

Untitled Mandela Script

(aka "The Human Factor")

by

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(Based on material by JOHN CARLIN)

"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, the power to unite people that little else has ... It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers."

Nelson Mandela

Untitled Mandela Script

EXT. ALL-WHITE HIGH SCHOOL, WESTERN CAPE - DAY

A big, rich, powerhouse all-white high school located near the freeway into Cape Town. The RUGBY FIELDS are immaculate. FIFTEEN YEAR OLD BOYS in striped rugby jerseys train with total intensity under the critical eye of the COACH.

Right ACROSS THE BOUNDARY FENCE from the rugby fields is an area of WASTE LAND leading up to the freeway. There, BLACK AND "COLORED" (MIXED-RACE) BOYS of the same age play a loose game of soccer with a tennis ball. Most of them have bare feet and threadbare, dirty clothes, most of them are noticeably smaller and skinnier than the white boys.

Two cultures, separated by more than the high boundary fence.

SUPER TITLE: SOUTH AFRICA, FEBRUARY 11, 1990

A COMMOTION ON THE FREEWAY intrudes on the soccer game. Horns honking, cars pull over onto the shoulder, people jump out.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Lead by police motorbikes, then patrol cars, a white Mercedes approaches, heading towards Cape Town. Whoever is in the Mercedes has stopped traffic.

EXT. ALL-WHITE HIGH SCHOOL, WESTERN CAPE - DAY

The soccer players abandon their game and run for the freeway, whistling and shouting.

The rugby players are more disciplined -- or obedient -- and do not acknowledge the commotion until the convoy passes right by them. The coach shakes his head in disgust.

HIGH SCHOOL BOY

Who is it, sir?

COACH

It's that terrorist, Mandela. They let him out.

(beat)

Remember this day, boys. It's the day our country went to the dogs.

CUT TO:

A short, STOCK-FOOTAGE MONTAGE which spans the tumultuous four years between NELSON MANDELA'S release from prison and his inauguration as President of South Africa.

Footage would include:

- Mandela's release from prison
- negotiations with the apartheid regime
- scenes of white fear and emigration
- the horrifying sectarian violence leading up to the elections
- the khaki-clad AWB (Afrikaner right wing) attack on the World Trade Center (where negotiations were taking place)
- the lifting of economic sanctions and cultural boycotts
- the lifting of the international ban on the Springbok rugby team and immediate Test match losses to New Zealand and Australia.
- popular black leader Chris Hani's assassination by white right wingers
- black retaliation
- Mandela's frantic intervention to keep the country from going up in flames
- the election itself, with those incredible images of thousands and thousands of people, black and white, lining up patiently, some to vote for the first time in their lives
- the African National Congress victory
- Mandela's inauguration as President, where he delivers the famous words:

"Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another, and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world."

As APPLAUSE FADES ...

GO TO BLACK:

INT. MANDELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dark. We can make out the FORM OF A TALL MAN SLEEPING ALONE at the very edge of the big bed, as if not wanting to rumple the blankets too much.

On the bedside table, the clock clicks from 4:59 to 5:00. The man's eyes open in the dark, instantly awake. He reaches out, switches on the light.

NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA, 76, sits up and gets out of bed in one movement. He has the physical vigor and energy of someone twenty years younger.

The second he is up, he turns around and makes his bed, leaving it as flawlessly smooth as a hospital bed. Or a prison bunk.

For this is the discipline of twenty seven years behind bars.

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dressed in a tracksuit and cross-trainers, Mandela comes down the stairs and heads for the front door.

This is a nice, big house but it is amazingly modest for the President of a wealthy nation, and arguably the most famous man on the planet.

EXT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mandela steps outside, closes his front door quietly, takes a moment to savor the air. It is bone dry and cold -- typical conditions in the Highveld at this time of year.

It is so quiet that, for a moment, it seems as if Mandela is completely alone in the world.

The big yard is fenced. There is a small GUARD HOUSE at the driveway gate.

When Mandela steps away from the house, A UNIFORMED SOUTH AFRICAN POLICEMAN IN THE GUARDHOUSE pushes the button that opens the gate.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When the gate begins to open we see that there are TWO GREY BMWs parked either side of it.

INT. GREY BMW - NIGHT

LINGA MOONSAMY comes to full alert as the gate opens. He is a big, scowling man dressed in a suit. He checks the load on a pistol, tucks it into his shoulder holster.

LINGA

Here he comes. Like clockwork.

JASON

It makes him such an easy target.

Behind Linga, in the back seat, sits JASON TSHABALALA, a naturally tense and suspicious man. Both of them are hollow-eyed, exhausted, running on adrenaline.

They get out of the BMW, fast and quiet. This does not look good.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As Mandela walks out through the gate, Jason and Linga intercept him.

JASON  
(traditional greeting in  
Xhosa)  
I see you, father.

Mandela's face comes alive as he smiles.

MANDELA  
(without breaking stride)  
Morning boys. How are you?

Jason is Mandela's head of personal security, Linga his number one bodyguard. They are both former "terrorists", and they are utterly devoted to Mandela.

JASON  
We're sharp, Madiba.

MANDELA  
Good ... good. And how's your  
mother doing, Linga?

LINGA  
She's much better, thank you.

MANDELA  
Good.

Mandela picks up the pace. Jason and Linga fall back, so that they are a few steps behind him.

They share a quick look. They hate this walk. It scares them. There's no way for it to be anything but completely unsanitary, from a security point of view.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHANNESBURG STREETS - NIGHT

A SMALL DELIVERY VAN drives really fast, blows through stop signs.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUGHTON STREETS - NIGHT

Mandela strides along the big, wide, tree-lined streets. Jason and Linga shadow him, eyes and ears alert.

Up ahead, we see a SMALL, UPSCALE AREA OF SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL, UPSCALE SHOPS - NIGHT

Mandela, Jason and Linga reach the shopping area. Dark, deserted.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE of the shops as the small van turns onto the street with a squeal of tires.

CUT TO:

The SLIDING DOOR on the van IS OPENED from inside. Too dark to see in. Ominous.

CUT TO:

Mandela, Jason and Linga pass a HUGE POSTER OF MANDELA in the window of CORNER GROCERY. Mandela does not react to this giant picture of himself, Jason and Linga do, proudly --

(A GENERAL NOTE: starting with the window of this grocery, there are pictures of Mandela everywhere. Magazine covers, newspaper centerfolds, T-shirts, children's art -- as if to make up for all the time Mandela's image and words were banned.)

-- until they HEAR THE SOUND OF THE VAN tearing towards them. They turn, SEE HEADLIGHTS VEERING TO THEIR SIDE OF THE STREET.

BOTH MEN DROP THEIR HANDS TO THEIR GUNS. Linga steps in front of Mandela, shielding him, Jason steps out wide, ready for anything.

Mandela is completely calm. The van screeches to a halt just past them.

A GUY jumps out of the van holding a tied BUNDLE OF NEWSPAPERS, which he drops with a thump at the grocery door. The guy doesn't see them. The delivery van is gone before the newspapers stop moving.

Mandela heads for the newspapers -- he wants to see the headlines.

Jason and Linga take their hands off their guns, but they do not relax. These are dangerous times.

GO IN ON THE TOP NEWSPAPER, which shows a PHOTO OF THE INAUGURATION, and the following words, in Afrikaans: HE CAN WIN AN ELECTION, BUT CAN HE RUN A COUNTRY?

JASON

What does it say?

MANDELA

It says, "He can win an election, but can he run a country?"

LINGA

(disgusted)

Not even one day on the job and they're after you.

MANDELA

It's a legitimate question.

Mandela turns and marches for home. Jason and Linga fall in behind him. In the east, the first milky hint of day.

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - BEFORE DAWN

The house is now bustling with activity. A pretty member of the KITCHEN STAFF sets a single place at the head of a big, formal dining table.

A LADY CHEF stirs the porridge, a KITCHEN ASSISTANT cuts fresh fruit.

Mandela's PERSONAL SECRETARY, MARY marches out of her small office with a STACK OF CORRESPONDENCE AND FIVE NEWSPAPERS, places them neatly next to the table setting.

Outside, Mandela is surrounded by men. Inside, he has surrounded himself with women of all shapes, colors and ages, to make up for twenty seven years without.

CUT TO:

MANDELA SHAVES UPSTAIRS IN THE BATHROOM. The razor is dull.

Mandela opens drawers looking for another. He opens a drawer that is empty but for a WOMAN'S BEADED BRACELET, broken and shedding tiny colored beads.

Mandela looks for it for a moment, then closes the drawer, looks at himself in the mirror. Mostly, Mandela's face is warm, animated, energetic and this is how we see him, almost all the time.

But, sometimes, his face can be a remote, sphinx-like mask that conceals all emotion, all feeling. This is his prison face.

This is the face that looks back at Mandela, right now, in the mirror. It is the face of a man whose long, hard journey has marked his very soul.

Expressionless, Mandela shaves himself with the dull razor.

OVER, a COCK CROWS and --

CUT TO:

-- a QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS, as the RAINBOW NATION WAKES UP.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Today marks the beginning of a new era in South Africa --

From the bush to the cities, from shanty towns to ocean-front mansions, PEOPLE START THEIR DAY.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

-- as President Mandela takes office in Pretoria, facing issues that range from economic stagnation and unemployment to rising crime --

Some start the day with a tea tray placed next to their beds by discreet black hands, some with nothing more than brown river water and half a fire-blackened ear of corn for breakfast.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 -- while at the same time balancing  
 black aspirations --

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENTS HOUSE - MORNING

TV ANNOUNCER  
 -- with white fears.

Click! The TV is turned off by MR. PIENAAR (late 40's) in his very modest, blue-collar house.

MR. PIENAAR  
 (gloomy)  
 I never thought I'd see the day.

Mr. Pienaar turns and addresses his son, FRANCOIS PIENAAR, 27, a big, blond, almost-handsome man with a fighter's face and mangled ears. Brutal toughness and honor in his features. A powerful physical presence, possibly dangerous. Francois drips with sweat, wears running clothes. Whatever he does, he is strong, fit and driven.

MR. PIENAAR  
 I feel sorry for you, son. You've got your whole life ahead of you. What's it going to be like now?

MRS. PIENAAR (late 40's) enters holding some kind of PROTEIN SHAKE for Pienaar.

MRS. PIENAAR  
 Don't be so gloomy.  
 (handing over shake)  
 I added vitamins -- there's a horrible flu bug going around. Tell Nerine when you get home.

PIENAAR  
 Thanks, ma.

MR. PIENAAR  
 I'm telling you, Francois -- look at Angola, look at Mozambique. Look at Zimbabwe. We're next. They're going to take our jobs and drive us into the sea. Just you wait.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

Magnificent, sweeping government buildings made of carved African field stone, with an Italian tiled roof, situated on a hill overlooking Pretoria. The seat of power.

Today, the entrance is mobbed with a huge, joyous, multi-racial throng, plus news crews from all over the world. Lots of new South African flags evident.

We move through the throng and swoop up into the air, so that we can soar along the outside of the building and LOOK THROUGH THE WINDOWS into the offices of state --

-- where people who worked for the De Klerk regime are packing up, in anticipation of being booted out by the Mandela regime. These characters run the gamut from little old Afrikaner tea ladies in tears, to the stoic fossils of grand apartheid. They are all white. A good third of the offices are already deserted.

The deserted offices have open doors. Through a window, through an open door, we see Mandela and his bodyguards striding down a Union Building hallway.

We swoop in through the window --

INT. UNION BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

-- and catch up with the new President. Mandela is regal in a magnificent tailored suit. Jason in front, Linga behind.

PORTRAITS of the architects and champions of apartheid look down sternly on them as they pass.

They pass a WORKER hanging a PORTRAIT OF MANDELA next to one of De Klerk, the previous President.

ON LINGA, as he smiles at that.

Mandela, on the other hand, looks into the empty offices, and into the offices being packed up.

Up ahead, the double doors to the OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, are closed. Jason speeds up, opens them, pokes his head in, then opens the doors wide.

JASON  
(with great pride)  
After you, Mr. President.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

Mandela's offices are fronted by a LARGE RECEPTION AREA, already filled with PEOPLE WAITING TO SEE HIM.

To one side are his CHIEF OF STAFF'S SUITE of offices, to the other side, the SMALL PRESIDENTIAL SECURITY OFFICE.

Beyond these are MANDELA'S SECRETARIES, TYPISTS AND ASSISTANTS -- his gatekeepers.

Beyond that is the inner sanctum, MANDELA'S OWN OFFICE.

The phones are ringing off the hook. Fax machines are chattering. Everyone wants a piece of Mandela.

Mandela enters, Jason and Linga behind him.

MANDELA

Good morning everybody.

ALL

(greetings)

BARBARA MASEKELA, Mandela's CHIEF OF STAFF (and now Ambassador to the U.S.), emerges from her office, carrying an arm load of files, folders and papers --

MANDELA

Barbara, good morning. You've had your hair done. I like it.

-- accompanies Mandela back towards his office.

BARBARA

Thank you, Madiba. We need to talk about your cabinet appointments and ministers.

MANDELA

Give me one moment, please.

Barbara waits outside Mandela's office, as he enters ahead of her.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mandela stands in the middle of his office, takes a moment to savor where he is.

Then, he takes off his jacket, hangs it up and is ready for work.

MANDELA

Barbara --

Barbara enters.

MANDELA

-- please assemble the staff for me. Whoever has not already left.

BARBARA

Right now? All of them?

MANDELA

Yes, please.

CUT TO:

INT. UNION BUILDING STAFF DINING ROOM - DAY

What's left of the UNION BUILDING STAFF are packed into the DINING ROOM. White faces, bitter and resentful. Waiting to be fired.

Through the glass doors, THEY SEE MANDELA APPROACHING DOWN THE HALLWAY, Linga and Jason with him.

STAFF MEMBER#1

Here he comes.

STAFF MEMBER#2

He wants the satisfaction of firing us himself.

They stand up straight, determined to receive the ax with pride.

INT. UNION BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

Linga and Jason amp up when they see the room full of restless Afrikaners. At the STAFF DINING ROOM DOOR, Mandela turns to them.

MANDELA

I'd like you to stay out here, please.

JASON

But, Madiba ...

MANDELA

I cannot talk to them if I'm hiding  
behind men with guns.

Mandela opens the doors and enters. Jason and Linga stay  
outside ... just.

INT. UNION BUILDING DINING ROOM - DAY

Mandela enters, smiles -- gets not one smile in return.

MANDELA

(in Afrikaans)  
*Gooie more almal.*

STAFF MEMBER

(aside)  
Does he think greeting us in  
Afrikaans makes this any sweeter?

MANDELA

Some of you may know who I am.

This gets a few bitter chuckles. Mandela is at this best  
just talking to people, like this. Only, he doesn't just  
talk to them, he wades in amongst them, shaking hands and  
making individual contact as he speaks to all of them.

MANDELA

Good morning ... how are you ...  
thank you for coming at such short  
notice ... etc.

QUICK CUT TO:

Mandela is a continual security nightmare. You can see the  
tension on Jason and Linga's faces as he disappears into the  
throng.

BACK TO:

When Mandela reaches the middle of the room, he stops shaking  
hands, and turns slowly as he talks to everybody.

MANDELA

I couldn't help noticing the empty  
offices as I came to work today.  
And all the packing boxes.

One black man, surrounded by a throng of serious white faces.

MANDELA

Now, of course, if you want to leave, that is your right. And if you feel in your heart that you cannot work with your new government, then it is better that you do leave, right away.

He can be tough and blunt, when necessary.

MANDELA

But if you are packing up because you fear that your language, or the color of your skin, or who you served previously, disqualifies you from working here now, I am here to tell you, have no such fear.

(beat)

*Wat is verby is verby.* What's past is past. We look to the future, now.

This is not what they expected to hear.

MANDELA

We need your help. We want your help. If you would like to stay, you will be doing your country a great service.

Mandela pauses, to look at the faces. They are receptive.

MANDELA

I ask only that you do your jobs to the best of your abilities, and with good hearts. I promise to do the same.

(beat)

If we can manage that, our country will be a shining light in the world.

CUT TO:

Jason and Linga are right outside the glass doors, looking in and listening. Jason shakes his head.

JASON

He wants to win them over, one damn boer at a time.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

Mandela heads back through to his office, Barbara, Mary and other assistants forming a phalanx around him. Linga peels off, goes into the security office.

Jason stands at the desk of one of the assistants (JESSIE), waits for her to finish a call, then:

JASON  
Molo, sister.

JESSIE  
(frazzled)  
It's still morning?

Jason grins.

JASON  
When you get a chance, can we see the schedule for the month? We need to plan security.

Jessie's phone rings.

JESSIE  
(answering phone)  
Office of the President, good morning.

Jessie waves Jason off. He crosses to the security office, enters.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Once he closes the door behind him, Jason shows his fatigue. Linga is feet-up on the sofa, sucking on a cup of coffee. Three more bodyguards -- SAM, KWEZI and WINSTON -- slump in chairs.

Jason grabs coffee, sits at his desk, puts his feet up with a groan.

JASON  
We need more men.

LINGA  
Did you talk to Barbara about it?

JASON  
Yesterday.

A knock at the door.

JASON  
That's Jessie, with the schedule.  
(loudly)  
Come in, beautiful.

The door opens -- but what enters is not beautiful.

FOUR BIG WHITE COPS in suits enter, Special Branch written all over them. ETIENNE VAN ECK, HENDRICK BOOYENS, GEORGE and WILLEM.

The bodyguards stand up like junk yard dogs protecting their territory.

JASON  
What is this?

ETIENNE  
Mr. Jason Tshabalala?

JASON  
That's me. Am I under arrest?

Etienne snaps out a crisp salute.

ETIENNE  
Captain Van Eck and team reporting  
for duty, sir.

Hendrick, George and Willem snap out salutes. Their military deportment contrasts strongly with the less rigid body language of the black bodyguards.

JASON  
What duty?

ETIENNE  
We're the Presidential bodyguard.  
We've been assigned to this office.  
(holding out a sheet of  
paper)  
Here are our orders.

Jason takes the orders, studies them, face increasingly angry.

LINGA  
(to Hendrick)  
You're Special Branch, right?

Hendrick nods, sternly. Linga, Sam, Kwezi and Winston react to that -- there is a long and brutal history between them and the Special Branch.

ETIENNE

You'll see that they've been signed.

JASON

I don't care if they're signed or --

Jason does a double-take when he sees the signature on the orders: NELSON R. MANDELA.

JASON

Wait here.

Jason storms out, holding the orders. The four black bodyguards seethe with hostility. The four white bodyguards stare straight ahead, refusing to give ground.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mandela and Barbara look over a position paper on something or other. When Jason knocks and enters, they pause.

JASON

Sorry to disturb you.

MANDELA

You look agitated, Jason.

JASON

That's because I've got four Special Branch cops in my office.

MANDELA

What have you done?

JASON

Me? Nothing. They say they're the Presidential bodyguard. They have orders.

(beat)

Signed by you.

MANDELA

Yes. They've had special training, those boys -- with the SAS. And lots of experience. They protected De Klerk.

JASON  
Yes, but --

MANDELA  
You asked for more men, didn't you?

JASON  
Yes, but --

MANDELA  
In public, when people see me, they see my bodyguards, too. You represent me, directly. The rainbow nation starts here.  
(beat)  
Reconciliation starts here.

JASON  
Reconciliation? Madiba, not long ago they tried to kill us! Maybe even these four guys. They tried and, often, they succeeded!

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE

Linga, Sam, Winston and Kwezi stare down Etienne, Hendrick, George and Willem.

BACK TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mandela stares at Jason in an entirely different way -- with wisdom, compassion and sympathy.

MANDELA  
Yes, I know.  
(very gently)  
Forgiveness starts here, too.

Mandela lets that sink in for a moment. He knows he asks for something very difficult, but he demands it of himself to an even greater degree.

MANDELA  
Forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon, Jason.  
(MORE)

MANDELA (cont'd)

(beat)

Please try it.

Jason exhales. He isn't remotely ready to forgive.

JASON

Yes, Madiba. Sorry to disturb you.

Jason turns, leaves. Barbara shakes her head at Mandela.

BARBARA

You ask a lot.

MANDELA

Only what is necessary.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

As Jason -- very upset -- walks back to security, Jessie holds out a file for him.

JESSIE

Two copies of the schedule.

Jason snatches the file, keeps walking.

JESSIE

Thank you, Jessie!

When he reaches the security office door, Jason walks right past, keeps going, has to make a full loop of the reception area, just to get himself together.

Even so, when he gets back to the security office door, Jason pauses, gathers himself to do something that he knows he's going to hate.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Things haven't eased up one little bit inside the office. The silence is deafening. Jason enters, looks them all over. His face is grim.

LINGA

Can we get rid of these guys, now?

Jason flashes a look at Linga, then -- and this hurts him, visibly -- he holds out one of MANDELA'S SCHEDULES to Etienne.

JASON

This is his schedule for the next month. Let's look it over for duty assignments.

ETIENNE

Right.

LINGA

What?

Linga and the others are shocked.

LINGA

Jason, I have to talk to you.  
Outside.

Linga virtually pulls Jason out of the office.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

Just outside the Security Office door, so they keep their voices low.

LINGA

How can we trust them?

JASON

We can't.  
(heading back in)  
This is what Madiba wants, okay.

Not okay for Linga, judging by the expression on his face.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

When Jason and Linga enter, Etienne looks up from Mandela's schedule.

ETIENNE

Are there any special orders or conditions?

JASON

No. Yes. Madiba gets upset if you don't smile when you push people out of the way.

HENDRICK

Seriously?

LINGA

Yes, seriously. It's the new South Africa.

ETIENNE

Madiba?

JASON

The President's clan name. It's what we call him.

The new bodyguards share a look. They're not comfortable with "Madiba".

ETIENNE

We'll call him Mr. President.

Jason lifts the schedule.

JASON

Let's get through this.

Still upset and hostile, the black bodyguards look over Jason's shoulder, the white bodyguards look over Etienne's, at the month's schedule.

Apartheid is by no means dead in this cramped little office.

Both teams study and discuss the schedule -- (shop talk tbd USE THIS TO GIVE US A QUICK GLIMPSE OF A DAY/WEEK/MONTH IN THE LIFE OF M.)

Etienne shakes his head.

ETIENNE

How's he going to do all this?  
When does he take a break?

LINGA

He says he rested enough in prison.

Jason recoils at something he sees on the last page of the schedule.

JASON

Here's a headache.

LINGA

What?

JASON

A rugby match at Loftus Versfeld.  
British Lions against the  
Springboks.

HENDRICK

It's going to be a headache for the  
Lions, that's for sure. We're  
going to *donder* them.

JASON

I don't care about the game. I  
care that the President'll be so  
exposed.

LINGA

To thousands of drunken --

ETIENNE

(innocently)  
-- sports fans?

JASON

Yes. Sports fans.

LINGA

Who didn't vote for him. Who  
probably hate him. Who came out of  
the womb with guns in their hands.

OVER, THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF PRE-GAME NOISE AT A MAJOR  
SPORTING EVENT.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - DAY

A huge, raucous crowd, almost entirely white and male. Many  
wearing the Springbok green and gold. Widespread evidence of  
drinking.

Lots of OLD SOUTH AFRICAN FLAGS -- the blue, white and orange  
apartheid flag -- make a defiant statement against the NEW  
SOUTH AFRICAN FLAGS ringing the stadium.

On the field, THE RUGBY TEAMS ASSEMBLE and face each other in  
two lines. The BRITISH LIONS in their white on white with  
black and red trim, the SPRINGBOKS in their green and gold.

Like their supporters, the Springboks are all white, but for  
one man, who is "colored" (mixed race).

Big, tough, brutal-looking men. Scary. (We may or may not notice Francois Pienaar, standing at the head of the line of Springboks.)

CUT TO:

INT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - TUNNEL ONTO FIELD - DAY

At the entrance of the tunnel onto the field, LOTS OF COPS in blue South African Police uniforms.

Behind the line of cops, in the tunnel, we find JASON AND ALL THE OTHER BODYGUARDS but for Linga. They are keyed-up, intense -- none more so than Jason.

JASON

(shouting against the noise)

I want your eyes on the crowd at all times. We're staying in the middle of the field. He's going to walk out, shake hands, walk back. Nothing else. Got it?

They nod. They are like the players at game time, only the stakes are much higher. Jason looks deeper into the tunnel, straightens up.

JASON

Here we go.

Mandela strides down the tunnel towards them, wearing a dark suit. Big crowds energize him. His eyes are alive with excitement.

One pace behind him, like a huge, dark shadow, comes Linga.

Mandela gives Jason a look, Jason nods.

We follow Mandela and the bodyguards out of the tunnel --

EXT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - DAY

-- onto the field, towards the waiting teams.

The crowd rise to their feet. Lots of them jeer Mandela, lots cheer. All the old South African flags are waved at him defiantly -- plus some new ones.

Mandela waves to them all, smiling proudly. To him, a crowd is an opportunity to make new friends. But he stays in the center of the field.

Jason and crew are hyper-alert, a human fence around Mandela.

Mandela reaches the rugby players.

Waiting for him at the head of the Springbok line, wearing the NUMBER 6 JERSEY and captain's armband, is FRANCOIS PIENAAR. Now we know what he does.

Mandela extends his hand.

MANDELA  
Good luck, captain.

PIENAAR  
(shaking hands)  
Thank you, sir.

Mandela shakes hands down the line of Springboks, then returns, shaking hands with the British Lions. Quick, perfunctory handshakes.

As Mandela does this, we take BODYGUARD POV SNAPSHOTS of the crowd, increasingly keyed-up and restless. Time to play rugby.

Mandela finishes, waves to the crowd, and begins the walk along the center of the field, back to the tunnel.

Crowd noise increases. They know the opening whistle is about to blow.

Then, Mandela sees something in the crowd, at field level.

MANDELA'S POV: A GROUP OF ROUGH-LOOKING WHITE MEN WAVE THE NEW SOUTH AFRICAN FLAG AT HIM.

WITHOUT WARNING, MANDELA CHANGES DIRECTION, heads towards this group, towards a wall of his former -- and perhaps current -- enemies.

ON JASON: shit!

JASON  
(into radio)  
Stay with him.

ETIENNE  
Stop him.

JASON  
Stay with him.

With his bodyguards scrambling to stay in position, Mandela reaches the stands, hand outstretched, leans into the crowd.

MANDELA

Thank you for honoring our new flag!

Some shake his hand, some -- very pointedly -- do not.

The crowd noise takes on an ugly undertone -- Mandela is delaying the rugby.

Mandela is undeterred. He's into this one-on-one outreach. He turns, looks for more hands to shake --

-- and Jason steps in between Mandela and the crowd.

JASON

We're delaying the rugby, Madiba.

MANDELA

Oh, yes, of course.

Mandela gives one last wave, turns away.

As he does, SOMEONE WINDS UP AND THROWS SOMETHING from the stands.

Jason and Etienne catch the movement, whirl, too late.

AN ORANGE WHIZZES PAST MANDELA'S HEAD, explodes juicily on the field.

Mandela didn't see it, doesn't react. If anything, his smile widens as he heads across the field. The bodyguards close around him protectively, get him back to the tunnel.

INT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - TUNNEL ONTO FIELD - DAY

Jason signals for extra bodyguards to escort Mandela all the way up to his box. Hendrick, the biggest, leads the way.

Jason stays in the tunnel, along with Etienne. Both men are in a muck sweat, adrenaline coursing through them.

ETIENNE

Why didn't you stop him?

JASON

Next time, you try.

ETIENNE

Does he do that sort of thing all  
the time?

JASON

Ask my ulcer.  
(beat)  
Good thing that was just an orange.

ETIENNE

And good thing he never saw it.

JASON

Oh, he saw it. He sees everything.  
(rubbing his ulcer)  
I hate rugby.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - DAY

Two international front rows come together with bone-crunching force.

Huge, violent men grunt like bulls. The crowd roar vibrates the stadium. The scrum -- a phalanx of eight men locked together against eight -- wheels, buckles, then steadies under the watchful eye of the referee.

Fanning out behind each scrum are the backs -- faster, more glamorous players who will run with the ball, or kick it.

The Lions scrumhalf thrusts the ball into the maw of the scrum, the huge men lock up against each other with maximum force.

The ball comes out the back of the Lions' scrum, the scrumhalf dive-passes it away to the backs, who flick it out laterally to the wing, with lightning speed.

The wing lofts a delicate kick just over the onrushing Springbok defenders. The Lions charge the ball, which bounces erratically --

-- right into the hands of the man who kicked it. One last burst of speed, one quick juke to avoid a desperation tackle, and the wing scores in the corner.

As the Lions kicker gets ready to convert the try, we find the Springboks huddling under their goal posts, hands on their hips, stunned.

At the center of the huddle Pienaar bleeds behind his gum guard as, furiously, he tries to inject some fire into his team.

PIENAAR  
Concentrate, dammit! Focus! We  
can beat these guys if we play our  
game, not theirs!

ON PIENAAR, as he realizes he is not getting through. There is dullness, shock in his player's eyes --

-- which all lift to the heavens as the CONVERSION KICK SOARS through the uprights.

We FOLLOW THE KICK as it drops past a GIANT SCOREBOARD.

STAY ON THE SCOREBOARD as it registers the conversion and shows the score: LIONS - 10    SPRINGBOKS - 0

INT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM VIP BOX - DAY

In the VIP box, Mandela turns his back on the field as the game restarts beneath him and continues in the background. He has BINOCULARS around his neck.

MANDELA  
Shall we work while we watch? We  
have lots of promises to keep.

Barbara sits to his right, with her ever-present files and folders.

BARBARA  
Yes, we do.

Mary pours tea at the back of the box. Linga stands two steps behind Mandela.

On Mandela's left, sits the PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY, a small man with a small man's ruthlessness and drive.

MANDELA  
It's not too late, if the boys can  
just pick up their game.

RUGBY PRESIDENT  
If they don't, heads will roll.  
This is unacceptable.  
(leaning forward)  
Come on you bloody bastards!

Mandela's expression shows that he has a gentleman's distaste for profanity. He turns to Barbara.

BARBARA

Where do you want go first, for foreign investment?

MANDELA

Where the money is. America, England, Saudi Arabia.

Barbara makes notes.

Mandela lifts his BINOCULARS, but instead of looking at the rugby, he looks at the crowd.

CUT TO:

MANDELA'S POV THROUGH BINOCULARS -- Mandela zeroes in on an OLD SOUTH AFRICAN FLAG -- the apartheid flag. It is being held by the FOUR KHAKI-CLAD BOERS (FARMERS). Classic South African figures from the rural far north, they are already drunk and suicidally depressed by the turn of events on the field.

CUT TO:

BARBARA

Do you see all the old apartheid flags? It's a disgrace.

Mandela lowers his binoculars.

MANDELA

It's also a constitutional right.

BARBARA

Along with the apartheid anthem. I know. But it's time people moved on.

Mandela grunts, raises his binoculars again.

CUT TO:

MANDELA'S POV THROUGH BINOCULARS -- Mandela finds a SMALL KNOT OF BLACK SPECTATORS, holding the NEW SOUTH AFRICAN FLAG and cheering ecstatically.

CUT TO:

MANDELA

Look at that. The whites are cheering for the Springboks, the blacks are cheering for the Lions.

Mandela lowers the binoculars.

MANDELA

We did that on the island, you know. We supported anyone but the 'boks. It really irritated the warders.

BARBARA

Of course it did.

ON MANDELA as he thinks about this for a moment, then lifts his binoculars to look at the crowd again.

CUT TO:

MANDELA'S POV THROUGH BINOCULARS -- on the knot of black spectators, who leap to their feet, reacting to ACTION ON THE FIELD --

EXT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - DAY

-- where the Lions score yet another try. This is an ass-whipping.

CUT TO:

The conversion sails over the 'boks heads.

The scoreboard clicks over to: LIONS - 20      SPRINGBOKS - 0

INT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM VIP BOX - DAY

Mandela lowers his binoculars, sets them aside, shakes his head. He knows it's hopeless now. He turns to the Rugby President.

MANDELA

How long until the World Cup?

RUGBY PRESIDENT

About a year.

MANDELA

Plenty of time for improvement.

The Rugby President can't take it. He stands.

RUGBY PRESIDENT

Mr. President -- I wouldn't get my hopes up. We're a damn disgrace.

He stomps out of the box, no doubt looking for someone to fire. Mandela gets back to work.

MANDELA

I want to go to India and Indonesia, too.

There is a knock at the luxury box door. Linga swings to face the door, alert, as a UNIFORMED DOORMAN opens it.

The MINISTER OF SPORT (Steve Tshwete), enters.

MINISTER OF SPORT

Sorry I'm late.

He sits down in the empty chair to the right of Mandela.

MINISTER OF SPORT

How's it going?

MANDELA

Very badly.

The Minister of Sport checks the score, winces.

MINISTER OF SPORT

Maybe it's just as well.

Mandela shoots him a sharp look.

MANDELA

Why?

MINISTER OF SPORT

(bending close, talking quietly)

I've just been at a meeting of the National Sports Council executive. There's strong support to drop the Springbok emblem and colors altogether.

(gesturing at the field)

If they're playing badly, maybe its a good time to make a change.

(with barely hidden relish)

(MORE)

## MINISTER OF SPORT (cont'd)

This could be the last time we have  
to look at the green and gold.

The Minister of Sport shoots a glance at Mandela, to see his  
reaction to all this.

Mandela is deep in thought and completely unreadable.

CUT TO:

## EXT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - DAY

One last, bloody, violent bit of play -- then, mercifully,  
the final whistle blows.

Final score: LIONS - 32 SPRINGBOKS - 15.

The Lions celebrate. The Springboks head off the field,  
heads down, shoulders bowed in defeat -- none more bitterly  
disappointed or bloodier than Francois Pienaar.

In the stands, the unheard of happens -- the Springboks are  
booed by their own fans. Not by everybody, but by enough.

We STAY WITH THE 'BOKS as they trudge across the field, then  
clatter along the concrete tunnel to their dressing room.

## INT. LOFTUS VERSFELD STADIUM - SPRINGBOK DRESSING ROOM

The atmosphere is absolutely dismal as the men undress and  
shower.

Nobody catches anybody else's eye. Huge, powerful, pale  
bodies have been ploughed purple with rake marks, bruises and  
roasties. Plus, one dark body -- that of CHESTER WILLIAMS, a  
skilled wing from the Cape, a reserved and private man.

Pienaar takes off his green and gold jersey, sits, begins  
taking off his cleats. His body hurts. He has been raked,  
scratched, bruised, and his ankle is swollen.

A noble warrior, defeated.

## BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)

Francois Pienaar's team came to  
Loftus Versfeld stadium this  
afternoon, unprepared and arrogant.

INT. TV STUDIO

Meet BOLAND BOTHA as he tapes his commentary on the test match. He is an ex-Springbok player from the boycott years, now turned ponderous, florid rugby commentator. He is a household name, and the last word on the state of the Springboks.

BOLAND BOTHA

They left 80 minutes later with their tails between their legs, like whipped mongrels.

(beat)

And I, for one, am glad. Not because we lost, but because there's now no way to disguise the fact that we are completely and utterly unprepared to reenter the world of top-notch international rugby.

Boland defines the South African talent for pessimism and negativity.

CUT TO:

INT. SA RUGBY PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

BOLAND BOTHA (ON TV)

The Rugby World Cup is now less than a year away, and I, for one, am relieved that we are the host nation, and therefore qualify automatically for the tournament. Because I'm not sure we would get in on merit alone.

The Rugby President sucks on a rum and coke, watches Boland with one of his HENCHMEN.

RUGBY PRESIDENT

Who gets the axe? Someone has to.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCOIS PIENAAR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

No after-match party this night. Still depressed by the loss, Pienaar stays home with this fiancée NERINE.

BOLAND BOTHA (ON TV)  
 Pienaar's team played without  
 discipline, without strategy and  
 without courage.

PIENAAR  
 He's trying to get them to drop me.

NERINE  
 He's just bitter because the  
 Springboks were boycotted when he  
 played.

PIENAAR  
 Maybe, but people listen to what he  
 says.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Wearing pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers, Mandela multi-  
 tasks, watching Boland Botha and going through a pile of  
 correspondence, scribbling notes or signing his name.

BOLAND BOTHA (ON TV)  
 They brought shame upon our nation,  
 and I, for one, can say without  
 fear of contradiction, that today,  
 these fifteen so-called men did not  
 deserve to wear the hallowed green  
 and gold.

ON MANDELA: a thought, an idea -- a big one -- is churning in  
 his head. He grunts, turns off the TV, puts the  
 correspondence aside, stands.

Mary enters with a glass of milk and some pills, on a tray.

MARY  
 Here's your *muti*. I warmed the  
 milk tonight.

MANDELA  
 You're too good to me.

Mandela takes his pills.

MARY  
 Your daughter called, to cancel her  
 visit this weekend.

Mandela pauses, between pills.

MANDELA

Did she say why?

MARY

No, she didn't.

(making it up)

She said to tell you she was sorry.

Mandela nods, has a hard time swallowing his last pill.

MARY

Do you need anything else tonight?

MANDELA

No, thank you. I'm going to bed.

Good night.

MARY

Good night, Madiba. Sleep well.

Mandela smiles at her, but as soon as he is past her, the smile fades. As he climbs the stairs to his bedroom, his face becomes sadder and older and lonelier.

IN HIS BEDROOM, Mandela pauses to take off his dressing gown. He looks at his bed. It is as smooth and as blank as a sheet of paper.

He peels back the bedclothes at one corner, slides under them and pauses for a moment while reaching for the light switch. He switches off the light and lies down, still and straight.

The most popular man in the world starts and ends each day alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWNSHIP - DAY

A very poor township outside Johannesburg. A stark reminder of how much work Mandela has ahead of him. A STAMPEDE OF KIDS runs by.

We FOLLOW THE KIDS and find a SMALL, BEAT-UP CHURCH. A noisy LINE OF THREADBARE KIDS leads from outside into the church. There is a pecking order in the line, based on size.

MRS. COLEMAN (O.S.)

No pushing now! There's enough for everybody!

INT. SMALL, BEAT-UP CHURCH - DAY

At a table near the altar, the kids rummage through bags of second-hand clothes under the watchful eye of MRS. COLEMAN, a stout and charitable woman. Next to her, MRS. DLAMINI hands out a lollipop and says --

MRS. DLAMINI  
God bless you.

-- to each kid. The clothes and lollipops move fast, rhythm kept by Mrs. Dlamini's "God bless you".

The last bag of clothes empties fast as the line of kids reduces until there is only ONE SMALL BOY (SIPHO) left and only one article of clothing. An old SPRINGBOK RUGBY PRACTISE JERSEY. Green and gold.

Sipho could use it. His clothes are more holes than anything else. He looks at the Springbok jersey mournfully.

MRS. COLEMAN  
You're a very lucky boy. It's a real Springbok practise jersey! It's a bit big, but it's warm and it'll last for ever!

Sipho shakes his head.

MRS. COLEMAN  
It's yours, take it! Go on.

Sipho turns and leaves. Mrs. Coleman looks at Mrs. Dlamini, completely confused.

MRS. COLEMAN  
Why won't he take it?

MRS. DLAMINI  
If he wears it, the others will beat him up.

MRS. COLEMAN  
Because the Springboks are playing so badly?

MRS. DLAMINI  
No. Because, for them, the Springboks still represent apartheid.

CUT TO:

EXT. EERSTERUST CONFERENCE CENTER - DAY

Eersterust is a settlement and conference location just outside Pretoria.

Today it is the location of a full membership meeting of the National Sports Council, an ANC organization that is now the governing body of all sports in South Africa.

A banner draped across the conference center entrance tells us so: WELCOME NATIONAL SPORTS COUNCIL.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

An NSC FIREBRAND has the podium and the microphone.

NSC FIREBRAND

... and now for the next item on our agenda.

The hall is jammed. Very few white faces.

NSC FIREBRAND

The NSC executive proposes a full membership vote on the following motion ...

A ripple of anticipation goes through the delegates.

NSC FIREBRAND

... that as a prominent symbol of the apartheid era, the colors, emblem and name of the Springboks be eliminated immediately ...

That causes a stir. The delegates understand how big this is.

NSC FIREBRAND

... and that all sports teams representing South Africa shall be known forthwith as the Proteas.

Excitement and noise level rises. The NSC Firebrand has to shout through his mike.

NSC FIREBRAND

(shouting)

We will submit this motion to a hand vote.

(MORE)

NSC FIREBRAND (cont'd)  
 In the event of a close count, we  
 will go to a written ballot.  
 (the moment he's been  
 waiting for)  
 ALL THOSE IN FAVOR OF ELIMINATING  
 THE SPRINGBOKS, RAISE YOUR HANDS.

The NSC firebrand shoots his clenched fist into the air.  
 With a roar, the delegates respond, raising their fists.  
 Unanimous. The Springboks are history.

ANOTHER ANGLE, as ONE OF THE OLDER DELEGATES steps outside to  
 make a call.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

At his desk, Mandela puts down his phone. Anger in his eyes.  
 He slams both palms down hard on his desk.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Both bodyguard units (minus Jason) are crammed into the small  
 office. The black bodyguards murmur amongst themselves in  
 Xhosa. (Ad-lib.) The white bodyguards talk Afrikaans (ad-  
 lib).

No talk between the two units, only tension.

Tension broken with a crash as JASON SLAMS THE DOOR OPEN.

JASON  
Both units to the cars, right now.

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

Grey BMW, armored grey Mercedes, grey BMW in a line at the  
 entrance.

Jason, Kwezi, Winston and Sam scramble out of the building  
 and dive into the lead BMW.

Etienne, Hendrick, George and Willem dive into the trailer.

INT. UNION BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

Brusque, scowling, Mandela marches towards the exit, shadowed by Linga, flanked by Barbara.

BARBARA  
What do I tell the Japanese trade delegation?

MANDELA  
I delegate that decision to you.

BARBARA  
Do you want me to inform the VP?

MANDELA  
No.

BARBARA  
We should at least include the Minister of Sport.

MANDELA  
No.

Mandela heads out to the cars. Barbara has no choice but to follow.

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

Ever the gentleman, Mandela ushers Barbara into the Mercedes. As she gets in:

BARBARA  
I strongly advise against doing this. Especially on your own. It ... it gives the impression of autocratic leadership.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

Mandela gets in, closes the door.

BARBARA  
You risk alienating your cabinet and your party.

MANDELA  
Your advice is duly noted, Barbara.

BARBARA

Madiba ... the people want this.  
They hate the Springboks. They  
don't want to be represented by a  
team they cheered against all their  
lives.

MANDELA

Yes, I know. But in this instance  
the people are wrong. And it is my  
job as their elected leader to make  
them see that.

Mandela leans forward to talk to Linga.

MANDELA

Can you tell the boys that Madiba  
wants to go to Eersterust, very  
fast.

Linga murmurs into his radio. The convoy pulls out, very  
fast. Barbara makes one last plea.

BARBARA

You're risking your political  
capital. You're risking your  
future as our leader.

MANDELA

The day I am afraid to do that is  
the day I am no longer fit to lead.

BARBARA

At least risk it for something more  
important than rugby.

Mandela looks out the window, says nothing, angry.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Mandela's convoy heads away from Pretoria, very fast.

NSC FIREBRAND (V.O.)

... and in concluding this historic  
conference ...

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

NSC FIREBRAND  
 ... brothers, sisters, comrades, we  
 in the executive applaud your  
 diligence and courage.

The NSC Firebrand and the executive applaud the members. The applause spreads until the hall rocks. They are all very pleased with themselves.

CUT TO:

EXT. EERSTERUST - CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

Mandela's convoy roars in. Mandela is the first one out, Linga next.

Jason and crew scramble to cover the immediate area.

Kwezi opens the door for Barbara on the other side.

Mandela strides over to Jason, says something to him. Jason looks surprised, turns to Hendrick.

Linga's customary scowl intensifies.

CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

As the applause finally begins to diminish, the NSC Firebrand turns and nods to a CHURCH CHOIR DIRECTOR, off to the side.

The choir director brings his CHOIR onto the stage.

NSC FIREBRAND  
 Brothers, sisters ... join us in  
 our anthem.

Anyone not standing, stands. The choir director raises his hands. The choir inhales. Go.

CHOIR  
 (singing)  
*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica* etc (God  
 Bless Africa) --

But before the first line is fully sung, an ASSISTANT rushes out, whispers urgently into the NSC Firebrand's ear.

The Firebrand's eyes bug out in surprise. He crosses to the Choir Director, says something quickly.

The Choir Director stops the choir in mid-chorus. Consternation everywhere. What's going on?

NSC FIREBRAND

Brothers, sisters, members of the choir -- we would only interrupt such beautiful music for something truly important. In this case, for someone truly important.

(beat, milking it)

Please welcome President Mandela!

The place goes berserk as Mandela enters, with Linga at his back, and -- surprise, surprise -- Hendrick Booyens leading the way.

Face stern and unsmiling, Mandela walks the length of the hall towards the podium. The delegates press in towards them.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Jason coordinates security inside and out. Lifts his radio to his mouth.

JASON

(into radio)

Smile.

ON HENDRICK, as his standard bad bastard scowl suddenly becomes a smile -- which scares the throng more than the scowl did.

ON LINGA, the same.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Barbara enters at the back of the hall, accompanied by Kwezi.

Mandela reaches the podium, turns looks out over the crowd, face thunderous.

When they see his anger, the crowd quietens down quickly.

MANDELA

Brothers, sisters, comrades, I am here because I feel strongly that you made a decision today without sufficient information or foresight.

He lectures them like a headmaster. They don't like it.

MANDELA

I am aware of your earlier vote. I am aware that it was unanimous.

(beat)

Nonetheless, I propose that we restore the Springboks. Restore their name, their emblem and their colors, immediately.

Instant and complete silence in the hall. This is utterly unpopular. Shocked faces, especially from the executive and the NSC firebrand.

ON BARBARA, as she sees her worst political nightmare playing out in front of her.

MANDELA

Let me tell you why ...

Murmurs of disapproval and disagreement begin to rise. Mandela's going to have to row upstream on this one.

MANDELA

... on Robben Island, in Pollsmoor Prison, my jailers were all Afrikaners.

(beat)

For twenty seven years, I studied them. I learned their language, I read their history, I read their poetry. I had to know my enemy, in order to prevail against him.

(beat)

And we prevailed, did we not? All of us here ... we prevailed.

For the first time, Mandela says something the crowd likes.

MANDELA

Our enemy is no longer the Afrikaner. They are our fellow South Africans, our partners in democracy.

Just as quickly, Mandela loses them again.

MANDELA

And they treasure Springbok rugby.  
If we take that away, we lose them.  
We prove that we are what they feared we would be.

(beat)

We have to be better than that.

(MORE)

MANDELA (cont'd)

We have to surprise them with  
compassion, with restraint, and  
generosity.

The grumbling and disagreement becomes noticeably louder.

MANDELA

Yes, I know. All the things they  
denied us.

ON HENDRICK, totally engrossed in his job, eyes sweeping  
across the crowd, feeling the tension.

MANDELA

But this is not the time to enjoy a  
moment's petty revenge. This is  
the time to build our nation using  
every single brick available to us -  
- even if that brick comes clothed  
in green and gold.

The crowd is growing more restless and rebellious by the  
moment.

LINGA is as alert as Hendrick, tuned in to the jumpy vibe.

MANDELA

(angry)

You elected me.

(beat)

You elected me to be your leader.

Let me lead you now.

(beat)

Who is with me on this?

It's almost as if he's daring them to go against him.

MANDELA

Who is with me?

The murmuring becomes a dull roar of argument and  
disagreement.

ON BARBARA as she closes her eyes and lowers her head: this  
is a fiasco.

CUT TO:

EXT. EERSTERUST CONFERENCE CENTER - DAY

As delegates spill out of the conference hall, Mandela's  
convoy leaves as fast as it arrived. It almost looks as if  
they're fleeing.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

Silence. Mandela looks exhausted, almost gaunt. Facing his own people like that took it out of him. Barbara stares out the window, chewing her lip, totally stressed out.

Linga heaves a great sigh, exhales a truckload of stress.

INT. GREY BMW (LEAD CAR) - DAY

Jason and his crew travel in stoic silence.

INT. GREY BMW (TRAILER) - DAY

Similar silence from Etienne and crew. It seems like the silence of defeat.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

BARBARA

Twelve votes. Twelve!

MANDELA

A luxury. All we needed was one more yes than no.

BARBARA

What if you hadn't got it?

MANDELA

Well, as you know, I am an obedient party member.

Barbara snorts disagreement. She is angry at her boss.

BARBARA

I'm sorry, Madiba, but we've got problems everywhere we look. Housing, food, jobs, crime, our currency. You can't keep interrupting affairs of state to placate a minority.

MANDELA

But, I must. This minority still controls the army, the police, and the economy. Without them, we cannot address the other problems.

BARBARA

So this rugby, it's just a political calculation?

Life and energy, flood back into Mandela. He sits up against his seat belt, faces his Chief of Staff.

MANDELA

It's a human calculation.

(beat)

If we take away what they cherish -- the Springboks, their national anthem -- we just reinforce the cycle of fear between us.

ON LINGA, in the front seat. He's not supposed to listen -- but how could he not?

MANDELA

I will do what I must to break this cycle. Or it will destroy us.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPRINGBOK DRESSING ROOM - DAY

The sound of cleats approaching on concrete. Exhausted footsteps. The DRESSING ROOM ATTENDANT PUTS CASES OF BEER (cans) on a side table, rips them open, backs away --

-- as the Springboks enter silently, faces miserable, shoulders slumped. They've lost another game.

One of the players grabs a beer, opens it, takes a gigantic swig --

ANGRY SPRINGBOK

This beer tastes like *kuk*.

-- hurls the beer against the wall so hard it ruptures, sending foaming beer everywhere.

ON PIENAAR as his eyes flash and he shoots to his feet.

PIENAAR

It's not the beer.

Pienaar picks up a case of beers, goes to the angry Springbok.

PIENAAR  
 Take another.  
 (beat)  
 Everybody take a beer.

This is an order. The entire team takes a beer, including Pienaar.

PIENAAR  
 A toast ...

Pienaar cracks his beer, raises it up. They all crack and raise their beers.

PIENAAR  
 ... to the taste of defeat.

That bewilders his team.

PIENAAR  
 Drink it. Remember it. And  
promise yourself never to taste it  
again.

Pienaar takes one long swig --

PIENAAR  
 You're right. It tastes like *kuk*.

-- tosses his beer against the wall, so that it ruptures. Eighteen other beers rupture against the wall. The dressing room is awash with beer and foam -- and re-kindled passion.

As with Mandela, Pienaar is a leader, on a smaller scale.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Both units crammed into the small office. As usual, neither team talks to the other. Jason enters with two files.

JASON  
 Here's the schedule for the  
 overseas trip.

Jason and the boys look over one, Etienne and his unit look over the other -- and discuss it amongst themselves in Afrikaans. Hendrick says something pointed, which resonates with the others.

LINGA  
What did he just say?

HENDRICK  
I said --

ETIENNE  
He asked when we were supposed to sleep.

HENDRICK  
As well as other basic human functions.

JASON  
Hey. If Madiba can do it, we can do it.

CUT TO:

INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY - DAY

Mandela addresses the General Assembly, thanking them for their support in the fight against apartheid.

MANDELA  
The millions of our people say thank you, and thank you again.

Linga and Hendrick are his closest bodyguards.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - SOUTH LAWN - DAY

Mandela addresses diplomats, members of Congress, black leaders at a made-for-TV ceremony on the South Lawn.

MANDELA  
I have come here with a message.  
People of the Unites States of America: Open your markets to us.  
People of the United States of American: Come and invest in our country.

Linga, Jason, Etienne and Hendrick are in on this one -- a little island of South Africans in a sea of U.S. SECRET SERVICE PROTECTION.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY

We are in a COURTYARD behind the palace. Drawn by four white horses, A ROYAL CARRIAGE (an open carriage) pulls up, stops. The courtyard quickly fills with liveried footmen, then security guards.

QUEEN ELISABETH and Mandela emerge from the palace. Footmen open doors on both sides of the carriage. The Queen and Mandela climb in (the Queen on the right hand side).

When they sit down next to each other, Mandela leans over and says something to the Queen that makes her giggle ...

... almost. For Queens do not giggle.

The carriage pulls forward and these two human icons sit up straight, as they get set to face the world.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
... and in London, President  
Mandela made quite an impression on  
the Queen --

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ON TV: footage of Mandela with the Queen, riding down the mall waving to ecstatic crowds.

TV ANNOUNCER  
-- as he concluded a gruelling trip  
to--

Mr. Pienaar MUTES THE TV, so that he can deliver the latest one-liner to Mrs. Pienaar.

MR. PIENAAR  
In related news, it was announced  
that President Mandela will be  
visiting South Africa this week.

Mrs. Pienaar laughs.

IN THE BACKGROUND, in the kitchen, a plump, middle-aged Tswana woman washes the dishes and keeps an eye on the TV. This is EUNICE, the Pienaar's maid.

She does not find Mr. Pienaar's joke amusing.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHANNESBURG AIRPORT - NIGHT

The PRESIDENT'S JET taxis towards the familiar BMW, Mercedes, BMW convoy.

CUT TO:

Mandela disembarks, very slowly. He is exhausted, his feet are swollen, his knee hurts. This is a very different man than the one we have just seen wooing the world.

He is met at the bottom of the stairs by Hendrick.

HENDRICK

It's good to be home, sir.

Mandela just nods. Too tired to talk.

Hendrick escorts Mandela to the Mercedes, opens the door for him.

Mandela takes a step towards the open door -- and staggers.

Reflexively, Hendrick reaches out, steadies him.

MANDELA

I'm fine.

Mandela steps out of Hendrick's hands, holds onto the open door.

MANDELA

Travelling the world, begging for money, is very tiring.

Mandela reaches into his jacket, pulls a SMALL PACKAGE out, hands it to Hendrick.

MANDELA

This is for you.

Mandela slides into the car. Once the door is closed, Hendrick glances at the package. We don't see it. It is too dark.

But we do see that Hendrick is amazed by it.

CUT TO:

INT. GREY BMW - NIGHT

Hendrick is being driven home through the Highveld night. He chews on something really sticky, chewy. He pauses to dislodge some of it from a tooth, before it pulls out a filling.

Then, he resumes chewing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANDELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the bedside table, THE CLOCK clicks from 4:59 to 5:00. Mandela's eyes open in the dark ... close for a second ... then shoot open again.

It takes everything Mandela has to sit up and switch on the light.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The bodyguards' BMW's flank the gate. As the gate opens --

-- Linga gets out of one BMW, Hendrick gets out of the other. They are alert. It is freezing cold.

Bundled up against the cold, Mandela emerges through the gate and they close in on him. It is clear that he is pushing himself, physically.

LINGA  
(traditional Xhosa  
greeting)  
I see you, father.

MANDELA  
Morning boys.

HENDRICK  
Morning, sir.

They keep moving. It is too cold for anything else.

MANDELA  
How is your family, Hendrick?

HENDRICK

Top shape, sir. How about yours?

Mandela's smile becomes fixed on his face.

MANDELA

I have a very big family. 42 million people.

Then, he stops, turns, heads back towards the house.

MANDELA

I don't think I want to walk today.

Hendrick realizes that he blundered, somehow. He shoots an anxious glance at Linga -- who looks at him as if he'd just committed blasphemy.

Mandela goes through the open gate without a word. The gate closes behind him, leaving Linga and Hendrick to watch him through iron bars.

Linga turns on Hendrick.

LINGA

We never ask him about his family.

HENDRICK

But he asks about ours all the time.

LINGA

Think about it, man. He's separated from his wife. His children ... how often do you see them here?

(beat)

He's not a saint, okay. He's a man, with a man's problems -- and he doesn't need us reminding him about them.

Linga heads back to his BMW. Hendrick stands at the gate, looking in at the house.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAWN

Mandela shaves, avoiding his own gaze.

CUT TO:

Shaved, showered and dressed, Mandela descends the stairs, sits down to breakfast by himself at the big table. He looks at the newspaper headlines, which talk about CRIME RISING, THE RAND FALLING, THE MANDELA HONEYMOON OVER etc. etc.

Like any other man, Mandela turns to the SPORTS SECTION for relief -- and finally finds something to smile about.

ON THE NEWSPAPER: SPRINGBOK COACH AND MANAGER AXED. PIENAAR STAYS ON AS CAPTAIN.

There is a PICTURE OF PIENAAR. Mandela reacts to it, pleased.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

As a CABINET MINISTER AND HER ENTOURAGE leave, Barbara enters, holding an envelope.

MANDELA  
Hello Barbara. I like that dress.

BARBARA  
Thank you Madiba.  
(offering envelope)  
This is for you.

MANDELA  
(taking envelope)  
What is it?

BARBARA  
Your pay checks. You haven't been  
collecting them.

Mandela opens the envelope, looks at a check -- and grunts.

BARBARA  
What's wrong?

MANDELA  
This is terrible.

BARBARA  
Madiba, it's what De Klerk got.  
Plus an increase for inflation.

But, Mandela shakes his head, outraged.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Today, President Mandela announced  
that, in his opinion --

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

TV ANNOUNCER  
(on TV throughout)  
-- his salary is too high.

Pienaar and Nerine watch the news with MR. AND MRS PIENAAR.

MR. PIENAAR  
Dead right. They're all overpaid.

IN THE BACKGROUND, once again, Eunice washes the dishes and  
keeps an eye on the TV.

TV ANNOUNCER  
He has therefore decided to donate  
a third of his monthly income to  
charity.

MR. PIENAAR  
Give me the houses and cars they  
give him and I'll donate a third of  
my salary too.

Francois' cell phone rings.

PIENAAR  
(to Mr. Pienaar)  
You would not. Not in a million  
years.

PIENAAR  
(answering phone)  
Hallo, Pienaar.

Whatever Pienaar hears on the phone sends him out of the room  
in a hurry.

PIENAAR  
(into phone)  
Hang on a moment, please.

TV ANNOUNCER  
President Mandela said that he  
wished to set an example to other  
leaders and cabinet ministers.

MR. PIENAAR  
 Fat chance. They're lining their  
 pockets as fast as they can.

Nerine is interested in the call that sent Pienaar hurrying  
 out of the room. Mr. Pienaar MUTES THE TV.

MR. PIENAAR  
 Must be his girlfriend, hey Nerine.

NERINE  
 He knows I'd bloody kill him.

ON EUNICE, as eyes and ears alive, she finishes in the  
 kitchen.

Pienaar comes back, stands in the doorway, a stunned  
 expression on his face.

NERINE  
 What? Who was it?

Pienaar doesn't answer immediately.

MR. PIENAAR  
 Told you. It was his girlfriend.

MRS. PIENAAR  
 Shush!

PIENAAR  
 I've been invited to tea.

NERINE  
 Who with?

PIENAAR  
 The President.

MR. PIENAAR  
 The President of SA Rugby? Count  
 your fingers after he shakes your  
 hand.

Pienaar points at the muted TV.

PIENAAR  
 The President.

ON THE TV: footage of Mandela with a group of SAUDI PRINCES.

Eunice turns and looks at Francois, wide-eyed.

The Pienaar family all stare at the TV, stunned.

PIENAAR

He wants me over for tea, week  
after next.

Eunice picks up her handbag, puts on her coat and heads for  
the door, stops when she reaches Pienaar.

EUNICE

Mr. Francois -- you must tell  
Madiba that the bus service is very  
bad, and too expensive. He must  
please fix it.

(leaving)

Good night everybody.

MRS. PIENAAR

Good night Eunice, thank you.

All eyes on Pienaar.

MR. PIENAAR

What the hell does he want with  
you?

Pienaar shakes his head -- he has no idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

Nerine's modest little car heads towards the seat of power.

INT. NERINE'S CAR - DAY

Nerine drives. Pienaar wears a blue blazer, grey slacks and  
subdued tie -- and is surprisingly nervous.

NERINE

Francois, relax. You've met him  
before.

PIENAAR

I shook his hand on the rugby  
field, that's all.

NERINE

You didn't even vote for him.

PIENAAR

He's still the President.

(confessing)

He's had dinner with the Queen.  
With Presidents and movie stars.  
All I do is play rugby. What if I  
pull something stupid in front of  
him?

Nerine stops to let Pienaar out. Gives him a kiss,  
straightens his hair.

NERINE

You won't. I'll pick you up right  
here.

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

Pienaar climbs out of Nerine's car.

A pretty sizeable KNOT OF JOURNALISTS rush towards him.

Pienaar takes a deep breath. He is a bundle of nerves.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Small office packed with big men.

ETIENNE

See who's coming for tea?

HENDRICK

My nephew wants me to get his  
autograph.

LINGA

Who?

ETIENNE

Francois Pienaar.

JASON

Who wants to escort him in?

Hendrick bolts for the door.

HENDRICK

I will.

JASON  
No autographs.

HENDRICK  
(insulted)  
I know how to do my job, okay.

Hendrick leaves.

LINGA  
Who's this Pienaar?

ETIENNE  
You can't be serious? He's the  
captain of the Springboks.

Linga shrugs, provocatively indifferent.

LINGA  
I like soccer, myself.

ETIENNE  
Well, you know what they say about  
soccer -- it's gentleman's game  
played by hooligans. One the other  
hand, rugby is a hooligan's game  
played by --

LINGA  
Ja, ja, I've heard it before. It  
wasn't funny the first time.

Not exactly violin music and roses ... but they are talking  
to each other.

INT. UNION BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

Hendrick escorts Pienaar back towards Mandela's offices.  
Hendrick is the bigger man.

PIENAAR  
Can I ask you a question,  
Lieutenant?

HENDRICK  
Ja, of course.

PIENAAR  
What's he like?

They pause at the office door. Hendrick ponders that  
question for a moment, then:

HENDRICK

When I worked for the previous President, it was my job to be invisible.

Hendrick opens the door.

HENDRICK

This President ... he found out I like English toffee and brought me some back, from his visit to the Queen.

Hendrick ushers Pienaar into Mandela's offices.

HENDRICK

To him, nobody is invisible.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

Hendrick gestures to the waiting area.

HENDRICK

That's where you wait. One of his assistants will come for you.  
(pointing)  
There's a bathroom over there, if you need it.

PIENAAR

Okay. Thanks.

Hendrick turns to leave, hesitates, turns back.

HENDRICK

What are our chances in the World Cup? I mean, for real.

PIENAAR

We'll do our best. That, I can guarantee.

Hendrick nods solemnly, heads back to security. Pienaar heads straight for the bathroom.

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - DAY

Hendrick enters. Etienne and the other white bodyguards look up.

HENDRICK

Well, he's not as big as he looks  
on TV.

(beat)

And we don't stand a bloody chance  
in the World Cup.

INT. UNION BUILDING BATHROOM - DAY

Pienaar washes his hands, dries them, dries them again, combs  
his hair, looks at himself in the mirror, adjusts his blazer.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - DAY

Pienaar returns to the waiting area, sits.

There is a clock on the wall. One minute to four.

Four Japanese trade officials traipse out, having just met  
Mandela.

The second hand journeys up to vertical. When it hits 4  
o'clock exactly --

-- Mary walks into the waiting area.

MARY

Mr. Pienaar?

Pienaar shoots to his feet.

MARY

This way, please.

Mary leads Pienaar back to Mandela's own office, knocks,  
opens the door.

MARY

Go on in.

Mouth dry, Pienaar nods --

-- and enters the inner sanctum.

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mandela leaps up from behind his desk, crosses the room to  
meet Pienaar.

MANDELA  
 Francois, what an honor. I'm so  
 excited.

They shake hands.

MANDELA  
 Thank you for coming all this way  
 to see me.

Pienaar gulps like a fish out of water.

PIENAAR  
 Yes, sir. No problem. Thank you  
 for inviting me.

MANDELA  
 Tell me. How's your ankle?

PIENAAR  
 My ankle?

MANDELA  
 I was told you'd hurt it. Has it  
 healed?

Pienaar relaxes, visibly. This is small talk he can handle.  
 This is Mandela's gift.

PIENAAR  
 The truth is, sir, you never play  
 at a hundred percent, no matter  
 what.

MANDELA  
 Yes ... yes. In sports, and in  
 life. Come. Sit. Please.  
 (indicating a chair)  
 Take this one. Looking into the  
 light hurts my eyes.

They sit in the chairs.

A KNOCK at the door, and MRS. BRITS the old Afrikaner tea  
 lady enters, carrying a laden tea tray.

Mandela stands again, immediately.

MANDELA  
 Ah, Mrs. Brits --

Pienaar stands just a beat slower.

MANDELA

-- you are a shining light in my day.

MRS. BRITS

Yes sir.

Eyes twinkling, Mrs. Brits puts the tea tray down on the coffee table in front of them. The finest china, cookies on a plate.

MANDELA

Mrs. Brits, this is Francois Pienaar. He's the captain of the Springboks.

Mandela clearly expects Pienaar to shake hands with Mrs. Brits. Pienaar holds out his hand --

PIENAAR

(Afrikaans greeting)  
*Aangename kennis, Mevrou Brits.*

-- gently shakes hers.

MRS. BRITS

*Ek ook, Meneer.*  
(to Mandela)  
Shall I pour, sir?

MANDELA

No thank you, I think I'd like to.

Mrs. Brits leaves. Mandela does not sit until the door closes behind her. Pienaar only sits after he does.

Mandela's manners would not be out of place in Victorian England.

MANDELA

How do you take your tea, Francois?

PIENAAR

Milk and sugar, please.

Mandela pours tea for both of them.

ON PIENAAR, as, just for a moment, he realizes that here he is, with the President pouring him a cup of tea.

MANDELA

The English have given us many things, including rugby, but afternoon tea is one of the greatest.

Mandela hands Pienaar the tea cup.

PIENAAR

Thank you, sir.

Both men have big hands. Fine china dwarfed and threatened.

In the exact moment that both their hands hold the same saucer, Mandela looks Pienaar in the eye.

MANDELA

You have a very difficult job.

PIENAAR

I do? I sell gas braais.

Mandela lets go and Pienaar takes the tea.

MANDELA

Captain of the Springboks. A very difficult job.

PIENAAR

Not compared to yours, sir.

MANDELA

Ah, but then nobody is trying to tear my head off while I'm doing mine.

Pienaar grins. True.

MANDELA

It is not so difficult to get people to do their best. And I imagine that anybody who plays for their country does their best, almost automatically.

PIENAAR

Or they wouldn't be chosen in the first place.

MANDELA

Yes. But to get people to be better than that?

(MORE)

MANDELA (cont'd)  
 Better than they think they can be?  
 Now, that is difficult, I find.

PIENAAR  
 Yes sir, it is.

MANDELA  
 How do we do that? By example? To  
 an extent. But there is more to it  
 than that ...  
 (searching for the right  
 word)  
 ... inspiration, perhaps.

Pienaar is engrossed. This is a master lesson on leadership,  
 from a master.

MANDELA  
 How do we inspire ourselves to  
 greatness, when nothing less will  
 do? How do we inspire everyone  
 around us?  
 (beat)  
 Sometimes, I think, by using the  
 work of others.

Long pause. Pienaar knows to keep quiet.

MANDELA  
 On Robben Island, when things were  
 very hard, I found inspiration in a  
 poem.

PIENAAR  
 A poem?

MANDELA  
 A Victorian poem. Just words. But  
 they helped me to stand when all I  
 wanted was to lie down --  
 (suddenly dismissive)  
 But you didn't come all this way to  
 hear an old man talk about things  
 that make no sense.

PIENAAR  
 No! They make a lot of sense, sir.  
 (beat)  
 On the day of a big match, say a  
 test, in the bus on the way to the  
 stadium, nobody talks.

MANDELA

Yes ... yes. Everybody is preparing.

PIENAAR

When I think we're ready, I have the bus driver put on a song I've chosen; a theme song. One we all know. We listen together and ... it helps.

MANDELA

Yes! I remember when I was a guest at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. The whole stadium welcomed me with a song.

(beat)

At the time the future -- our future -- seemed very bleak. But to hear that song, in voices from all over our planet ... it made me very proud to be South African. It helped me to come home and do better. It allowed me to expect more of myself.

A beat.

PIENAAR

May I ask what the song was, sir?

MANDELA

Well, it was *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. A very inspiring song.

Mandela looks into Pienaar's eyes.

MANDELA

We need inspiration, Francois.

Brown African eyes, blue African eyes meet over their cups of tea.

MANDELA

Because, in order to build our nation, we all need to exceed our own expectations.

Something passes between them. Whatever it is has a profound impact on Pienaar.

PIENAAR  
 Yes, sir. We probably do.

CUT TO:

Cameras click and whirr as MANDELA AND PIENAAR SHAKE HANDS for the press.

(NOTE that there are NO FLASHES.)

CUT TO:

INT. UNION BUILDING HALLWAYS - DAY

Pienaar walks away from the President's offices, still processing his meeting with Mandela. He seems a little stunned and mystified. Something profound just happened -- but he's not quite sure what.

EXT. UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA - DAY

When Pienaar steps outside and sees all of Pretoria -- all of South Africa -- stretching away below him, he pauses. He looks at his country in a new way.

A BEEP BEEP from Nerine's car interrupts his reverie, as she pulls up at the bottom of the stairs.

INT. NERINE'S CAR - DAY

Nerine drives Pienaar away. Pienaar turns, looks back at the Union Buildings.

NERINE  
 So ...?

PIENAAR  
 Hm?

NERINE  
 What's he like?

PIENAAR  
 He's ...  
 (beat)  
 ... he's not like anyone I've ever met before.

An unsatisfying answer. Nerine waits for more. But, she isn't going to get it without prying it out of Pienaar.

NERINE

Well? What did he want?

This is the question Pienaar is wrestling with, too. He thinks it over for long enough to drive Nerine crazy.

NERINE

Ag, come on Francois. It's like talking to a bloody brick wall. What did he want?

Pienaar turns in his seat, looks at her as realization comes clear in him ...

PIENAAR

I think ...

(beat)

I think he wants us to win the World Cup.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

A FRAMED PHOTO OF MANDELA SQUARING OFF AGAINST MUHAMMAD ALI looks down --

-- on Mandela, who is surrounded by HIS GRANDCHILDREN IN THE LIVING ROOM. Mandela likes the babies. THEIR PARENTS, shoo and shepherd the kids, keeping them on their best behavior --

-- for the PHOTOGRAPHERS shooting this family gathering. Seeing the photographers makes this feel staged.

Mandela looks past the photographers, sees his daughter ZINDZI glancing in from the doorway, and then moving on.

MANDELA

Excuse me.

Mandela disentangles the babies, stands, leaves.

CUT TO:

In the DINING ROOM, Zindzi looks down at a BIG FRONT PAGE PHOTO OF MANDELA AND PIENAAR SHAKING HANDS.

She is a modern, cosmopolitan young woman.

When Mandela enters, Zindzi looks up from the newspaper with a very Mandela-like grunt.

MANDELA  
What do you think?

ZINDZI  
It doesn't matter what I think.

MANDELA  
Yes, it does.

ZINDZI  
(defiant)  
Okay. I think he looks like one of the policemen who forced us out of our house when you were in jail. I don't like seeing you shake his hand. And I'm not the only one.

Mandela overreacts.

MANDELA  
You criticize without understanding. You seek only to address your own feelings. This is selfish thinking. It does not serve the nation.

Zindzi shakes her head, turns, leaves.

MANDELA  
Wait. Please. I --

Mandela wants to apologize, doesn't know how. Instead, he pulls AN ENVELOPE out of his pocket, holds it out.

MANDELA  
Will you give this to your mother.

ZINDZI  
What is it?

MANDELA  
A bracelet.

Zindzi looks into the envelope. In it is the BEADED BRACELET, from earlier, from the bathroom.

ZINDZI  
Just throw it away.

MANDELA  
I don't have the right to. It's not mine.

ZINDZI

If she left it here, she meant to  
throw it away.

Only children know how to twist the dagger so deftly.  
Mandela turns away so that his daughter cannot see his eyes.

A man so at ease with strangers does not know how to talk to  
his own family.

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

The SAME NEWSPAPER PHOTO of Mandela and Pienaar that Zindzi  
was looking at -- only, this time, someone is cutting it out,  
very carefully. Eunice.

Mr. Pienaar enters to get something from the fridge, sees  
what Eunice is doing. Eunice stops cutting.

Mr. Pienaar looks down at the photo for a long moment. He  
doesn't know how to react to it.

EUNICE

Mrs. Pienaar said you were finished  
with the paper.

MR. PIENAAR

Ja. Of course.

Mr. Pienaar leaves. Eunice keeps cutting until the photo can  
be lifted up. She nods, proud.

OVER, A WHISTLE BLOWS, SHARPLY.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

On a PRACTISE FIELD at this world-class facility, the  
SPRINGBOK SQUAD (about 30 guys) sprint to the 25 m line,  
drops, begins 20 explosive push-ups.

NOTE, also, that at least half of the players who faced the  
British Lions earlier are gone.)

MINISTER OF SPORT (V.O.)  
 The World Cup is played every four  
 years. Sixteen teams qualify from  
 around the world.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

THE MINISTER OF SPORTS BRIEFS MANDELA on the World Cup, with  
 the help of a BIG DIAGRAM ON AN EASEL (just like a March  
 Madness bracket layout, showing all the teams.) The Minister  
 looks ragged, exhausted.

MINISTER OF SPORT  
 Four pools of four teams each,  
 playing in nine different venues  
 around the country. Two teams will  
 advance from each pool to the  
 quarter finals.

Mandela studies the diagram. He loves this stuff.

MANDELA  
 The Ivory Coast qualified. This is  
 wonderful.

(For the record, the sixteen teams who qualified were: South  
 Africa, New Zealand, Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland,  
 Wales, Canada, Romania, Italy, France, Japan, West Samoa,  
 Argentina, Tonga and Ivory Coast.)

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

The Springbok squad leap up after the push-ups, sprint to the  
 50 m line, drop, begin 20 rapid crunches --

-- under the critical eye of the new COACH and MANAGER.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

MINISTER OF SPORT  
 Australia won the previous World  
 Cup. New Zealand won the one  
 before that.  
 (MORE)

MINISTER OF SPORT (cont'd)

They're both clear favorites to reach the finals this time.

(beat)

According to the experts, we'll reach the quarter finals, and no further.

MANDELA

According to the experts, you and I are still supposed to be in jail.

That brings a grin from the Minister of Sport.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

The coach blows his whistle.

COACH

Again!

ON PIENAAR, as he leaps to his feet, leads the charge back to the 25 m line.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

MINISTER OF SPORT

You make a personal appearance at the finals, and at the opening match between the Springboks and Australia.

(beat)

The finals will be broadcast to over a billion people around the world, live.

MANDELA

A billion people watching us!

(wheels turning in his head)

Yes ... yes. This is a great opportunity.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

Hands on their knees, sucking air, retching, the squad has worked their way down the full length of the field.

SPRINGBOK MANAGER

I reckon you've knocked the stuffing out of them today.

COACH

I haven't even begun.

(beat)

We may not be the most talented team in the world -- but we're going to be the fittest.

He blows his whistle.

COACH

And back!

The squad can't believe their ears. No one moves. Except Pienaar.

PIENAAR

Come on boys, let's show him.

Staggering more than sprinting, Pienaar heads towards the 25m line.

SPRINGBOK FLANK

Shit, what's Pienaar been eating?

But, they follow him.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Alone in his office, Mandela looks at the World Cup diagram, for a moment, then picks up his phone.

MANDELA

(into phone)

Please call the head of South African rugby for me.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Thirty completely wiped-out athletes. Some are too tired to shower, some have made it that far, but are too tired to change.

Pienaar has showered and changed and slumps next to his locker.

The SPRINGBOK MANAGER enters, followed by the RUGBY PRESIDENT.

Pienaar and the boys drag themselves upright.

The Rugby President looks them over as if they were his very own stable of race horses -- a stable he's not entirely sure he likes.

RUGBY PRESIDENT

Afternoon men. It's good to see you working so hard. I have a short announcement.

(beat)

As part of the PR buildup to the World Cup, you will be conducting coaching clinics in townships all over the country.

The players greet this announcement with complete silence.

RUGBY PRESIDENT

I know you have plenty on your plates already -- but this is a request that comes from the top.

(looking at Pienaar,  
pointedly)

The very top.

The Rugby President turns on his heel, and leaves, followed by the Manager.

The players say nothing for a long moment, but body language alone shows that they are completely disgusted.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

This is complete crap.

SPRINGBOK FLANK

Are we some kind of circus act now?

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
 We don't have time for *kuk* like  
 this.

The boys are getting angrier by the second.

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
 They expect us to play our best, to  
 give our bloody all, then they add  
 to our bloody workload ...

The lock turns to Chester.

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
 What do you think about this,  
 Chester?

All eyes on Chester, as if the poor guy is a magic guide to a  
 world they barely understand.

CHESTER WILLIAMS  
 I try not to think. It interferes  
 with my rugby.

The perfect answer for these guys.

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
 See! Now there's a rugby player.  
 Talk to them Francois.

SPRINGBOK WING  
 Make them see that this is a waste  
 of time we don't have.

All eyes on their Captain -- who shakes his head, no.

PIENAAR  
 I'm not going to talk to them.

SPRINGBOK FLANK  
 Why not?

PIENAAR  
 Whether we like it or not, we're  
 more than just a rugby team. We're  
 ... we're ambassadors inside our  
 own country. And we might as well  
 get used to it.

Silence. Rebellious silence. Then:

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
 Is this you speaking, or Mandela?

Pienaar's eyes are fierce. He needs them to see how serious he is.

PIENAAR  
 You know me better than that.  
 (beat)  
 Times change. We need to change,  
 too.

It is clear that much of his team disagrees with him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICES - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP ON A TV -- horrible, startling images of the OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING.

TV ANNOUNCER (ON TV)  
 We're looking at the remains of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, America, which was destroyed today in a massive explosion.

PULL BACK to reveal that we are in Mandela's offices. Barbara, Mary, other assistants look on. So do the bodyguards. All faces stunned, appalled.

Mandela approaches slowly from his office, drawn in by the horrible, irresistible images. He stands behind his people.

TV ANNOUNCER  
 No one has claimed responsibility yet, but authorities say that the timing and target mark this as the work of white, right-wing fanatics. An act of revenge for the FBI killings in Waco, Texas.

Jason and Linga share a pointed look. South Africa is a global leader in white, right-wing fanatics.

TV ANNOUNCER  
 The explosive, a truck bomb, was apparently a simple mixture of commonly available industrial and agricultural materials.

JASON  
 (to Linga)  
 That's all we need.  
 (MORE)

JASON (cont'd)

A homemade explosive from materials every boer already has.

Then, Jason realizes that Mandela is standing right next to him.

TV ANNOUNCER

So far, the official death toll stands at over a 100 people, which includes at least 12 children from a day care center in the Federal building.

Mandela turns to Barbara.

MANDELA

Please call President Clinton for me. I wish to offer him our condolences.

Mandela turns to Jason, eyes deep and dark.

MANDELA

Do you see why forgiveness is essential, Jason?

(beat)

Revenge only begets revenge.

As Mandela walks back to his office, there is a look of utter sorrow on his face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

A luxury bus heads along the freeway.

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

The Springbok squad rides in style. Most are wearing tracksuits, most are asleep. Pienaar is awake.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWNSHIP - DAY

The same township where Sipho rejected the Springbok rugby jersey.

At one edge we find what passes for a SOCCER FIELD. Just a littered rectangular expanse of Highveld winter dirt.

TV VANS and a very nervous SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW drive to the edge of the field, stop, get out --

-- and are immediately mobbed by THREADBARE, EXCITED KIDS, many of them begging for cash and candy. SIPHO in the thick of things.

One of the Springbok management crew pulls a ROLLED BANNER on two spiked poles out of their van.

Mallet and banner in hand, the management crew head to the edge of the field, mobbed by shouting, whistling township kids.

They hammer one pole into the ground, unroll the banner (seen from the back so that we can't read the words), get set to hammer the second pole into the ground --

-- except that there is a SMASHED BEER BOTTLE in the way. Broken glass everywhere.

They look at the broken glass, then turn and look across the field.

Broken glass glints in the low sun, all over the field.

SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW#1  
They can't play on this.

SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW#2  
When are they due?

SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW#1  
Fifteen minutes.

SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW#2  
Plenty of time.

He reaches into his wallet, pulls out a R100 note (about \$17), holds it up high. The kids yell for it.

SPRINGBOK MANAGEMENT CREW#2  
THIS GOES TO WHOEVER COLLECTS THE  
MOST GLASS!

Mayhem, as kids sprint out across the field, hunting for glass. Siphon goes for the tiniest, most treacherous shards.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

The bus hits a rut in the dirt road with an almighty jolt, which wakes the sleeping Springboks.

They look out of the windows and see the absolutely hellish outskirts of the township. Every possible incarnation of poverty, as far as the eye can see.

This shocks them. Most of them have never been anywhere like this township.

SPRINGBOK LOCK

Shit, I'm glad I don't live here.

EXT. TOWNSHIP - DAY

The driver sounds the horn, as they pull into the township.

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

The bus pulls up at the field --

EXT. TOWNSHIP - DAY

-- which is covered with kids on their hands and knees.

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

What the hell are they doing?

The driver sounds the horn again, and the kids on the field sprint for the bus, hands and pockets full of broken glass.

PIENAAR

Don't forget, we've got TV cameras on us at all times.

SPRINGBOK LOCK

(muttering)

What a bloody joke.

EXT. TOWNSHIP - DAY

As the kids approach the bus, they dump their broken glass under the banner, which reads --

ONE TEAM, ONE COUNTRY

-- brown, green, white, blue shards tinkling and piling up, like lethal jewels, backlit in the low winter sun.

One of the big kids gets the R100. Attention focussed on that --

-- until the bus door opens with a loud hiss of hydraulics and the Springboks exit, one by one.

Pienaar first, with a huge NET BAG OF PRACTISE BALLS over his shoulder.

The Springboks are all so big, so strong, so healthy, they look like gods, or aliens, emerging from a spaceship. The kids go quiet, awed and uncomfortable.

Until Chester Williams steps off the bus, and there is a collective sigh of recognition and wonder.

Now, the kids can relate to the Springboks. Even Siphon, who looks on from the side of the field.

Springbok management notes it.

The TV crews note it.

Pienaar notes it.

PIENAAR

Okay Chester -- I reckon you're up.

CHESTER WILLIAMS

(panicking)

What am I supposed to do?

PIENAAR

What you do best.

Pienaar turns to the throng.

PIENAAR

WHO WANTS TO PLAY RUGBY?

A roar. They all do.

Pienaar opens the net bag full of rugby balls, gives a ball to Chester.

PIENAAR

Let rip.

Chester boots the ball out over the crowd, high and incredibly far in the thin winter air. (60 yards, easily.)

Pienaar tosses balls to the others.

PIENAAR

Let's do our best.

One after another, the Springboks kick the balls high into the air.

PIENAAR

Go get them!

The kids go after them. Siphon stays on the sideline.

BEGIN RUGBY CLINIC MONTAGE

Barely controlled chaos. Each Springbok works with one ball and a group of kids. There are THREE THEMES to this montage.

FIRST, a primer on the basic rules of rugby, with demonstrations.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

Who here knows the first rule of rugby?

TOWNSHIP KID

Me!

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

What is it?

TOWNSHIP KID

Only hit the other players when the ref isn't looking!

Laughter. A good ice-breaker.

PIENAAR

No. The first rule of rugby is you can only pass the ball backwards or sideways.

Pienaar demonstrates. (NOTE: All the rules are demonstrated.)

VARIOUS SPRINGBOKS

- If you drop the ball, or pass it forwards, you scrum for possession.
- This is a scrum.
- You kick forwards.

(MORE)

## VARIOUS SPRINGBOKS (cont'd)

If you kick it out of bounds, you throw it back in to a lineout.

- This is a lineout.
- You score in four ways: a try, when you dot the ball down behind the try line. That's five points.
- Another two points when you convert the try by kicking the ball through the uprights.
- Three points for a penalty kick.
- Three points for a drop kick.
- Have you got all that?

## KIDS

No!

## SPRINGBOK HOOKER

Agh, bugger it, let's just run and pass. Whoever drops the ball does pushups!

SECOND, as the players work with the kids, they get into it. Much to their own surprise, they enjoy the energy, they enjoy the kids, they enjoy the giving. Even the grumpiest, most conservative Springbok.

## SPRINGBOK LOCK

Okay. Who wants to scrum against me?

One huge man scrums against a horde of kids. He pushes them backwards with a roar -- then lets them push him backwards. They love it, the cameras love it.

THE THIRD THEME shows the emergence of Chester Williams as the face of the Springboks. The crowd of kids around him is twice as big as any other player's crew. Given Chester's basically shy nature, he finds it all a bit overwhelming. The TV cameras follow him even more closely than they follow Pienaar.

AT ONE POINT, an errant pass puts a rugby ball right at Siphos feet. He hesitates, then picks it up. He doesn't just hold it, he feels it.

END THE MONTAGE as the luxury bus pulls away, surrounded by a horde of cheering kids, many of whom hold new rugby balls under their arms.

One blast on the horn, one answering cheer from the kids and the bus slowly accelerates away.

CUT TO:

INT. UNION BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM - EVENING

A cabinet meeting in the rainbow nation, with Mandela at the head of the table.

The MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT is making a presentation about a campaign to put an end to littering by plastic bags. Behind him is a VERY DRAMATIC SLIDE IMAGE of a rural barbed wire fence festooned with wind-blown plastic bags.

MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

-- and in addition to the nationwide PR campaign, we propose that all retail outlets charge a nominal fee for plastic bags --

Mary enters quietly, slips a piece of paper in front of Mandela, who reads it, holds up his hand.

MANDELA

Mr. Minister, please forgive me. This sounds excellent, and we will return to it, but if you'll indulge me for just one minute --

Mandela nods to Mary, who switches on a big TV on the wall -- which shows NEWS FOOTAGE OF THE COACHING CLINIC in the township.

When we see the FOOTAGE OF THE LOCK SCRUMMING WITH THE KIDS, Mandela laughs, delighted, turns to his cabinet.

MANDELA

You see, that picture is worth any number of speeches.

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Pienaar watch the same report ON TV. Mr. Pienaar has quite a different reaction to Mandela's.

MR. PIENAAR

Tell me something -- how does this help them win rugby matches?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAPE TOWN - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT from the air of Cape Town, one of the most beautiful cities in the world. We see the Cape Peninsula, the harbor, the city itself draped around the shoulders of Table Mountain like a multi-colored Mediterranean shawl.

On its descent towards Cape Town airport, a SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS JET flies across the view with the smiling face of Chester Williams painted on the fuselage.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
This is Boland Botha coming to you  
live from Cape Town airport --

EXT. CAPE TOWN AIRPORT - DAY

From a position near an IDLING LUXURY BUS, Boland speaks into his mike.

BOLAND BOTHA  
-- where the Springbok flight has  
just landed.

CUT TO:

ON THE APRON, the team disembarks.

The boys are dressed in Springbok blazers, slacks and ties. A magnificent sight. Gladiators in top shape, faces appropriately stern.

INT. CAPE TOWN AIRPORT - DAY

People -- white people -- clap and cheer as the team enters the building.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
The green and gold have one week to  
put the finishing touches to their  
gruelling training program --

The team feeds on the energy. They walk taller, faster, closer together.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
-- and I, for one, have to admit to  
being cautiously excited.

EXT. CAPE TOWN AIRPORT - DAY

ON BOLAND BOTHA, next to the bus.

BOLAND BOTHA  
 (into mike)  
 I say cautiously, because in my  
 humble opinion --

Behind Boland, the Springboks get into the bus, fast.

BOLAND BOTHA  
 -- this team has been over-trained  
 on the field, and over-committed  
 off it.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S CAPE TOWN HOUSE - DAY

A beautiful Cape Dutch style mansion. Mandela stands in his HOME OFFICE, watches Boland on TV. The MINISTER OF SPORTS is with him.

BOLAND BOTHA (ON TV)  
 Which makes beating a powerhouse  
 Australian side in the Cup opener  
 next week a tall order, especially  
 since this is an inexperienced team  
 with a history of coming up short  
 in big matches. This is Boland  
 Botha --

Mandela switches off the TV.

MANDELA  
 Around the world -- objectively --  
 what are they saying about our  
 chances against Australia?

MINISTER OF SPORT  
 Everyone thinks they'll beat us.  
 And if they do, we'll have to go  
 through England and the All Blacks  
 just to get to the Final.

MANDELA  
 So it is very important that we  
 beat Australia.  
 (to Minister of Sport)  
 Thank you.

The Minister leaves.

Alone in his office, Mandela sits, thinks, gets a sheet of paper with his PERSONAL LETTERHEAD on it, uncaps his fountain pen.

OVER MANDELA'S SHOULDER, we see him write, and then underline, the title INVICTUS by W.E. Henley.

BARBARA KNOCKS, pokes her head in.

BARBARA

The Cabinet Ministers are here to brief you on the trip to Taiwan.

MANDELA

I'll be right out.

From memory, Mandela writes the first line of the poem:

Out of the night that covers me ...

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWLANDS - DAY

The luxury bus comes around a bend in a leafy suburb of Cape Town, right under the flanks of Table Mountain.

Ahead, we see NEWLANDS STADIUM, home of the World Cup opener between the Springboks and Australia.

A magnificent old stadium in a beautiful setting.

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

All eyes on the stadium as the bus idles past, very slowly. This is a coach move.

COACH

One week, boys.

Excited faces become grave, serious. The bus goes quiet.

Coach nods to himself, pleased.

EXT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - DAY

The bus pulls away.

WE STAY AT NEWLANDS STADIUM -- and SWOOP UPWARDS until we are looking down on the stadium and surrounding streets.

This AERIAL SHOT BECOMES A BIG MAP --

INT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - SECURITY CENTER - DAY

-- pinned to a board in the security center.

JASON

We need snipers on top of the stadium and these surrounding buildings.

Jason leads the meeting. He uses an old-fashioned pointer. All of Mandela's security detail present, plus LOCAL COP BRASS.

LOCAL COP

Not a problem.

JASON

We want these two approaches completely sanitized.

LOCAL COP

Two approaches?

JASON

We're not going to decide which way we bring him in until the very last moment.

(beat)

We need uniforms, plain clothes, sharp-shooters ...

LINGA

And sniffer dogs.

JASON

Yes. No truck bombs, no Oklahoma City.

The locals stir, share a look. This is going to be a nightmare.

JASON

We've got an army unit on standby at Silvermine, if you need more men.

Not an option the cops favor, judging by their faces.

JASON

We're not taking any chances, okay.  
The President's going to be very  
exposed.

(beat)

Much too exposed.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

The silver Mercedes tools into Cape Town past Groote Schuur.  
Mandela travels with Barbara, who opens her first file of the  
journey -- but is forestalled by her boss.

MANDELA

Barbara, I have been studying.

BARBARA

For the summit in Taiwan? Good.

MANDELA

No. Not exactly.

Mandela hands Barbara a folded SPORTS SECTION.

MANDELA

Test me.

Barbara unfolds the sports section --

-- to reveal COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SPRINGBOK SQUAD. A  
collector's pull-out.

Barbara looks at the photos, shakes her head.

BARBARA

They look like thugs.

Mandela just smiles at that remark.

MANDELA

Block out the names. See if I can  
recognize them.

Barbara gives her boss a put-upon look -- this is such a  
waste of time! -- but blocks out the first row of names.  
Mandela points at the first photo.

MANDELA

Andre Joubert.

(next photo)

(MORE)

MANDELA (cont'd)

Gavin Johnson.

(beat)

Did I get them right?

BARBARA

Yes, Madiba.

MANDELA

(immensely pleased with himself)

This is how I used to study in law school.

(next photo is of Chester)

Unfortunately, Chester is far too easy to identify. But that will change. It must.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE TOWN STREETS - EVENING

The entire Springbok squad has been on a training run through Cape Town, on ordinary streets, through ordinary people.

(This is unthinkable in top-level sports anywhere else. It really happened.)

When they are recognized, drivers toot their horns, pedestrians cheer, kids on bicycles ride with them (mostly still white).

As they approach the hotel grounds, Pienaar surges to the front, so that he can give them a message as they pass through the hotel gate.

PIENAAR

Players-only meeting in the team room after dinner.

INT. SPRINGBOK TEAM ROOM - CAPE TOWN HOTEL - NIGHT

Normally a conference room, now equipped with fridge, pool table, ping pong, sofas, TV etc.

The entire team has assembled, minus Pienaar. A quiet air. Serious, relaxed.

Pienaar enters, holding a sheaf of XEROXED PAGES, begins to hand them out.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

What's this? Homework?

PIENAAR

Sort of.

The players look down at the pages.

ON A PAGE: the words to Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, in Xhosa.

One by one, the players look from the page to Pienaar.

SPRINGBOK WING

Cappie? What's this?

PIENAAR

We need to learn it. We can't just mouth the words anymore.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

Nobody cares, as long as we win matches.

PIENAAR

They do care.

SPRINGBOK LOCK

It's their song, not ours.

SPRINGBOK WING

It's a terrorist song.

SPRINGBOK PROP

They used to arrest you for singing it.

PIENAAR

And now it's one of our anthems.

But he's talking to a deeply conservative group of guys.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

Cap. You know I leave my guts on the field for you, and you know I'd follow you into a fight anywhere, any time. But this ...

The hooker crumples the page, is about to throw it away.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

... I can't even read it. I definitely can't pronounce the words.

One look at his men, and Pienaar knows he has hit a wall.

PIENAAR  
 Okay, boys. It's optional. Take  
 it if you want to.

The players are relieved. Pienaar looks down at the sheet of  
 paper for a moment, then looks up at the guys.

PIENAAR  
 It means "God Bless Africa".  
 (beat)  
 Which you have to admit, we could  
 use.

Nonetheless, most of the players crumple the pages, toss them  
 into the closest trash can.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO

BOLAND BOTHA  
 Tell us, Mr. President, have you  
 always been a rugby fan?

Mandela appears with Boland Botha on his show, under a ONE  
 TEAM, ONE NATION banner.

MANDELA  
 People do not realize that I once  
 played rugby myself, when I was a  
 student at Fort Hare. It is a very  
 rough game. Almost as rough as  
 politics.

Boland laughs.

BEGIN BOLAND BOTHA/MANDELA INTERVIEW SEQUENCE

SHOTS OF BOOZE BEING DELIVERED to people's houses all over  
 the country by BOTTLE STORE DELIVERY VANS (a very South  
 African alcoholic enabling service). Lots and lots of booze.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
 How do you think the Springboks  
 will do?

MANDELA (V.O.)  
 I think they will do very well.  
 Their level of commitment is  
 tremendous.

THE SPRINGBOKS TRAIN on an isolated field at the SILVERMINE ARMY BASE outside Cape Town. Tactics and refinements, not fitness training.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)

Now, it's been said that you used to support any team who played against the Springboks.

MANDELA (V.O.)

Obviously, that is no longer true. I am one hundred percent behind our boys.

JASON, ETIENNE, LINGA and HENDRICK stand anxiously outside Newlands Stadium. One of them points to the top of a tall building nearby -- a Eureka! moment, for reasons we don't yet understand.

BACK TO THE STUDIO:

MANDELA

After all, if I cannot change when circumstances demand it, how can I ask others to?

END BOLAND BOTHA/MANDELA INTERVIEW SEQUENCE

EXT. CAPE TOWN - DAY

A SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENSE FORCE HELICOPTER hovers over the tall building next to Newlands stadium.

INT. SADF HELICOPTER - DAY

IN THE HELICOPTER, Mandela, Jason, Linga, all wearing radio headsets. All wearing suits, as if for a state occasion.

JASON

(on radio)

We're going to land you on top of that building. We'll own the road between it and the stadium.

Mandela likes it.

Jason gives the pilot a nod and they take off down the peninsula towards Silvermine Army base.

FROM THE HELICOPTER, MANDELA LOOKS down at his country, and finds it good.

EXT. CAPE - DAY

Helicopter against spectacular scenery.

INT. SADF HELICOPTER - DAY

Mandela points down. Jason and Linga look.

POV FROM THE AIR: They can see the Springboks practising right below them, on the army base.

Mandela pulls out the SPORTS SECTION with the Springbok team on it. His study guide. He takes a last minute glance at it as the helicopter loses altitude.

EXT. SILVERMINE ARMY BASE - RUGBY FIELDS - DAY

Mandela's helicopter lands at the edge of the field, and brings practise to a halt.

ON COACH -- not happy, but what's he going to do.

Mandela springs out of the helicopter, energized, excited. Linga and Jason with him.

The players assemble in a loose, semi-formal unit. Not a line, but orderly. (We may or may not notice that Chester Williams is missing.)

Pienaar stands at the front, relaxed. He's an old hand with Mandela, by now.

MANDELA

Francois, gentlemen -- forgive me for interrupting your work the day before such an important match ...

(beat)

... I just wanted to wish you good luck, in person.

There is a naughty twinkle in Mandela's eye.

MANDELA

And sometimes, very seldom, as President, I am allowed to do what I want.

They all laugh.

Mandela wades in amongst them, leaving Linga and Jason behind.

Picture this: Behind the barbed wire security of a modern, South African military base, a tall, regal black man in his 70's is surrounded by huge, sweating, battered, brutal-looking white men --

PIENAAR

(doing introductions)

Mr. President, this is --

MANDELA

I know who this is.

(shaking hands)

Good luck, Andre.

(shaking hands with all of them)

Good luck Brendan, we're behind you all. Japie -- etc

-- every single one of whose names he has committed to memory. Statesmanship is often about attention to detail.

The players are awe-struck.

(FOR THE RECORD: Andre, Gavin, James, Japie, Christiaan, Brendan, Hennie, Joel, Johan, Joost, Marius, James, Chris, Pieter, Garry, Mark, Kobus, Hannes, Krynauw, Ruben, Francois, Robby, Adriaan, Rudolf.)

CUT AWAY to Jason and Linga, who are amazed by what they're seeing.

LINGA

Did you ever imagine this?

JASON

How could I?

By the time Mandela has shaken every single player's hand, he has won the team over, coach and manager included. They glow.

And then, Mandela frowns, steps back, looks at all of them.

MANDELA

But where is Chester?

Pienaar doesn't answer immediately, he looks at his coach first. Coach nods.

PIENAAR

He's injured, sir. His hamstring.  
We're trying to keep it quiet.

MANDELA

Is he out for the whole tournament?

PIENAAR

With hamstrings, who knows?  
(beat)  
We'll miss him.

MANDELA

The whole country will miss him.

A somewhat sour note to leave on. But it's about to be rescued.

SPRINGBOK PROP

Mr. President, sir --

MANDELA

Yes, Hennie.

SPRINGBOK PROP

-- this is for you. From us.

The huge, thick man holds out a GREEN CAP with gold piping and a Springbok leaping above the visor.

Mandela takes the cap as if he has just been given a holy relic.

MANDELA

I am honored. Truly honored.

Mandela runs his finger over the embroidered Springbok leaping across the front of the cap.

MANDELA

Good luck gentlemen. Your country supports you, completely.

The team applauds, beaming, glowing.

Mandela turns to go back to the helicopter.

MANDELA

Francois, walk with me.

Pienaar walks Mandela back towards the helicopter.

MANDELA

I have something for you.

Mandela reaches into his jacket, pulls out an ENVELOPE WITH THE PRESIDENT'S LETTERHEAD on it. Gives it to Pienaar.

MANDELA

This helped me, many times.  
Perhaps it will help you, too.

CUT TO:

Pienaar holds the envelope, stares upwards at the rising, departing helicopter, as do the rest of the team -- until Coach blows his whistle.

COACH

Enough fun and games! We've still  
got work to do.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - SECURITY CENTER - NIGHT

Jason paces restlessly, going over his mental check list, making sure he hasn't missed anything.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S CAPE TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

Mandela reads, scrawls comments, signs papers from a big "In" pile. Mary enters with his glass of milk and his pills.

MARY

It's time for bed.

MANDELA

I think I'll stay up a little  
longer. The country is excited  
tonight.

MARY

You need to sleep. The doctor  
said.

MANDELA

The doctor has no sense of  
occasion.

Mandela turns on the TV, begins flipping channels. Rugby, rugby, rugby. Mandela is sucked in.

Mary sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. COACH'S ROOM - CAPE TOWN HOTEL - NIGHT

The coach and the manager. Cats on a hot tin roof.

COACH

There's nothing more we can do.  
The game plan's good. It's just a  
matter of the boys executing it  
tomorrow.

MANAGER

That's Pienaar's job. It's in his  
hands, now.

INT. PIENAAR'S ROOM - CAPE TOWN HOTEL - NIGHT

Room dark but for one small desk light. Pienaar stands at the window, looking out across Cape Town. He is deep in thought.

Pienaar turns away from the window, goes to the desk, where, under one small light, we see "Invictus", the poem Mandela wrote out by hand.

Pienaar begins reading it. There is a soft knock at his door. Pienaar goes to it, opens it. It is Nerine, accompanied by a cop.

Pienaar nods at the cop, steps back so that Nerine can enter. As soon as the door closes behind her, Nerine says:

NERINE

You know the best thing about you  
being the captain?

PIENAAR

Uh ... the honor?

NERINE

You don't have to share a room.

Nerine gives Pienaar a scorching kiss. He resists ... then responds -- then pulls away.

NERINE  
 (breathless)  
 Francois, come on. It's been  
 weeks.

PIENAAR  
 Uh uh. I need to be angry for  
 tomorrow.

Nerine takes a deep breath, nods, turns away -- and sees the  
 poem on Mandela's personal letterhead.

NERINE  
 What's this?

PIENAAR  
 A poem. From the President.

NERINE  
 How does a poem help you play  
 rugby?

PIENAAR  
 The same way your visit does.  
 (beat)  
 Inspiration.

OVER, REFEREE'S WHISTLE BLOWS HARD AND SHARP.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - DAY

A massive crowd roars.

The Wallaby flyhalf runs forward, puts his boot into the  
 ball, sends it soaring towards the waiting Springboks.

The Springbok lock rises high into the air, supported on all  
 sides, takes the ball out of the air perfectly --

-- just as the Wallaby pack closes in and huge men meet with  
 an adrenaline-fueled crunch of bodies.

The World Cup has begun at last.

CUT TO:

But not for Chester Williams. Clad in Springbok blazer and  
 tie, he sits behind the coach, the manager and the reserves,  
 in the stands -- and almost succeeds in hiding his utter  
 disappointment at not being on the field.

INT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - VIP BOX - DAY

Mandela looks on, calmly. The Minister of Sport isn't late for this match. The President of Rugby is pale with nerves.

Behind Mandela, stand Linga and Hendrick. The VIP box is a safe place, but Jason isn't taking any chances.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - DAY

Jason prowls through the stadium, talking constantly on his radio. Hunter's adrenaline.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. NEWLANDS STADIUM - DAY

Back to action on the field.

The highlights we see here should match the rugby primer we saw in the township. This continues the education of those who do not know rugby.

So, for instance, we see a ball knocked forward, and the resulting scrum.

We see a ball kicked out of bounds, and the resulting lineout.

We see scintillating passing, rucking, mauling, tackling, strategic kicking at it's very best. Both teams are crisp and strong.

INTERCUT SHOTS OF THE RUGBY MATCH --

-- with SHOTS OF THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS (snipers, lots and lots of uniformed cops inside and out, sniffer dogs etc. all overseen by Jason) --

-- with SHOTS OF THE CROWD, which, unlike the earlier test against the Lions, is completely and passionately united behind the Springboks (all commentators talk about the extraordinary passion of the crowd, that day) --

-- always returning to the VIP BOX, where something interesting is taking place right behind Mandela: Linga Moonsamy, the rugby scorer, the soccer lover, loses his scowling reserve and gets sucked into the game.

When a ball soars between the uprights and everyone in the box groans, Linga leans towards Hendrick and asks:

LINGA  
What happened?

HENDRICK  
They scored.

When another ball soars between the uprights and the crowd roars, Linga asks again:

LINGA  
What happened?

HENDRICK  
We scored.

A third ball through the uprights. Before Linga can ask:

HENDRICK  
They scored again.

A fourth ball, to the joy of the others in the box.

LINGA  
We scored?

HENDRICK  
Ja. We're tied.

A fifth ball through the uprights, and the crowd goes wild.

HENDRICK  
We're up by three.

ACTION ON THE FIELD, as a Wallaby drive combining backs and forwards moves relentlessly towards the Springbok try line. Six times the drive is stopped by Springbok tackling, but the Wallabies keep possession and, on the seventh wave of the assault score a beautiful open try, which is converted.

A ripple of concern goes through the crowd --

-- and the VIP box.

LINGA  
They're ahead?

HENDRICK  
By four.

Nerves in the box.

But not on the field, as Pienaar starts a drive with a tackle we feel ourselves, resulting in a change of possession --

-- and a stunning, open field try scored in the corner by the Springbok wing, who raises his fist in the air, after juking the last Wallaby to try and tackle him.

The crowd roars.

In the VIP box, Mandela is on his feet, shaking hands with everyone he can reach, including Linga and Hendrick, and the waiter.

The difficult, angled conversion is missed.

LINGA

What does that mean?

HENDRICK

We're only ahead by one.

Another penalty kick.

HENDRICK

We're ahead by four.

A drop goal.

HENDRICK

By seven.

An incredible try by the Springbok fly half.

HENDRICK

By fourteen.

Everyone dares to dream. The classic South African penchant for pessimism begins to abate.

Two things to note: The crowd roar grows and grows and grows and is echoed in the VIP box. Even Jason turns to look at the action on the field -- but only for a second. Also, this match serves as the coming-out party for the SPRINGBOK FLY HALF, who scores 22 of South Africa's 27 points this day.

SUDDENLY, A REFEREE'S WHISTLE CREATES PANDEMONIUM on the field, in the stands, and in the VIP box.

LINGA

What happened?

HENDRICK

We won!

LINGA

We did?

Mandela shoots to his feet, pushes his chair away and begins the famous "Mandela shuffle" -- a very cool African boogie that is one of his signature moves. ON THE MANDELA SHUFFLE --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VIP PARTY - NIGHT

-- the same shuffle hours later, at a VIP party. Mandela has changed clothes, wears one of his Indonesian-inspired "Madiba shirts" and dances energetically with the absolutely stunning TROPHY WIFE of one of the VIP's.

TROPHY WIFE

You must be very pleased!

MANDELA

What man would not be pleased to be dancing with a beautiful woman like you?

TROPHY WIFE

Oh, Mr. President, you're exaggerating.

MANDELA

Indeed not. My father was a Xhosa chief, and therefore a polygamist. As you know, I am not.

(beat)

But when I look at you ... I envy my father.

The man is a major flirt, and really enjoying himself. But, once again, he is dancing with a stranger --

-- and, when we get close to his eyes, we realize that Mandela is pushing himself way past empty.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jason is asleep on his face, in his suit and shoes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE TOWN WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Big party, spilling onto the streets. Most of the partiers are white. Black South Africans look on, or serve drinks.

We follow the crowd into a big sports bar --

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

-- where the Springboks are pounding beers and blowing off the steam of months of training grind, plus a huge win.

Even though most of the players are with their wives or girlfriends, pretty, single women crowd them, two and three deep, men pay for round after round of beers.

Pienaar and Nerine are part of the action. Then Pienaar gets a TEXT MESSAGE which makes him shake his head, give Nerine a chagrined look.

He grabs the Springbok closest to him, puts his mouth near the player's ear and screams again the hubbub:

PIENAAR  
COACH'S RUN, NINE A.M. SHARP. PASS  
IT ON.

The Springbok shakes his head -- bloody coach -- grabs the player next to him, repeats it.

Pienaar watches the message travelling through his team -- and grins.

Then, something catches his eye on one of the big overhead TV's.

ON THE TV: news footage of the Mandela victory boogie. The boogie is followed by a quick "How far we have come" type of montage. One of the images shows an island ringed by rough surf.

Pienaar gets an idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAPE TOWN STREETS - DAY

Pienaar leads his hung-over, sleep-deprived team on a very slow jog through the mostly empty streets.

When he gets to an intersection, he sneaks a peek down at the palm of his left hand.

CLOSE-UP ON PIENAAR'S HAND, where he has drawn a crude street map.

Pienaar takes a left at the intersection.

CUT TO:

Another intersection, another peek at the map on his hand, and another left turn, takes the team --

EXT. CAPE TOWN WATERFRONT - DAY

-- back onto the waterfront, to an idling FERRY BOAT, where the coach and the manager wait for them -- along with the player's wives and girlfriends.

COACH

I hope you're not that slow next week.

Pienaar grins, stops. The team stops around him.

SPRINGBOK FLYHALF

What's going on?

PIENAAR

A change of pace.

CUT TO:

EXT. FERRY BOAT - DAY

The ferry pulls away from the waterfront, with the team on board, pulling on tracksuits against the cold sea air.

It is early winter. The seas are fairly rough.

So are the stomachs of the 'boks who partied hard last night.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

Who's bloody idea was this?

ON PIENAAR, innocent as a lamb.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY

Behind the ferry, Cape Town and Table Mountain, in all their glory.

Ahead of the ferry, one of the most notorious island prisons in modern history --

-- ROBBEN ISLAND.

EXT. ROBBEN ISLAND - DAY

Robben Island lies only eight miles from the mainland. It is two miles long, with sandy beaches full of penguins and seals. It would be pretty --

-- but for its MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON. Concrete, barbed wire, guard towers.

(In 1995, the political prisoner wing was shut, but the island still housed criminal prisoners, so the island still had the feel of real incarceration. Today, it is a tourist destination.)

EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY

As they approach the island, a sense of dark history settles over the Springboks and their partners.

One of the Springboks turns to a DECKHAND, getting ready to moor at the jetty.

SPRINGBOK LOCK

How do they bring the prisoners here?

DECKHAND

On this boat.

Sobering.

EXT. ROBBEN ISLAND - DAY

The Springboks and their partners step onto dry land with some relief, look around at the prison, humbled.

NERINE

(to Pienaar)

Imagine being able to see Cape Town  
so close by.

PIENAAR

That would make it worse.

They head towards the prison entrance, slowly becoming a tighter and tighter bunch. The ghosts of Mandela, and all the others who spent much of their lives here, are very strong.

CUT TO:

VARIOUS SHOTS OF THE SPRINGBOK PARTY, in the EXERCISE YARD, the LIME QUARRY, the MESS HALL. None of the usual horsing around. This place affects them, deeply.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBBEN ISLAND PRISON - SECTION B - DAY

Section B is the bleak political wing. Tiny cells line each side of a damp concrete hallway.

A PRISON GUARD shows the Springboks into the hallway, and they dwarf it, as they stand there, shocked. Shocked at what was done in their names. This group is as quiet as we have ever seen them.

PIENAAR

Can we see the President's cell?

PRISON GUARD

Yes, of course.

(leading them down past  
the cells)

We've done it up just the way it  
was.

They reach a cell with a piece of white cardboard on the door, showing the number 466/64 -- MANDELA'S PRISON NUMBER.

PRISON GUARD

(pointing at the number)

That means he was the 466th  
prisoner admitted in 1964.

The Prison Guard unlocks the door, pulls it open, then unlocks the metal grill that is the inside door.

INT. MANDELA'S CELL - DAY

Pienaar peers into the cell. It is tiny. There is no bed, just a sisal mat on the concrete floor, with a couple of blankets. A chamber pot, a short bench, a tin cup and plate are the only other objects in the room.

A couple of small lockers are screwed high to the wall. The barred window is opaque. It lets in light but does not allow the prisoner a view.

When Pienaar enters, we see how small the cell really is. He can reach out and touch the opposite walls at the same time.

This is a bleak, horrible, dehumanizing place. Pienaar is stunned by it. He turns, slowly, looking at Mandela's world for over twenty years.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBBEN ISLAND PRISON - SECTION B - DAY

The other Springboks and their partners wait to look into the cell themselves, a little puzzled by how much time Pienaar's taking.

INT. MANDELA'S CELL - DAY

Pienaar almost looks as if he is in a trance. He hears Mandela's voice in the cell with him.

MANDELA (V.O.)  
 (reciting "Invictus")  
 Out of the night that covers me,  
 Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
 I thank whatever gods may be  
 For my unconquerable soul.

Now, Pienaar sees Mandela in prison clothes, in the cell.  
 (The image is unclear, ghostly.)

MANDELA (V.O.)  
 In the fell clutch of circumstance  
 I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
 Under the bludgeonings of chance  
 My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Pienaar sees Mandela sitting on the dirt in the prison yard, breaking up rock with a hammer, along with rows of other political prisoners.

MANDELA (V.O.)  
 Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
 Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
 And yet the menace of the years  
 Finds and shall find me unafraid.

Pienaar sees Mandela leading his fellow prisoners to the lime quarry, to mine lime under the eye of a guard who looks like Pienaar.

MANDELA (V.O.)  
 It matters not how strait the gate,  
 How charged with punishment the scroll,  
 I am the master of my fate:  
 I am the captain of my soul.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The gates open. Linga gets out of one BMW, Hendrick out of the other. We know the routine.

Only, Mandela doesn't appear for his walk. Linga and Hendrick wait for a moment, then head in through the gate --

EXT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

-- break into a sprint, when they see MANDELA'S FORM, CRUMPLED on the lawn.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Barbara, Mary, the house staff, plus Linga, Hendrick, Etienne and Jason, all wait. All are scared. Nobody talks.

The SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS from on the top floor brings them to their feet. MANDELA'S DOCTOR descends the stairs.

BARBARA  
 What happened?

DOCTOR  
 It's simple exhaustion, but it'll lead to worse if it's not treated. He needs complete rest. And I don't mean just shifting the affairs of state to his bedroom.  
 (MORE)

DOCTOR (cont'd)  
No phone calls, no visitors, no  
meetings. No politics.

MARY  
You know him. He won't do that.

DOCTOR  
Then I'm going to put him into  
hospital. In isolation.

BARBARA  
No. Not yet. I'll threaten him  
with hospital if he doesn't behave.

MARY  
I'll cancel everything.

DOCTOR  
And I'll come back tonight to make  
sure he's not working.

The doctor leaves. The rest of them look at each other,  
relieved ... and maybe a little guilty, for letting things  
get this bad.

BARBARA  
(to Mary, aside)  
Don't cancel the trip to Taiwan.  
Not yet.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dark. Curtains drawn. The door opens quietly. A shaft of  
light from the door shows Mandela, on his back in bed, eyes  
closed.

Barbara enters. The sight of Mandela lying like this is  
chilling. It is too close to what he would look like lying  
in a casket.

Barbara makes sure he is breathing. He is. She unplugs his  
phone, takes it. Unplugs his TV. Sweeps the room for  
papers, articles, legal briefs. For the first time, she  
takes an arm load of stuff away from him. She gives Mandela  
one last, long look, closes the door behind her.

We stay behind and look at Mandela, and ponder South Africa's  
fate if this were worse than just deep, sedated sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

Chester Williams jogs under the tense eye of coach, trainer, manager and Pienaar.

He accelerates, running fast, but not sprinting.

COACH

That's not good enough.

Chester opens it up. Full sprint, sustained. Pienaar grins. Chester is back.

COACH

Let's hope the Samoans don't injure it again.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

ONE, BRIEF SHOT of a typically brutal Samoan tackle, and the ensuing foul play in the maul.

CUT TO:

FOUR QUICK SHOTS of Chester williams scoring four tries.

CUT TO:

ONE MORE SHOT of the Springboks trudging off the field. Every single player is bruised or bleeding, or both.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S OFFICE - DAY

Looking frail, but better than before, Mandela pencils in a score ON THE WORLD CUP BRACKET DIAGRAM: SOUTH AFRICA 42, WESTERN SAMOA 14. The diagram shows us that this was a quarter final match.

We can see that he has entered all the South African scores.

(For the record: South Africa 27 - Australia 18; South Africa 21 - Romania 3; South Africa 20 - Canada 0.)

For the semi-finals, against South Africa, Mandela pencils in France.

On the other side of the bracket, Mandela pencils in England vs. the All Blacks.

With a satisfied grunt, Mandela steps back from the diagram. Things are shaping up nicely.

A knock at the door, and Barbara enters, ushering in a GROUP OF LABOR LEADERS.

BARBARA  
Madiba, this is --

MANDELA  
I know who this is.

Beaming, exuding energy we know he doesn't have, Mandela rises to yet another occasion. He strides forward to shake hands.

MANDELA  
Welcome, and thank you for coming  
such a long way to see me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

Monsoon rain batters the bus as it crawls towards KING'S PARK STADIUM, in Durban.

CUT TO:

EXT. KING'S PARK STADIUM - DAY

Rain, rain, rain. The field is flooding.

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINGBOK DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Coach walks in on his team, who are dressed for the match and ready to go.

COACH  
Forty minute postponement. They're  
trying to clear the field.

CUT TO:

EXT. KING'S PARK STADIUM - EVENING

A HUNDRED ZULU CLEANING LADIES with brooms and squeegees push the water off the field. Capacity crowd cheers them on.

(This happened. There will be stock footage.)

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINGBOK DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

The boys stretch, jump, try to keep warmed-up.

CUT TO:

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE, TAIWAN - DAY

Mandela and a negotiating team are meeting with their opposite numbers from Taiwan. A high-level affair that cannot be interrupted.

Nonetheless, Mandela takes a discreet look at his watch, and we realize that his mind is back home, with the Springboks.

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINGBOK DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Pienaar leads his men out into the rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. KING'S PARK STADIUM - NIGHT

A quagmire, despite the efforts of the Zulu ladies. Muddy green and gold against the muddy blue, white and red of France. End of a close game. Both teams are tired, muddy and desperate.

The French assault the Springbok try line, wave after wave. The Springboks defend valiantly, but slowly go backwards.

Finally, the French score a try -- or do they?

CLOSE-UP ON THE RUGBY BALL, under a mountain of muddy men, on the ground three inches outside the try line.

The referee waves off the try.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENT'S JET - DAY

Mandela flies home, still working intensely with a mixed South African/Taiwanese trade group.

Mary slips a piece of paper in front of him, discreetly.

ON THE PIECE OF PAPER IN EXCITED WRITING: BOKS 19, FRANCE 15.  
WE'RE IN THE FINALS!!! GO BOKKE!!!

Mandela's face betrays nothing. But, he gets up.

MANDELA

Please excuse me for a moment.

With Mary leading the way, Mandela goes to the back of the plane, looking grave and leaderly --

-- but once he is through the galley curtain, he breaks into a huge smile.

MANDELA

This is very good ... very good!  
Who is our opponent?

MARY

The All Blacks play England  
tomorrow. Then, we'll know.

MANDELA

Please make sure that my schedule  
is clear for the entire match.

MARY

Yes, Madiba.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUN CITY RESORT - DAY

ON A BIG SCREEN TV in a private banquet room, the Springbok team watches the England/All Black semi-final, which the All Blacks dominate from beginning to end --

-- thanks to the exploits of JONAH LOMU, their unnaturally huge, fast left wing, of Tongan parentage (and unanimous choice for the best player in the entire World Cup).

Jonah Lomu scores in the first two minutes of the match, the first of four tries. He runs through, over, and around hapless defenders. His speed and balance are almost unprecedented in a man his size.

The Springboks go quiet as they watch this beating by the All Blacks.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mandela watches at home with Barbara and Mary.

MANDELA

Let's do some work while we watch.

Barbara resists her natural impulse to work and says:

BARBARA

Just enjoy the rugby.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

The sound of the match ON THE RADIO of one of the BMWs. Johan Lomu's name in every sentence.

All the bodyguards are out of the cars, enjoying the winter sunshine as they listen to the match.

KWEZI

So, let me understand this. The All Blacks are killing a team that thrashed us last year?

ETIENNE

Thanks for reminding me.

Hendrick opens the trunk of their BMW, pulls out a RUGBY BALL, shows it to Linga.

Linga nods. Okay. Throw it.

CUT TO:

INT. SUN CITY RESORT - DAY

Another Lomu try, and a ripple goes through the Springboks.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER

We're going to have to tackle  
better than the English, that's for  
sure.

PIENAAR

We do.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

TV blares. Barbara does some work. Mandela comes and peeks  
over her shoulder --

MANDELA

Are those the judicial appointments  
for the Free State?

-- and Barbara shuts the file.

BARBARA

They'll keep until after the match.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

A pile of guns in holsters, on the hood of a BMW. Suit  
jackets draped over the side mirrors.

In the wide street, in their shirts and ties, the boys toss  
the ball around. The white bodyguards handle the ball  
expertly, the black bodyguards for the first time in their  
lives.

ETIENNE

Give it a spin when you pass it.  
(demonstrating)  
Like this.

Kwezi catches the ball, tries to throw it with spin, blows  
it. The ball bounces crazily all over the street, seems to  
have a mind of its own as it eludes Kwezi.

They all laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. SUN CITY RESORT - DAY

Lomu scores his third try.

SPRINGBOK WING  
How much does Lomu weigh?

SPRINGBOK FLANK  
About 120 kilos.

SPRINGBOK LOCK  
Shit, that's what I weigh.

SPRINGBOK WING  
Ja, but at least you're slow.

As we will discover, the wing is going to have to defend against Lomu.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mandela isn't watching TV. He's at the window, looking out at a GAME OF TOUCH RUGBY, taking place on the street outside his house.

MANDELA  
Come and look at this.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Two mixed teams. Hendrick passes to Linga, who passes back to Hendrick, who scores.

HENDRICK  
(panting)  
You should've played rugby.

LINGA  
(panting)  
They wouldn't let me carry my gun.

Laughter. This scene was unthinkable a year ago.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Barbara and Mary stand next to Mandela at the window. Mandela's eyes twinkle with pleasure as he hears the laughter. In a way, this small moment already justifies everything he has done. Almost.

He gives Barbara a sly look.

MANDELA

Do you still think I'm wasting my time with the rugby?

Before Barbara can reply, excitement on the TV makes Mandela turn away. He looks at the TV just as Lomu scores his fourth try, to make it 42 - 15. Mandela shakes his head, awed.

MANDELA

Barbara, can you please tell the Minister of Sport that I need a detailed briefing on the All Blacks.

Barbara gives Mandela a long look.

BARBARA

This rugby, it's still strictly political?

MANDELA

Oh yes. Of course.

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Pienaar hands an envelope to his father.

PIENAAR

Don't lose them. I won't be able to get more.

Mr. Pienaar opens the envelope, pulls out TICKETS TO THE WORLD CUP FINAL. Mr. Pienaar kisses the tickets.

MR. PIENAAR

Thanks, Francois.

(fanning out tickets)

Me, mom, Nerine -- wait, and the fourth? Who's it for?

Pienaar looks at his father, mischief in his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - END OF THE DAY

BMW, Mercedes, BMW, driving from Pretoria to Johannesburg at the end of the day. Red winter sunset over the arid Highveld. GO 'BOKS, GO AMABOKOBOKO signs, side by side. Chester and Pienaar billboards.

MINISTER OF SPORT (V.O.)  
The All Blacks beat Ireland 43 to  
19 --

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

The Minister of Sport gives Mandela his final briefing. At his side, Barbara thrusts papers in front of Mandela for his signature. This continues throughout.

MINISTER OF SPORT  
-- they beat Wales 34 to 9, they  
beat Japan 145 to 17.

MANDELA  
145 points, in one match?

Linga listens openly.

MINISTER OF SPORT  
It's a new international record.  
(back to the briefing)  
They beat Scotland 48 to 30 in the  
quarter finals. You saw the match  
with England.

MANDELA  
45 to 29. And it was not that  
close.  
(beat)  
They seem unstoppable.

MINISTER OF SPORT  
If opposing teams play them  
straight up, Jonah Lomu runs wild.  
If they focus on Lomu, that leaves  
others free.  
(beat)  
And, also, there's the business of  
the haka.

MANDELA

Their Maori war dance. Yes. It's very powerful.

MINISTER OF SPORT

My sources tell me that half of the All Black matches are won before the first whistle, because of it.

Mandela peers out of the window at a Springbok billboard.

MANDELA

How are we going to beat them?

MINISTER OF SPORT

I have the coach's number. You could call him and ask.

MANDELA

No ... no. I don't want to break their focus for even a minute.

(intense)

But, how do we win?

ON LINGA: an idea occurs to him. A wild idea. He almost turns and blurts it out -- restrains himself.

MINISTER OF SPORT

Maybe we won't. They're favored two-to-one.

(beat)

Madiba, we've already exceeded all expectations. On and off the field.

MANDELA

It's not enough. Not now. Not so close.

(beat)

This country is hungry for greatness.

Barbara pushes another paper in front of Mandela. He signs it.

CUT TO:

INT. SPRINGBOK COACH'S OFFICE - EVENING

The coach, the manager and Pienaar gather for a final briefing in the coach's spartan office.

COACH  
How's the feeling in the dressing  
room?

PIENAAR  
Calm.

MANAGER  
And Lomu? Are they talking about  
him?

Pienaar shrugs -- of course. Coach grins.

COACH  
Nobody gives us a bloody chance. I  
like that. It plays into their one  
weakness.

Both Pienaar and the manager look at the coach.

COACH  
Their vanity.  
(beat)  
They're already counting the win.  
But they want to win with style,  
the way they won all their other  
matches. They want to show the  
world how beautiful All Black rugby  
is.  
(glaring)  
I just want to show the bloody  
world how hard we tackle.

Pienaar's up for that.

PIENAAR  
I wish tomorrow was already here.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - ELLIS PARK - NIGHT

Jason wishes tomorrow was already over. He goes through his  
plans, his check lists for the tenth time.

He sighs, tries to roll the tension out of his shoulders,  
gives up. He leaves the office.

I/E ELLIS PARK STADIUM - NIGHT

Cops at their posts. Jason walks alone through the tunnels, until he comes to a field entrance. He goes to the edge, looks out at the dimly lit field, trying to imagine tomorrow.

ETIENNE  
 (from behind him)  
 Come on, man. There's nothing more  
 you can do today.

Jason turns to Etienne.

JASON  
 Have I ever mentioned to you that I  
 hate rugby?

ETIENNE  
 Once or twice, yes.

JASON  
 I just want to get him through  
 tomorrow, safely. That's all.

ETIENNE  
 We all do.

A look between the two men: they are united. They have come a long way.

CUT TO:

INT. PIENAAR'S HOTEL ROOM - JOHANNESBURG - NIGHT

As in Cape Town, Pienaar stares out into the night, pensively. Preoccupied.

So preoccupied, that when Nerine enters quietly, he hardly turns.

NERINE  
 I brought one of your mom's protein  
 shakes.

Pienaar nods, thanks. Nerine puts the protein shake down. She tries to read Pienaar's mood, see what he needs from her at this moment.

NERINE  
 Thinking about tomorrow?

PIENAAR

No, tomorrow's taken care of, one way or another.

Pienaar turns to her.

PIENAAR

I'm thinking about how you spend 30 years in a tiny cell, but come out ready to forgive the people who put you there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We have seen that solitary shape under the blankets before. We have seen the clock on the bedside table change from 4:59 to 5:00 before. We have seen Mandela's eyes open, immediately.

But we have never seen Mandela roll over and go back to sleep.

SUPER: JUNE 24, 1995 - RUGBY WORLD CUP FINAL.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The two BMWs wait faithfully.

INT. GREY BMW (LEAD) - NIGHT

Linga looks at his watch.

INT. GREY BMW (TRAILER) - NIGHT

Hendrick does the same. Gets out.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Linga gets out, meets Hendrick at the gate.

LINGA

Big day.

HENDRICK

Be an even bigger day if we actually won.

Then, they both look at their watches again.

HENDRICK  
Where is he?

They share a worried look. Linga reaches for his radio.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mandela's bedroom door is opened from outside the room. Light from the hallway hits the bed. Mandela looks very still under the covers.

Mary peers in, concern wiping away sleep. She sees Mandela lying there. Mary tiptoes in, concern growing, until she stands over Mandela --

-- who opens his eyes without moving otherwise.

MANDELA  
Can a man not sleep in, when he has  
a big day ahead of him?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary's voice on Linga's radio.

LINGA  
(into radio)  
Okay, thanks. Out.

Linga lowers his radio, embarrassed.

LINGA  
He's sleeping in.

HENDRICK  
Or was.

Linga and Hendrick stand at the gate for a moment, then turn to head back to their respective cars. Linga pauses.

LINGA  
I had an idea. About today.  
(beat)  
It's a crazy idea.

HENDRICK  
 Hey, don't worry, man. I already  
 know you're crazy.

CUT TO:

INT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Mandela eats breakfast -- porridge and fresh fruit -- and looks over the newspaper headlines, all screaming about today's World Cup final.

The doorbell rings, and he pauses, listens to the sound of voices at the door -- then the sound of heavy footsteps approaching through the house.

Mandela wipes his mouth and waits. Linga and Hendrick appear in the doorway. They look even bigger indoors.

MANDELA  
 Morning, boys.

LINGA & HENDRICK  
 Morning, Madiba.

MANDELA  
 What is it?

Linga hesitates -- until Hendrick gives him a (for Hendrick) discreet nudge.

HENDRICK  
 Linga had an idea, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mary walks briskly to her car, gets in and drives towards the opening gate, fast.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Linga and Hendrick watch as Mary drives away.

HENDRICK  
Now you've done it.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHANNESBURG STREETS - DAY

As in Cape Town, the Springboks jog through the streets. As in Cape Town, cars toot their horns, people cheer.

But the crowd running with them is twice as large as it was in Cape Town -- and twice as black.

This crowd shows that the Springboks really do have the support of the whole country now.

As the 'boks rumble past, newspaper vendors, gardeners, pharmacy delivery men on small motorbikes abandon their tasks and run alongside the team.

Pienaar turns to look at one of his teammates, grins, gets a grin in return.

CUT TO:

INT. SECURITY OFFICE - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Jason addresses his entire team (minus Linga), plus assorted POLICE OFFICERS.

JASON

The tickets sold out long before the team became so popular. So it's not exactly going to be the rainbow nation out there. That's the reality.

(beat)

The President will greet the players before the match, he'll present the trophy after the match. He'll be exposed to 62,000 people, twice. He'll be on TV, live, all over the world.

(expressing his deepest fear)

All it takes is one idiot trying to make a statement, or one crazy fool who thinks he hears god speaking to him over the radio.

One of the cops smiles at that.

JASON  
 It's happened before!  
 (super intense)  
 But not today. Not on our watch.  
Not today.

The security boys are fired up.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

It is hours before the match, but every entrance to Ellis Park stadium is chaotic with people, cars, face painters, flag sellers, fruit vendors. Cops everywhere, and everywhere outnumbered.

In the crowd outside, WE FIND SIPHO, collecting empty bottles from trash cans, for recycling.

Jason was right about the demographics of the crowd: white, khaki-clad, quite a few old South African flags among the sea of new flags. Springbok colors everywhere. We may even see the FOUR BOERE from the Lions debacle earlier.

FACE PAINTER  
 (to boere)  
 Face flag?

BOER  
 Bugger off!

Ellis Park isn't exactly the Rainbow Nation today.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
 We're at Ellis Park on this  
 historic day, where, even this  
 early, crowd excitement is at fever  
 pitch --

Boland does another live remote. FANS CHEER AND WAVE behind him

BOLAND BOTHA  
 -- because their beloved green and  
 gold have somehow managed to exceed  
 all expectations.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPRINGBOK HOTEL - JOHANNESBURG - DAY

A luxury bus pulls away from the hotel, with a FULL POLICE ESCORT, LIGHTS ON, SIRENS BLARING.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
But now they come up against a team  
that is unlike any other they have  
played.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

With that inward look of boxers before a big fight, the Springboks begin the journey to the stadium.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
These All Blacks are possibly one  
of the greatest international sides  
ever, with a player in Jonah Lomu  
who is as dominant as any this  
correspondent has ever seen.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MANDELA'S HOUSE - DAY

Mandela's Mercedes exits his gate, BMWs fore and aft.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
To lose to them is no disgrace. To  
lose to them in the finals is, in  
fact, an honor.

CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - DAY

Tight on Mandela's face, absolutely expressionless. His game face.

BOLAND BOTHA (V.O.)  
I say this with absolutely no  
negativity. I simply want to save  
people from the heartbreak of  
unrealistic expectations.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Back to Boland's live remote.

BOLAND BOTHA

So, take a reality check, sit back and share an afternoon with one billion fellow fans around the world. And as you do, feel a special pride in having made it this far. This is Boland Botha, signing off and sitting back at Ellis Park.

Huge crowd now, all around the TV truck, streaming in.

CUT TO:

EXT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

Driving down a secure access lane, the Springbok bus and police escort approach Ellis Park.

And pass Siphon, who stares up at them from the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY BUS - DAY

The boys are very quiet -- until the sheer spectacle gets to them. Then, the first nerves hit. You can tell in the way they look at each other, the way they swallow.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Mandela's convoy pulls up at a secure entrance.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Stadium almost full. Crowd noise a dull roar.

ABOVE THE SPRINGBOK BENCH, near the field, we find Nerine, Mr. and Mrs. Pienaar ... and Eunice, as they take their seats. Pienaar got the fourth ticket for her.

Eunice turns to Mrs. Pienaar.

EUNICE  
What's Mr. Francois doing now?

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

All dressed, all warmed up, the Springboks are quiet, introspective. Everything that should be said has been said. This is the calm before the storm.

(NOTE that almost every player wears bandages, or braces, or is injured in some way.)

Pienaar is not in the room.

CUT TO:

I/E ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Dressed in his rugby togs, Pienaar sneaks up the ramp to the edge of the field, takes a peek out of the tunnel --

-- and is blown away by the magnitude of it all.

CUT TO:

EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF JOHANNESBURG - DAY

Vast city seen from the air. Zero in on Ellis Park.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER ANGLE of a SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS 747 flying over the city, in the direction of Ellis Park.

INT. 747 COCKPIT - DAY

CO-PILOT  
Final approach, Captain.

CAPTAIN  
Let it be noted that I'm taking control of the aircraft.

ANGLE BACK THROUGH THE COCKPIT -- NO PASSENGERS.

CAPTAIN  
I assume full responsibility for  
what happens from now on.

CO-PILOT  
Duly noted.

The captain drops the nose of the 747 towards Ellis Park.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Every seat full. Almost every seat filled by a big white man. Excitement unbearable.

Jason stalks the runways between the seating sections, high in the stadium. Binoculars around his neck, radio in hand.

Something catches his eye. Something in the air. Jason lifts his binoculars to his eyes.

POV THROUGH BINOCULARS -- the 747 is heading right for the stadium.

Jason lowers his binoculars. He frowns -- more puzzled than alarmed. (This is pre-9/11.)

He lifts his radio to his mouth.

JASON  
(into radio)  
Do you see that jet, to the east?

CUT TO:

Etienne, in another part of the stadium, looks eastwards -- sees it.

ETIENNE  
(into radio)  
Did they get clearance for this?

CUT TO:

JASON  
(into radio)  
Not from us.

The 747 gets closer, fast.

Jason is hit by a horrible thought.

JASON  
(into radio)  
Where is he?

LINGA  
(on radio)  
VIP BOX.

Jason finds the VIP box, looks out at the 747 --

-- and realizes that the jet is heading straight at that side of the stadium.

JASON  
(into radio)  
Get him out of there. Now.

CUT TO:

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Mandela is not in his seat. Linga turns. Hendrick points at the closed door of the VIP bathroom.

LINGA  
(into radio)  
No time.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Nothing Jason can do about it but hold his breath as --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. 747 COCKPIT - DAY

The captain drops the 747 even lower.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Jason has to fight down the impulse to flee.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Everyone in the VIP box sees the jet. They all stand.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The 747 nose appears over the rim of the stadium.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. 747 COCKPIT - DAY

CAPTAIN  
Full throttle.

Captain and co-pilot go full throttle, yank the 747 straight upwards.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The ALMIGHTY ROAR OF FULL THROTTLES fills the stadium, as the 747 passes less than 200 feet overhead --

-- so that everyone can read the huge letters painted on the bottom of the wings:

GOOD LUCK BOKKE

(This really happened.)

THE CROWD GOES WILD.

JASON NEARLY FAINTS with relief.

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Linga and Hendrick share a look. They have just had a brush with the unthinkable.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

THE DRESSING ROOM VIBRATES with the roar ...

SPRINGBOK WING  
What the hell was that?

... which slowly fades ...

... leaving only the background roar of the revved up crowd.

The boys jog in place, dying for the release of rugby.  
Pienaar appears to be praying, silently.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The REFEREE walks off the field, into the tunnel, stands there for a moment, then raises his whistle to his mouth and blows a LONG, ECHOING BLAST --

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

-- which is the signal to come to the field.

The cop opens the door, throws down a full parade ground salute as Pienaar leads his men out of the dressing room.

PIENAAR  
Breathe, boys. Breathe.

INT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

WITH THE 'BOKS, we head down the hallway, down some stairs to the tunnel onto the field --

-- where the referee holds his hand up like a traffic cop, keeping the boys in a line in the tunnel.

As they wait, they hear the CRUNCHING APPROACH OF BIG MEN IN CLEATS.

Down the opposite stairway come THE ALL BLACKS. This is the first time we have seen them in the flesh.

Huge men, black on black uniforms, arrogant. Been here before, done this before. The best in the world, expecting nothing but the best from the day.

They ignore the Springboks, dismiss them, line up next to them in the tunnel.

The SOUND OF THIRTY MEN JOGGING IN PLACE in their cleats, on the concrete, sounds like a drum roll before a medieval battle.

The Springbok wing sneaks a peek at JONAH LOMU.

The biggest, fastest wing ever. Even bigger looking in this confined space. Bigger than the Springbok wing, bigger than any of the Springbok backs, bigger than most of the Springbok forwards.

The referee nods to both captains, turns, and leads them onto the field --

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

-- where the already-whipped up crowd goes crazy, as both teams sprint onto the field and go through their brief warm-up ritual.

WE FOCUS ON THE CROWD, focus on how white and old South Africa most of them are.

The referee blows his whistle again, and both teams assemble in a line, facing each other. Glaring like boxers across immaculate green grass.

INT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Seen only in silhouette, Mandela walks down the tunnel. He is flanked by Jason, The Minister of Sport and the President of SA Rugby.

Linga, as always, has Mandela's back. Plus Hendrick.

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Mandela emerges into daylight, wearing not a suit, not a Madiba shirt --

-- he is wearing Francois Pienaar's green and gold number 6 rugby jersey.

On his head is THE SPRINGBOK CAP given to him by the team in Cape Town

The crowd catches its breath. This is unprecedented, shocking ... and brilliant.

The Springboks digest this extraordinary display of support.

SPRINGBOK HOOKER  
 (murmuring to Pienaar)  
 The All Blacks won't like that.

Pienaar nods, eyes glinting. Mandela is giving them an edge.

As he walks towards the waiting teams, Mandela lifts the Springbok cap high, waves it, and fires his famous, beautiful, huge, African smile at the crowd --

-- who roar and stand, slowly, and start chanting, slowly ...

CROWD  
 Nelson ... Nelson ... Nelson ...  
 NELSON ... NELSON ... NELSON ...

63 000 South Africans, chanting as one.

CUT TO:

A QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS

ALL ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA, THE CHANT ECHOES through EMPTY STREETS. Not a soul, not a car to be seen. Everyone is inside, watching TV.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

CROWD  
 ... NELSON ... NELSON ... NELSON  
 ... etc.

Mandela shakes hands with the Springboks, who are brimming with pride. Mandela shakes Chester Williams' hand with special energy.

MANDELA  
 I'm so glad you're here.

Chester beams.

CUT TO:

IN THE STANDS, EUNICE ULULATES, loud African warrior woman call. Mr. Pienaar looks at her, shocked. Looks at her as a person for the first time, maybe.

MR. PIENAAR  
 DO THAT AGAIN!

Eunice ululates again.

CUT TO:

ON THE FIELD, Mandela shakes hands with the All Blacks, who, as predicted, don't like his partisan clothing. Mandela looks up at Jonah Lomu.

MANDELA  
Hello, Jonah.

Lomu looks down at Mandela, eyes glowing with aggression --

-- and suddenly, he bares his tattooed Tongan tongue in a FIERCE WAR CRY.

As do the rest of the All Blacks.

WE HAVE SEGUED TO THE FAMOUS HAKA, a Maori war dance that tells an opponent they're going have their daughters stolen, their wives ravaged and their brains eaten right out of their skulls with a sharpened tea spoon.

It is abundantly clear why, as the Minister of Sports told Mandela, half of the All Blacks matches are won before the whistle blows.

This is very intimidating.

Especially because, this day, the All Blacks push the haka closer and closer to the Springboks --

-- who do not back down. In fact, they close ranks and advance.

Major, major international smackdown. This is not fake. The emotions, the aggression are real.

ON MANDELA, whose diplomatic mask slips a little showing a warrior's glitter in his eyes. He wants to respond, primally. His fists clench at his side.

The HAKA ENDS with a fearsome, guttural Maori yell.

ON THE SPRINGBOKS, massed together, faces red with emotion, pulses racing.

Mandela takes a deep breath in.

Then the boys answer.

With, of course, a terrorist anthem of their own: NKOSI SIKOLEL' IAFRIKA.

Pienaar starts it.

PIENAAR

Nkosi --

ALL SPRINGBOKS

-- SIKELEL' IAFRIKA etc ...

With decent pronunciation, with full fervor and heart, THE BOYS ROAR THE ANTHEM back at the All Blacks.

The crowd joins them. "Nkosi" roars through the stadium, through the nation.

ON MANDELA: his heart swells, as he sings with his people.

CUT TO:

ON JASON, who stands surrounded by his former enemies singing the song that kept him -- kept all of them -- going through the apartheid years.

In this stadium, at this moment, all hostility, all fear, are a thing of the past.

The tension finally goes out of Jason's shoulders.

ON JASON'S FACE, close to tears, as NKOSI slowly fades.

As Mandela said -- a very inspirational song.

BEGIN HEARTBEAT OVER. Is that a heartbeat, or an African drum?

CUT TO:

ON THE FIELD, the All Black fly half tees up the ball, for kick off.

As the fly half back-pedals slowly, and pauses in readiness, waiting for the whistle --

CUT AWAY:

TO RAINBOW NATION FACES, poised all over South Africa, WATCHING ON TV and IN THE STANDS. Heart/drumbeat over.

The last face is Sipho's.

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The crowd noise spills out of the stadium behind Sipho.

A RADIO PLAYS NEARBY, tuned to the game. The radio is in a cop car, manned by TWO BEEFY WHITE COPS. As the crowd noise rises, Siphos edges closer to the cops. They eye him out.

CUT TO:

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Mandela front and center. Minister of Sport to his right, Prime Minister of New Zealand to his left, President of SA Rugby next to him.

Both using all their diplomatic skills to stay cool.

MANDELA

(to NZ P.M.)

Perhaps we should make a small wager?

NEW ZEALAND P.M.

All your gold, for all our sheep?

MANDELA

I was thinking more along the lines of a case of wine.

Behind Mandela, Linga and Hendrick suppress grins. They are outwardly professional -- but bursting with excitement.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The referee blows his whistle.

The All Black fly half boots the ball towards the Springboks, charges after it, along with the rest of the All Blacks.

Game on.

We have only seen snippets of rugby, so far. And mostly from a somewhat polite distance -- the usual distance of TV coverage. Say, at closest, the referee's point of view.

Not now. Not for the climax. We experience this beautiful piece of mayhem up close and personal.

We're inside the heaving scrums. We are the ball. We see the way cleats leave a pattern of round white dimples on abused skin, which quickly turn to purple as they fill with subcutaneous blood.

We feel a tackle in our own spine; we see teeth sink into flesh in the intimacy of a loose scrum; we feel a hard fist smacking us again and again in the hot privacy of a rolling maul.

For this is not a pretty match, not for one moment -- just as the Springbok coach wanted.

This match is all about a less talented team stifling the best team in the world by sheer determination and fitness.

This is about the Springboks applying continuous, unrelenting pressure, and forcing the vaunted All Black attack into making mistakes. Lots of them.

Dropped balls, errant passes, knock-ons. No fluency of movement, no electric building of momentum.

Because of one thing: tackling.

Tackling and tackling and tackling again.

The first time Lomu touches the ball, the stadium, the nation holds its breath --

-- until the Springbok wing scythes into him at thigh height, wraps him up and brings him down.

The second time Lomu gets the ball he is brought down from behind by Pienaar, with a picture perfect tackle.

We can cut away to the faces of the spectators when we want; from Mandela to Nerine to Sipho and on and on, all over the country. But, in truth, our attention belongs on the field.

ON PIENAAR, continually exhorting his men, leading by example, wreaking havoc in the All Black backfield.

ON LOMU, who always seems just one broken tackle away from running one in -- except that there are no broken tackles.

ON THIRTY BIG, STRONG, BATTLE-SCARRED MEN, who have devoted their entire lives to this moment. They are not playing for money. They are playing for pride, for their countries.

Outdated notions. We miss them.

No tries are scored in the Final. The two fly halves match each other, penalty goal for penalty goal.

With each made kick, the goal posts shrink for the next. The penalty goals are unchallenged. It is up to the kicker to make them or fail. That is pressure.

The score is 6 - 6 when, just before half time, the Springbok fly half takes a long, perfect pass from the scrum half, and with the All Black defenders looming, kicks a drop goal through the uprights.

The Springboks lead 9 - 6. A tight match.

So tight, in fact, that there is only one score in the second half -- an All Black drop goal that levels the score at 9 - 9.

Until right before the end of the match, when the All Blacks camp in the Springbok half.

The scrum half sends a long, spiralling pass to the fly half, who is in perfect position to go for a drop goal.

The kick soars into the air, high and straight.

43 million South Africans hold their breath.

All around the world, fans lean forward on their chairs. This will be the decisive blow.

But the kick just goes wide.

Relief.

The referee blows his whistle to signal the end of regulation. Both teams are spent.

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

LINGA  
What happens now?

HENDRICK  
Extra time. Twenty minutes.

LINGA  
I don't think I can take it.

No one can. Mandela paces. Everyone is drained.

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Sipho leans on the cop car, listening to the radio. He and the two cops suck nervously on sodas.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Two sets of bruised, bleeding, exhausted, cramping men face each other for the extra time kick off.

Pienaar turns to his men.

PIENAAR

Who's the fittest team on this field?

The answer lies in their eyes: they are.

An All Black penalty goal makes it 12 - 9 almost immediately.

A Springbok penalty goal answers. 12 - 12.

Seven minutes from the end of extra time, the Springboks earn a scrum deep in All Blacks territory.

PIENAAR

Keep it here. Run it forward.

The scrum goes down, wheels a little.

SPRINGBOK FLY HALF

Francois!

Pienaar turns his head. The fly half taps his own chest: give me the ball.

Pienaar hesitates, then nods to the scrum half: give him the ball.

The ball goes into the scrum.

The ball works its way back through the feet of the eight Springbok forwards.

The scrum half gathers it, spins it out to the fly half --

-- who takes one step to his left and KICKS A DROP GOAL high into the air.

Ball soaring past a backdrop of open mouths. Higher than the uprights ...

... but through them nonetheless.

Springboks 15 - 12 All Blacks.

An entire nation jumps to its feet.

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Everyone is on their feet in the press box.

MANDELA

How long before the end?

MINISTER OF SPORT

Seven minutes.

They turn out to be the longest seven minutes in Mandela's life. In every South African's life.

BEGIN CLIMAX SEQUENCE:

This is where we fold the Rainbow Nation into the rugby match, fully.

INTERCUT BETWEEN PEOPLE ALL OVER SOUTH AFRICA, AND THE RUGBY as we show the whole nation wanting exactly the same thing at the same time. Faces, postures, eyes are identical, no matter where they are, who they are, what color they are.

(It would be nice if we used all the faces we've already cut away to throughout this story.)

ON THE FIELD

The All Blacks attack desperately. The Springboks tackle and tackle and tackle.

ON PIENAAR, totally spent but dragging himself to his feet for another tackle.

He glances over at the referee, makes another tackle --

-- looks over at the referee --

-- the referee puts his hands on his whistle --

-- another tackle, another look --

-- the referee lifts the whistle to his lips --

-- another tackle, another look --

-- the REFEREE BLOWS THE FINAL WHISTLE.

It's over.

The Springboks have won.

END CLIMAX SEQUENCE

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Pandemonium on the field, pandemonium in the stands.

Jason is hugged by an ecstatic boer (Jason is not a hugger).

CUT TO:

Mrs. Pienaar and Nerine are in tears. Mr. Pienaar hugs a shocked Eunice.

INT. VIP BOXES - ELLIS PARK - DAY

Pandemonium in the VIP box. Mandela shakes hands with everyone he can find. It is way too loud to say anything.

Hendrick and Linga almost hug. Almost. They shake hands with total joy and engagement, whack each other on the shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

Sipho *toi-tois* next to the cop car (a township war dance, very political). The two cops *toi-toi* with him.

CUT TO:

AROUND THE NATION, an EPIDEMIC OF HUGGING begins. This spills out onto the streets later, but for now, let's restrict this to the people who've been watching the match together.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIS PARK STADIUM - DAY

The Springboks say a prayer on the field. Pienaar kneels in the middle, leading the prayer.

Behind them, a WORK CREW ASSEMBLES A PORTABLE PODIUM.

At "Amen", Pienaar's men lift him to his feet, then onto their shoulders.

The crowd roars again and again as PIENAAR TAKES A VICTORY LAP on the shoulders of the men he has led through thick and thin.

Tears stream down his face, through his unstoppable grin.

As they near the podium, the team is intercepted by a news crew and --

-- none other than BOLAND BOTHA.

BOLAND BOTHA  
Francois ... a few words ...

The interview booms through the PA system. Pienaar just nods -- he isn't about to spoil the moment by reacting to this buffoon.

BOLAND BOTHA  
... great game, but I don't think you could've done it without the amazing support of these 63,000 South Africans --

Francois grabs the mike from Boland.

PIENAAR  
(into mike, words booming)  
We didn't have the support of 63,000 South Africans today. We had the support of 42 million South Africans.

The crowd roars.

The Springbok manager grabs Pienaar's shoulder, points.

SPRINGBOK MANAGER  
They're waiting for you over there.

Pienaar turns, looks.

Mandela waits at the podium, eyes alight with joy.

In front of him is the WILLIAM WEBB ELLIS TROPHY, a big gold confection.

Their eyes meet.

Their eyes stay locked as Pienaar fights his way through the press, the officials, his own team, to the podium.

Mandela holds out his hand. Pienaar takes it. Big hands, one black, one white, one with bruises visible, one with a lifetime of bruises implied.

Both wearing the NUMBER 6 SPRINGBOK JERSEY.

MANDELA

Francois, I want to thank you most sincerely for what you have done to our country.

Pienaar shakes his head.

PIENAAR

Mr. President, I want to thank you for what you have done.

Eyes lock again, for just a moment, blue eyes, brown eyes -- African eyes, both.

And then PIENAAR RAISES THE TROPHY HIGH. A very traditional sports hero's moment, richly deserved.

Real gold, against the green of the battered field.

But that is not the real prize.

The prize is what happens next, all over the nation.

DISSOLVE TO:

ALL OVER SOUTH AFRICA, people spill out into the streets, to celebrate.

Utter joy, everywhere, as black and white, servants and employers, strangers, enemies, foreigners are swept up in love and happiness.

People who have been suspicious of each other, hated each other, feared each other all their lives ... they hug each other on this day.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHANNESBURG STREETS - END OF THE DAY

Housewives, gardeners, cops, kids dance in the middle of the street.

A car horn beeps politely.

BMW, Mercedes, BMW come slowly down the street.

The crowd begins to dance and ululate as they part to let the convoy through.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - END OF THE DAY

Linga in front. Mandela is alone in the back seat. He looks out at his people as they cheer him through.

He also looks exhausted. Spent. None of that shining life force that makes him so big.

INT. GREY BMW (LEAD) - END OF THE DAY

JASON  
(into radio)  
This route's too crowded. We're  
changing to route B.

EXT. JOHANNESBURG STREETS - END OF THE DAY

The convoy switches to another street --

-- which is just as crowded as the first, with happy South Africans.

It is as if every single person in the Rainbow Nation wants to celebrate together.

INT. GREY BMW (LEAD) - END OF THE DAY

JASON  
(into radio)  
Change to route C.

EXT. JOHANNESBURG STREETS - END OF THE DAY

The convoy switches to yet another street --

-- to no avail. South Africa is literally dancing in the streets.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - END OF THE DAY

Mandela leans forward, taps Linga on the shoulder.

MANDELA

Tell Jason it's all right. There's  
no hurry.

LINGA

(into radio)  
Madiba says no need to hurry.

INT. GREY BMW (LEAD) - END OF THE DAY

Jason nods, puts down his radio, settles back with a deep  
sigh. So do the rest of the boys in the car. This day is  
almost over.

INT. GREY BMW (TRAILER) - END OF THE DAY

Etienne, Hendrick loosen their ties, bask in the feeling.  
Hendrick looks out at the rolling street party -- and shakes  
his head in amazement.

INT. PRESIDENT'S MERCEDES - END OF THE DAY

President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela undoes the top button of  
his rugby jersey, settles back with a deep sigh --

-- and drives home through a nation that has begun the  
process of forgiving itself. His nation.

GO IN ON MANDELA'S FACE as it settles into the now-familiar  
sphinx-like mask.

Except for his eyes.

Mandela's eyes glow with deep joy and satisfaction as he  
moves slowly through a moment in history that he has worked  
for, all his life.

ON MANDELA'S EYES ...

FADE EVER SO  
SLOWLY TO BLACK.

THE END