

The Quarterback Trade

A short story by Henry Cavanaugh

“Look, you know I’m not one to play locker room politics but *really*, you think Taysom is ready to carry this franchise on his shoulders?” Drew Brees, the longtime quarterback for the New Orleans Saints, was at a total loss. The team’s head coach had just informed him that they wouldn’t be renewing his contract with them and would move into the next football season with Taysom Hill, Drew’s backup for the past several years, as their starter instead of him. To say that he was frustrated by the news would be putting it very mildly.

The team’s coach let out a long and heavy sigh. He’d known this wouldn’t be an easy conversation. “This isn’t a decision we made lightly, Drew. We really are thankful for all you’ve done for the Saints, but the higher ups think it’s time that we look to the future so... this is just how it’s gotta be.”



There was sincerity to the coach’s tone, but that didn’t make what Drew was being told any easier for the veteran quarterback to digest. He’d been with the New Orleans Saints since 2006 and up until that very conversation, he’d had every intention of closing out his career there. Despite being relatively old for a quarterback at forty-one though, he wasn’t ready to hang up his cleats just yet. He had another season in him, maybe even two, he knew it. Learning that he wouldn’t be spending it in New Orleans with the team he’d led to so many successes in the past felt like a blow to the gut. He’d wanted to end his time on the team under his own terms, not in such an anticlimactic fashion.

“So... that’s it, huh?” he growled, a dark cloud hanging over him. “Free agency, here I come. Let’s see if anybody wants a ‘washed up’ vet, hmm?” Drew wasn’t unaware of the comments made about him on social media, but he liked to think that his productivity on the field made up for it. Apparently that wasn’t enough for the Saints staff though. He wasn’t normally the type of guy to feel so bitterly angry about things, but football was different. Outside of his family, it was everything to him, and he seriously didn’t appreciate it being shaken up in such a dramatic fashion during the twilight years of his career.

“Maybe not,” the coach replied in a carefully calm tone. “Supposedly there’s been some talk between the folks higher up and I’ve been asked to put you in touch with the Chicago Bears. From what I’ve heard, they’ve got a pretty one-of-a-kind deal in mind for you.”

It was now Drew's time to sigh. "You're recommending I finish up my career with the damn *Bears*?" he asked in absolute exasperation. He was one of the best quarterbacks of his generation and his current treatment was nothing short of an insult. "What's next, the Jets are interested?"

"I really recommend you hear them out," the coach urged. "What they're offering is... well, it ain't my place to spoil but I think you'll find it more tempting than you think." The coach's insistence was enough to get Drew at least a little intrigued. He could usually rely on the coach to tell it to him straight, so if he thought it was worth hearing the Bears out then maybe - *maybe* - there was some worth to it.

Despite the lingering bitterness, Drew indeed followed up on the request to meet with the head office at the Chicago Bears and, simply put, was stunned by the offer they put before him. In fact, perhaps stunned was too light of a term. Utterly flabbergasted probably wasn't strong enough to cover it either, but it would have to do.

"Don't get it wrong, everyone at the Bears like Mitchell a lot. He's a good kid," claimed Mr Hevanoff, a well-dressed British gentleman with at least ten or fifteen years on Drew, who had introduced himself as an 'elite NFL tradesman'. He had a kind smile, but that kindness never reached his eyes, which held a near permanent piercing glare, as if he was able to look right through Drew and deep into his innermost thoughts. It wasn't often that the veteran quarterback was intimidated by people, not even the huge defensive linemen whose sole job it was to bring him down on the field, but there was something rather unnerving about Mr Hevanoff that he couldn't quite put his finger on. "He's athletic, he's got a face for the cameras, the boys in the locker room like him. He just can't seem to put it all together like a franchise quarterback needs to. Like *you* have."

"Now, while it is my personal opinion the Saints' decision to move on from you is a mistake, it also opens up a very unique opportunity for us," the Brit continued. "What would your response be if I said that I could ensure you were signed onto a ten year multi-million dollar contract with the Chicago Bears?"

"Ten years?" Drew exclaimed, hardly believing his ears. "Look, I've still got some more in me, I know that for certain, but a *decade* might be pushing it. I'm not getting any younger." Even as he reached behind him to scratch at the back of his neck, there was a dull ache in a number of both his muscles and bones. As much as he desperately wanted to continue playing football for the foreseeable future, it was highly unlikely his body would hold up for such an amount of time. He was already facing accusations of being washed up and injury prone.

"And that's what brings us to the unique part of this deal," Mr Hevanoff replied, not even slightly faltering at Drew's own hesitation. "The Chicago Bears would like you to spend the next ten years as their quarterback from inside the body of their *current* quarterback." Then, to spell out the blunt truth: "They want you to be Mitchell Trubisky."

For a moment, the room was doused in complete silence.

Then, a laugh escaped Drew's lips. How could it not? "This is for a prank show, right?" he chortled, glancing around the dimly lit office. "Where are the cameras? C'mon, I'm not falling for that." Some cocky NFL intern probably thought they could easily dupe the 'grandpa' QB. Not so fast!

The cool and collected manner of Mr Hevanoff persisted. "I assure you, Mr Brees, that this isn't for some prank show, nor am I joking," he insisted, with a hint of sternness adding a gravelly rumble to his voice. "As I said when I introduced myself, I am an elite tradesman offering my services to the National Football League. I don't deal in the trading of contracts, but rather the trading of bodies. It's a unique talent of mine and it made me a very rich man in Europe. Tell me, do I look like the kind of man who would jest about such things?"

Drew continued to stare at the older man for several seconds before letting out another brief laugh. "Seriously, does *anyone* buy this?" he asked with a tight-lipped smile. "Wait, have you tried this shit on Brady? He'd probably fall right into the joke! Oh man, please tell me you have and you've got footage!" Anything to get a good rib on his old friend. Apparently though, his present company didn't find his disbelief amusing, judging by the growing stiffness in the other man's posture.

"Well, if you're so sure that this is all a joke, you won't mind signing your name at the bottom of this contract then, will you?" Mr Havenoff challenged, sliding a document across the desk that had to be at least one-hundred pages long. It stopped by Drew's hands and he glanced down to read its title: **THE LEGAL AND BINDING TRADE CONTACT BETWEEN DREW BREES AND MITCHELL TRUBISKY.**

The veteran quarterback turned through a few pages, taking note of the headings of various clauses and justifications without bothering to read into any of them. There was absolutely no way this was anything more than a joke and he wouldn't be made a fool out of in front of the cameras that he remained certain were hidden somewhere in the office.



After weighing up his options on how best to deal with the situation without coming across as a total jackass or grumpy old man, Drew finally made his decision.

"Alright, I'll sign," he announced, before adding in a mutter, "If only to get to the overdue punchline." Accepting the pen that was offered to him, Drew turned to the final page of the document where he found Mitchell Trubisky's signature already signed on the dotted line. *I wonder if he's in on this joke too...*

Truthfully Drew knew very little about the young quarterback other than that he'd had his troubles as a starter for the team and a lot of people both in and out of the organisation had decided he was a bust that wasn't worth the money. As Havenoff had put it, a great face for the cameras but not

much more. Drew had a fair amount of sympathy for the kid. He was well aware that his own success was a rarity - so many aspiring quarterbacks didn't even get to sniff the playoffs, let alone by perennial contenders.

As Drew brought the pen down to the paper and signed his name, he was convinced that nothing would come of it. There was no way it was a legitimate contract, not when it made such bold and absurd claims of, what, *bodyswapping*? Maybe that would work on a more gullible soul, but not Drew. He felt smug as he pushed the contract back to Mr Havenoff and placed the pen back on the desk, but once both were out of his grasp, a burning sensation spread over him as if he had suddenly been dunked into a hot spring. The feeling came over him so suddenly that he let out a pained gasp, but his exclamation only prompted the man across from him to smile even wider.

"I knew you were an agreeable man," Mr Havenoff began to monologue. "Perfect for the first major trade in the league. The men in charge had me use practice squad lads as demonstrations before they gave me permission to offer my services to teams in the league, and when the Bears heard that the Saints were giving you up... well, they were chomping at the bit to get you. They feared you'd never buy in, but I've been doing this a long time, Mr Brees. So many people are willing to scoff at the mere idea that magic might be real that they'll do anything to prove it can't possibly be the case. You're hardly the first I've lured in by such a manner and I assure you, you won't be the last. Thank you for the tip on your friend, Mr Brady, though. I'll have to put my feelers out to his people."

All while the man spoke, the heat that had come over Drew only began to intensify and cause him to twitch and writhe in discomfort. He could hardly focus on the other's words as he gasped, hissed and moaned in response to the sharp jolts rocketing through every inch of his body, from the top of his skull right down to the tips of his toes. It was quite unlike anything he had ever experienced before, to tell the truth, as if there was something inside of him threatening to burst right out of his chest.

Genuine fear floated through Drew's mind as he desperately tried to rationalise what was happening to him. Had he been poisoned? Had his morning coffee been spiked? Surely there was an explanation for the shooting pains he was experiencing!

While Drew was occupied by the unpredictable pains resulting from his signing of the contract though, his exterior began to contort and warp, molding itself into something new. The lines of age and wisdom on his face smoothed out as his skin adopted a newfound youthful glow, with the few places of sagging on his frame tightening up in short order. The extra weight he carried around his stomach evaporated and instead a full set of six-pack abs were sketched onto his torso, like some invisible artist was carefully crafting their latest masculine masterpiece. His arms and legs swelled with solid muscle, while both his shoulders and neck broadened. It soon became clear that the changes to his physical form were granting him a more muscular physique, and that of a man some fifteen years younger.

The changes were not just limited to his muscles though. His jawline took on a sharper angle while his sky blue eyes darkened to become chocolate brown, and the hair that had begun to

recede and thin in recent years sprung back with fresh vigor. It even adopted a more modern cut with the sides shaved close and the top perfectly coiffed. A healthy amount of stubble sprung forth from the lower half of his face, but it was carefully groomed rather than the wild mane that some of his teammates possessed, as if he had taken great care of it, or paid for a stylist to keep him looking good! It beautifully complimented the subtle change in his lips, nose and brow as his facial features shifted into those of a man he'd only ever briefly encountered at the end of games between their two teams.

As the transformation progressed the initial agony that Drew had experienced finally began giving way to pleasure, pleasure that was just as heightened as the discomfort had been, and his pained protests transitioned into whimpers of overwhelming delight. His entire body shook with orgasmic ecstasy as all of his most sensitive spots hummed in pure delight. Indeed the gratification was so all-consuming that it felt like a drug. He simply couldn't get enough, and as he finally began to return to earth from that insane high, he almost longed to experience it all over again and perhaps even ask the other man to record it so he could admire the transformation with his own eyes.

At the very least, even once the last of his changes had settled, Drew was left with a pulsating energy deep within him, a buzz that made him feel as if he could break a world record for sprinting across a football field, or single-handedly bring peace to the world. He felt truly *alive*, more so than he suspected any man had ever felt before!

"How do you feel?" Mr Hevanoff inquired, the corners of his lips turned up into a slight smirk.

"Different," Drew replied in honesty, only to startle himself with the unfamiliar tones that came forth from his lips. "Very different." He thought about it for a moment longer. Considered the energy vibrating throughout his entire being, and what that meant. "Younger," he added, bringing an unfamiliar set of hands to his chest and feeling the hard muscles under his shirt. There wasn't an ounce of softness to be found on him!

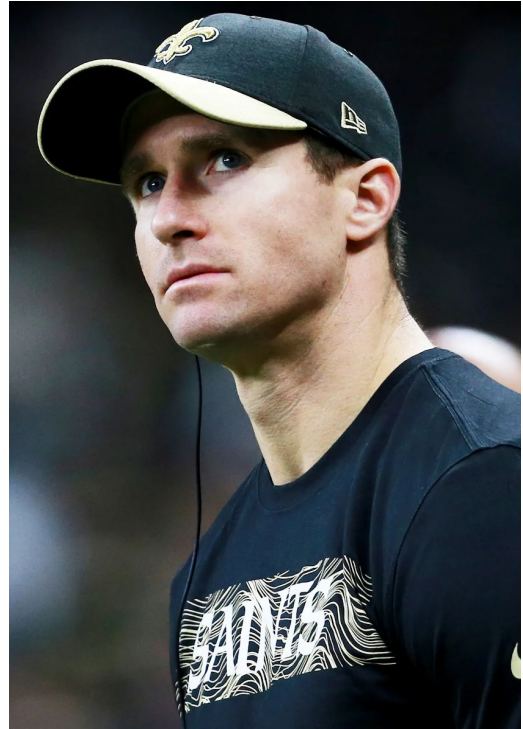
Mr Hevanoff chuckled. "I thought you might perhaps respond with *foolish*, for doubting me. Or maybe even *apologetic*, for taking up such a tone with me. After all, I've just given you quite the gift... Mr Trubisky. As promised, another ten years as a starting quarterback." As Drew was left to contemplate exactly what on God's green earth had just happened, the older gentleman pressed a comms system on his desk to speak to the receptionist who had greeted Drew earlier. "Please bring in our guests from the Chicago Bears."



A few moments later, the office doors opened and Drew turned to catch a glance of the new entries. His breath was momentarily taken away when he found himself face to face with *himself*... or at least the Drew Brees that he and just about everybody else in America recognised.

It was a strangely nauseating experience to see himself from such a perspective; an unmistakable unease crept down the real Drew Brees' back and seeped into his pores. Next to his double was a man Drew vaguely recognised as being the head coach of the Chicago Bears. The new arrivals took the two open seats beside him, the trio all sat across from the smirking Mr Hevanoff.

Even as the Bears coach and Mr Hevanoff began conversing, Drew's eyes remained on his duplicate. The other gave him a sheepish smile as a faint blush coloured his pale cheeks. Looking into his own face from an exterior position still twisted Drew's gut into a knot, but that was strangely beginning to calm with every passing second, and instead he found himself settling into a mild fascination with the sheer absurdity of the situation they found themselves in.



"If I might have your attention, Mr Brees? Mr Trubisky?" Hevanoff's bassy voice all but demanded, snapping all eyes in the room towards him. He sat in his chair like a king sat upon a throne, gazing down at his loyal subjects. There was truly no mistaking just who was in control of the room. "Per the contracts you both signed, you will remain in these new bodies for precisely ten years as of today. The process will then immediately reverse itself without any need to involve myself, unless, of course, some sort of extension has been agreed on." Drew's heart began to race as he slowly started to take in precisely what the man's words meant. This was all going much further than he had ever anticipated. His eyes moved back to the contract as his sense of dread escalated, wondering exactly what was in that maze of legal jargon. As if reading his mind - suddenly a very real possibility - Hevanoff continued: "You will not be revealing your true identities to anyone at any point, nor what has occurred during your meetings with me today, lest you would like to risk spending the rest of your days as a cockroach."

"What about my family?" Drew cut in, unable to stop himself. His heart thundered in his chest like a herd of horses galloping forth in fury. "My wife, my kids, you can't expect me not to--"

"See them? Actually, I *can* expect that of you. Had you actually taken the time to read the contract, you'd see that you have agreed by law not to reveal your true identity to anyone outside of this room, and that includes any spouses or kin." Hevanoff spoke in a sharper tone than ever before, his voice echoing around the room as a menacing growl. "That said, I was

kind enough to include a clause that states that Mr Brees here--" He lazily waved a hand towards Drew's replacement, who shifted somewhat uncomfortably in his seat. "-- is to invite you as a guest to his family home at least once a month, so that you may be certain that everything continues on as it should."

"Don't worry, sir," Drew heard his own voice remark from beside him, "I'll take good care of your family. I've always wanted to be a husband and a father... I just didn't think it would happen quite so soon." There was a wide-eyed honesty to him as he spoke, but that didn't make things feel any better for the real Drew Brees. He was now faced with the fact that an imposter was going to be living in his home and sharing a bed with his wife - and he was apparently unable to do anything about it!

"This is outrageous!" he exclaimed, jumping up from his chair with such force that it toppled over behind him. "I would have *never* agreed to this had I--"

"Actually read the contract?" Hevanoff challenged, eyes narrowed into a steely glare. "That's the thing, *Mr Trubisky*, you didn't. You doubted and disrespected me and you're really rather lucky I'm getting such a nice paycheck from this deal, or I'd have you squashed under my boot in an instant!" He rose from his own chair in a slow and steady motion and leaned across the table. "As I said before, I've given you quite the gift. You can play the sport you love for another ten years and rehabilitate the career and public image of Mr Trubisky while you do it. Count your blessings that nothing more nefarious was included in this contract!" He pushed it back across the table. "Perhaps you'd like to have my receptionist photocopy this contract so you can take one home with you to read over, hmm? Or do you still believe you have all the answers?"

As much as Drew desperately wanted to continue to fight the injustice of his fate, he understood that there was little he could do against a man holding such preternatural power. Timidly pulling his chair back onto its legs, he returned to the seat and accepted the offered contract. Despite what the other man had said, he felt certain that he would find more within its pages that would cause him distress. Evidently though, that was an issue for another time...

For the remainder of the meeting Drew - or *Mitchell*, he supposed he should get used to being called for the next decade - sat in silence, staring at the tanned hands in his lap and paying minimal attention to the conversation around him. It soon became clear that his replacement would be announcing his retirement at the end of the season and would be free to pursue other avenues. The new Drew Brees explained that he'd spend at least a year just doing sponsorship advertisements as he adjusted to his new life, before perhaps considering acting or coaching a high school team.

Meanwhile, the former Drew silently cursed his own brash dismissals of Mr Hevanoff's claims, furious at how his own actions had cost him his dearest loves. Behind that surface misery though, he could recognise a spark of excitement beginning to blossom within him. The thought of having football taken away from him had been nothing short of terrifying; now its presence in his life was guaranteed for a further ten years. So many players at his age would have killed for such an opportunity and *he* was the first to get to experience it! Mitchell's body was nothing to sniff at either, nor was the money he was promised in his new contract with the Chicago Bears.

His new life was opening up so many doors and the adventure those fresh avenues promised were tantalising enough to suppress his anger and anxieties at being goaded out of his own body, family and life.

Sure, it would take a lot to turn around the less-than-stellar reputation his new team - and new body - had, but it offered Drew a rare opportunity. For years he had fought to break out of the shadow of his contemporaries, but perhaps one day down the line when people were finally permitted to know the truth, he would finally be recognised as the *true* greatest quarterback of his generation - and that of Mitchell Trubisky's generation too!

