Tink Outside the Box

Pilot: "This Guy is the Real Dill!"

Written by

Carl Burcham

thebrandguy@gmail.com
281-857-0172

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

A huge banner flaps in the breeze: "WELCOME U.S. OPEN FANS."

INT. STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

ANXIOUS FANS ram the rafters. SHOUTING. CHANTING. CHEERING.

Legendary "Dean of TV Tennis" BUZZ NUDGEWAY, 72, a baritone, broadcasting O.G., picks up the action.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
Welcome to the U.S. Open Tennis Championship match between number one-ranked Thomas "Tink" Thompson and number two, Todor Zoran.

DOWN ON TENNIS COURT

MUSCLED BODYGUARDS TOTE a violet-velvet-draped, gold-trimmed palanquin onto the court. TODOR ZORAN, 25, a flamboyant, self-absorbed Serb EMERGES and WAVES to the crowd.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
Todor Zoran is the first player to arrive on court.

FANS
ZORAN SUUUUUUCKSSSS ASSSSS!!

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
Appears not everyone here is a fan.

FANS spot 36-year-old THOMAS "TINK" THOMPSON as he ambles into the stadium. The mood instantly changes.

FANS
WE LOVE TINK! WE LOVE TINK!

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
Definitely not the case though for fan fave, Tink Thompson! Listen to this place erupt in joy.

Tink's in his usual sanitary white, head to toe. He's methodical and comically quirky. Tink mouths *THANK YOU* to fans, DROPS his equipment bag onto a bench, PEEKS inside.

FANS
ACE! ACE! ACE!!

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
There's that endearing chant we've grown to love at Tink's matches.

TINK
(whispers into bag)
Time for your grand entrance, boy!

A fluffy white Maltese JUMPS from equipment bag into Tink's outstretched arms.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
It's Tink's cuddly canine, Ace, here to root for his human!

While fans CHEER, ACE takes a LAP around the court before he LEAPS BACK into Tink's equipment bag. Tink gives him a PAT.

IN STANDS

Three rows up, Tink's daughter KADEN--15 going on 25--FLASHES a braces-filled smile and WAVES to her dad. She's a high voltage whirlwind squeezed into a jet-black tube top, hiding behind dark sunglasses.

Beside Kaden sits Tink's agent, WARWICK BIRTWISTLE, 52, a four-foot-five, bottom-feeding Brit. Kaden and Birtwistle track Tink's three-step phobic pre-match ritual.

STEP ONE. Tink SKIPS over the white lines painted on court.

KADEN
Check off the superstition routine.

STEP TWO. Tink SNAPS on disposable polyurethane gloves.

BIRTWISTLE
Mark off the Germaphobe ritual.

STEP THREE. Tink KISSES three silver good luck charms.

KADEN
Check off Claustrophobia, Decidophobia, and Coulrophobia.

Birtwistle looks confused.

KADEN (CONT'D)
(off Birtwistle)
New one--fear of clowns.
(MORE)

KADEN (CONT'D)
He saw the flick *"It"* last night. Thinks some might be hiding here.

BIRTWISTLE
Ah.

Tink's ritual complete, Kaden YELLS words of encouragement.

KADEN
KICK HIS UGLY, PIMPLED BUTT, POP!!

EXT. COURTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Zoran NODS at a teenage BALL BOY. The kid NODS back, SLIDES a box of tennis balls behind Tink's baseline. Nobody notices.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.)
Looks like we're ready to roll.

Zoran SMACKS a line drive serve over the net.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Thompson returns Zoran's clothesline howitzer with his signature *Tink Dink*.

Zoran reaches Tink's *dink*. SLAMS it back over the net.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
OH! Zoran's return takes a huge bounce and skyrockets over Tink's head. He scrambles back, back--

Tink CHASES down the ball, BACKHANDS a return and... CRASHES violently into the ball box. Tennis balls EXPLODE like fireworks into the air. On court, Tink WRITHES IN AGONY.

BUZZ NUDGEWAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
GOOD LORD! Tink makes a magnificent return, but he's down! Screaming in pain. And he's not getting up.

Zoran SMIRKS and WINKS at the ball boy.

EMTs, KADEN, and BIRTWISTLE rush to Tink's aid.

DEAD SILENCE overwhelms the stadium.

SLAM TO BLACK.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. HOSPITAL - A FEW DAYS LATER

Birtwistle PEEKS OUT double doors, looks left, right, WAVES to a figure behind him... KADEN. She WHEELS Tink out the back doors. Tink's left leg is in a thigh-to-ankle cast.

Unfortunately, the trio's attempt at a secret getaway doesn't take. A THUNDEROUS horde of SPORTS REPORTERS SWARMS over them like psychotic teen fans at a Bieber concert.

Birtwistle RAISES A PALM for them to halt. The reporters simply LIFT HIM UP and TOSS him to the ground.

BIRTWISTLE
(shaking fist)
Ya bunch 'a bloody heathens!

Questions are SHOUTED which Tink does his best to ignore--

BLOODY HEATHEN ONE
How bad is your injury, Tink?

BLOODY HEATHEN TWO
Tink, will you ever play again?

BLOODY HEATHEN THREE
How do you feel now that Zoran has taken over the top spot?

--but that last one catches him off guard.

TINK
Wait. What?

BLOODY HEATHEN THREE
With you out, Zoran is now ranked number one in the world.

Reporters SHOVE microphones and cameras at Tink. He MOTIONS for Kaden to WHEEL HIM AWAY from this crush of humanity.

TINK
(to the heathens)
I'll be back out there soon. Then we'll see who's numero uno.

Birtwistle reappears, ELBOWS his way through the mob.

BIRTWISTLE
STALKING SESSION'S OVER HEATHENS!

The clamoring throng grows silent. *Perhaps they're taking Birtwistle's admonishment to heart?*

Nah. Bloody Heathen One TOSSES HIM back onto the ground. But Birtwistle's *heroic* distraction gives Kaden and Tink enough time to SAFELY ESCAPE into an idling getaway van.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

In his heavily gilded, over-the-top office, ZORAN WATCHES TV coverage of Tink's dramatic hospital exodus.

Nearby, Zoran's size zero Slavic girlfriend, OLGA SEMENOV, 26, APPLIES a fresh coat of flaming red lipstick.

ZORAN
What a shit show! How was that twit ever ranked ahead of Todor Zoran?

Olga SLITHERS onto Zoran's lap, STROKES his long black hair. She POINTS to a news ticker scrolling on TV.

INSERT: TODOR ZORAN TAKES OVER PRO TENNIS #1 SPOT.

OLGA
Not anymore. Your reign has begun!

Zoran SHOVES Olga off his lap, STROLLS to liquor cabinet, POURS himself a scotch. Olga MOTIONS for one as well, but Zoran ignores her request. She POURS her own.

ZORAN
And Todor Zoran intends to keep it that way. That phobic fruitcake Thompson must never step onto a court again!

OLGA
Unlikely he will. Word is his knee is shot.

ZORAN
Still, I want you to keep an eye on what he's up to and report back.

OLGA
(animated)
Oh, I love going undercovers!

ZORAN
(rolls eyes)
Under*cover*. Undercovers is where you and Todor Zoran go to do the nasty.

Zoran CHECKS his desk calendar.

ZORAN (CONT'D)
Set up meetings with Thompson's sponsors. I want all of them to move to Team Zoran. Immediately.

Olga WRAPS her arms around Zoran.

OLGA
My big, sexy tennis god. You make me so horny! Let's go undercovers!

INT. REHAB FACILITY - DAY

REHAB PATIENTS WORK OUT in a state-of-the-art gym crammed with parallel bars, exercise balls, stationary bikes.

Tink's enthusiastic, purple-haired physical therapist CASSANDRA, late 60's, STEADIES HIM between parallel bars as he PLODS along. In addition to his usual all white get-up, Tink wears medical gloves and an N95 face mask.

CASSANDRA
Not too fast, Mr. Tink. You've got plenty of time to recover.

TINK
That's just it, Cassandra. I <u>don't</u> have plenty of time. I need to get back on tour or I'll go crazy. In my case, *crazier*.

CASSANDRA
(humoring him)
You're not crazy. Just cautious.

TINK
No, I <u>am</u> crazy. Can't help it though. I'm just reacting to an unpredictable, unsanitary world with risks around every corner.

CASSANDRA
(sarcastically)
So true.
(MORE)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
One never knows when one will have to deal with a spider or a clock or gravity or sex--

TINK
You jest but to me... wait, there are people who're afraid of *sex*?

CASSANDRA
Oh yea! *Erotophobia*. My last husband Darnell had it. Never wanted to have sex with me.

TINK
I'm sorry, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA
Don't be! I must've had it too. Cuz I never wanted to have sex with that flaccid old bastard either!

She CHUCKLES. Tink doesn't. He's too busy with his rehab. He reaches the end of the bars, looks over for an "ATTA BOY!"

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Better! But with a torn MCL *and* ACL, your rehab's gonna take a bit longer than normal. Be patient.

Tink SIGHS. Cassandra HELPS HIM into a wheelchair. She PACES ten steps and STOPS beside a basket filled with tennis balls.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
We need to rehab your knee slowly. But your hand-eye coordination, we can go at full tilt. You game?

TINK
Not like I'm doing anything else.

Cassandra WITHDRAWS two tennis balls from the basket.

CASSANDRA
You don't have a phobia about tennis balls, do you?

TINK
Oh no. Tennis balls are my friends.

CASSANDRA
Good. See that?

Cassandra POINTS across the gym to an inflatable pool shaped like a pink flamingo. Tink spots it, NODS.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
The basket here holds twenty-five tennis balls. I'll throw 'em at you. You whack 'em into that pool.

TINK
Where's my racket?

CASSANDRA
At the end of your arms.

TINK
My hands?! That pool's so far away!

CASSANDRA
(off Tink's objection)
Whack hard.

Tink SHRUGS, extends palms, awaits first ball.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Okay, on three.
(beat)
One.
(beat)
Two.

Cassandra lied. She TOSSES the ball after a count of two.

Tink's not fooled. His eyes follow it all the way to his right palm. He FOREHANDS it toward the pool but the ball MISSES wide left, BOUNCES on the floor.

Tink GRITS his teeth. BEARS DOWN.

Cassandra tosses next ball, then next after that, in rapid succession. The air grows thick with tennis balls.

THERAPISTS and REHAB PATIENTS stop to watch.

The first five balls Tink hits miss the pool. Then--

Number six plops into the center. CHEERS ring out.

Cassandra speeds up her tosses, but Tink responds. Every ball he smashes is landing in the pool.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)
Five left!

Tink's in the zone. He rises from the wheelchair and powers through until the ball basket is empty.

Exhausted, he drops back into the wheelchair. Cassandra reaches for a hug, but Tink shields his face with an arm. She realizes he's not ready for human touch. Not just yet.

Another THERAPIST checks the pool, announces the results.

THERAPIST
Twenty out of twenty-five in the pool!

The ONLOOKERS APPLAUD Tink's valiant effort.

CASSANDRA
Mr. Tink. I think you're gonna be back on that pro tour *real* soon!

Tink removes his medical face mask to reveal a wide smile.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Outside the gym, a stooped over FEMALE JANITOR in a one-piece jumpsuit shoves a cleaning cart into a dark corner. It's Olga, disguised as the world's skinniest custodian.

She TEXTS Zoran.

OLGA: "he's still in a full leg cast & wheelchair"

ZORAN: "looks like Todor Zoran's #1 spot is safe then"

OLGA: "Da. so stop undercover now?"

Three dots appear and disappear. Olga grows impatient.

OLGA: "Todor?"

ZORAN: "NEGATIVE! STAY ON HIM!"

Olga frowns at her phone and stashes it in a pocket.

INT. TINK'S HOUSE - DAY

Kaden races downstairs into a dark living room. She checks her watch: *Eleven fifty-five A.M.* She spots Tink sprawled in a Barcalounger beneath a blanket and shakes him awake.

KADEN
Dad! I told you we need to leave for my swim meet by noon. Why are you in the dark?

TINK
(sings)
Hello darkness, my old friend. I've come to talk with you again.

Kaden opens the drapes. Tink shields his eyes from the sun.

KADEN
What are you mumbling about?

TINK
Simon and Garfunkel.

KADEN
Your lawyers?

TINK
No! Famous singers... never mind. I just like to sit in the dark. Helps me focus on how much my life sucks.

Kaden slaps sunglasses and a cap onto Tink and points him to the front door. His cast has been replaced by a cane.

EXT. TINK'S HOUSE - DAY

Kaden helps Tink behind the wheel of his vintage Peugeot. He puts on driving gear--plastic gloves and an N95 face mask.

KADEN
Why are you so negative? You're *walking* again. And down to just two new phobias a week.

TINK
<u>And</u> I'm never going to play my beloved tennis again. <u>Ever</u>!

KADEN
(mimics Tink)
I'm never going to play again, poor pitiful me. When are you going to stop being such a wuss!

TINK
Show your father respect. It's *Mr. Wuss* to you.

KADEN
Fine, *Mr.* Wuss. By the way, are you sure you're okay to drive? I'm too young to die, if you don't mind.

TINK
Feeling's mutual. Besides, you drive too fast.

Tink turns the ignition key. The old car rattles to a start and WHEEZES from the driveway in a plume of coal gray smoke.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Tink's Peugeot creeps down the highway at half the speed limit. Angry DRIVERS pass, BLARE horns, flip a middle finger.

INT. TINK'S CAR - DAY

Tink's cell CHIMES. He glances at caller ID: Birtwistle. Tink puts him on speaker, but his face mask muffles his voice.

TINK
Heedo Bawee.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Tink?

TINK
Mehm.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Tink! Are you wearing a face mask?

TINK
Mehm, Maymon mit.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
TAKE IT OFF! Covid has been over for years!

Kaden CHUCKLES at the absurd exchange between two *supposedly* grown men. Tink removes his mask. Two more drivers pass and share best wishes with extended middle fingers.

TINK
Maybe, but you never know when some deadly new strain might emerge and kill us all.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Whatever. Where's Kaden by the way? I thought you hated driving.

TINK
How do you know it's me and *not* Kaden driving?

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
All the honking in the background. Means you're at the wheel driving about thirty on the highway.

Tink looks at the speedometer. The needle's buried on thirty.

TINK
Maybe. But I'm not about to let her drive. She's a speed demon. Anyway, she only has a permit.

Kaden rolls her eyes.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Uh huh. Well, anyway, I just wanted to remind you we have sponsorship reviews coming up, so--

TINK
Can‘t wait! I'm due an increase for every contract.

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
We'll have to talk about that.

TINK
Talk about what? This has been the best year of my pro career!

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Until the accident.

TINK
Yea, but I'm due--

BIRTWISTLE (O.S.)
Like I said, we'll talk about it.

The line goes dead. Tink SIGHS.

A full soft drink cup SPLASHES the Peugeot windshield. From a passing car, a YOUNG WOMAN's angry face pops out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN
(screams)
Just because you can't play tennis anymore, at least learn to drive, NUMBNUTS!

EXT. TINK'S PATIO - NIGHT

Surrounded by empty liquor bottles and Ace beside him, Tink lolls on an outdoor lounger feeling sorry for himself. He's three sheets (maybe four) to the wind. Between whiskey shots, he smiles at a video playing nonstop on his cell.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
THOMPSON WINS ANOTHER GRAND SLAM!

With the video and whiskey as inspiration, Tink stumbles to his feet. He flips on the lights to illuminate his two tennis courts, wobbles to a cabinet, and removes a tennis racket.

TINK
(to Ace)
Think I can get one over the net from here like the old days, boy?

Ace BARKS approval. Tink nods, holds a thumb close to his eyes, jiggles his tongue, and guesses the distance.

TINK (CONT'D)
I put the net at ninety-five feet.

Ace BARKS twice. Tink nods, again, tosses a tennis ball in air, and PUMMELS it as hard and far as he can.

Dog and owner monitor the yellow sphere's flight path as it climbs higher and higher until gravity wins out and it plummets toward earth--

-- well short of the tennis courts. And into the swimming pool. SPLASH!

Tink tosses the racquet and falls to the lawn. Ace BARKS and licks Tink's face. He closes his eyes... and starts to snore.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Kaden and Tink monitor adjacent tennis courts divided into four smaller courts. PLAYERS of every shape, age, and race snatch numbers from a board: TAKE NUMBER FOR NEXT OPEN COURT.

TINK
Why did you bring me <u>here?</u>

Irritated, Kaden spins toward her father.

KADEN
I *brought you here* to reveal the way back to your *beloved* tennis.

Tink scrutinizes players waiting for an open court.

In the grass, SILVER-HAIRED WOMEN whack plastic wiffle balls back and forth with what appear to be ping pong paddles.

Two MIDDLE SCHOOLERS and a group of SENIOR MEN do the same.

TINK
You want me to join an AARP fitness club? Or become a scoutmaster?

KADEN
(shakes her head)
I'd call you a *smart* ass but it's obvious you're not smart so you must just be a *generic* ass.

TINK
(unmoved)
Your point?

KADEN
Pickleball's my point.

TINK
Pickleball?

KADEN
The perfect game to rehab with 'til your knee is a hundred percent.

TINK
For God's sake, Kaden, it's named after a cucumber brined in vinegar!

Kaden crosses her arms and points to the games underway.

KADEN
Look out there. What do you see?

TINK
Looks like ping pong crossed with badminton. *Padminton*?

KADEN
Look closer, *un*-wise ass.

TINK
(sarcastically)
Ah yes, now I see! It's America's newest game for *non*athletes. Following in the hallowed steps of bowling, horseshoes, and my personal favorite... cornhole.

Kaden shoots Tink the stink eye. He gets it.

TINK (CONT'D)
Okay, my bad. It looks to be action packed, requiring quick reflexes, and maybe a whiff of strategy.

KADEN
Correct. Now, what *don't* you see?

TINK
Sweating?

KADEN
<u>Running!</u> The game is all about staking a spot and maximizing your hand-eye skills and reflexes.

TINK
My daughter, the visionary.

KADEN
Glad you're enthusiastic about my plan, because I have a pickleball coach coming to the house tomorrow to get you started. *At five a.m.*

Kaden stomps off. Tink shakes his head but follows.

SLAM TO BLACK.

<u>END ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

EXT. TINK'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A fastidious, fit WOMAN in matching workout shorts and tennis shoes RINGS the doorbell. Steps back. No answer. She jiggles the door handle. It's unlocked so she creeps inside.

INT. TINK'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

In white boxers and tank top, Tink attempts to free a WHINING, kicking ACE from the bed comforter pocket.

TINK
Come out of there little guy!

The woman appears in the bedroom, watches as Tink, his butt in the air facing her, attempts to extract Ace. After a struggle, he spins around with Ace in his arms.

Their eyes lock. The woman, GENESIS "GENNY" BORJA, 30's, is classy, confident, and--in this case--curious.

TINK (CONT'D)
Uh. Good morning?

GENNY
(uncomfortably)
I rang the doorbell but--

Tink puts Ace down on the floor. Tail wagging full throttle, he scampers to Genny. She picks him up, rubs his belly, and chuckles at Ace's friendliness. Tink notices the betrayal.

TINK
He flunked out of guard-dog school.

Ace hams it up by licking his newfound friend's face.

TINK (CONT'D)
I assume you're the pickleball coach Kaden hired, not the burglar for the early shift?

GENNY
(smiles)
Yes. Genny Borja. I hope this isn't too early for you to get started.

Tink glances down at his attire.

TINK
No, it's fine. Give me five though?

GENNY
Sure, Tink. Sorry, Mr. Thompson. I'll just go out and convert the tennis court for pickleball.

TINK
Call me Tink. Please.

GENNY
(slight blush)
Okay... Tink.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - A BIT LATER

Tink yawns as he approaches his backyard tennis court. The sun rises behind Genny and casts a halo around her head. Tink's so caught up in her heavenly aura, he trips, and TUMBLES down the hill leading to the court.

Genny starts to help him up, but Tink raises a palm.

TINK
I'm good.

Genny backs off, watches Tink brush himself off.

GENNY
Just worried about your knee. Kaden said you don't like to be touched.

TINK
What else she say about me?

GENNY
That you're a good dad.

TINK
She mention my phobias?

GENNY
A few, yes.

TINK
Not all forty-three?

GENNY
What?

TINK
On a good week, I have forty-three phobias, minimum. On bad weeks--way more.

GENNY
Look Mr. Thompson--

TINK
Tink!

GENNY
Right. Tink. Look, I'm not here to attend your pity party. We all have quirks and fears. I'm here for one thing only--to teach pickleball. So, stop feeling sorry for yourself and focus on the task at hand.

Tink FLINCHES, caught off guard by this woman's intensity. Genny waves at the converted pickleball court.

GENNY (CONT'D)
Welcome to pickleball, your pathway back to professional tennis.

TINK
(with complete insincerity)
Happy Happy, Joy Joy.

EXT. BUSHES - DAY

Olga hides behind a well-manicured hedge on the edge of Tink's property. She watches his lesson through binoculars as she SWATS away early morning mosquitos.

A dog BARKS. She's startled to see Ace, staring up at her. He SNARLS, bares his tiny, slobbering teeth, and inches closer.

OLGA
(kicks at Ace)
SHOO! GO!

Ace CHOMPS on Olga's pants leg and tugs. She swats, and tries to KICK HIM OFF, but the little YAPPY MUTT hangs on tight.

Olga sees Tink and his teacher striding her way. She SWEARS in Slovak and tries to RUN AWAY with Ace still attached. He won't let go, so she stops in the yard, kicks off her pants, and makes her escape pantless, in just a lacy thong.

EXT. TINK'S CONVERTED PICKLEBALL COURT - LATER

Tink and Genny volley so he can get a feel for the paddle and ball. In the grass, Ace continues to chomp on Olga's jeans.

GENNY
Your fans usually snoop around like that?

TINK
It's why I keep this vicious attack dog.

Ace BARKS approvingly. Genny CHUCKLES as she volleys.

GENNY
You're catching on pretty quick.

TINK
We'll see how quick when I play a real match.

Genny stops the volley, approaches Tink.

GENNY
You're a UCLA alum, right?

TINK
Blue and Gold for life!

GENNY
Then you know what UCLA Coach John Wooden said. 'Games mean nothing if you don't give it your all during practice.' Tink, if you practice hard and really, truly learn this game, you <u>will</u> win your matches.

TINK
Or my money back?

GENNY
Nice try but no.

INT. CAR - DAY

Behind the wheel of her rental car, Olga TEXTS Zoran.

OLGA: "he converted his tennis court to pickleball and hired a coach!"

ZORAN: "a tennis coach?"

OLGA: "No, pickleball!"

No response. Olga SIGHS, jabs at her phone.

OLGA: "did you hear me???!!!"

ZORAN: "yes"

OLGA: "NOW CAN I QUIT UNDERCOVERS? no way he returns to tour"

ZORAN: "NO! KEEP WATCHING HIM! FOCUS OLGA! FOCUS!"

Olga shakes her head, GRUNTS, and casts the phone aside.

EXT. TINK'S BACKYARD - EARLY MORNING

Tink descends stairs. He looks at his watch: Five a.m.

TINK
(to Ace)
Two days and already late, boy. Now I can fire her and sleep in.

From Tink's swimming pool comes a familiar voice.

GENNY
Over here guys!

EXT. TINK'S POOL - CONTINUOUS

Genny lounges on a pool chair as Tink and Ace shuffle up. She's in a one-piece swimsuit, cellphone in hand. A confused Tink PLOPS into a lounge chair.

GENNY
Don't get too comfy.

TINK
So, we're having a sunrise pool party? Should've ordered a keg!

GENNY
Not today, I'm afraid. We're starting your training routine. Every morning at this time.

Tink tilts his head. Ace mimics him. Genny explains.

GENNY (CONT'D)
Cassandra will continue to help you rehab your lower body. You and I will focus on your upper body.

TINK
Whatever floats your boat.

GENNY
Good.
(beat)
Jump into the pool.

TINK
Excuse me. You do see I'm fully clothed?

GENNY
What's your point?

Tink shrugs, begins to take off shirt and shoes.

GENNY (CONT'D)
I didn't say take off your clothes. I said jump in the pool.

TINK
Am I being punked?

Genny points to the pool, starts a stopwatch app.

GENNY
Better quit bellyaching and start swimming. Up and back in ninety seconds or you do it again.

TINK
That's like Michael Phelps time!

Genny shrugs and points to the water.

Fully clothed, Tink JUMPS IN, KICKS his feet and begins pounding out his first lap. Genny YELLS from deck.

GENNY
NO LEGS!

Tink stops swimming, treads water, glares at Genny.

TINK
How am I supposed to--

Genny's having none of it. She flares her nostrils.

TINK (CONT'D)
(off Genny's flaring)
Fine. Matilda the Hun.

Tink COUGHS UP water, SIGHS, and begins TO SWIM with no kicks, just arms, hands, upper body. On the pool deck, Ace BARKS beside him. Genny's glued to the stopwatch time.

A BIT LATER

Tink finishes another lap, grasps the pool ledge.

GENNY
Forty laps but none under ninety seconds. We'll keep at it tomorrow.

Tink drops his head in disbelief. Ace LICKS Tink's forehead.

Genny points to various items laid out on a patio table--lawn darts, pickleballs, knitting needle, yarn, a book.

GENNY (CONT'D)
Time for your next drills.

TINK
What kind of training *is* this?

GENNY
You'll thank me when you win your first match.

TINK
I've already won twelve hundred matches and never once did I train with knitting needles.

GENNY
Those were tennis matches. Not pickleball.

Tink THROWS UP HIS ARMS in desperation. He climbs out of the pool and dries off.

GENNY (CONT'D)
You're a smart guy. *Unique*, but smart. So, you tell me. Right now, what's your weakness?

TINK
A bad knee.

GENNY
And your strength?

TINK
Knowing I can fire you at any time.

GENNY
True. Or I can quit at any time.

TINK
Touche.
(beat)
Uh, my upper body. Hands, eyes, arms, core.

GENNY
And... mind and heart. How you think. And how much passion you have for winning.

TINK
Oh, golly gosh, now I see why we're training with lawn darts!

GENNY
(sighs)
The darts improve serving accuracy.

Genny picks up the five pickleballs, juggles them.

GENNY (CONT'D)
Juggling pickleballs promotes visual focus and hand-eye skills.

Genny SNATCHES the knitting needle and yarn.

GENNY (CONT'D)
Knitting improves concentration for repetitive tasks like paddling a pickleball over the net.

Genny picks up a book titled *"Life Without Limits."*

GENNY (CONT'D)
And for heart and mind, this book. The author was born with no arms or legs. His story shows how anyone--even you, Tink Thompson--can overcome any obstacle.

Tink SIGHS, picks up the lawn darts.

TINK
I *cannot* wait to get back on tour, so I can stop this goofy Obi-Wan Kenobi training method of yours.

GENNY
Actually, it's the Miyagi method.

TINK
Kenobi. Miyagi. Muskogee. Whatever. It's goofy.

INT. TINK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Kaden and Tink finish the dinner dishes at the kitchen sink.

KADEN
Genny's a great teacher, right?

TINK
If you're a Cruella de Vil fan.

KADEN
Stop! She's sweet. Highly recommended too.

TINK
By whom? The Marquis de Sade?

KADEN
I think you *like* her!

Tink SHOVES a clean plate into Kaden's hand to dry.

TINK
I hardly know the lady. If you want to call her that.

KADEN
I knew it! Your tell. Sarcasm. You *do* like her!

TINK
You know since you became a teenager, you've become--

KADEN
A beautiful and brilliant young woman whose fun to hang with?

TINK
I was going to say impudent.

Kaden dries the last plate, TOSSSES her cloth onto counter.

KADEN
Fine. This *impudent teenage maid* of yours needs to do her homework.

At the kitchen door, she SPINS AROUND.

KADEN (CONT'D)
Doesn't matter if you like her anyway. She just got engaged.

Tink stops washing. A glass slips from his hand and SHATTERS.

TINK
SHIT! SHIT! SHIT!

Kaden GIGGLES as she leaves humming the *K-I-S-S-I-N-G* tune.

EXT. PICKLEBALL COURTS - DAY

Tink and Genny volley at the City Park public courts. A crowd forms to watch. Tink's holding his own. Easily returning Genny's serves. Avoiding the penalty area called the kitchen. Slamming the ball over the net with finesse and power.

Genny notices that EVERYONE in the park has come over to watch the great Tink Thompson. She spots a LITTLE GIRL, about nine years old, watching intently.

GENNY
What's your name, sweetie?

LITTLE GIRL
(wide smile)
Sasha Lowenstein.

GENNY
Could you take over for me, Sasha?

Sasha's eyes widen to match her smile. Tink grins, in anticipation of an easy victory in front of his loyal fans. Sasha SMASHES a ball deep, with heavy spin. Tink can't reach it in time.

Sasha LEAPS into the air, hands high. The crowd CHANTS.

CROWD
SASHA! SASHA! SASHA!

Tink's mystified. He glances at Genny hoping for sympathy. She just tilts her head and shrugs.

A BIT LATER

A different opponent now--an OLD GUY. Tink's soaked with sweat. With precision-like accuracy, Old Guy is forcing Tink to run around the court to keep up. Finally, Tink sneaks in a soft lob but Old Guy returns it just out of Tink's reach. Tink TOSSES DOWN his racquet and limps over to Genny.

GENNY
Humbled yet?

Tink SIGHS, wipes sweat off his forehead with a towel.

TINK
If I can't beat a girl or an old man in *pickleball*, how will I ever get back on the pro *tennis* tour?

Genny puts an arm around Tink. Surprisingly, he doesn't flinch. She waves to the crowd, mouths a *thank you*. A round of APPLAUSE breaks out as she escorts Tink off court.

GENNY
When did you first play tennis?

TINK
When I was six.

GENNY
How'd it go?

TINK
My father humiliated me in front of his country club cronies.

GENNY
Did you go home and sulk?

TINK
Hell no! I went home and practiced. By the end of the week, I was kicking his ass on a regular basis.

Genny looks Tink in the eye with a knowing smile.

TINK (CONT'D)
Okay, I get it. But just know I can still fire you at any time!

GENNY
Not if I quit first.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. BIRTWISTLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Birtwistle ushers Tink in. The walls are covered with vanity photos of Birtwistle and other famous sports clients.

The vertically challenged Birtwistle climbs a tiny stair step and drops into a giant mahogany chair. He pumps a handle on the side as Tink watches his face slowly rise above the desk.

BIRTWISTLE
How's my favorite client?

Tink flicks off invisible hairs from the guest chair and faces Birtwistle. Desperation's in his voice and manner.

TINK
Wally, I gotta get back to the pro tour. Pronto! I thought maybe pickleball could keep me sharp till I could return at my best, but I suck. Little kids and old coots are whupping my ass!

BIRTWISTLE
It's only been a few months. What's your physical therapist say?

TINK
Says I need more time. But I'm the Greatest of All Time. The GOAT! My fans and sponsors love me. They *want me* back on tour!

Birtwistle folds his hands, leans forward.

BIRTWISTLE
Thing is, Tink, they don't really love or want you that much anymore.

TINK
My fans or my sponsors?

BIRTWISTLE
Well... both.

TINK
No way, Wally!

BIRTWISTLE
Tennis fans feel like you betrayed them when you took up pickleball.

TINK
But the sponsors? I'm due performance increases!

BIRTWISTLE
About the sponsors... they're gone, Tink. They moved over to Zoran.

Tink GRIPS his chair, slumps back, MOUTH AGAPE.

TINK
Zoran! But we have solid contracts!

BIRTWISTLE
With solid *clauses* that allow them to drop you for anything you do that disparages their brand.

TINK
Pickleball *disparages* their brand?!

Birtwistle pumps his chair down and descends the steps.

BIRTWISTLE
There is good news though. We do have one *new* sponsor.

Birtwistle flips on TV. In an advertisement, a man in a GIANT PICKLE outfit addresses the camera.

GIANT PICKLE
I LOVE PICKLES! Ever since I was just a little stippled cucumber swimming in salty vinegar. That's why I'm here to say--don't be fickle! Treat yourself to a PETERMAN'S PARTY PICKLE!

The camera ZOOMS IN on a grocery aisle display of Peterman's Party Pickles. The talking pickle holds up a jar.

GIANT PICKLE (CONT'D)
And for a limited time, try our *DILL*icious holiday favorites-- Peterman's *Pumpkin Spice* Party Pickles! Mmm good!

The ad ends. Birtwistle shares a final bit of news.

BIRTWISTLE
And the founder, old lady Peterson herself wants you to be the company's new spokes*pickle.*

TINK
You mean... the guy in the giant pickle outfit?

Birtwistle places a hand on Tink's shoulder and nods.

Tink drops his head to the desk and begins to SOB.

FADE TO BLACK OVER TINK’S SOBBING.

END PILOT EPISODE