DECLAN: (*furious*) NO ONE FUCKING CARES! I WANT TO KNOW HOW THIS BASTARD KNOWS THEIRRY HENRY AND I WANT TO KNOW RIGHT NOW!

PAUL: Right you are, Dec.

DAVE: Sorry, Dec.

DECLAN: All right now, Le Falcon, tell us how you know Thierry Henry.

Falcon steadies himself, preparing to discuss something which he hasn't spoken of in a long long time. Maybe ever. There is a music & light shift to reflect the overly dramatic nature of this story.

FALCON: Yes, very well...I see that I can have no choice. And indeed, perhaps this is what was *meant* to happen. Perhaps we were meant to cross paths again, after so long a time. (*Beat. He takes a drink of water perhaps.*) 15 years ago, there was a young, handsome footballer who was taking the Belgian under-18 National Team by storm. He was a goalkeeper, of great skill. They spoke about his ability to see a ball's trajectory, to sense how it would move in the air, to know how a player striking the ball would shift, at what moment the ball would be struck...This goalkeeper had led his team through many matches, raises their profile across Europe. It was said that this goalkeeper was the future and face of Belgian international football. That he would be the one to lift Belgium from the dregs, perhaps be the one to lift the trophy in victory at the World Cup. The hopes of an entire nation rested on this goalkeeper's shoulders. And he bore that weight proudly and without complaint.

And so it was when a "friendly" match was arranged between Belgium and her old, bitter rival, France. The French U-18 team had also been doing well of late. It seems the French has a young star of their own. A striker. Quick. Deadly. A weapon of mass destruction on a football pitch. A bright shining light. That striker's name was... Thierry Henry.

The lads exchange glances to each other at this bit of news.

FALCON: On the day of the match, the goalkeeper was asked by the press if he feared Henry's goal-scoring acumen. "*Non,*" he replied. "*He is about to learn what happens when you strike a football against a wall. It simply bounces back.*"

Falcon laughs at this bit of hubris, which Declan then joins in on. Falcon silences him with a look.

FALCON: He was young! Over-confident, perhaps, but with such skill! Such promise! (*Falcon shudders for a moment, someone walking over his grave. He recovers.*) In any event, the match went off as played. The day was bright, clear. The air smelled clean, as if it had been laundered and hung to dry on a line. As soon as the whistle was blown, the battle was joined. The two young teams clashed like lions on the field. Back and forth it went, with neither team gaining the advantage. The young keeper stopped every shot that came his way. And while his compatriots were unable to score, he prevented them from falling behind.

Time came to its inevitable end, as it must. The score stood at nil-nil. The crowd was mad! Roaring, screaming, chanting, singing, drums, drums pounding, as if tribal myths

were being born. After a brief respite, it was now for the shoot-out, the penalties to decide who would go home a champion and raise a nation, or go home crushed under heel.

The keeper was confident, certain he would hold. And for a time he did. For a time...he did.

A pause here as Le Falcon collects himself. This is an extremely painful memory, once which he has never shared with anyone since the day it happened. It's costing him something to be telling it now. The lads are on the edge of their seats, enraptured but this tale. Falcon takes out a handkerchief and dabs at his eyes.

DECLAN: It's all right, lad. Go ahead now. We're with you, yeah?

FALCON: *Oui. Merci.*

Falcon steadies himself up, ready to finish the story.

FALCON: Sadly, the young Belgian team didn't muster much more offense during the penalties than in the match proper. After five shots by the Belgians and four by the French, the score remained tied at nil. Then...Theirry Henry stepped up to take his shot. The goalkeeper was unafraid, this must be clear. Why would he be? He stopped the mighty Henry all game. Why would now be any different. He locked eyes with the French star (*Falcon does the "Im watching you" gesture, two fingers to his own eyes, then out "towards" Henry*) and took his position.

Now, gentlemen, what you must understand that *in this scenario*, the keeper must be more than mortal. He must be superhuman. He must be able to read the mind of the striker approaching the ball, by watching how his weight shifts from foot to foot, which way he turns his head, where his eyes are moving. Then, having deduced, like a detective, where the striker intends to put the ball, diving there to meet it, *anticipating* it. Strikers merely have to kick the ball. The keeper has to be a magician.

Beat.

Henry stepped up to the ball, and then traced six steps backwards from it. The keeper stood ready, muscles coiled and tensed ready to strike. But who was the cobra...and who was the mongoose? Indeed that is the question.

DAVE: (*under his breath*) What the fuck does that mean?

Paul and Declan both shrug.

FALCON: We waited for the whistle, the two of us, waiting in a space outside of space. And, then, when it came, it was if a sluice-gate had been opened and movement flowed

back into our collective. Henry ran forward and struck the ball hard and true. It arc-ed to the net like a rainbow. And then-

Dramatic beat.

PAUL: FUCKIN' hell, man! What happened??

FALCON: The keeper, he--he guessed wrong. He was not a magician that day. Merely a man who does card tricks. ...the ball curved softly into the net, landing with a soft swish of a whisper. The keeper fell to his knees as the stadium exploded in delight and defiance. Henry was crushed in a hug from his teammates, who carried him from the pitch as if he was Charlemange himself.

Supertitle:

CHARLEMANGE WAS BELGIAN, BY THE BY.

THAT'S IT.

FALCON: No one carried the keeper off the field. He stayed there, kneeling in the goal, until long after the crowds had left and only an echo could be heard. But forever in his mind, he would see Theiryry Henry taking that last shot, see himself diving the wrong way, seeing the faces of teammates, his friends, his family, his *nation*, as he failed.

A long pause as Le Falcon cover his eyes and quietly sobs. The three lads look at each other, nodding with sympathy and understanding. This is a terrible tragedy.

DAVE: *(breaking the silence, with empathy)* So, like, you were at this match, then?

Falcon stands up, looking ready to kill Dave. Declan intervenes.

DECLAN: Please, monsieur, allow me.

He cuffs Davey a hard one. Dave goes down like a ton of bricks, again.

DAVE: Fuck me.

FALCON: It was in all the papers. "A *NATION MOURNS*" read the headlines. The goalkeeper was left in disgrace. He left the team and never touched a football again.

DECLAN: You never did? I mean, he never did? What did you do? Or him? Or both of you?

FALCON: He dropped out of school, wandered around aimless for a time, before he wound up at the St. Sixtus Abbey in West Flanders. It was there that the Trappist monks

tried to teach him peace and harmony, but in fact, all they did was teach him the secret to brewing their legendary beers.

PAUL: St. Sixtus---wait now---isn't St. Sixtus, isn't that where they make--ah, what's it called now?

DECLAN: *(with wonder)* Westvletern 12. The rarest beer in the world...

Supertitle:

WESTVLETERN 12 IS ONE OF THE RAREST BEERS IN THE WORLD. IT IS NOT SOLD COMMERCIALY ANYWHERE. THE ONLY PLACE TO BUY IT IS DIRECTLY FROM THE MONKS AT THE ABBEY. BREWED SINCE 1940, IT IS CONSISTENTLY RANKED AS THE WORLD'S BEST BEER.

FALCON: *Oui*, gentlemen, the rarest beer in the entire world. The monks has hoped that he would find some respite from his shame there, amongst the barrels and bottle of finely brewed ale. But alas, it was not to be. He was plagued by nightmares of footballs rocketing past him, like shooting stars. After a time, he left the kind monks and ended up in the military. He learned that the sharp eyes that had once served him so well on the football pitch worked even better in a rifle sight. He became the most decorated marksman in the history of the Belgian Special Forces-

PAUL: *(whispering)* How hard could that have been?

FALCON: *(ignoring this)* --and after resigning his commission, went into business for himself. And that is this man who stands before you today.

A beat while this registers with the trio.

DAVE: *(suddenly realizing)* It's him!

The other two sigh with exasperation.

DECLAN: Yes, Dave, it's him, that's why we've been listening this-

He stops himself in frustration and walk to Falcon.

DECLAN: Le Falcon, that is a--a--a MASSIVE story and we can understand why this must be so difficult for ya. In fact, it makes perfect sense. But we need to know, meaning no disrespect now, but with this added complication of you knowing the man, would you be wanting to warn Henry of our plans? Would you want to let him know that Irish were looking for vengeance?

A pause as Falcon wipes his eyes, looking at each of them in turn. He slowly nods his head.

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: Gentlemen, this is something you need not fear. I will not warn Henry. Indeed no. Allow me to show you something.

He walks over to his bag.

FALCON: *(indicating his bag)* This is something I have carried along with me for nearly as long as my shame.

PAUL: What? A purse?

FALCON: No, it's a satchel.

The lads exchange a look.

FALCON: *(reaching into the bag and revealing with dramatic flair)* This, gentlemen, is the world's only bottle...of Westvletern 13!

A moment of hushed awe amongst the lads. Dave, as if against his will, reaches out to touch the bottle. Falcon quickly pulls it away.

FALCON: Monsieur David! Please, I must insist that you be careful! The value of this bottle is beyond imagining.

DAVE: Fair enough, Le Falcon, but how did you come to have that? I've never even heard of Westvletern 13. And, you know...I'm in the pub a lot.

FALCON: It is no wonder that you have heard of it, gentlemen. It has never been brewed before or since.

A moment where Falcon holds the bottle up in reverence and a light special hits it. A choir of angels sing. When he pulls it down, special & music stop immediately.

FALCON: A monk at the St. Sixtus Abbey showed me a special recipe that had been formulated decades before, but never attempted, for fear that, if the world learned of its existence, so powerful as it is, so very delicious, that the Abbey would be besieged by home-brewers and beer-lovers from around the globe.

PAUL: And sure, who'd be wantin' that now?

DECLAN: Yeah, that sounds terrible.

FALCON: Precisely, Monsieurs! However, the night before I left the Abbey, I took the formula and brewed enough for a single bottle. Which is what you see before you now. I sealed it with wax and never let it touch my lips. And long ago, I promised myself, I would only drink it if my honor was redeemed after that awful day on the pitch. And it

seems that hour is near at hand. So, *mes ami*, not only will I complete the contract, for the honor of Ireland and for the honor of Belgium, but, at long last, for myself. Finally, this terrible weight will be lifted and this beautiful beer shall be consumed. AND, because of this unexpected joy and purpose you have brought me---I will do it for free!

The four men shake hands and clap at this news, excited that justice will finally be served. At a discount.

FALCON: Minus a reimbursement for my travel here.

A beat

FALCON: I keep receipts.

A brief moment of confusion. Then renewed camaraderie.

Lights fade.

SUPERTITLE:

INTERLUDE 4

A press conference, again. This time, Sarkozy. When he appears, he is holding a martini and has two women draped on either side of him. Perhaps they appear "Irish" in a stereotypical sense. In this state, he appears somewhat like a Bond villain.

SARKOZY: *(his accent is slightly slurred, as he is quite drunk)* Ladeez & gentlemen, haha, oh, it is all too much, *non?* Ha! If only Madame McAleese would just calm down and have a drink, perhaps all would be well, eh, *cherie?* There will be no rematch between our countries and of course, we know it wouldn't matter if there was! The French, *Les Bleus*, could not truly lose to the Irish! *Zut 'alor!* We all know this to be true! So who cares if Henry slapped the ball a bit, *oui?* Is football really that important? True, over 2/3 of the planet watch the World Cup, but are there not things of greater value? In point of fact, is not *l'amour* more important than football? But of course! If only Madame President would feel the same way. Perhaps *Monsieur* McAleese is not getting the job done at home, eh? I assure you, Madame, I would make you feel right at home here, in Paris, the City of Light! The City of Love! Indeed, look what I have prepared by way of an apology!

He claps his hands and an Irish reel starts off-camera. The two women on his side start Irish step-dancing beside him.

SARKOZY: Dance, *mon petite fairies!* DANCE!

There is confused murmuring as more flashbulbs go off.

Fade out.

SCENE 5

Supertitle:

LATER.

Still in the cafe.

DECLAN: So, what's the plan then?

FALCON: Pardon?

DECLAN: How're ya gonna get the bastard?

FALCON: Well, I don't normally-

PAUL: Are you gonna use one of them high-powered rifles?

FALCON: Perhaps, I hadn't really-

DAVE: What about one of them blow-darts? You know, the kind dipped in a poison?

PAUL: That's no good, now. You have to be right close to use one of them. Plus, what if it doesn't take?

DAVE: Whatt'dya mean "if it doesn't take"? It's poison, isn't it? The man's (*indicating Falcon*) a professional, after all.

PAUL: Yeah, but Henry's a *world-class* athlete, right? He's got the constitution of...like....I don't know...

DAVE: (*helpfully*) 50 men?

DECLAN: That seems a bit much, now.

PAUL: Yeah, more like ten, probably. But the point is, one dart isn't going to get it done.

DAVE: You can use a bunch though, like in *Raiders of the Lost Ark!*

PAUL: Oh yeah, when the guy gets a mess of them in the back?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: I don't remember that scene.

DAVE: Sure you do, its in the beginning, after the boulder chases him-

DECLAN: Oh right, yes, Got it. Forgot about that one.

PAUL: I still doubt that's the way to go.

DAVE: With a boulder? That's a bit impractical, isn't it? We'd never be able to set that up.

PAUL: The blow darts, ya idijt.

DAVE: Ah yeah. Right. Sorry.

A pause as the trio are considering this, as Falcon looks at them incredulously.

DAVE: A rolling boulder trap would be awesome though, wouldn't it.

PAUL: Absolutely.

DECLAN: No doubt.

Another brief moment of reverie.

DECLAN: So... what do you reckon, then, Le Falcon?

A beat as Falcon looks a bit bewildered at the three men.

FALCON: Well, gentlemen...I don't anticipate using blow darts. Or a boulder. I think, *oui*, a precise shot from a suppressed rifle, or perhaps even a handgun, depending on the distance, is the way to go.

PAUL: When will ya do it then?

FALCON: I have, of course, followed the scandal that Monsieur Henry has created. And I have it on good authority that he will be making a promotional appearance at his old stomping grounds in London at Arsenal's stadium in two days' time . I shall get myself into position at that location. And then, at the right moment, end this *charade*.

DAVE: That was brilliant. Gave me chills, it did.

Declan and Paul nod emphatically.

FALCON: Yes. Well. Fine then. Henry shall be dispatched and honor shall be restored, for Belgium and for me.

THE HAND OF GAUL

PAUL: As long as Ireland comes out ahead.

FALCON: *Pardon?*

PAUL: It's all well and good that your honor and Belgium's be redeemed or whatever, but just remember, it's for the Irish that this job is being done. It's us that were publicly humiliated on the international stage. We don't want that to be forgotten.

FALCON: What, exactly, is it that you are saying, *Monsieur?*

PAUL: I'm saying, lad, that this is not a personal vendetta. *We* hired *you*. For Ireland. Not for bloody fucking Belgium. No one cares about-

DECLAN: (*cautioning*) Easy now, Paulie.

FALCON: That is not necessary, Monsieur Declan. I am very interested in hearing how that sentence will be concluded. Pray tell, Monsieur Paul. No one cares about...what?

There is a tense and deadly silence as Paul weighs his options. No one moves or speaks.

PAUL: Well, ah...(*gathering himself*) ah, fuck it. Listen here, Falcon, no one cares what happened in a friendly U-18 match 20 fucking years ago.

FALCON: Indeed? Is that a fact?

PAUL: Fuck yes, it's a fucking fact. *IRELAND* is what is important here. An entire nation and her people were humiliated by that French bastard. That carries more water than some Belgian has-been who couldn't get his hands on the fucking ball.

FALCON: *HA!* And you think that the world cares about a country of *poser* Europeans who were nearly wiped out when they ran out of potatoes?

All three react to that statement: "Whoa," "Hey now" "That's not right" etc.

DECLAN: Listen up now, Falcon, no one can make a crack like that about the Famine, for fuck's sake. I don't care who you are.

FALCON: And *we*, *all of Europe*, don't care who *you* are, gentlemen. Or should I say...*paddies?*

PAUL: Fuck man, no one cares about that one anymore.

DAVE: Yeah, I have to say, that insult doesn't carry a lot of weight.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: That's right, it doesn't. So watch your fucking mouth, you--- what's an ethnic slur for a Belgian?

DAVE: That's a good question, now.

A beat as they all consider this.

FALCON: I must confess, I have never heard one myself.

PAUL: And see? That's it, then.

DECLAN: Whattya saying, Paulie?

PAUL: I'm saying that the bloody fucking Belgians are so beneath everyone's notice, that folks haven't even bothered to come up with a proper slur for them. What's more disdainful than that?

DAVE: Yeah! How'dya like that--*no-slur?*

As Dave is feeling quite proud of himself for that bit of brilliance, Falcon launches himself at Dave and another brawl breaks out. However, this is not as comedic as the previous, with the exception of how inept the three are against the Falcon. He dispatches the three of them with relative ease, leaving them beaten and bruised on the ground. Falcon picks himself, dusts himself off and regards the trio with contempt.

FALCON: No one calls a Belgian "*no-slur.*"

The trio nod wearily and painfully.

PAUL: Right you are, Le Falcon.

DAVE: Won't say it again.

DECLAN: Don't know what we were thinkin'.

FALCON: Now, gentlemen, I trust there will be no more disparaging of Belgians in my presence.

PAUL: Probably not.

DAVE: Yeah, I doubt it.

DECLAN: Sure, there's been a lot of...great...Belgians over the years...right?

DAVE: Definitely! Like Hercule Poirot!

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: *(steaming)* He's *fictional*.

DAVE: Is he? Well...still and all, he's pretty ripping.

DECLAN:*(quickly)* Listen, Le Falcon, we're sorry, and there won't be anymore cracks about your people, all right? Can we just get back to the...the contract?

FALCON: Indeed. As I was saying before all the unpleasantness, I believe that I suppressed rifle is most likely the method I will use to dispatch Henry.

DAVE: *(timidly raising his hand)* So, can I ask a question, like? I don't wanna get a smack for it, but this is just something that's been on my mind, since this whole plan was concocted.

FALCON: By all means, please speak, Monsieur David.

DAVE: Well, the thing of it is...like...is it gonna hurt?

A beat.

FALCON: Is *what* going to hurt?

DAVE: You know. When you...when you take 'im...out, like.

PAUL: Jaysus, you want to know if it's gonna hurt? Who's caring about that now?

DAVE: I just don't want him to be sufferin' is all. Don't see the need for that.

DECLAN: A little pain is a small price to pay for the liberation of Ireland's honor.

DAVE: Yeah. Ok. Sure.*(a beat)* ...I don't really know what that means.

DECLAN: It means...you know!

PAUL: Stop being such a nancy whiner, Davey. It's embarrassing.

DAVE: I don't understand why that's making me a Nancy, like.

DECLAN: Leaders need to make tough decisions, Davey, for the good of their people, right? And that's what we're doing.

DAVE: We're leaders of our people now?

DECLAN: This is the kind of thing that can lift a man up on the shoulders of his brothers! Bringing justice to the masses! Lift a country out of soul-crushing darkness!

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: You speak rightly, Monsieur Declan! This is an act of righteousness!

DAVE: *(being swayed)* Maybe now, I dunno-

FALCON: Indeed, Monsieur, think about what he has done, not only to me and to you but to our peoples! Henry has literally destroyed entire nations!

PAUL: Yeah! Like Godzilla!

DECLAN: Or one of dem giant samurai robots.

PAUL: Fuckin' killer, those things are.

DECLAN: No doubt.

FALCON: *(using all the European charm he can muster, which is considerable)* Monsieur Dave, I understand your hesitation. Truly, I do. But this...this...*fiend*...has committed crimes against humanity. He has robbed *le beau jeu* of its simple grace. It is an affront to us all and cannot be allowed to stand.

DAVE: Right. Yeah. Sure and all but I still don't want him to--

FALCON: Monsieur, I can *assure* you, Henry will not feel a thing. My skill is such that he won't even be aware what has occurred when-

DECLAN: ...when the match is over?

FALCON: *Oui*, just so, Monsieur Declan.

PAUL: It'll bring him peace, really. Imagine living with the shame of it!

DAVE: That's true, I suppose...and it won't hurt? You're sure now?

FALCON: No, it will not. It will be as gentle an end as I can manage. I give you my word. You are an honorable man, David. *(He kisses both of Dave's cheeks)*. As proof of my bond, I leave you this. *(He pulls the bottle of beer from his satchel)*. Such is my belief in this action and my desire to qualm your fears, I *entrust* you, Monsieur David, with this. If in the news reports following the contract, you hear of anguish, or pain, smash it to the ground!

The trio is astounded at this gesture.

DECLAN: ...jaysus...

THE HAND OF GAUL

PAUL: ...do ya want me to hold it, like? Davey can be a bit buttery-fingered, ya know...

DAVE: But, but--Le Falcon, I can't take, I mean this is your most--

FALCON: Indeed it is. Which is how *certain* I am that this is the right and even, yes, the *only* course to take. Do you trust me, David?

DAVE: ...yes.

FALCON: (*triumphantly*) And I trust you! Very well then! It is settled! When next we meet, our mutual problem will be solved and I will take a deep, long drink from that bottle.

He turns to leave, gathering himself together.

FALCON: *Au revior!*

He leaves. The trio are left alone. There is a quiet moment of satisfaction, as they shake hands, although Dave seems reluctant. The three of them sit down.

DECLAN: Well, lads, I gotta say now. That's a job well done.

PAUL: Absolutely Dec. You were right on the money with this one, now.

DECLAN: It's gonna be sweet when he's...ya know.

PAUL: Totally. When he's...(*struggling to find the word*)

DECLAN: (*pumping his fist*) IRELAND!

PAUL: (*same*) IRELAND!

They look to Dave, who has yet to participate. He feels them looking, and offers a half-hearted fist pump.

DAVE: (*weakly*) Ireland.

DECLAN: Ahhh, c'mon now lad. It's all gonna be all right now, isn't it?

DAVE: I dunno Dec.

PAUL: We're gonna be *heroes*, Davey.

DAVE: How can we be heroes if no one can know it was us?

PAUL: Ah yeah. Right you are. (*beat*) Anonymous heroes then.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: It's the gesture that counts, doesn't it? People will know it was an Irishman did this.

DAVE: Except it was a Belgian, really.

DECLAN: They'll know it was an Irishman *behind* it, right?

DAVE: Yeah maybe. Doesn't feel heroic though, like.

PAUL: Ah, it will when all of Ireland is weeping for joy!

DAVE: Yeah, right, but if people knew that it was us, we'd prosecuted for *murder*, Dec.

DECLAN: What do ya mean?

DAVE: What do you mean, what do I mean? Are youse serious? Listen, I know I participated as much as the two of ya, and setting aside the fact we're about to kill a man for a football foul, but Christ, what if Falcon gets caught?

PAUL: Nah, he's never gonna get caught, Davey.

DAVE: Yeah, but WHAT IF HE DOES?

DECLAN: Nah, he a pro, isn't he?

DAVE: Dec, you can't even get a glass bottle in them stadiums anymore, you think he's just gonna waltz in with a rifle?

DECLAN: Well, I-

DAVE: Paulie, you know it's true. Sure didn't your cousin get chucked out of a match last spring for bringing a plastic bin with roast chicken in it?

PAUL: Well yeah, that's true, like, but Falcon is-

DAVE: --is what, Paulie? We don't know how good he is, not really. We found him *through a google search, for fuck's sake!* What if he gets caught? You think he won't give us up??

DECLAN: Well, now, I hadn't, that is, I'm *sure*-

DAVE: Sure of what? You think we can trust that Belgian bastard to keep our names outta it? And *when*, not *if*, *when* he gives us up, what are we gonna do? The guard or whoever will find us sitting down the pub in the same table we always sit in and then we're fucked, lads. Fucked right and proper.

THE HAND OF GAUL

A moment of tense silence as they each contemplate that possibility.

PAUL: I have to be honest and say I'm not really cut out for prison life.

DECLAN: Yeah, I'd have to agree on that point. You wouldn't last too long in the joint, like.

PAUL: Oh yeah, but *you* would. Please. Like you'd be king o' the fuckin' castle, then?

DECLAN: I'd last longer than you, of that I'm sure.

PAUL: Ha! How'd ya figure that?

DECLAN: I'd keep my head down, not make noise. I've seen Oz. I know the score.

PAUL: *The score?* For fuck's sake. Are youse-

DAVE: (*furious and frightened*) WE DO NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS NOW! Christ! It's even beyond that!

PAUL: Beyond us going to prison, you're saying?

DAVE: Would you, like, think for a *second*? This could create an international incident!

DECLAN: (*realizing*) Fucking hell.

PAUL: An international incident? Like what, for fuck's sake?

DECLAN: Dammit, Paulie, this whole thing could start a war between Ireland and Belgium!

A beat as this possibility is considered.

PAUL: ...would someone care about that?

DAVE: I have to admit that seems unlikely.

DECLAN: Yeah, I agree.

Another beat of consideration.

DECLAN: All right then, look, here's the plan. Let's get the hell out of here.

PAUL: And go *where*, for fuck's sake?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: Listen, we have the money that we were gonna pay Falcon with, right?

DAVE: Yeah, so?

DECLAN: So let's get to the airport and catch a flight out of the country!

DAVE: But I can't just leave my da, like!

DECLAN: Fuck, son, we can send for your da, after we've settled somewhere!

PAUL: Yeah but-

DECLAN: But what?? None of us have anything else here. No real prospects. No careers. Shite jobs that pay hardly a livin' wage at this point. It's all fallen down, hasn't it? We're Irish. We'll always be Irish. Let's just go be Irish somewhere else.

The trio look at each other, take a long moment, then nod.

DAVE: Yeah. Yeah, all right then. But we can't forget to send for me da, as soon as we can, all right? I forgot him at the store once and he was pissed, ya know.

DECLAN: Absolutely, lad. All right now, where shall we go?

PAUL: *(excitedly)* I've got it! Let's go to fucking Argentina then!

DAVE: Why there?

PAUL: They'd never think to look for us in the home country of another handball-cheating bastard!

General approval at this.

Supertitle:

THAT'S MARADONA HE'S TALKING ABOUT, IF YOU RECALL.

YEAH, I'M STILL HERE.

DECLAN: Well thought out, Paulie. Argentina it is. Let's get the fuck out of here, then.

Lights fade.

INTERLUDE 5

As before.

MCALEESE: Yeah, right. Fuck it. I'm done with this. Does this French bastard honestly think that I, or, Ireland, will stand for this? And his sophomoric attempts at humor are simply sad. Shall we have a bunch of mimes in berets on this podium with me? Shall I mock their love of cheese, body odors and unfortunate styles in men's trousers? There are ACTUAL problems in the world that need solving. So can we just fucking get on with it?

She turns to leave, changes her mind, comes back to the podium.

MCCALEESE: But before I go, let me say this, right to the camera, and to President Sarkozy. STOP POKING ME ON FACEBOOK.

She storms off, amidst more flashbulbs and some applause.

Lights fade.

SCENE 6

The screen shows the interior of an airport. The lads are waiting nervously for their flight. All three have carry-on bags or backpacks. They are all sitting, checking the time, looking around, various nervous tics. It is quiet for a long moment. There are various sounds of an airport. Planes taking off in the distance. Faint announcements being made. The voice of a television reporter, etc.

PAUL: *(trying to encourage some enthusiasm, pumping his fist in the air)* ARGENTINA!

The other two look at him blankly and look away.

PAUL: Yeah, doesn't have quite the same ring, does it?

A pause.

DAVE: ...I can't speak Spanish. Can you, Dec?

DECLAN: Well, not as such, no...

PAUL: We're not gonna need it. Everyone speaks English everywhere.

DAVE: That's not true.

PAUL: What do ya mean? Of course it is.

DAVE: Nah, it's not. More people speak Mandarin than English.

THE HAND OF GAUL

PAUL: So what, you want to go to China, instead?

DAVE: I'm not saying that-

PAUL: Football's rubbish there, though isn't it?

DAVE: I don't want to *move* there, I'm just saying that-

DECLAN: Shut it, the both of ya. It's Argentina.

A pause.

DAVE: It's far, isn't it.

DECLAN: What's that?

DAVE: Just sayin' it's far. Like thousands and thousands of miles, isn't it.

DECLAN: *(trying to be patient)* It's supposed to be far. That's the point, like.

DAVE: They've got penguins you know.

DECLAN: What?

DAVE: I'm saying that's how far south it is. They've got like, native penguins that live there.

Supertitle:

IT'S TRUE. THE MAGELLANIC PENGUIN IS NATIVE TO ARGENTINA, CHILE AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

HERE'S A PICTURE OF SOME.



AREN'T THEY CUTE?

PAUL: But don't penguins need like icebergs and that? It's hot in South America!

DAVE: Not there, it isn't. It gets cold there. Really cold. Like, it's not that far from Antarctica, ya know.

PAUL: Fuck me, is that true?

DECLAN: What difference does that fucking make? It's cold in Ireland too. Jaysus.

PAUL: Yeah, but like that was a selling point for me, anyways! Sun, girls wearing bikinis all the time, fruity cocktails and all-

DECLAN: It's not a resort we're going to, for fuck's sake. We're fugitives, for the love of Christ!

DAVE: (*quietly*) ...like the Nazis.

DECLAN: What was that?

DAVE: (*sighing*) Nothing, Dec.

PAUL: Did you say Nazis?

DAVE: Sure, didn't most of them that weren't caught or killed or whatever flee to Argentina?

PAUL: I thought they went to Brazil, like.

DECLAN: Oooh, like in "Boys from Brazil" about them Hitler kids!

PAUL: That is a good film.

Supertitle:

THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL IS A 1978 THRILLER ABOUT CLONES OF ADOLF HITLER BEING SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, CULMINATING IN A SHOWDOWN IN A BARN IN LANCASTER, PA

NO, I'M NOT JOKING.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DAVE: That's not the point! The point is Argentina provided shelter for runaway Nazis like. I dunno that I wanna be associated with that.

DECLAN: That's a fair point, but-

DAVE: Dec, look, I know you're just looking out for us and all, but, look where we're at! Fleeing the country, mixing in with Nazis-

PAUL: And penguins.

DAVE: And penguins. That's not our scene, like.

DECLAN: We're not worried about the scene, right? We're trying to save ourselves.

DAVE: And my da.

DECLAN: (*exasperated*) And your da. So can we just drop it now? Penguins and Nazis and all?

DAVE: All right, Dec.

PAUL: Sure thing, Dec.

There is a moment of uncomfortable silence as the lads consider their future. In that silence, the voice of the television reporter grows louder, as they become more "aware" of it.

VOICE OF REPORTER: *"...and in a stunning admission, the now-infamous French footballer, Thierry Henry, has admitted and apologized for his handball in France's recent World Cup qualifier match against Ireland. Henry issued a statement saying, quote,*

'Naturally I feel embarrassed at the way that we won and feel extremely sorry for the Irish, who definitely deserve to be in South Africa. Of course, the fairest solution would be to replay the game, but it is not in my control.' In other news..."

Voice fades out. The lads are sitting mouths agape at this news. A silence.

DAVE: Well...

DECLAN: Yeah.

PAUL: Fuck me.

DAVE: Who would've thought he had it in him, huh

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: Not me.

PAUL: Me neither.

DAVE: Who knew a Frenchman could be honorable?

DECLAN: Fuck, not me.

PAUL: Me neither.

A pause.

DAVE: *(standing)* Well...that's it.

PAUL: *(incredulous)* What the fuck does that mean?

DAVE: Wouldn't be right. Not now.

DECLAN: *What* wouldn't be right?

DAVE: You know. Doing the...doing the *job* now. We have to call it off.

PAUL: WHAT?!?

DAVE: There's no point now. The man apologized.

DECLAN: But- but-

DAVE: No sense killing a man for an honest mistake.

PAUL: Yeah, that's true but-

DAVE: It coulda happened to anyone, really. Happened to me, playing for my da's team when I was--

DECLAN: Shut up about your Da now, Davey.

DAVE: You can't still be thinking of going through with it? The man apologized! I mean, ok, look now, I know we were all hyped up about the handball and all, but, Christ, does he really need killing for it now? That would like make *us* worse than *him*, wouldn't it?

PAUL: There's nothing worse than a Frenchman.

DAVE: That's hard to deny, But listen, the man said he was sorry!

PAUL: Who gives a fuck about that?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: Davey, I understand what you're saying but-

DAVE: Dec, hold on now, let me say this: your da wouldn't like this. I knew the man, rest his soul and I know things have been hard all around, like, but...he wouldn't like this, Dec, Irish honor or no. Neither would yours, Paulie. Wouldn't have stolen a match to light a fag, that man. Do you think he'd proud of this?

PAUL: Well, probably not, now.

DECLAN: Christ Davey, why didn't you say something like this before we hired a hitman?

DAVE: Well...I thought we were mostly in it for the craic. Plus, I didn't want to be bollocks'd again.

A pause as Declan considers this.

DECLAN: What do you say, Paulie?

A beat.

PAUL: Well now, I mean, it won't change the fact that Henry is bastard, but no, I guess he doesn't deserve to die for it in the end. Plus, I don't want to be hanging around with Nazis.

DAVE: And penguins.

PAUL: And penguins.

A beat.

DECLAN: You understand what this means, right? It mean *we* have to stop Falcon.

Another beat.

PAUL: Fuck.

DAVE: Forgot about that. Dammit.

PAUL: Yeah, Dec, I don't like our chances on this one.

DECLAN: There's no choice on this, lads. We have to try. For our fathers. For Ireland. We have to try,

DAVE: *(quoting with reverence)* "Do or do not. There is no try."

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: Now's not the time for your Star Wars references, Daveyboy.

DAVE: Right you are. Sorry.

PAUL: So how are we gonna do this then?

DECLAN: Davey, do ya still have Falcon's bottle?

Davey reaches into his backpack and pulls out a stuffed animal first, hands it to Declan, and then fishes the bottle out. They trade objects.

PAUL: *(as if understanding the plan)* Ah right! Of course. What say, fellas? A quick nip for the road then?

Dec cuffs him one.

DECLAN: Don't be daft. This is how we're gonna stop him.

A pause as the other two think about it.

DAVE: *(understanding)* Ah, right-o!

PAUL: *(not getting it)* Ah...right...o!

DECLAN: Now, all we have to do is get to London.

A beat

PAUL: How're we gonna do that, then?

DAVE: Yeah, should we hop on a ferry or something?

DECLAN: ...we're in an airport, for fuck's sake.

PAUL/DAVE: Ah, right. Of course.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

"Ryan Air, Flight 347 to London, now boarding Gate 3."

The lads gather their things and rush off, with Dave leaving the bottle and his stuffed animal behind

DECLAN: *(off-stage)* DAVEY!

Dave runs back in, grabs the animal, caresses it lovingly, then rushes out, still leaving the bottle. After a moment, Declan walks in, picks up the bottle wearily and heads out.

Lights fade.

VIDEO MONTAGE: Boats, planes, trains, people running, etc

SCENE 7

Supertitle:

LONDON

The image of a football stadium, perhaps with a small crowd in front.

After a moment, Falcon, walks calmly on stage alone, looking around him. He pulls his weapon out, cautiously, checking it. After having done satisfactorily, he turns to head toward the stadium. At the moment, the trio runs on, out of breath, startling him. Declan has the bottle tucked away.

DECLAN: *(haltingly)* Hold it---hold it, right there, Falcon. We can't-

DAVE: You can't do it Falcon!

FALCON: What on earth are you doing here? What are you talking about?

PAUL: *(really out of breath)* Fuck--me--jaysus, we gotta get in better shape, lads.

DECLAN: Falcon, listen, we appreciate everything you've done so far, but we've had a change of heart, like.

FALCON: *Pardon?*

DECLAN: Yeah. I mean, I don't know if you heard, like, but Henry...well, he apologized.

FALCON: He...apologized.

DECLAN: Yeah.

PAUL: It's true. Couldn't believe it myself.

DAVE: Fairly eloquent, I'd say.

FALCON: He apologized.

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: He did.

FALCON: So?

DECLAN: So.. .we...that is to say...yeah, the contract's off.

FALCON: *Pardon moi?*

A tense moment, with potential for great violence.

DAVE: We all agreed that this, you know, stopping this...that would be the right thing.

PAUL: Plus, we figured we weren't cut out for prison life. In the event you got caught, like. Although personally, I feel that I would be--

FALCON: *Le Falcon* has never been apprehended!

DECLAN: Right you are, but you know, there's always a chance though, right?

DAVE: And who's to say when, yeah? Like today might be that day!

PAUL: Totally. Odds are.

DAVE: Instant karma's gonna get you.

PAUL: *(joining in)* "Gonna get cha right in the face!"

DAVE/PAUL: *(singing)* "And we allll shine on/like the moon and the stars and sun!"

FALCON: Gentlemen-

DAVE/PAUL/DECLAN: *(singing joyously)* "And we allll shine on/And on and on and on"

FALCON: *(at his wit's end)* Gentlemen, PLEASE!

PAUL: Not a Lennon man, I guess.

FALCON: Gentlemen, having second thoughts is very common and I can appreciate your concerns but-

DAVE: No buts, here Falcon.

PAUL: Yeah. We're done with it. It's over.

FALCON: *(with menace)* Over?

THE HAND OF GAUL

DECLAN: *(trying to be brave)* Yeah, that's right. Over. I mean, Henry apologized and all.

FALCON: *(with fury)* *Je ne m'inquiète pas si il s'est excusé!* [TRANSLATION: *I do not care if he apologized*] This IS NOT about your stupid handball! This is about a lifetime of humiliation!

PAUL: First of all, the handball is not stupid. He's still an arrogant French bastard, but the man apologized and we're lettin' it go. Fuck, are all youse Belgians so whiny?

DECLAN: And he didn't cheat in your match. You were unlucky that day. That shite happens, son. Sometimes you lose.

FALCON; SHUT UP! What is WRONG with you--you---FOOLS?!? The man destroyed the honor of your entire PEOPLE!

DECLAN: I'm not sure that's totally true. I mean, I think Gaelic football might have more fans at home, actually.

DAVE: Yeah, Im not sure that many people care, really.

PAUL: But some us definitely do.

DECLAN: For sure. But that's beside the point. Henry's apologized now.

FALCON: What possible difference could that make?

PAUL: It takes a big man to admit he's in the wrong like that.

DAVE: Especially on a global stage.

PAUL: *(agreeing)* Especially on a global stage.

FALCON: *(near falling apart)* No, no, no. I will not have it. I have waited 15 years for this moment.

PAUL: Fuck man, let it go. It'll just eat you up in the end.

DECLAN: Yeah brother. That's a dark road you've been on. Best to let it be at this point. After all, it led you to your calling, didn't it?

FALCON: What?

DAVE: Yeah, Dec's right, absolutely. You wouldn't be Belgium's finest assassin if not for Henry.

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: Well, yes, I suppose that's true, but-

PAUL: Yeah man, plus you can do all this samurai shite. Couldn't do that if you were just a footballer. And, you know, your career would probably be over by now anyway.

Falcon had been listening to this with a somewhat open mind, but upon Paul's "career would be over by now" comment, his rage is fully returned.

FALCON: No, gentlemen, I will have my revenge, with or without "*Le Trinity*."

PAUL: Who the fuck's that?

DECLAN: *(giving Paul a whack)* That's us, ya eedjit.

PAUL: Fuck. Yeah, right.

Falcon turns to leave.

DECLAN: Stop right there, Falcon. We can't be letting you go murdering Henry now.

FALCON: Is that so gentlemen? I don't think you understand.

He pulls a gun from nowhere. The trio immediately put their hands up.

FALCON: I don't need your permission to do this. This moment is mine. Finally, finally mine. Do not try to stop me. Do not follow. Or I will kill you all.

DAVE: *(desperately)* Falcon, look now. There's a crowd of innocent people up there with 'im. You don't wanna be shooting into that lot do you?

FALCON: *(dumbfounded)* I'm an ASSASSIN.

DAVE: Right, yeah. No, yeah, that's a good point. But these aren't like-

DECLAN: These aren't politicians. If they were, you could murder the whole lot. But these is just football fans, now.

FALCON: I will have my revenge!

He turns to go.

PAUL: Hard to believe there are people who actually talk like that, ya know?

DAVE: Yeah.

DECLAN: *(pulling out the big guns)* MAURICE!

The Falcon stops in his tracks. He turns, dumbstruck.

FALCON: How--how do you know that name?

DECLAN: We looked up the match where Henry made his shot against you. Your name is still listed.

DAVE: We have mad "googling" skills, ya know.

PAUL: If it's any consolation to ya, I wouldn't go by *Maurice* either.

DAVE: Yeah, that's terrible. It sounds like "more ice."

PAUL: Totally.

DAVE: Like at parties, people saying "Hey Maurice, more ice!"

PAUL: That's awful, isn't it?

Falcon is about to lunge at the pair when Declan pulls out the bottle. It stops him in his tracks.

DECLAN: Easy now, lad. In your rush to leave our fair country, you gave this to us, remember?

DAVE: He gave it to me, actually.

PAUL: I see you've still got your purse though.

FALCON: It's a *satchel*.

DAVE: I'd say it's more purse-like, really.

PAUL: Definitely. Think me mum has one just like it.

DECLAN: Listen to me, Maurice. We've got your bottle now. And do you know what we're gonna do with it?

PAUL: Not drink it, apparently.

FALCON: Give it to me!!

DECLAN: I don't think so, lad.

Declan makes a "dropping" gesture with the bottle.

FALCON: *Non.*

DECLAN: *Oui.* Now, here's the deal, Maurice. Either you stop what you're doing right now, or this bottle gets smashed on the ground and no more *Westvletern 13.*

FALCON: ...you wouldn't.

DECLAN: I absolutely would.

PAUL: *(whispering)* Let's not be too hasty, Dec.

DECLAN: Drop the gun and the bottle's yours again.

DAVE: Think about it, Falcon! What's worth more to you? The bottle or Henry?

Falcon considers for a moment, weighing the options and turns to run towards the stadium. At that moment, Declan tosses the bottle in the air in an arc. Falcon stops, changes direction, drops the gun and makes a spectacular diving catch, just like a top-notch goal-keeper, saving the bottle from destruction. On the screen, close-ups of the Falcon making the catch run in slow motion. It then fades back to the stadium image. The Falcon lays on the ground, cradling the bottle. He shares a moment with it briefly, then looks at the trio, who are nodding appreciatively.

DAVE: Jaysus! That was well-done!

PAUL: Incredible save, Maurice!

DECLAN: Brilliant, lad, just fucking brilliant.

Falcon stands slowly. Clearly he has undergone some sort of sea-change.

FALCON: I feel---I feel so strange. I feel like-

DECLAN: Like honor redeemed?

FALCON: *(nodding)* *Oui. Integritie degager.*

PAUL: Sounds fuckin' sweet when you say it like that.

FALCON: My rage---it is gone. I feel a calm I have not known for years. Saving this bottle, it has soothed me. *Mon ami*, and I say that truly now, you have performed upon me an *amnestie*.

DAVE: What's that now, Maurice?

THE HAND OF GAUL

FALCON: An act of grace.

The trio look at each other, quite chuffed with themselves.

FALCON: Indeed, what else would a Trinity do?

He reaches out a hand and each of them shake in turn.

DECLAN: Well-- I guess that's it for us, then. We should be heading back home, I suppose.

PAUL: Yeah, right. I told me boss I was just heading out for a smoke. Best to go back, like.

FALCON: Gentlemen, I wonder if I could persuade you to stay. We can watch the match in the stadium. I had tickets to get in and get close to Henry. A shame to waste them.

A general hub-bub of "Ah, I don't know now" " Can we please?" etc.

FALCON: And, before-hand, I was thinking that the three of you could help me drink this bottle.

PAUL: We're in.

DAVE: Absolutely.

DECLAN: A pleasure.

The foursome turn to head upstage.

PAUL: Maurice?

FALCON: *Oui?*

PAUL: Can we chuck the empty bottle at Henry's head?

FALCON: I insist.

PAUL: Fuckin' brilliant.

Lights fade.

SUPERTITLE:

FRANCE'S TEAM FELL APART IN THE FIRST ROUND OF THE 2010 WORLD CUP, AS A RESULT OF POOR PLAY AND INTER-SQUAD FIGHTING AND THEY DID NOT ADVANCE.

THEIRRY HENRY LEFT FRANCE AND JOINED THE AMERICAN MLS TEAM, THE NEW YORK RED BULLS, NEVER KNOWING HOW CLOSE HE CAME TO BEING "RUBBED OUT."

LE FALCON LEFT THE ASSASSIN PROFESSION BEHIND AND RETURNED TO BREWING BEER. AND COACHING YOUTH SOCCER, WHERE HIS PENCHANT FOR THREATENING THE REFS FITS IN NICELY.

THE BOYS RETURNED HOME AND TRIED TO LIVE GOOD LIVES, WITH LESS ANGER AND MORE PATIENCE. THEY ALSO TRIED TO SELL A BOOK BASED ON THIS EXPERIENCE. BUT NO ONE BELIEVED IT WAS TRUE.

ALSO THEY KEPT ARGUING ABOUT WHO SHOULD WRITE IT.

AND AS FOR IRELAND...WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS BRAZIL. 2014.

SEE YOU THERE.

A short montage of great goals over the years and the fans who love them, weeping, singing, chanting, screaming, bursting into cheers.

END OF PLAY.