

LOVE AND BASKETBALL

BY

GINA PRINCE-BYTHEWOOD

OPENING TITLES

SLOW MOTION. STYLIZED. TIGHT.

The silhouette of a man and woman. They are on a blacktop basketball court, playing a sexually-charged game of one-one-one.

Sweat glistens. Hands pull at clothes. Hips bump and collide. Eyes lock...

FADE TO:

BLACK.

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: "FIRST QUARTER" then "1981"

BALDWIN HILLS

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - LATE MORNING

An upper middle-class neighborhood, known as the Black Beverly Hills. Big houses, green grass and Caddies in every other driveway. The street is quiet, until --

YOUNG VOICE (O.S.)

You wanna be Kareem?

CAMERA REVEALS: QUINCY MCCALL, eleven years old, dribbling a basketball in front of KELVIN and JAMAL, also eleven. He sports a fro, a "Clippers" jersey, and a serious swagger.

QUINCY (CONT'D)

All his big butt do is stand by the basket.

JAMAL

Shoot, I'll be blocking your stuff.

KELVIN

I'm gonna be like Dr. J.

QUINCY

I'ma be like my Dad.

JAMAL

He ain't a star or nothing.

QUINCY

I don't see none of your sorry daddies in the NBA.

KELVIN

Hey, look, Q.

Quincy follows Kelvin's eyes, to a beat-up pair of Converse All-Stars approaching from next door. Walking in the kicks is a YOUNG KID in a T-shirt and Tuff-skins, and a LAKERS cap pulled low. A moving van is parked in the driveway.

KELVIN (cont'd)

Thought only girls were moving in.

QUINCY

That's what my Moms said.

KELVIN

I hope he can ball.

JAMAL

Bet he's a scrub.

The Kid stops at the edge of Quincy's driveway.

KID

Hey.

QUINCY

Hey.

KID

Can I play?

QUINCY

You nice?

KID

Yeah, I'm nice.

Quincy looks the Kid up and down, then --

QUINCY

You and Kelvin gainst me and Jamal.

Quincy tosses the Kid the ball. The Kid pulls off the baseball cap. Brown hair tumbles down, framing a soft brown face and bright eyes. She is MONICA WRIGHT, eleven years old.

JAMAL

Ah man, he is a girl.

QUINCY

Girls can't play no ball.

MONICA

Ball better than you.

Quincy laughs derisively as Monica walks to the top of the driveway.

QUINCY

(whispering)

What a dog.

Monica shoots him a glare.

JAMAL

She heard you.

QUINCY

Nuh uh, they could only hear dog whistles.

Monica starts to dribble. Jamal whistles as he walks backwards, guarding her. She throws up a shot. IT'S AN AIRBALL. Quincy and Jamal crack up. Kelvin rolls his eyes.

Quincy grabs the rebound and shoots. Swish.

QUINCY (cont'd)

One, zip.

He rolls the ball to Monica. She starts dribbling and again, Jamal just backs up with her. She passes to Kelvin. Jamal and Quincy collapse on him, leaving Monica open under the basket. Trapped Kelvin has no choice but to pass it back.

Monica catches the ball and throws up a shot. It banks off the backboard...AND DROPS THROUGH THE NET. The boys look at her in shock. Monica tosses the ball back to Quincy.

MONICA

One, up.

QUINCY

Lucky.

Quincy easily dribbles by Kelvin and lays up the ball. He throws the ball back to Monica.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Two, one.

Monica dribbles. Jamal plays her a little tighter. Monica bounces the ball through his open legs and lays up the ball.

MONICA

Two, up.

Quincy can't believe it. Kelvin cracks up.

KELVIN

Aaah, she dogged you.

JAMAL

Shut up.

The game continues, with Quincy and Monica trading baskets for their teams. Quincy grows agitated with Jamal, who is unable to stop her. The score hits nine, nine.

Quincy stands at the top of the driveway, ball in hand.

QUINCY

Point.

Quincy dribbles through his legs, then pops an outside shot. The ball bounces on the rim...and rolls off.

Quincy curses as Monica grabs the rebound and clears the ball. Jamal moves to guard her, but Quincy shoves him off.

QUINCY (cont'd)

I got her.

Quincy defends. Monica smiles back at him.

MONICA

Told you I was nice. I'm going to be the first girl in the NBA.

QUINCY

I'ma be in the NBA. You're gonna be my cheerleader.

Monica suddenly passes to Kelvin, sprints for the basket. Quincy stumbles, giving her a step. Kelvin throws it back.

Quincy knows he's beat as Monica goes for the winning lay-up. In desperation, he swings at her for the hard foul, shoving her off balance.

THE BALL FLIES FROM HER HAND AS SHE CRASHES TO THE GROUND, FACE-FIRST. SHE GRABS HER CHEEK. BLOOD SLIPS THROUGH HER FINGERS.

The boys stand frozen. Quincy stares down at her, his eyes wide with fear...and regret.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - BATHROOM - LATE MORNING

Monica leans over the sink as her mother, CAMILLE, 36, wipes the blood from her face with a washcloth.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Eew.

Her sister, LENA, 14, leans in the doorway, making a face. She is a mirror of their mother, with relaxed hair and painted nails.

Her father, NATHAN, 39, moves behind Lena, holding a box.

NATHAN

How are you feeling, munchkin?

Monica nods. He smiles.

NATHAN (cont'd)

Yeah, you're through.

CAMILLE

She needs to stop running around like a little boy.

NATHAN

She's alright.

CAMILLE

How is she alright looking the way she does?

NATHAN

Camille, she'll be fine.

He gives Monica a wink, crosses away. Monica pulls the washcloth away from her Mom and starts wiping the blood herself.

CAMILLE

I'll get some ice.

She exits. Lena shakes her head, follows.

Monica pulls the washcloth from her face and stares into the mirror. TORN SKIN SURROUNDS A SMALL DEEP GASH IN HER CHEEK. Seeing her latest battle scar, there's only one thing left for this little girl to do. She smiles.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Quincy sits at the kitchen table, writing "I AM SORRY" in block letters across a homemade card. His face is tight with concentration as he tries to write in a straight line.

At the counter, his mom, NONA, moves a cake from its store box to a cake dish. She is 30, beautiful, with effort. She smooths the frosting with a spoon.

ZEKE, 32, with the height and ego of an NBA ballplayer, enters. He laughs.

ZEKE

Girl, who you trying to fool?

Quincy looks up, smiles. He quickly grabs a piece of crumpled paper, and tosses it to Zeke.

QUINCY

Alley-oop, Dad.

Nona intercepts his pass.

NONA

Boy...

She points him back to his card. Quincy scowls, starts writing again. Nona scoops some frosting on her finger, holds it up.

NONA (cont'd)

New neighbors.

Zeke wraps his lips around her finger, sucks the frosting off.

ZEKE

See, Quincy, this is how your Moms caught me, with the old fake and bake. Had me thinking I was getting a sister who could burn.

Nona laughs, pulls him down for a kiss. Quincy suddenly throws down his pencil in frustration.

QUINCY

I can't do this shit.

Zeke and Nona pull away, stare at Quincy in shock.

ZEKE

Boy, what'd I tell you about using that word?

QUINCY

(sighs, then)

"Can't" should never be in a man's vocabulary.

ZEKE

Why not?

QUINCY

Cause when you say can't, you ain't a man.

ZEKE

That's right.

NONA

Zeke.

ZEKE

What?

(then)

Oh, and, uh, don't say "shit."

Nona just shakes her head.

NONA

We should head over.

ZEKE

Just you and Quincy, baby. I got a

meeting.

NONA

With who?

ZEKE

Business folks.

NONA

You just got back from a four game road trip.

ZEKE

Nona, don't start bitching. I got maybe two years left to play. I'm just trying to put some things together for us.

Zeke grabs his keys.

ZEKE (cont'd)

Later, Quincy.

QUINCY

Later, Dad.

Zeke exits. Nona leans against the counter, concerned.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Mom?

NONA

What?

QUINCY

We still have to go?

NONA

(beat)

Yeah.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Camille and Nona stand among the piles of boxes. Monica and Quincy stand at their mothers' sides, stealing glances at each other. A large bandage covers Monica's cheek. Monica holds her card, Camille holds the cake.

NONA

...we moved back here when Quincy was

about five, after Zeke was traded.  
Neighborhood was a little more mixed  
back then...

CAMILLE

Until the Black family down the street  
became the Black family next door.

NONA

(nods)

Okay?

Camille tries to smooth down Monica's unruly hair. Monica  
moves her head.

CAMILLE

Well, thanks again. This was really nice  
of you.

NONA

It was the least we could do. And I love  
to cook.

Quincy looks up at his Mom, surprised. She quickly hugs his  
face into her stomach. Camille lights up.

CAMILLE

Oh, me too. I used to cook for my  
friends' parties and things back in  
Atlanta.

NONA

You're a caterer?

CAMILLE

Well, no, but once Nathan gets settled  
and the girls get a little older, it's  
definitely something I want to do.

(then)

Since you love to cook, maybe it's  
something we can talk about.

Quincy snickers. Nona quickly changes the subject.

NONA

You know, girl, long as I've lived next  
door, I've never seen the inside of this  
house.

CAMILLE

Really? Well, come on, then.

Camille hands Monica the cake.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

Honey, put this in the kitchen.

NONA

Help her, Quincy.

Camille and Nona head down the hall, leaving Monica and Quincy alone. The two just stand there.

Quincy reaches out, scoops a finger of frosting, and pops it in his mouth. Beat, then Monica takes a bigger scoop.

QUINCY

So...does it hurt?

MONICA

It's this big hole. You could almost see bone.

QUINCY

For real?

MONICA

Uh huh.

Quincy is impressed.

QUINCY

So how come you could play basketball?

MONICA

I just can.

QUINCY

I never knew a girl that could play.

MONICA

My Mom says she doesn't know where I come from 'cause I act different.

QUINCY

Your Dad play?

MONICA

He works at a bank.

QUINCY

My Dad plays for the "Clippers." He says

I'ma be a doctor or a lawyer, but I'ma play for them, too. Same number and everything.

MONICA

I'm going to be number thirty-two, like Magic.

QUINCY

He's alright, but my Dad can take him.

MONICA

What was the most points your Daddy ever got in Junior High?

QUINCY

I don't know. A lot.

MONICA

One time Magic scored forty-eight points, and they only had six minute quarters and he sat out the whole fourth.

QUINCY

You do act different.

MONICA

I don't care.

QUINCY

Well, if anybody bothers you, you could just tell me cause I run this street.

MONICA

I'd just tell my sister, Lena.

QUINCY

She don't know how to box, I bet. My dad showed me how to fight like Ali.

He shows off a flurry of punches.

MONICA

So, I know karate from "Almighty Isis."

Monica puts the cake down on a box, does a couple of kicks and hand movements. Quincy is impressed.

QUINCY

Bet you can't do this though.

Quincy does a jump kick. Monica does the same.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Okay, how bout this?

Quincy takes a couple steps back, then does a cartwheel. It looks great, until he crashes into the box with the cake. The cake falls onto his head and shoulder.

Monica doubles over, laughing. Quincy is embarrassed. Camille and Nona rush back into the living room.

CAMILLE

Monica, what did you do?

MONICA

Nothing.

CAMILLE

(to Nona)

Oh, all that work.

NONA

It's...it's okay. Can I get a towel?

Camille quickly crosses into the kitchen. Quincy stares at the floor.

QUINCY

Sorry.

Nona bends down, whispers in his ear.

NONA

No. Good boy.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Monica sits between Lena's legs, grimacing, as Lena works a comb through her freshly washed, kinky hair. Monica's head flops like a rag doll. Her eyes are wet.

MONICA

Ow!

Lena keeps tugging.

MONICA (cont'd)

Ow, Lena!!!

Monica punches her in the leg.

LENA

Ow!

Lena yanks Monica's head back as Camille enters, carrying a yellow dress on a hanger. Monica sees it and her face falls.

MONICA

Ah, Mom.

CAMILLE

I'm lucky I found it. Someone put your box of dresses under a pile of rags in the garbage.

Monica sulks. Lena cackles in her ear. Camille has to laugh.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

Child, pick up your lip.

MONICA

I hate it.

CAMILLE

Fine, you don't like this one, which one would you rather wear?

MONICA

Pants.

Camille rubs her temples, then hangs the dress on the door.

CAMILLE

(to Lena)

When you're done can you make sure she brushes her teeth?

LENA

Are you okay?

CAMILLE

I just need to lay down. I've been running around all day.

Just then, Nathan enters. He holds up two dress shirts as if it were a matter of life and death.

NATHAN

Which one for tomorrow?

CAMILLE  
The blue.

NATHAN  
You sure?

Camille nods. Nathan looks at both of them, then:

NATHAN (cont'd)  
Can you iron both tonight just in case?

CAMILLE  
(beat)  
Okay.

NATHAN  
Thanks, sweetheart.

He kisses her on the cheek, hands her the two shirts and crosses out. Monica just watches. Beat, then Camille turns back to her daughters.

CAMILLE  
The boy next door is riding with you to school so you'll know somebody your first day.  
(to Lena)  
Hurry so she can go to sleep.

Monica reacts, surprised. Camille leaves. Lena puts the comb back to Monica's hair. Beat, then:

MONICA  
Make it look nice, kay.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - QUINCY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Basketball posters, "Clippers" and USC memorabilia, a basketball globe light.

Quincy lays tucked in bed, eyes wide open, listening to his parents MAKING LOVE. The sounds bring a smile to his face.

Quincy climbs out of bed, wearing underwear. He moves to his window, sees Monica through her window directly across from his. Her eyes are closed as Lena braids her hair. Quincy kneels down, rests his arms on the window sill, and watches.

EXT. MCCALL AND WRIGHT HOUSES - MORNING

Quincy sits atop his BMX bike in front of Monica's house. A basketball is tucked under his arm.

Monica emerges, walking her banana-seater. She is looking cute in her yellow dress and braids tied with ribbons. A basketball sits in her back basket.

Quincy is taken aback, stares at her.

QUINCY

You wanna be my girl?

Monica blinks in surprise. She thinks for a moment.

MONICA

What do I have to do?

QUINCY

I guess, you know, we play ball and we ride to school together. And if you get mad at me, I gotta give you flowers.

MONICA

I don't like flowers.

QUINCY

Oh.

MONICA

How bout Twinkies? My mom won't ever buy them.

QUINCY

Kay.

MONICA

Okay.

An awkward beat between the new couple. Finally --

QUINCY

I think we gotta kiss now.

MONICA

For how long?

QUINCY

Five seconds.

The two glance around, then climb off their bikes and walk to the secluded area between their two houses.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Ready?

Monica nods. They lean in, eyes wide open, and touch lips. Quincy counts to five with his fingers. They pull away, embarrassed, and walk back to the driveway.

Monica lifts her bike from the ground and climbs on.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Wait. Cause you're my girl now you gotta ride my bike.

MONICA

I want to ride my own bike.

QUINCY

My Dad always drives my Mom.

MONICA

So?

QUINCY

(impatient)

So that means I have to ride with you.

Monica doesn't move.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Come on.

MONICA

I don't have to do what you say.

QUINCY

Man, forget you then, stupid.

MONICA

You're stupid. And your Daddy plays for the worst team in the NBA.

Quincy's face instantly clouds.

QUINCY

What?

MONICA

(laughs)

Last time they won, Dr. J. was a nurse.

QUINCY  
Shut up!

He shoves her, knocking her off her bike.

QUINCY (cont'd)  
I don't wanna be your boyfriend, you ugly  
dog!

Monica leaps up, her dress now dirty. She shoves him back.

MONICA  
I don't want to be your girlfriend, big  
head!

They grapple, then fall to the ground swinging...

FADE TO:

BLACK.

FOOTAGE. Men's NCAA Finals. Michigan State against Indiana State. Magic Johnson against Larry Bird. Magic drives on Bird, hits a beautiful scoop shot. He celebrates as he jogs back down court...

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: "SECOND QUARTER" then "1988"

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

A snarling Black cougar glares down from a large mural. On the court below, a girl's basketball play-off game.

The bleachers are almost half-full with a hyped crowd. In the crowd are Monica's parents. Her father is excited and vocal. Her mom reads a book. Also in the stands, the HEAD COACH OF THE TENNESSEE LADY VOLS, PAT SUMMIT.

A fine-ass BROTHER leans in the doorway, sporting a letter jacket with an embroidered "Q" on the chest. He gets as much

attention as the game. A couple of JUNIOR VARSITY CHEERLEADERS smile his way.

CHEERLEADERS

"U", "G", "L", "Y", you ain't got no alibi, you ugly, yeah, yeah, you ugly.  
"M", "A", "M", "A", how you think you got that way, your Mama, yeah, yeah, your Mama.

On the floor, MONICA, dribbles down court. Just EIGHTEEN, her athletic figure has a few curves, but her loose jersey does little to show it off. Her hair is a mess and her knees are dark with bruises. A small scar is visible on her cheek.

She whips a no-look, around the back pass to a cutting TEAMMATE under the basket, who scores. The crowd cheers.

Monica defends the opposing point guard like a gnat. She knocks the ball loose and grabs it up. She goes for a lay-up and the opposing guard steps in front of her. Monica crashes into her, knocking both to the floor.

A WHISTLE.

REFEREE

No basket! Offensive foul, number thirty-two.

Monica leaps up.

MONICA

What? She wasn't set!

The referee ignores her.

MONICA (cont'd)

She was still moving!

From the sideline, COACH HISERMAN waves frantically.

COACH HISERMAN

Monica! Let it go!

Monica stares down the ref as she jogs back on defense.

The opposing guard drives the lane and puts up a shot. Monica leaps and blocks it with a taunting scream. A WHISTLE.

REFEREE

Technical foul! Number thirty-two.

Coach Hiserman slams down his clipboard. Monica charges the referee. A teammate grabs at her but she pushes her off.

MONICA  
For what?

REFEREE  
Taunting.

MONICA  
Taunting?!

COACH HISERMAN  
Sub!

MONICA  
Man, you suck!

The referee whips back around, whistle in mouth. Coach Hiserman grabs her arm and pulls her off the court.

COACH HISERMAN  
Sit down and shut up.

Monica slams down in a chair, sweat pouring, hands clenched. Her mom watches from the stands, completely embarrassed. The brother in the doorway turns, leaves.

Monica looks up at the clock. SIX MINUTES LEFT IN THE THIRD QUARTER.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LATE DAY

Monica, still benched, sits slumped in her chair, her sweats on, her face dry. She glances up at the clock. TWENTY SECONDS LEFT IN THE FOURTH QUARTER. Her team's up by SIX.

Her teammates dribble out the clock. The BUZZER SOUNDS and they dance across the floor. Monica looks up in the stands. COACH SUMMIT IS GONE.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Camille, now forty-three, stands at the stove stirring a pot of gumbo. Lena, 21, and pretty, stands next to her, holding a handful of plates and silverware.

CAMILLE

...and if you want a thicker base, you can cut in a potato or just use a little flour.

LENA

But you use potato?

Camille nods as they cross into:

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the table, Monica is in mid-conversation with her dad. Camille and Lena start setting the table.

MONICA

Dad, you have to talk to Coach for me.

NATHAN

And what am I supposed to say to the man?

MONICA

The coach from Tennessee was there and he has me riding the bench.

NATHAN

You lost your head.

MONICA

I was just showing emotion.

CAMILLE

So that means it's alright for you to act like that?

LENA

(to Monica)

What'd you do?

MONICA

(dismissive)

nothing.

CAMILLE

I don't know why I keep hoping you'll grow out of this tomboy thing.

MONICA

I won't. I'm a lesbian.

Lena chokes on her drink, cracks up.

CAMILLE

That's not funny

MONICA

Well, that's what you think, isn't it?  
Cause I'd rather wear a jersey than an  
apron...

CAMILLE

Watch your mouth.

Nathan quickly jumps in, tries to clean things up.

NATHAN

Monica, I think her point is...maybe it's  
time to start thinking about other things  
besides basketball.

MONICA

(taken aback)  
What?

NATHAN

You only have one game left and you  
haven't been recruited. Munchkin, I  
wanted it as bad as you did, but we have  
to face reality.

MONICA

The coach from USC is going to be at the  
championship.

NATHAN

I know. But chances are...

MONICA

Chances are there's still a chance.

Nathan nods. She can always soften her dad, but not her mom.

CAMILLE

If you'd just listen for once, you'd  
realize you have a lot more going for  
yourself. You're smart, you'd be pretty  
if you put a comb to your head. I mean,  
why walk around with your hair looking  
like "whodunit"...?

As her mom nags on, Monica looks out the window.

OUTSIDE, QUINCY and a GIRL lean against a car parked at the curb, slobbering each other down.

Just shy of 18, with a magnetic face and muscular body, he is a brother who drank his chocolate milk. HE IS ALSO THE BROTHER WHO WAS WATCHING MONICA'S GAME FROM THE GYM DOORWAY.

Monica watches and her mom's droning voice disappears...

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - SAME TIME

FELICIA, 17, can't get enough of Quincy's lips.

QUINCY

Yo, Felicia, I gotta get to my game.

She keeps kissing him.

QUINCY (cont'd)

And my mom's about to be home.

FELICIA

So I'm not good enough to meet your mom?

QUINCY

Girl, she knew I had a hottie like you up in here, she'd beat the black off me.

FELICIA

(kissing him again)

That's a lot of beating.

She finally lets go, and slides into her car. Quincy watches her go with a cocky-ass smile.

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

A frenzied crowd from floor to ceiling watches Quincy explode across the court. He is the complete point guard - hitting from the outside, driving to the hoop, no-look passes, playing tight D.'

His father, Zeke, now 39, stands on the sideline. His muscle has softened a little over the last five years of retirement.

Monica sits alone in the bottom row, holding a basketball. She wears jeans and a T-shirt and her hair is pulled back in

a simple pony-tail.

Quincy does a killer cross-over move and his Defender falls down. He lays up the ball, then taunts the player he just poster-ized. Behind Monica, TWO GIRLS smack each other excitedly. One of them, SHAWNEE, 17, pretty, big chest, slides down into the empty seat next to her.

SHAWNEE

Hey, girl.

MONICA

Hey.

SHAWNEE

Your hair looks so cute like that.

Monica knows she's full of shit, doesn't respond.

SHAWNEE (cont'd)

So...you know who Q's asking to the Spring Dance?

MONICA

No.

SHAWNEE

C'mon, girl, you live next door. Who's been creeping?

MONICA

There's so many I just can't keep track.

SHAWNEE

Well, can you give him this for me?

Shawnee holds out a folded note. Monica doesn't take it.

MONICA

Give it yourself.

SHAWNEE

I don't wanna look fast.  
(drops it in Monica's lap)  
Thanks, girl.

She slides back to her seat. Monica shakes her head, turns back to the game.

Quincy dives for a loose ball. Shawnee clutches her friend.

SHAWNEE (cont'd)

Good Lord, look at that ass. I just want to lick the sweat off it.

Monica takes in his tight body. He does look good. Quincy jogs back down court and flashbulbs go off...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Flashbulbs. Quincy stands with his dad, his sweat still fresh, talking to a reporter named JIM.

JIM

Quincy, word has it you might make the jump the NBA.

ZEKE

Don't go starting rumors, Jim. My son's college bound with or without basketball.

JIM

You could make a career by telling me where.

ZEKE

Gotta wait til the press conference.

JIM

But you'd love for him to play at USC, like you did.

ZEKE

I'd love for him to get a good education.

(then)

That's it.

Jim crosses away. Zeke puts an affectionate arm around his son as they walk toward the locker room.

ZEKE (cont'd)

We should have another talk with Coach Carril at Princeton.

QUINCY

Pop, there's no way an Ivy League Team is going all the way.

ZEKE

I don't care about the team. I care

about the school.

QUINCY

Didn't we already have this conversation?

Zeke sighs, then:

ZEKE

You played good. I was proud of you.

Quincy smiles wide.

QUINCY

Yeah?

(then)

So you up for a game later?

ZEKE

I don't wanna hurt your feelings.

QUINCY

You don't wanna hurt your back.

ZEKE

(smiles)

Anyway, I gotta get to this meeting.

Tell your Mom I'm gonna be late.

QUINCY

You work too hard, Pop.

ZEKE

Let's hope I can say the same about you  
one day.

Quincy watches his dad move toward the doors, stopping once  
to give an autograph. Zeke passes Monica, entering.

MONICA

Hey, Mr. M.

ZEKE

Hey, Miss Baller.

He exits. Monica approaches Quincy.

MONICA

Way to hoop.

QUINCY

I know this. What do you want?

MONICA

A ride home.

QUINCY

Your legs don't look broke.

MONICA

Look, big head, I'll be at your car.

QUINCY

Guess "please" would be a stretch.

MONICA

(dryly)

Please.

INT. QUINCY'S JEEP - NIGHT

Silence as Quincy wheels his Jeep Wrangler toward home. Monica sits in the passenger seat, basketball in lap. She pulls Shawnee's note from her pocket. Quincy glances it over.

QUINCY

What's that?

MONICA

Some note Shawnee Easton told me to give to you.

QUINCY

(thinks)

Big-ass titties?

Monica shoots him a disgusted look. Quincy reaches out.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Give it here.

Monica leans away, reads aloud.

MONICA

"Q. I think you are so fine and I've been wanting to get with you. Let me take you to the Spring Dance and I promise I'll leave you satisfied."

Monica laughs in disbelief.

MONICA (cont'd)

What a ho.

QUINCY

Why she gotta be a ho, just cause she wants to get with me.

MONICA

She's a ho cause she's sending her coochie through the mail.

QUINCY

And?

MONICA

And? She's not saying, "I think you're a nice guy and I wanna get to know you better," she's saying, "I wanna bone."

QUINCY

So she's honest.

MONICA

Yeah, an honest tramp-ass ho. But I guess you'll stick your dick in anything.

QUINCY

Didn't know you cared so much.

MONICA

I don't.

QUINCY

So who you going to the dance with, Spalding?

MONICA

Who's Spalding?

Quincy looks down at the SPALDING BASKETBALL in her lap and cracks up. Monica glares.

MONICA (cont'd)

Fuck you, Quincy.

QUINCY

See, that's why you ain't getting recruited.

MONICA

Who said I'm not getting recruited?

QUINCY

Your hot-ass temper.

Monica points to the scar on her cheek.

MONICA

I'm not the one who put this scar here.

QUINCY

God, here we go.

MONICA

When we were eleven years old cause he was about to lose.

Quincy turns, faces her.

QUINCY

That's it, give it your best shot.

MONICA

Would you watch the damn road?

QUINCY

I mean it, give it your best shot, cause I'm tired of you holding that over my head.

MONICA

I'm warning you, don't tempt me.

QUINCY

I'm warning you. You don't stall that bad attitude, no one's gonna recruit you.

Quincy pulls his Jeep into his driveway.

MONICA

Please, you jump in some guy's face, talk smack and you get a pat on your ass. But because I'm a female, I get told to calm down and act like a "lady". I'm a ballplayer, okay. A ball player.

QUINCY

With a jacked-up attitude.

MONICA

Didn't know you cared so much.

QUINCY  
I don't.

MONICA  
Good.

Monica slams out of the Jeep and walks across the lawn to her house. Quincy exits his ride.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - ENTRY WAY - SHORT TIME LATER

Quincy steps inside, drops his bag on the floor. His mom, Nona, approaches from the dining room.

QUINCY  
What's up, Moms.

Nona holds up a large hoop earring.

NONA  
What is this?

QUINCY  
Uh, your earring?

NONA  
I look like some hoochie to you? I found it on your floor.

QUINCY  
What are you doing in my room?

Quincy crosses into:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nona follows. Quincy pulls open the fridge, grabs a couple of slices of cold pizza.

NONA  
Quincy, I told you about these fat-ass girls.

QUINCY  
We were just studying.

NONA

I'm not playing with you, these girls are looking to get you caught. They see you, they see dollar signs.

QUINCY

Okay.

NONA

You hearing me?

QUINCY

I've been hearing you.

Nona eyes her son, then lets up. She gives him a kiss.

NONA

How was your game?

QUINCY

Twenty-seven points, eleven assists and still undefeated.

NONA

Still the man.

QUINCY

Yup.

Nona smiles, starts back the kitchen.

NONA

Where's your dad?

QUINCY

Said he'd be home later.

NONA

Later when?

QUINCY

I don't know, he had a meeting or something.

Quincy exits to his room.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - ZEKE AND NONA'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Nona angrily rolls her hair as Zeke undresses.

ZEKE

I had some players to see and hands to

shake.

NONA

At one in the morning?

ZEKE

I'm not gonna get anywhere punching a clock just so my wife doesn't get an attitude.

NONA

I came second to the NBA. I'm not about to come second to this bullshit scouting job.

Zeke looks at her, offended.

NONA (cont'd)

I didn't mean it like that.

ZEKE

Yeah.

NONA

I'm just saying it'd be nice if you found time for your family.

You should see the tramps coming after Quincy. If you don't talk to him...

ZEKE

I have.

A beat.

NONA

You said you'd think about going back to get your degree.

ZEKE

No, you said I should get my degree. I like my "bullshit" job, okay, and it's gonna lead to a spot in the front office. Til then, don't worry, there's just enough savings to keep your ass in Gucci and gold.

Livid, Nona pulls off her gold bracelet, throws it at him.

NONA

Fine, then how many nights home is that?

ZEKE

Keep your voice down.

She grabs a pair of gold earrings from her jewelry box, nails him.

NONA

How about now? I got a week yet?

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - QUINCY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quincy lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, as his parents continue to have it out.

He rolls out of bed, pulls on a pair of shorts and a T-shirt. He moves to his window, pulls it open and climbs out...

EXT. MCCALL AND WRIGHT HOUSES - CONTINUOUS

Quincy crosses the grass to Monica's window, knocks quietly.

Long beat, then Monica sleepily stumbles to her window, wearing boxers and a tank top. She pushes it open and Quincy pulls himself through...

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Now a routine, Monica tosses Quincy one of her pillows and blankets, then crawls back into bed. He lays out on the floor and closes his eyes. Monica casts a long, sleepy glance at him, then drifts back to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - LATE DAY

Posters of Magic line three walls. A hand-made collage of female college and Olympic ball-players fills the fourth. The only real "soft" touch is the teddy bear laying on the pillow.

Monica sits on the floor between Lena's legs, as Lena puts Monica's hair in cornrows.

LENA

That too tight?

MONICA

No.

LENA

Mom's going to hate it.

MONICA

Always on my ass, anyway.

LENA

Like you don't give her a hard time.

MONICA

Just cause I don't kiss her booty like you...

Lena yanks Monica's head back.

MONICA (cont'd)

Ow!!!

LENA

You need to. She's alone in this house all day, taking care of Dad and your ungrateful behind.

MONICA

No one's forcing her.

LENA

Just try and chill a little bit, alright.

Monica doesn't answer. Lena yanks her head back again.

MONICA

Ow!!! Okay!

They crack up.

LENA

So what's going on with the Spring Dance? You have a date yet?

MONICA

(sarcastically)  
Yeah, brothers are lined up at my locker.

LENA

I found you someone.

MONICA

Found? I'm not some charity case.

LENA

I know...

MONICA

Mom tell you to do this?

LENA

No.

MONICA

Damn, Lena...

(then)

Who is he?

LENA

This brother from my college.

MONICA

He's in college?

LENA

And he's fine, girl.

MONICA

How'd you get him to say yes?

LENA

I told him you looked like me.

MONICA

Oh, great.

LENA

You do.

MONICA

Yeah, right.

LENA

If you were tore up I would not be claiming you. Trust.

Monica is not convinced.

LENA (cont'd)

We'll do something cute with your hair, get you a dress, get you some heels...

MONICA

I don't know how to walk in heels.

LENA

Hey. You just worry about playing your  
behind off for that recruiter tonight.  
Let me worry about your date.

Lena starts to braid Monica's hair again. Beat, then...

MONICA

You ever been in love?

LENA

Too many times.

MONICA

They ever love you back?

LENA

Yeah, once I cut them off. Why?

Monica just shrugs. Lena continues braiding.

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATE DAY

Quincy and Zeke sweat through a playfully intense game of one-  
on-one.

Quincy almost breaks Zeke's ankles with a cross-over dribble,  
and leaves him in the dust. He stops under the basket, waves  
for his Dad to come on before laying it up.

Zeke smiles, tells Quincy to bring that shit on again.  
Quincy tries his cross-over again and this time Zeke picks  
him clean.

Zeke taunts him as he easily backs in on him to the basket.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Camille stands at the stove, cooking up some yams. Monica  
enters with a gym bag over her shoulder, dribbling her ball.  
THE HOOD OF HER SWEATSHIRT COVERS HER HAIR.

CAMILLE

Monica, please.

Monica stops.

MONICA

Sorry.

(then)  
I'm leaving.

Camille fills a spoon from the pot, holds it out.

CAMILLE  
Taste this.

MONICA  
I can't eat before a game.

CAMILLE  
Child, take a bite.

Monica sighs, takes a bite. It's good.

CAMILLE (cont'd)  
I found some apricot chutney and mixed it  
with the yams.

MONICA  
You really should be a caterer or  
something like you used to say.

CAMILLE  
Sure. In between all the other things I  
have to do.

She pulls off Monica's hood, then stops when she sees her  
braids. Monica looks back defiantly.

MONICA  
What?

CAMILLE  
Nothing. So good luck.

She forces a smile, turns back to her cooking. Monica just  
nods, and crosses out.

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

The championship game. The bleachers are almost filled.  
Nathan and Lena sit, dead center. ALSO IN ATTENDANCE, COACH  
CHERYL MILLER - THE COACH OF USC.

Quincy sits in the back row with a couple of teammates. As  
always, he's the focus of much attention.

Monica and her teammates are crouched in a tight huddle,  
surrounding Coach Hiserman.

COACH HISERMAN

I don't have to tell you girls how big this game is. We worked too damn hard all season to leave without this championship. So let's play smart...

(looks at Monica)

...let's play in control, and let's kick some butt. Cougars on three. Once...two...three.

TEAM

Cougars!

As Monica moves to center court, she glances up at the USC Coach, then at Quincy.

Monica takes a deep breath as she lines up for the opening tip. An opposing player suddenly bumps her out of position. Monica glares at her, but just moves over.

The ball is tossed up...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CRENSHAW GYM - NIGHT

Fourth quarter. One minute left. Cougars down three.

Monica dribbles down court, bouncing with confidence as her opponent plays her tight.

Monica zips a no-look pass to a teammate, who lays it up. Quincy punches one of his friends - "Oh shit!" She is having the game of her life.

On the defensive end, Monica steals the ball. She drives the length of the court, lays it up between two defenders. The crowd is hyped.

Twenty seconds left, up by one. Monica hounds the opposing guard as she brings up the ball. Monica suddenly reaches in and knocks the ball loose. As she goes for the ball, a WHISTLE.

REFEREE

Reaching in, number thirty-two. One-and-one.

Boos fill the gym. Monica's eyes widen.

MONICA

No!

Anger rushes through her as she starts for the ref.

MONICA (cont'd)

That's bullsh--!

COACH HISERMAN

Monica!

Monica catches herself, turns the word "shit" into a frustrated yell as she quickly moves away from the ref.

Monica lines up for the free-throw, clenching her fists. The girl hits the first one. Then, she hits the second.

With ten seconds left, down by one, Monica drives down court and throws up a prayer. EVERYONE IS ON THEIR FEET AS THE BALL SPINS AROUND THE RIM. AND THEN...IT POPS OUT. An opposing player grabs the rebound and Monica has no choice but to foul her.

Monica has just fouled out. She walks to her bench and drops down. She buries her face in a towel and sobs.

The buzzer goes off. Cougars lose.

Quincy stares at Monica, feeling almost as bad as she does.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Monica sits slumped on her bed in a bathrobe, as Lena stands in front of her, putting the finishing touches on Monica's make-up.

LENA

Might help if you didn't look so evil.

MONICA

I don't even want to go.

She steps back, looks at her work.

LENA

Mom!

Beat, then Camille enters.

LENA (cont'd)

Talk to me.

Camille stares at her daughter, taken aback by how great she looks.

CAMILLE

Go in my top drawer and get my pearls.

Lena exits. Monica still looks miserable.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

You okay?

Monica shrugs.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

Well, can you promise me one thing?

MONICA

What?

CAMILLE

Tonight, don't worry about yesterday's game, the recruiters, or anything else. I just want you to enjoy being beautiful. Will you do that?

Monica takes this in as Lena returns with Camille's pearls.

LENA

Here.

Camille puts them around Monica's neck. Monica looks back at her.

MONICA

You really think I look beautiful?

Camille smiles at her daughter, nods. Monica touches the pearls.

INT. CRENSHAW GYM - NIGHT

An R&B song jams through the speakers, filling the dance floor with high school kids in suits and dresses.

In the middle of the floor, Quincy gets his groove on with his date, Shawnee. She dances so provocatively, there is no mistaking what she has in mind for later.

Over at the doors, Monica enters with her college date, JASON, 21, and fine. Heads turn in surprise. Monica feels the stares, shifts nervously.

JASON

Can I take your coat?

MONICA

You're cold?

Monica starts to pull it off.

JASON

No, I mean I can check it for you.

MONICA

(embarrassed)

Oh, sorry.

Jason pulls off her coat, revealing a dress that shows off everything Monica has been hiding. He checks out her frame, smiles.

JASON

Your sister wasn't lying.

He crosses to the coat check, leaving her alone.

ANGLE ON

Quincy, who glances over from the middle of the dance floor, and abruptly stops. He stares at Monica in shock.

QUINCY

Oh...shit.

Quincy starts off the floor as a new song kicks in.

SHAWNEE

Q, I like this song...

ANGLE ON

Monica, sees Quincy approaching in his suit. She quickly steadies herself on her heels, brushes a curl from her face.

QUINCY

See you made it.

MONICA

Yeah.

QUINCY

You don't look half-bad.

MONICA

You either.

Jason returns. Quincy looks at him, surprised.

JASON

What's up, Black. I'm Jason.

QUINCY

Q.

Shawnee suddenly steps up, slides her arms around Quincy.

SHAWNEE

Dang, girl, I didn't know Nike made dresses.

Monica looks at Shawnee, wrapped around Quincy. She can't believe it.

MONICA

Guess we'll see you later.

Monica heads into the crowd with her college man. Quincy watches her go.

INT. CRENSHAW HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Monica sits at a table with Jason. His arm lays casually across the back of her chair. Monica sits upright, stiff.

JASON

So, you like school?

Monica smiles nervously, nods.

JASON (cont'd)

Yeah, high school was cool. I don't remember sisters being as fine as you,

though.

Monica just holds that nervous smile.

JASON (cont'd)

So what do you like studying?

MONICA

Gym.

He waits for more, but nothing comes.

JASON

I'm an English major. You like English?

MONICA

Sort of.

JASON

Careful.

MONICA

Huh?

JASON

That was two words.

Monica ducks her head, embarrassed. Jason laughs.

JASON (cont'd)

Girl, how come you're so stressed?

MONICA

Sorry.

JASON

I mean, I'm having a good time with you...

His arm slides off the back of her chair and onto her shoulders.

JASON (cont'd)

So tell me what I have to do to make you have a good time with me.

MONICA

My mouth is kinda dry.

JASON

Then I'll get you some punch.

He stands, then.

JASON (cont'd)

Just don't jet while I'm gone and leave a glass slipper behind.

Monica's face lights up. Jason smiles.

JASON (cont'd)

There we go.

He crosses away to the refreshment table. Monica smiles wider, leans back in her chair with her legs splayed. She catches herself and quickly crosses them.

A couple of guys pass by and check her out. Monica smiles wider. Quincy steps up, holding two cups of punch.

QUINCY

Hey.

MONICA

Hey.

QUINCY

You having fun?

MONICA

Yeah.

QUINCY

Yeah, the DJ's kinda whack, though.

(beat)

So who is this clown?

MONICA

He ain't Spalding.

QUINCY

Guess not.

MONICA

So you took Shawnee, huh?

The DJ puts on "Make It Last Forever" by Keith Sweat. Couples move to the dance floor.

QUINCY

(embarrassed)

You know, it was late and she asked...

JASON

You want to dance?

Jason stands behind her chair. Monica smiles shyly.

MONICA

Sure.

Jason puts down her cup of punch, takes her hand, leads her to the dance floor.

Quincy just shakes his head, then crosses to his table, grabs Shawnee's hand.

QUINCY

C'mon.

He pulls Shawnee to the middle of the floor.

ANGLE ON

Monica, nervous at first, a little awkward, but Jason gently guides her in a slow circle and she starts to relax.

Jason moves his hands down Monica's back, pulling her in closer. Shawnee snuggles into Quincy's chest, runs her hands down his neck. The heat from bodies grows.

Monica and Quincy glance up at the same time and catch each other's eyes. They start to look away but find they can't. Eyes locked as they dance, they move together, almost feel each other. Finally, as their bodies turn, they lose sight.

Monica puts her head to Jason's chest, Quincy slides his hands lower down Shawnee's back. The music continues...

INT. JASON'S CAR - NIGHT

Jason and Monica are parked up on Mulholland Drive. LL Cool J's "I Need Love" plays on the tape deck.

Jason has his arm around Monica, ready to make his move.

MONICA

(rattling)

Freshman year, my free throw percentage was fifty-one percent, cause I was shooting it like a jump shot.

Jason leans in, kisses her bare shoulder.

MONICA (cont'd)

Um...but then sophomore year I was shooting seventy-five percent from the line.

Jason kisses her neck.

MONICA (cont'd)

...uh, by keeping my feet set and really following through.

Jason goes in for the slam dunk. Kisses Monica on the lips. It's the first time she's really been kissed. Jason pulls away, smiles.

JASON

That was nice.

MONICA

Uh-huh.

JASON

Your sister told me hands off, but I can't help myself...

Jason leans in. Monica closes her eyes, and they kiss some more. Monica tries to follow his practiced lips.

Jason's tongue slides in and their bodies slide down. His hand moves across her breast. Monica's eyes pop open.

MONICA

Wait...

JASON

Shh. It's okay.

Naive and inexperienced, Monica shuts her eyes tight.

DISSOLVE TO:

E WRIGHT HOUSE -NIGHT

Jason's car pulls off, Monica slowly moves to her front door.

She looks in the living room window. Her mom is asleep in a chair, trying to wait up.

Monica catches her reflection in the window. She glares at her made-up face, then wipes at her mouth with her hand.

She steps back, walks to her bedroom window. She pulls it open, kicks off her heels and climbs through.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Monica moves to her bed and drops down. She sits motionless for a beat, then suddenly feels something beneath her. She reaches for it. IT'S A LETTER FROM THE USC ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT. Monica stares at it in her hands...

Light suddenly cuts through the darkness. Monica turns and is surprised to see Quincy standing in the middle of his room, pulling off his jacket. Monica moves to her window, pulls it open.

MONICA

Psst.

Quincy looks over. Beat. Then he climbs out of his window, drops down.

EXT. WRIGHT AND MCCALL HOUSES - CONTINUOUS

MONICA

Early night for you, isn't it?

QUINCY

I was about to ask you the same thing, going out with a college boy and all.

Monica doesn't respond.

QUINCY (cont'd)

So where'd you go after?

MONICA

(beat)

Mulholland Drive.

QUINCY

Figures.

MONICA

So what dead-end street did you and Shawnee hit?

QUINCY

None of your business.

MONICA

Well, I'm sure she kept her word and left you satisfied.

QUINCY

That what you think?

Monica shrugs.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Little after you left, I told Shawnee it was time to go and I drove her ass straight home. And after she told me I was the dumbest brother in the world, I took off.

MONICA

Why?

QUINCY

Cause I don't just stick my dick in anything.

Monica takes this in.

MONICA

I was sitting in Jason's ride with him kissing on me and feeling on me and it was really bugging me cause I couldn't remember how many offensive boards I had in the championship. And then I guess she got tired of me sort of accidentally kneeing him in the balls.

Beat, then Quincy cracks up. Monica laughs with him.

QUINCY

Four.

MONICA

What?

QUINCY

You had four offensive rebounds.

Monica stares at him, surprised. She thinks.

MONICA

Hold up for a second.

Monica disappears back inside. Beat, then she re-appears. She climbs out her window, drops down. Quincy looks at her.

She holds out the envelope from USC.

QUINCY

When'd you get this?

MONICA

It was on my bed when I came in.

(then)

Can you just...?

QUINCY

(beat)

You sure?

Monica nods. Quincy takes the envelope, sits down on the grass. Monica sits down beside him. He tears open the envelope and pulls out the letter.

Monica stares at him as he reads, trying to see an answer in his face. Quincy finally looks up. Expressionless.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Damn girl...

Monica's face falls. And then, a slow smile spreads across Quincy's face.

QUINCY (cont'd)

They want you.

Monica grabs the letter, reads. Her head just drops as a tidal wave of relief washes over her.

Quincy smiles.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Congratulations.

Monica looks up, cheesing.

QUINCY (cont'd)

I'm gonna be there, too. I'm announcing tomorrow.

MONICA

I knew it.

Monica can't contain her excitement. Without thinking, she gives Quincy a kiss. They pull away, then break into nervous laughter.

QUINCY

What was that about?

MONICA

I know, right?

But they both want more. They lean in, kiss deeply. They fall back on the grass. And kiss. And kiss.

Suddenly, Monica pulls away, sits up. Quincy follows, instantly apologetic. Monica stares at him, then to his surprise, she reaches over, gives his shirt a small tug with her finger.

Quincy stares at her, then slowly pulls off his tie. He nervously unbuttons his shirt. He fumbles with the last two buttons.

Monica slowly pulls down the straps of her dress, self-conscious. Quincy can't keep his eyes off her.

He pulls off his pants. Monica glances down and her eyes widen. She looks scared to death. Quincy smiles softly, leans in and gently kisses her. She relaxes. They lay down.

Quincy reaches into his pants for a condom. His hands shake as he puts it on. They stare at each other as he moves on top of her.

Quincy pushes inside her. She flinches back in pain. Quincy immediately stops as tears spring to her eyes.

QUINCY

(softly)

You want to stop?

Monica shakes her head. Quincy pushes inside again. He looks down at her with tenderness, moves gently, kisses her tears...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

FOOTAGE. 1988-89 NBA Finals. Game SEVEN. The Lakers against the Pistons. With seconds left, up by three, Magic guards Isiah Thomas. They collide, no foul is called and the

Lakers win their second championship.

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: "THIRD QUARTER"

INT. USC - CAMPUS GYM - MORNING

Championship banners hang from the ceiling.

TWELVE YOUNG WOMEN sit on the first two rows of bleachers. The eight upperclassmen kick back in the second row, comfortable, confident. Monica and the three other freshmen sit in front of them, jiggling nervously.

COACH MILLER stands in front of the team.

COACH MILLER

I don't know some of you very well yet, and you don't know me because I'm still being nice to you.

Laughter from the upperclassmen.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

But my philosophy is simple. Hard work and sacrifice.

There's a lot of basketball history and pride here at USC, but just putting on the cardinal and gold doesn't make you a great player. Hard work and sacrifice makes you a great player. What you were doesn't matter anymore. For the first time in your life, you won't be the best. You'll be going up against women that are bigger and stronger and better than you ever imagined. So the question is, how will you respond? Well, your answer better be hard work and sacrifice because that's the only way you're gonna make it through. Vince Lombardi preached it and I teach it, "There is only one way to succeed at anything and that is to give everything."

Coach Miller pauses a moment to let her words sink in. Monica glances at her fellow freshman for their reactions. Like her, a lot of cockiness, a lot of fear.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

A few simple rules. Eleven o'clock curfew, no exceptions. Always be on time, no exceptions. Attend every class, no exceptions. No drugs, no alcohol, no getting pregnant. And finally, respect yourselves, respect your coaches and respect your teammates, right Sidra?

SIDRA, senior point guard, nods from the second row.

SIDRA

That's right, Coach.

COACH MILLER

By the end of this year some of you will hate me...

The upperclassmen crack up.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

Some of you will want to go home...

UPPERCLASSMEN

(cat-calling)

Cree!

CREE, junior forward, ducks her head sheepishly. Coach Miller smiles.

COACH MILLER

But I guarantee you, if you work hard and sacrifice, all of you will be better basketball players and better people.

Monica nods, accepting the challenge.

EXT. TRACK - EARLY MORNING

It's cold, it's dark. It's six a.m.

The team pounds down the track, pushing through a two-mile run. Monica and her freshman teammate/roommate SHAYLA, 18, breathe heavily from the back of the pack.

From the sideline.

COACH MILLER

Let's go, freshmen, you're getting spanked!

Monica sucks it up, runs faster. She reaches the middle of the pack, then runs out of gas. She drops back to the rear.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

Monica, I'm putting you on my Wizard of Oz team. No brains, no courage and no heart!

INT. CAMPUS GYM - MORNING

Defensive drills. One by one, players crouch low and move backwards down the sideline. ZVETTE, a junior guard, hustles through the drill.

COACH MILLER

Way to work, Zvette.

Monica starts the drill.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

Get lower, Monica, move your feet.

Monica grimaces as she squats lower.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

I said lower!

Coach Miller stops her, squats down low beside her.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

This is low, got it? Offense sells tickets, defense wins games!

Monica starts again.

INT. CAMPUS GYM - MORNING

The team stands along the baseline. Monica stands right below the free throw line.

TONI, 6'4", 200 pound senior, drives the lane. Monica steps in front of her, and is slammed to the floor. She lays still for a moment, stunned by the impact. Laughter from the baseline.

SIDRA

Dag, you took her out, T.

Teammates SANDRA and LISA crack up.

SANDRA

I think she just said "Mommy."

LISA

No, she said "mammary."

COACH MILLER

Monica, you trying to tell me you can't take a little challenge?

Monica crawls to her feet.

MONICA

I can take it.

COACH MILLER

This time get your feet set.

Monica moves back into position. Toni drives at her again. Monica steps in front of her, braces herself. Toni slams into her and she hits the floor. Monica blinks back the pain as she pops back up.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

Next!

Monica wobbles back to the sideline.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - LATE DAY

The team is spread out, lifting weights. Monica lies on a weight bench, her arms shaking as she struggles to bench press fifty-pounds. Sidra stands behind her, spotting.

SIDRA

You got it, c'mon, lift!

Monica lifts it with Sidra's help.

SIDRA (cont'd)

That's it.

MONICA

Coach hates me, doesn't she?

SIDRA

She hates all freshmen.

Monica scowls, discouraged.

MONICA

What's up with that?

SIDRA

Hey, don't take it personal. And don't think just cause we play the same position we have to compete with each other. We're teammates, okay?

MONICA

Thanks, Sidra.

SIDRA

Besides. I've been starting point the last two years. Ain't no way some dumb-ass freshman is taking my spot.

Sidra walks off, leaving Monica with the bar on her chest. Finally, she has to drop the weight to the floor.

EXT. USC CAMPUS - LATE MORNING

Monica and Quincy walk to class, his arm draped casually across her shoulders. Quincy gets looks and smiles. Monica just looks exhausted.

MONICA

You finish the reading for E-con?

QUINCY

Yeah.

MONICA

What'd it say?

QUINCY

Basically broke down how I'm gonna make mad loot in the NBA, me being such a limited commodity and all.

MONICA

Whatever, big head.

Quincy laughs. TWO GIRLS pass by, smile.

GIRL #1

Hey, Q-man, you gonna take us to the Final Four?

QUINCY

We'll see.

GIRL #2

We'll be watching.

The girls continue on. Monica looks at Quincy.

QUINCY

What?

MONICA

You do see me standing here, right?

QUINCY

I can't be nice to a fan?

MONICA

Fine, Quincy.

QUINCY

I can't help girls coming up to me.

MONICA

I said fine.

Quincy looks at her sulking. He suddenly pulls her down onto the nearby lawn, and cradles her.

QUINCY

It's okay, little baby.

MONICA

(struggling)

Quit.

Quincy grips her tighter, rocks her. Students pass by, laugh.

QUINCY

Shhh. Daddy's here.

Monica finally cracks up.

MONICA

You're such a punk.

He gives her a kiss.

QUINCY

All these girls...you're the only one I know who's for real.

Monica smiles, kisses him back.

MONICA  
Always.

INT. CAMPUS GYM - MORNING

A heated scrimmage between the women's "A" team (the starting five) and "B" team (five who want to be starting). Monica runs point for the "B" team, playing opposite Sidra.

Sidra is all over Monica, slipping in cheap shots, but Monica starts to come on. She does a quick cross-over and loses Sidra. She dishes off to Shayla, who scores.

COACH MILLER  
Sidra! You feel like playing any "D"?

Sidra scowls as she runs down court. She gets a pass in the corner, tires to make a move but Monica slaps the ball loose.

Monica grabs it, drives to the three-point line, puts up the shot. SWISH! Monica stays posed, with her arm up.

Sidra takes advantage, sprints back down court. She get the long pass, lays it up. Coach Miller blows her whistle.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)  
Monica! Get over here.

Monica jogs over, sheepish.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)  
While you're so busy posing, your man just scored!

Monica drops her head.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)  
Show me again.

MONICA  
What?

COACH MILLER  
You love to pose so much, let's see it again.

Beat, then Monica holds up her arm like she just shot the

ball. Snickers from her teammates.

COACH MILLER (cont'd)

I want you to stand like that for the rest of practice.

MONICA

Coach...

COACH MILLER

I want you to stand like that until you're sick of it because I don't ever want to see it again, you hear me?

(then)

Dora, take her spot.

DORA, freshman, jogs onto the court. Coach Miller blows her whistle and the scrimmage resumes.

Monica stands alone on the sideline, posing, and feeling like an asshole.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATE MORNING

Monica sits on the bench in front of her locker, dressing after the shower. Shayla sits next to her.

Nearby, Lisa and Sandra apply make-up in the mirror. Zvette passes by, already dressed. Lisa turns.

LISA

Z, I know you're gonna shower first.

ZVETTE

I don't smell bad.

SANDRA

And you wonder why your ass sits alone on the bus.

Cree glances over from another sink, as she snaps the chain on her CROSS NECKLACE.

CREE

You guys curse too much.

SANDRA

Since when is "ass" a curse?

MAEYEN walks past.

MAEYEN

Whoa, it's as big as yours.

They crack up. Cree just shakes her head. Two TEAMMATES pass by Monica with their arms raised, mimicking her pose. Monica shakes her head.

Sidra glances at Monica from her spot on the bench.

SIDRA

That's what you get for trying to show out, freshman.

MONICA

I was just playing ball.

SIDRA

You were trying to make me look bad.

MONICA

Didn't have to try very hard.

Ears prick up around the locker room. Sidra stands.

SIDRA

Girl, don't you know you're just sloppy seconds?

Monica rises.

MONICA

What?

Toni tries to step in.

TONI

Sidra, let it go.

SIDRA

Only reason you're here is cause Tonya Randall got pregnant and decided not to come. They were done recruiting.

KELLI, senior forward, shakes her head.

KELLI

That's cold, Sid.

SIDRA

Just thought the girl should know.

Monica is stunned. Sidra saunters to the showers. Shayla nudges her with her shoulder.

SHAYLA

Don't even trip. She's just mad cause she's bow-legged.

INT. USC SUITES - QUINCY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Monica and Quincy lay feet to face on Quincy's twin bed.

Monica's hand holds an ice bag on Quincy's hip. Quincy's arm rests across an ice bag on Monica's ankle.

QUINCY

Forget Tonya Randall.

MONICA

I'm telling you, Coach wishes she was here instead of me.

QUINCY

Then prove her wrong.

MONICA

I don't have it easy like you, alright. There's no red carpet laid out for me.

QUINCY

So you're gonna act salty all night?

Quincy's roommate/teammate REGGIE, 18, suddenly pops his head into the room.

REGGIE

Yo, dog, we're about to order some wings.

QUINCY

Nah, thanks.

Reggie shrugs, closes the door. Quincy looks at Monica, still brooding.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Fine. Don't worry about proving everybody wrong, okay? You can't handle the pressure, I'll understand.

MONICA

That was so weak.

QUINCY

Who cares if you're never known as the first girl in the NBA. You'll get more play behind Quincy McCall's woman anyway.

Monica shoves Quincy's ice bag down his sweat pants. He leaps up.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Aaaah! Damn, girl!

MONICA

That's what you get.

He smiles as he pulls the ice. Then looks her up and down.

QUINCY

So how about a little one-on-one?

MONICA

What are we playing for?

QUINCY

Clothes.

MONICA

What?

Quincy locks the door, sets up his indoor hoop.

QUINCY

I score, you strip. You score, I drop something.

Monica looks at him, then cracks up.

MONICA

Give me the ball.

QUINCY

My court, I go first.

Quincy grips the ball. Monica crouches low on defense. Quincy drives past her and slams down a vicious dunk.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Strip.

Monica makes a face, then pulls off her sweatshirt. Quincy

skips back. Monica drops low again. Quincy fakes her out and slams down another vicious dunk. He laughs.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Where's the "D"?

MONICA

Kiss my booty.

QUINCY

Plan to.

Monica glares through her smile, then pulls off her T-shirt, leaving her in a bra and shorts.

Quincy goes for another dunk, but this time, Monica reaches out, GRABS HIS DICK. Quincy drops the ball. Monica picks it up and lays it in.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Hold up...

MONICA

All's fair in love and basketball.  
Strip.

Quincy pulls off his shirt. Monica moves back into position. Quincy drops down low. Monica fakes, gets him to leave his feet. She slips under him and scores. She laughs.

MONICA (cont'd)

Too bad you got your mama's height, huh.

Quincy pulls off his sweats, leaving him in just drawers. Monica takes in the view as she moves back into position.

She holds the ball out, taunting. Quincy pretends to reach for it, but grabs her breast instead.

QUINCY

Oh, my bad.

She drives. Quincy just steps out of the way and lets her score. Monica snatches the ball off the floor.

MONICA

Yo, where's the "D"?

QUINCY

Right here.

Monica turns, finds Quincy butt-naked. He moves her against the wall and kisses her. Monica drops the ball, wraps her arms around him. She smiles.

MONICA

I won.

QUINCY

I wanted you to.

Game over. They hit it.

INT. ESPN STUDIOS

Sportscaster DICK VITALE talks animatedly about the upcoming season.

DICK VITALE

It's the start of the new college season and I'm like a kid in a candy store. Too many great teams to choose from. You have your Dukes', Kentuckys', Arkansas', but my surprise treat this season...

INT. BASKETBALL COURT

Sportscaster ROBIN ROBERTS reports on the upcoming women's season.

ROBIN ROBERTS

...USC. The women of Troy made it to the Sweet Sixteen last year and are returning four starters from that squad. And many consider their recruiting class one of the best in the nation. The highlight of that class,...

INT. ESPN STUDIOS

DICK VITALE

...is Quincy McCall, one of my diaper dandies. He's a real P.T.P., a prime-time player. Every college in the country wanted him but he chose to follow in his father's footsteps and become a Trojan. He's gonna have a lot on his shoulders this season...

INT. BASKETBALL COURT

ROBIN ROBERTS

...but Coach Cheryl Miller feels that if just one of her freshmen has a breakout year, they can go all the way. It's a long season, anything can happen, but one thing is for sure...

INT. ESPN STUDIOS

DICK VITALE

It's gonna be awesome, baby!

MONTAGE:

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

A hundred flashbulbs pop as Quincy jogs out to center court. The crowd goes crazy as...

INT. CAMPUS GYM - NIGHT

Monica sits on the bench, watching Sidra run the floor against UNLV, as...

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Quincy drives to the three-point line against Cal and puts it up. It drops through the net. He pounds his fist against the number twenty-two on his chest, nods to Zeke standing behind the bench, as...

INT. CAMPUS GYM - NIGHT

Coach Miller motions to Monica. She jumps up, pulls off her sweats. She jogs past Arizona bench and onto the floor, as...

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Quincy goes up for a dunk against North Carolina. He jams it down, grips the rim, and pulls his legs up high, as...

INT. KAISER ARENA - NIGHT

Monica catches a long outlet pass. She drops a no-look bounce pass between two Berkeley defenders, to a teammate who scores. She jogs back, as...

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Zeke grips Quincy's head proudly, affectionately, as they walk off the floor after a game against Washington, as...

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT - GAMPEL PAVILION - NIGHT

Sidra crashes to the floor, immediately grabs at her ankle. Monica rises off the bench...

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Televisions hang from every corner, broadcasting various games.

Zeke and Quincy sit at a bar. Quincy is still hyped from his game.

QUINCY

...up and under between two defenders, with the left hand. That's gotta make SportsCenter.

Zeke just nods as the Bartender/Owner crosses over. He is an ex-ballplayer named TERRY.

QUINCY (cont'd)

They can't stop me, Pop...

TERRY

What are you having, Zeke?

ZEKE

Genuine Draft. And an orange juice for my kid.

TERRY

Cross-over's looking good, Quincy. I know your old man didn't teach you that.

ZEKE

Didn't need a cross-over to post you up.

Terry laughs as he moves off to fix the drinks. Something is on Zeke's mind, but before he can speak on it...

QUINCY

You know, the numbers I'm putting up are better than any freshman. Some people

are saying I'm a definite lottery pick.

Zeke suddenly focuses.

ZEKE

What people?

QUINCY

You know, people.

ZEKE

Well, tell them to mind their damn business. You're smart enough to get a degree.

QUINCY

I'm also good enough to go pro.

ZEKE

You know how much higher the play level is in the NBA? Give yourself time to develop, Quincy. Get an education. The NBA ain't going nowhere.

QUINCY

You came out early.

ZEKE

Your mom got pregnant and I had to make choices. You don't have a choice.

QUINCY

Okay...

Silence, then.

ZEKE

Besides, the sooner you go pro, the sooner you'll have to deal with the mess I'm dealing with.

QUINCY

What mess?

ZEKE

there's this thing out there. This paternity suit.

QUINCY

What?

ZEKE

Some girl that's been hanging on at every party. now I'm supposed to be her baby's Daddy.

(then)

Anyway, I told your mom I wanted to be the one who told you.

QUINCY

Tell me what?

ZEKE

I just told you.

QUINCY

I mean, it's not true, is it?

Zeke stares at his son.

ZEKE

You got the balls to ask me that?

Quincy can't hold his father's look. Zeke shakes his head, hurt.

QUINCY

Sorry.

ZEKE

No, you need to hear me say it, I'll say it. It's not true.

Quincy looks in his father's eyes, knows he's telling the truth.

QUINCY

So what are you gonna do?

ZEKE

I want this thing to go to court, but my lawyer's telling me to settle.

QUINCY

Why?

ZEKE

A case like this could hang around for months and I'm up for this player relations job with the "Clips." This gets out, false or not, no one'll touch me.

QUINCY

What's Mom think?

ZEKE

We haven't exactly been living the fairy-tale life the past few years. Something like this happens, it either brings a family closer or pushes them further apart. We'll just have to see how it plays out.

(then)

I'm giving her some space, couple days...

Just then, a COLLEGE STUDENT approaches.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Yo, Q-man, great game.

QUINCY

Thanks.

The student holds out a piece of paper, without even a glance to Zeke.

COLLEGE STUDENT

Can I get an autograph?

Quincy nods, signs the guy's paper. Zeke watches his son, the rising star.

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Through the windows, we see Quincy enter the house. He glances around, then walks to the living room. He sees his mom sitting outside by the pool, drink in hand, looking torn up. He pulls open the sliding glass door. Nona jumps, then sees Quincy. She quickly puts her drink down.

NONA

You scared me.

QUINCY

Sorry. You okay?

NONA

I'm fine.

Quincy glances at her half-hidden glass.

QUINCY

Last time I remember you drinking was when Marvin Gaye died.

No response from Nona.

QUINCY (cont'd)

This about Dad?

NONA

Guess he talked to you.

QUINCY

Don't sweat it, okay. Sooner or later the truth'll come out.

NONA

(beat)

Whose truth are you talking about?

QUINCY

Mom, we can't let something like this mess up the family.

She doesn't respond. Quincy studies her.

QUINCY (cont'd)

I mean, you believe him, right?

Nona sits silent, humiliated.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Mom?

NONA

Just...leave it alone.

QUINCY

This is just about money, you know that.

NONA

Quincy, please...

QUINCY

I mean, how many times have you told me yourself to watch out for these ho's?

NONA

Guess I should have been telling your father.

QUINCY

So you're gonna take the word of some trick over Pop's? He wouldn't lie.

Nona grabs an envelope beside her and throws it at him.

Confused, Quincy opens it. HE PULLS OUT A COUPLE OF PHOTOS:

Zeke outside a party. IN ONE PHOTO, his arm is around a young woman. IN ANOTHER PHOTO, they KISS. AND YET ANOTHER, they climb into his car.

QUINCY (cont'd)

What...what's this?

NONA

I hired somebody. How pathetic is that? After all his late nights and "meetings" and I still needed proof.

Quincy just stares at the photos.

NONA (cont'd)

I used to think I was lucky just to be married to Zeke McCall, but I'm too tired.

Quincy looks stricken, but he moves to Nona, comforts her as she cries...

EXT. TRACK - NIGHT

Monica sits with a devastated Quincy, high up in the bleachers. In the distance, the clock-tower glows 10:50.

QUINCY

Don't put your hands in your pockets, hold your head up, always look a man in the eye, and all the time I'm hanging on his every word like he's God or something...

MONICA

I know he messed up, but that doesn't change what he's been to you.

QUINCY

What has he been to me? I mean, he

looked me in my face and lied like it was nothing. Like it was easy.

(then)

And I'm standing there getting loud on my mom like she's the one with no sense...

MONICA

She understands.

QUINCY

He even had me wanting to play for the "Clippers." Man, how stupid am I.

MONICA

You're not stupid.

QUINCY

I know a lot of brothers dog their wives, I just never thought my pops would do some shit like this...

Monica puts her arms around him. They sit there, quiet. Monica glances up at the clock tower. She reacts. Quincy notices.

QUINCY (cont'd)

What?

MONICA

Nothing.

(beat)

Why don't we walk to my dorm?

QUINCY

I'm not up for running into anybody. Let's just kick it here, alright?

MONICA

I...can't.

QUINCY

Why not?

MONICA

Coach has us on eleven o'clock curfew. If I'm late, I don't suit up.

Quincy looks at her, almost in shock.

QUINCY

Didn't realize you were watching the

clock.

MONICA

I mean, I can stay a few more minutes.

QUINCY

Nah. Don't sweat it.

MONICA

Quincy...

QUINCY

For real. I should be alone, anyway.

Monica reluctantly stands.

MONICA

Will you call me when you get in?

Quincy nods. Monica gives him a kiss. Then she turns and crosses away.

INT. MONICA/SHAYLA'S DORM - NIGHT

The lights are off but Monica sits up in bed. SHE WEARS BOXERS AND ONE OF QUINCY'S PRACTICE SHIRTS.

Shayla lies under her covers across the room.

MONICA

I shouldn't have left.

SHAYLA

Go to sleep.

MONICA

You should have seen him, Shay...

SHAYLA

Mon, Sidra's out for one game, and you got the start. But you get caught breaking curfew and Coach is gonna send your ass back to the bench. You'll see your man tomorrow.

Shayla's warning slowly sinks in. Finally, Monica lays down.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRACK - NIGHT

The clock tower glows 12:30. Quincy still sits in the bleachers. Alone. Tears fill his eyes as his world comes crashing down...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAMPUS GYM - LATE DAY

USC vs. Louisiana Tech. The packed crowd is hyped. Nathan sits by himself in the stands, excited.

Monica sits on the bench with four of her teammates. The rest of the team is lined up in front of them, including Sidra in street clothes.

ANNOUNCER

And now the starting line-up for your Women of Troy! At center, a senior, Toni Noise!

Toni rises, jogs through the line of teammates to the court.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

At forward, a senior, Lisa Mason!

Lisa stands, skips through the line.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

At forward, a junior, Zvette Mitchell!

Zvette jumps up, bumps into each teammate as she moves down the line.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

At guard, a freshman, Monica Wright!

Monica takes a deep breath, then jogs through the line. She gets to the middle of the floor and looks around with her game face on.

ANNOUNCER (cont'd)

And at guard, a sophomore, Sandra Perez!

Sandra jogs out and the rest of the team follows. Everyone gathers in a tight circle with their arms around each other.

TONI

Look y'all, we got all these people here to see big-bad, La Tech. We need to let them know that this is our house. So everybody better leave everything out on that floor, you got that? Ready? One, two, three....

TEAM

Team!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS ARENA - LATE DAY

A sellout crowd for the men's SC/Temple game. And Quincy is having the worst game of his life.

He drives down court on a fast break. He ignores his two open teammates and puts up a three-pointer. It hits nothing but air. The crowd boos.

Humiliated, Quincy tries to steal the ball back and commits a stupid foul. His teammates glare at him as they line up for free throws.

INT. CAMPUS GYM - CONTINUOUS

Monica's game. Late second half. SC down two.

Monica drives the lane, drawing two defenders. She looks like she's about to force up a shot, then suddenly whips up a pass to a wide-open Sandra at the three-point line. Nothing but net. SC up one.

Coach Miller claps intensely on the sideline.

COACH MILLER

That's it, that's it!

Ten seconds left. Game on the line. Monica tries to lob a pass inside to Toni. The pass is knocked away and grabbed up by the opposing point guard.

It is a one-on-one between Monica and the guard. The girl drives hard for the winning hoop. Monica races to the key and slides in front of her. The guard goes up and slams into Monica. Both crash to the floor as the ball drops through the net and the buzzer goes off.

A WHISTLE. The two women stare up at the REFEREE from the floor. And then --

REFEREE

Offensive foul! Charging! No basket!

Monica leaps up as the crowd goes crazy. Toni grabs up Monica in a hug as their teammates celebrate around them.

INT. SPORTS ARENA - CONTINUOUS

Quincy drags himself to his bench, slumps down dejectedly, as the Temple Owls celebrate their win around him.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DUSK

The female players continue to celebrate as they undress.

MAEYEN

Shoot, you see that crowd? We need to be playing in the Sports Arena.

KELLI

Hell yeah.

They give each other a pound.

Lisa looks at Monica, standing in her shorts and sports bra.

LISA

Oh damn, Mon.

MONICA

What?

LISA

I think ol' girl took out your chi-chis with that charge.

The women break into laughter. Monica smiles.

MONICA

Kiss my ass.

SANDRA

Nah, I think she took that too.

MONICA

Sandra, please, last time you chest-bumped me, it took you three tries.

More laughter. Monica looks over at Toni, sitting quietly at the bench.

MONICA (cont'd)

Yo, T, why you so quiet?

TONI

(beat)

I don't want to go play overseas.

DORA

I thought you were hyped about going to Portugal next year.

TONI

It's never gonna be like this. Playing in front of my family, hanging out with my girls. Probably not even a McDonald's.

SANDRA

Nah, there's always a McDonald's.

SIDRA

Least you got an offer. My agent's still looking.

CREE

(to Lisa)

What about you?

LISA

(beat)

Maybe it'd be worth it if I knew some day I could come back here and play. But for right now, it's law school.

COACH MILLER (O.S.)

Monica.

Monica turns, sees Coach Miller standing in her office doorway. She motions for her. Monica heads over. Sidra watches.

INT. COACH MILLER'S OFFICE - SHORT TIME LATER

Trophies, plaques and photos fill every empty space.

Coach Miller sits behind her desk. Monica stands before her.

COACH MILLER

You could've given up after you threw that ball away. But you kept your head and you showed real heart.

MONICA

Thanks.

COACH MILLER

We've got our final games against Oregon and Oregon State and I want to shake things up a bit, so I'm starting you at point again.

MONICA

(confused)

I thought Sidra's ankle was okay for next game.

COACH MILLER

You want the job or not?

Realization finally hits.

MONICA

Yeah. Yes.

Monica looks at Coach Miller completely thrown.

COACH MILLER

What?

MONICA

It's just...it seems like you're always yelling at me.

COACH MILLER

You think I'd go hoarse for a player with no potential? When I ignore you, that's when you worry.

(then)

Go get dressed.

Monica nods, crosses out.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Monica walks back to her teammates, Coach Miller steps into the doorway.

COACH MILLER

Sidra.

Sidra looks at Monica as she rises, crosses over. Monica avoids her eyes as they pass. Sidra enters the office and the door closes.

SHAYLA

Yo sis, what's going on?

Beat, then Monica smiles.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Black folks pack the cramped houseparty, bumping to a phat hip hop joint.

Monica bounces through the throng. A GIRL grabs her arm.

GIRL'S VOICE

Yo, great game.

MONICA

Thanks.

Another PARTY-GOER grabs her arm.

PARTY-GOER

Girl, you can play.

Monica smiles wider. She spots Reggie dancing in the crowd, moves to him.

MONICA

Reg. You seen Quincy?

REGGIE

What's up, girl.

MONICA

(louder)

Derek said Q was here.

REGGIE

We'll roll through.

Monica is suddenly pulled into a dance routine by Sandra and Lisa.

She laughs, tires to move away, but they won't let her go. Monica gives in, grooves with them.

ANGLE ON:

Quincy walks through the door with a half-empty forty in his hand. Girls immediately try to grab his attention from the dance floor, or stare him down from the sidelines.

Quincy sees Monica on the dance floor. He stands, watching her. Takes a drink. Monica finally looks over, sees him. She smiles, crosses to him.

MONICA

Hey.

QUINCY

What's up?

MONICA

I've been trying to find you all day.

QUINCY

Here I am.

She glances at the forty in his hand.

MONICA

Sorry about your game.

QUINCY

It happens, right...

Shayla suddenly grabs Monica from behind.

SHAYLA

(to Monica)

What's up, superstar.

(then, to Quincy)

Your girl was on tonight. She tell you?

QUINCY

(beat)

I heard.

SHAYLA

She also tell you she ganked the starting

spot from Sidra?

Monica looks at him for a reaction.

QUINCY

Nah.

He downs the last of his forty.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Where's the keg at?

SHAYLA

Balcony.

He heads for the glass doors. Monica and Shayla follow.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Reggie approaches the group. Gives Quincy a nod.

REGGIE

What's up, dog?

(to Shayla)

Hey, flyness.

SHAYLA

Get off the bra strap, Reggie, you're a ho.

He laughs, then turns back to Quincy.

REGGIE

Coach is gonna kill us in practice tomorrow. Might even pull his lips off your dick, limp as your game was tonight.

Quincy just looks at him.

QUINCY

That's funny.

Monica leans against Quincy, affectionately.

MONICA

he's just playing, Q...

QUINCY

You think for once we could talk about something besides basketball?

SHAYLA

Sure.

REGGIE

Whatever's clever.

Silence. Reggie and Shayla crack up. Quincy shakes his head, moves to the keg line.

MONICA

Y'all need to quit.

She starts for Quincy

SIDRA (O.S.)

Monica.

Monica looks over, sees Sidra standing in the doorway. There is no escaping this confrontation. She glances at Quincy, then crosses over. Quincy turns, sees her disappear back inside.

INT. HOUSEPARTY - CONTINUOUS

MONICA

What's up?

SIDRA

Just wanted to say good game.

MONICA

But?

SIDRA

No butts. Took a lot of heart to take that charge.

MONICA

Thanks.

SIDRA

But that was a dumb-ass pass to Toni. Ten seconds left, you run out the clock.

Monica shakes her head. An awkward silence.

SIDRA (cont'd)

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't pissed.

MONICA

I know.

SIDRA

Just one word of advice for next season.

MONICA

What's that?

SIDRA

Never let a freshman take your spot.

Sidra turns and walks away.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Quincy takes one long drink from his cup. KERRY, 20, and spandexed, stands directly in front of him, flirtatiously.

KERRY

Excuse me.

QUINCY

Excuse me.

He steps aside as she tries to work the keg. Nothing comes out. She nods at his cup, smiles.

KERRY

If that's the last beer, you and I are sharing.

Shayla glances over as Quincy pumps the keg a couple of times. Kerry hands him her cup and he starts filling it up.

KERRY (cont'd)

I like watching you play. Number twenty-two.

QUINCY

Guess you didn't see the game.

Quincy knows he should blow her off, but he's digging the attention. He hands her back her cup.

QUINCY (cont'd)

What's your name?

KERRY

Kerry.

QUINCY

Q.

KERRY

I know.

ANGLE ON

Monica looks over at Quincy and sees him talking to the hoochie. The girl looks too damn comfortable. Monica moves back outside.

KERRY (cont'd)

I'll see you. Q-man.

She swishes past Monica. Shayla "accidentally" bumps her. Kerry glares.

MONICA

Who was that?

QUINCY

Nobody.

MONICA

Who's nobody?

QUINCY

Look, this party's whack. You ready to go?

MONICA

You want to go talk?

QUINCY

Not really.

He leans in, kisses her drunkenly. She pulls away.

MONICA

We could finish what we were talking about last night.

Quincy kisses her again.

MONICA (cont'd)

Q...

(pushing him off)

Quincy, quit. You're drunk.

They fall silent.

QUINCY

You know what, I'm just gonna crash.

MONICA

(agitated)

Fine...Maybe I'll come by later.

QUINCY

Nah. I have curfew.

He starts to walk away, then stops.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Oh, by the way. Congratulations.

He goes. Monica stares after him.

INT. QUINCY/REGGIE'S SUITE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Quincy pushes through his front door, then stops short in his doorway. Zeke sits on the couch.

QUINCY

What are you doing here?

ZEKE

Your door was unlocked.

QUINCY

Still is, so let yourself out.

ZEKE

We need to talk.

QUINCY

We ain't got nothing to talk about.

ZEKE

I messed up, okay, I know that. But I ain't that kid's father.

QUINCY

Lucky kid.

ZEKE

Look, I ain't saying it was right, but sometimes things happen.

QUINCY

And some things should never fucking happen!

ZEKE

Boy, you're so perfect you can look down on me?

QUINCY

I ain't a damn liar.

ZEKE

Your mom was real quick to show you those pictures, wasn't she?

Well, she was nineteen when she got pregnant and don't get me wrong, you're the best thing in my life, but she knew I wasn't ready for no marriage.

QUINCY

So now you're saying my mother trapped you?

ZEKE

I'm saying I handled my responsibilities like a man. But when you're in the NBA, you pull into a city and there's a hundred women waiting at the hotel. And another twenty that made it past security on your floor. And the boldest one is standing right at your door. And after awhile, it just becomes part of the game.

(then)

I'm sorry I lied to you, I shouldn't have. But I did it cause I love you.

Zeke looks at his son, meaning every word. Quincy stares back, long and hard.

QUINCY

Since we're being honest, guess I should tell you. I'm dropping out of school and going pro.

ZEKE

What?

Quincy just stares back.

ZEKE (cont'd)

Quincy, you'd be making the biggest mistake of your life.

QUINCY

(sarcastic)  
From your mouth.

ZEKE  
(desperate)  
I know your mad at me, okay, but I can't  
let you do this.

QUINCY  
Always thought "can't" wasn't in a man's  
vocabulary.

Zeke is taken aback by the hatred in his son's eyes. He  
turns and without another word, exits.

EXT. STREET - LATE NIGHT

Quincy stands across the street from the houseparty, staring  
up at the balcony. Monica leans against the railing,  
laughing with a couple of teammates. Quincy watches her,  
then turns and walks away...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPUS GYM - LATE DAY

SLOW MOTION. Monica's eyes are on fire as she races an  
Oregon player for a loose ball. Both dive for it, slide  
across the floor. Monica grabs it up, screams for a time-out  
as her opponent tries to wrestle away the ball...

EXT. QUINCY/REGGIE'S SUITE - DUSK

Monica walks down the hall to Quincy's suite. The window is  
open. The sounds of Nintendo are heard. She walks in  
without knocking.

INT. QUINCY/REGGIE'S SUITE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Reggie sits on the couch with a TEAMMATE, playing Nintendo's  
"Duck Hunt".

MONICA  
Hey, y'all.

They barely give her a nod. Monica crosses into

INT. QUINCY/REGGIE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quincy stands at an ironing board, ironing a T-shirt.

MONICA

Hey.

QUINCY

Hey, what's up.

MONICA

You weren't at my game.

QUINCY

Yeah, sorry about that. I had this meeting with this guy.

Quincy pulls on the T-shirt.

QUINCY (cont'd)

You win?

MONICA

Yeah, I hit a three at the buzzer.

QUINCY

The "man" again.

MONICA

(smiles)

Woman...

A knock at the front door. Quincy exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Monica follows, then stops short. Kerry, the spandexed girl from the party, stands in the doorway.

QUINCY

Hey, you.

KERRY

Hi.

Quincy gives her a hug. Monica stares at him in disbelief. Reggie and his teammate smack each other, "Oh shit!"

QUINCY

Oh, Kerry, this is Monica. Monica,

Kerry.

MONICA

What the hell's going on?

QUINCY

We're going to get some food.

MONICA

Are you out of your mind?

KERRY

Maybe I should come back?

MONICA

No. You stay, I'll leave.

She storms out.

EXT. WRIGHT HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DUSK

BAM! Monica slams her car door. Her face is a mask of anger and confusion.

Camille exits the house, car keys in hand. She sees her.

CAMILLE

Monica. What are you doing here?

MONICA

Didn't know I needed a reason to come home.

CAMILLE

Don't be defensive. I'm just surprised to see you.

MONICA

Dad around?

CAMILLE

He's still at the bank.

Monica glowers. Camille looks at her.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

Everything okay?

MONICA

(clearly not)  
Yeah.

Camille just nods, doesn't bother asking again.

CAMILLE

Well, I'm going to get dinner.

She pulls open her car door. Beat, then...

CAMILLE (cont'd)

It's just a game.

MONICA

What?

CAMILLE

Whenever you lose, you get this attitude.  
But it's just a game.

Monica rolls her eyes, as her mom leaves.

EXT. DORMS - NIGHT

Quincy sits on the wall outside of Monica's dorm, as Monica slowly makes her way up the walk. She sees him, stops.

QUINCY

Can we talk?

MONICA

Talk to your new girlfriend.

QUINCY

I just took the ho to Burger King,  
alright.

MONICA

Cheap date.

QUINCY

Least she had time for me.

MONICA

So you fucked around to prove a point!

QUINCY

I just said I didn't fuck around. But  
you got your head so far up your ass it  
took a cheap date for you to notice me.

MONICA

What, "Q-man", did I forget to kiss your

ass like everybody else?

QUINCY

You forgot to be there.

MONICA

That night you wanted to talk about your Dad I had a curfew. What was I supposed to do?

QUINCY

Stay!

MONICA

If I stayed, I wouldn't be starting!

QUINCY

Least you got your priorities straight.

MONICA

I never asked you to choose.

QUINCY

Never had to.

MONICA

I'm a ballplayer. If anyone knows what that means it should be you.

QUINCY

Well, if all you care about is basketball, why you fucking me? Go fuck Dick Vitale.

Monica punches the shit out of Quincy, then pushes past him. Quincy grabs her arm, stopping her.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Hold up. I'm sorry, alright.

They stand, silent. Trying to come down from their anger.

MONICA

How do I know next time you're feeling neglected or whatever, you're not going to run around on me? If we're going to be together I have to be able to trust you.

QUINCY

I'm not asking for us to be together.

Monica flinches in shock.

MONICA

What?

QUINCY

I'm going through a lot of shit right now, more than you have time for.

MONICA

How are you going to tell me what I have time for? I mean, whatever I did...we can fix this.

QUINCY

I don't think so.

MONICA

You don't think so?

QUINCY

Look, I'm entering the draft.

MONICA

You're what?

QUINCY

I decided to go pro. And who knows where I'll end up, you know?

Monica's heart is sinking fast.

MONICA

When did you decide all this?

QUINCY

Few days ago.

MONICA

So that's it, just forget about us?

QUINCY

Damnitt, Monica. This ain't about us anymore, it's about me.

Monica is crushed. Beat as, Quincy struggles to stay cold.

QUINCY (cont'd)

But, you know, I'd still like us to be friends.

MONICA

Friends.

She fights back tears. Quincy has to look away. Monica can't respond.

QUINCY

So...I guess I'll see you around.

MONICA

Uh huh.

Beat, then Quincy turns and walks away. Monica tries to fight her tears but her pain, hurt and confusion are too much. Finally, she gives in, and the tears fall.

FADE TO BLACK.

FOOTAGE. Press conference. Magic sits beside his wife Cookie. He shocks the world as he announces his retirement from basketball.

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: "FOURTH QUARTER" then "1993"

ESTABLISHING SHOTS OF SPAIN

Madrid, Pamplona, the running of the bulls, old-world architecture.

Finally, we rest on a large billboard, a photo of Monica in a basketball uniform, drinking a Spanish soft-drink.

EXT. STREETS OF SPAIN - LATE DAY

Monica jogs down the congested cobble-stone street, a sports bag over her shoulder. She is TWENTY-THREE. Half-assed braids frame her matured features.

She passes store fronts, street vendors, and dodges pedestrians, as she makes her way toward a large, older arena.

EXT. ARENA - CONTINUOUS

An excited crowd jockeys for position at the front doors. Above them, a huge banner reads "Campeonato de Europeo". (European Championships".)

As Monica heads for the back entrance, a cheer goes up from a large contingent in the crowd. Monica smiles, waves back. TWO LITTLE GIRLS break from line, run to her.

LITTLE GIRLS

Baloncesto! Baloncesto! (Basketball!  
Basketball!)

MONICA

Oye.

They giggle, hold out a piece of paper and a pencil.

LITTLE GIRLS

Autografo.

As Monica signs her autograph, a tall woman carrying a matching sports bag approaches. She is LUISA, Spanish, 33.

LUISA

(thick Spanish accent)  
Monica. What is up?

MONICA

Oye, Luisa.

Monica hands the girls her autograph and they run off.

LUISA

Large game, no?

MONICA

Si. Large game.

They duck into the arena.

INT. ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - LATE DAY

Paint peels off the walls. Windows are broken overhead.

Monica sits alone at her locker, taping her own ankles. Her TEN TEAMMATES, all from Spain, sit on the surrounding benches, talking and joking among themselves in Spanish. Monica is clearly an outsider.

COACH PARRA, Spanish, late 40's, enters.

COACH PARRA

Silenco!

The women immediately stop talking. COACH PARRA gives an animated, impassioned speech in Spanish. Monica doesn't understand a word, just continues taping her ankles.

Coach Parra finishes and the women clap, pumped up. Monica turns to Luisa, seated next to her on the bench.

MONICA

What did he say?

LUISA

He say to give the ball to you.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The arena is PACKED with a raucous European crowd, chanting and waving signs - the love their women's basketball.

Monica walks onto the floor, tucking her jersey into her shorts. The uniforms are old-style - polyester and tight. Her club's name is stitched on the front, "GODELLA".

As she hits center court, a smile suddenly breaks through her game face. Standing opposite her, playing for the opposing Italian club is Sidra, HER RIVAL FROM USC.

SIDRA

Well, what do you know.

MONICA

What's up, Sidra.

SIDRA

I'm gonna love winning this championship in your house.

MONICA

How do you say "you're dreaming" in Italian?

They move into position. The ball is tossed up. Italy winds the tip and the ball is passed to Sidra.

Monica hounds her as she brings up the ball. Sidra shoves her off and to the floor, and scores. No whistle. Women's pro ball is at a whole other level. Bigger, better, tougher.

The ball is passed in to Monica. She drives down court, goes up for a lay up. An Italian player shoves Monica in mid-air, taking out her legs. Monica crashes on the hardwood.

A whistle. Monica lays still for a moment, then pushes herself up and walks to the free-throw line without a word. Without emotion.

INT. SPAIN - NIGHTCLUB - LATE NIGHT

A huge crowd dances fervently to the live Spanish music. In the middle of the floor, the Spanish players are the life of the party.

In a corner, Monica sits with Sidra, drinking and watching the festivities. A large trophy sits on the table.

SIDRA

Can you take that damn thing off the table.

MONICA

You mean my championship trophy? My bad.

Monica sets it down in the seat next to her, puts an arm around it. Sidra shakes her head.

SIDRA

Still a cocky bitch.

Monica laughs. She downs her drink, motions to the waiter.

MONICA

Uno mas, por favor.

The waiter nods.

MONICA (cont'd)

Last I heard, you were playing in Sweden.

SIDRA

Yeah, four years ago. They had me staying in this tiny-ass town with like fifty people. I'm not playing, there was about a thousand goats running around, and it gets dark at four o'clock. Then the whack club I'm on loses three games in a row and I get blamed. So they fire me.

MONICA

Just like that?

SIDRA

Yup. So I've been playing with this Italian club the last three years.

MONICA

How's that been?

SIDRA

It's better. Even though the whole first season my teammates didn't pass to me cause they were mad "The American" was making more money.

(smiles)

I led the team in rebounds cause it was the only way I could touch the damn ball.

Monica laughs as the waiter brings her drink. She tries to pay, but he just shakes his head, crosses away.

SIDRA (cont'd)

Most of us don't win championships our first year overseas.

MONICA

Please, I went through the same drama as everybody else. I mean, the first four months, only person I could talk to was this chick Luisa, who knew like ten words of English from watching old "Dif'rent Strokes" reruns. Swear to God, I had to tell her if she said, "What you talking bout, Willis?" one more time, I was gonna kick her ass.

Sidra laughs. They watch the madness out on the dance floor.

SIDRA

So what are these Spanish guys like?

MONICA

I wouldn't know.

SIDRA

What? You've been over here seven months and you ain't tapped anything?

MONICA

Just not my type, I guess.

SIDRA

Shoot, Italian boys love them some black women. They can't get enough of me.

Monica smiles.

MONICA

You ever think about going back?

SIDRA

Sometimes. But what's the alternative, not playing? You remember big Toni?

(off Monica's nod)

She quit last year, now she's working at some bookstore. I mean, look at us. They treat us like we're Hollywood stars over here. We just played in the championship game. It doesn't get much sweeter than this.

Monica takes this in. Her eyes do not reflect someone on top of the world. She takes a long drink.

INT. SPAIN - MONICA'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A small, sparse, one-bedroom. Sam, Diane and the rest of the gang from "Cheers" fill the small TV screen that flickers in the darkness. Their dialogue is dubbed in Spanish.

Monica sits on the floor, braiding her hair.

SHE WEARS BOXERS AND QUINCY'S OLD PRACTICE SHIRT. AFTER FIVE YEARS, IT IS WELL-WORN.

Feelings of loneliness threaten to swallow her whole. She looks out her window and sees her billboard, looming in the distance. She just stares.

INT. LOS ANGELES FORUM - NIGHT

The crowd erupts as a Laker player dunks the ball on a fast break.

ANGLE ON

Laker announcers CHICK HEARN and STU LANTZ.

CHICK HEARN

Stu, this game is in the refrigerator.  
The door is closed, the lights are out,  
the butter's hard and the Jell-Ooooo's  
jigglin'.

STU LANTZ

And here come the subs.

ANGLE ON

Quincy pulls off his sweats and jogs onto the court with the rest of the subs. He is twenty-three, a man. His goatee and tired eyes make him look older. HE NOW WEARS NUMBER TWENTY-ONE.

STU LANTZ (cont'd) (V.O.)

It's good to see these guys get a little playing time. And the fans love it.

Quincy immediately gets a pass in the corner. He puts up a quick three and it banks hard off the rim.

ANGLE ON

Chick and Stu.

CHICK HEARN

Three-pointer is off for the kid from SC. Came out after his freshman year, now in his fifth year with the league.

STU LANTZ

The son of Zeke McCall, played twelve years with the Clippers.

CHICK HEARN

(nods)

Pretty good player. The kid's moved around quite a bit, but he's hoping to finally have a home with the Lakers.

ANGLE ON

Quincy steals the ball, has nothing but open court ahead of him.

CHICK HEARN (cont'd) (V.O.)

Watch out, folks, it's showtime.

Quincy takes off from the hash-mark and throws down a monster jam. He swings high off the rim. Too high. His hand slips and he crashes to the floor. His knee twists at a sickening angle.

The dwindling crowd gasps as Quincy clutches his left knee, writhing in pain.

INT. DANIEL FREEMAN HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

Zeke walks down the corridor, checking room numbers. He is forty-five now. His slight paunch as become a roll.

He sees Nona exiting a room, with an empty water pitcher in hand. Her hair is in locks.

ZEKE

Nona.

Nona looks over. Her eyes narrow.

ZEKE (cont'd)

How's he doing?

NONA

Not great.

ZEKE

What's that, not great?

NONA

The doctor'll be back in a minute.

ZEKE

Nona, please.

NONA

He tore his ACL.

Zeke's shoulders slump. Then he looks back at her.

ZEKE

Almost didn't recognize you with your hair like that. How you been?

NONA

Happy. And he won't want to see you.

Nona walks over to a MAN standing nearby. He puts an arm around her and they move down the hall. Zeke watches for a beat, then pulls open Quincy's door, steps inside.

INT. QUINCY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Quincy lays in the bed. His knee is bandaged and propped up by pillows. He stares out the window.

ZEKE

Hey, son.

Quincy turns, sees his father. He turns back to the window.

ZEKE (cont'd)

Well, you made SportsCenter.

QUINCY

What do you want?

ZEKE

Came by to check on you.

QUINCY

After five years.

ZEKE

Don't remember that being my fault.  
Seems like you divorced me same time as  
your mom.

QUINCY

Look, I'm busy.

ZEKE

I can see that. I know things look  
pretty bleak right now, but you can't get  
down on yourself.

QUINCY

I stopped taking your advice a long time  
ago, or did you forget?

ZEKE

No.

QUINCY

Good.

ZEKE

Quincy. I know you left school early to throw your middle finger up at me.

QUINCY

And now I'm paying for it, right? That what this is about? "I told you so?"

ZEKE

You want me to fuck off?

QUINCY

Yeah.

ZEKE

Fine, I'll fuck off, but not til I say something.

Silence. Then.

ZEKE (cont'd)

You're a better ballplayer than I ever was. But you got a lot of other things going for you. You're smart. I always felt...I always knew that you could do anything you wanted. You want to be a ballplayer, be a ballplayer. Just know you ain't like everybody else on that court. You ain't like I was. You got options. That's all I ever tried to show you.

QUINCY

You're still trying to tell me what I should and shouldn't do. How come you couldn't be the man you kept trying to make me?

Zeke stares at his son, wishing he could satisfy him with an answer.

ZEKE

I just couldn't

With nothing left to say, Zeke pulls open the door and leaves. Quincy stares at the door long after it closes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. QUINCY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A NURSE enters, carrying a bouquet of flowers. She moves past the empty bed, puts them on a table already overflowing with flowers. She pulls open the blinds and light floods the room. She crosses back out.

A toilet flush. Beat, then Quincy slowly hops out of the bathroom, scratching his bare ass through the opening of his gown.

VOICE (O.S.)

And I thought this was gonna be awkward.

Quincy whips around and is shocked to see Monica standing there, laughing. She has clearly made an effort with her appearance.

QUINCY

Monica?

He stumbles. Monica quickly goes to him, catches his arm before he falls.

MONICA

I'm sorry.

Quincy stares at her, completely thrown. It's been five years. An awkward beat.

MONICA (cont'd)

So, how you doing?

QUINCY

Alright. I heard you were in Spain.

MONICA

I was.

(smiling)

I see your peach fuzz finally grew in.

Quincy rubs his goatee self-consciously.

QUINCY

Just something I'm trying.

MONICA

No, it looks good. I mean, it's cool.

QUINCY

Thanks.

Quincy tries to adjust his footing and flinches in pain.

MONICA

Shouldn't you be lying down, or...

QUINCY

I'm alright. But you can sit.

MONICA

I'm fine. My dad said you tore your ACL.

QUINCY

Yup.

MONICA

What are the doctors saying?

QUINCY

(shrugs)

A lot of things. All I know is I'll be back in six months.

MONICA

I thought a torn ACL was ten to twelve.

QUINCY

Not for Quincy McCall.

MONICA

I forgot, "Q-man."

An awkward beat.

QUINCY

So, how's pro-ball, Europe?

MONICA

We won the championship.

QUINCY

Still working on being the first girl in the NBA?

MONICA

Well, I tried sneaking in after college,

but they found breasts during my physical.

QUINCY

Funny. I never did.

MONICA

Kiss my ass.

Monica cracks up. Quincy laughs with her.

MONICA (cont'd)

I can't believe it's been five years.

Quincy nods.

QUINCY

Tried calling you a couple times.

MONICA

Oh yeah?

QUINCY

Wanted to give you props on making First Team All-American. And then when Magic retired, I tried calling you again.

MONICA

(lying)

Must have been my cheap-ass answering machine. It was always messing up.

QUINCY

Figured it was something like that.

They look at each other. The moment is building.

QUINCY (cont'd)

So, when do you go back?

MONICA

Actually, I don't...

QUINCY

What do you mean?

MONICA

I'm tired of playing overseas. Thinking about giving it a rest for awhile.

QUINCY

(completely thrown)  
A rest?

MONICA  
Yeah. Basketball just, isn't fun  
anymore. You know?

QUINCY  
No.

He stares at her. Into her.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
Quincy!

Quincy and Monica turn, as KYRA KESSLER, black, 26 and beautiful, rushes into the room. She wears a flight attendant's uniform. She goes to Quincy, gives him a kiss. Monica reacts.

KYRA  
I'm so sorry. No one would switch  
flights with me.

QUINCY  
It's okay.

KYRA  
Why are you up? Get in bed.

She takes Quincy's arm, moves him to the bed. Monica watches.

KYRA (cont'd)  
Tell me you're going to be okay.

QUINCY  
I'm gonna be okay.

Kyra relaxes. Then she glances over at Monica.

KYRA  
Hello.

QUINCY  
Kyra, this is Monica. She, uh...

KYRA  
(recognizing)  
Monica. You grew up together, right?  
Quincy's told me about you.

Monica smiles awkwardly.

QUINCY

This is Kyra. My fiance.

The shock hits too quick to cover. But Monica tries.

MONICA

Fiance. Wow. Congratulations.

KYRA

Thank you.

MONICA

I didn't know. Wow. That's great.

(then)

Well...I should go.

QUINCY

It means a lot that you came by.

KYRA

Yes, we appreciate that.

MONICA

Yeah, and Quincy, good luck with your knee, and everything.

QUINCY

Thanks.

Monica forces one last smile, pulls open the door and leaves.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Monica walks down the hall, shell-shocked.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATE DAY

Camille moves between the counter and the stove, whipping up a couple pecan pies. Monica enters.

MONICA

Hey.

CAMILLE

Hi.

MONICA

Need any help?

CAMILLE

I can manage.

Monica nods and moves to the barstool.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

Your sister's bringing the baby over.  
You should try to be here.

MONICA

Yeah. Can't wait to see him  
(she falls silent, then)  
I just saw Quincy.

CAMILLE

How is he?

MONICA

Engaged.

CAMILLE

To that stewardess?

MONICA

Yeah, you met her?

CAMILLE

His mother had a cookout a few weeks ago.  
He could do a lot better if you ask me.

MONICA

Maybe she is.

Camille looks up, studies Monica for a moment.

CAMILLE

I thought you were over him.

Monica shrugs.

MONICA

So what do I do?

CAMILLE

Find out where they're registered and send them a gift.

MONICA

(disgusted)  
Whatever.

CAMILLE

You didn't want my opinion in the first place, so why even ask?

MONICA

I asked but why does it always have to be so damn prissy.

CAMILLE

Don't curse.

MONICA

There you go.

CAMILLE

What do you want me to tell you, Monica, to go beat that girl up? To go have sex with him? I'm not going to do that. Yes, I believe thinking of other people is important and yes I'd rather bake a pie than shoot a dumb jump shot. If that makes me too "prissy" for you, too bad.

Monica stares at her mother. There's no going back.

MONICA

So that's why we can't get along? Because I'd rather shoot a "dumb" jump shot?

CAMILLE

You're the one always turning your nose up at me.

MONICA

No I don't.

CAMILLE

Child, please. Ever since you were little you thought you were too good for anything I had to say.

MONICA

I wasn't Lena. I didn't care about nail polish or lip gloss or sneaking a spray of your perfume.

CAMILLE

What was so wrong with wanting to teach you the things I knew could help you?

MONICA

Because you're pushing me to be something I'm not.

CAMILLE

So you're angry with me because you're standing here with your hair combed and wearing perfume?

Monica is busted. It takes her a moment to come back.

MONICA

I'm angry because I want a mother, not Martha Stewart.

CAMILLE

Oh, yes. The superstar female athlete whose mother is nothing but a housewife.

MONICA

That's not it.

CAMILLE

Don't tell me you aren't ashamed of that because I know.

Monica stares at her mother.

MONICA

I remember when I was eight years old, you spent like four hours cooking up this fancy meal. All you'd let me and Lena do was set the table. And I guess you and Dad got your wires crossed or something because he walks in with a couple of pizzas. And you didn't say anything. You just threw the whole meal into some tupper-ware and tossed it in the fridge.

CAMILLE

I don't remember that.

MONICA

I do. You never stood up for yourself. Ever. If I was ashamed, it was because of that.

CAMILLE

That's ridiculous.

MONICA

What's ridiculous is not being a caterer so your husband can feel like a man knowing his woman's home cooking and ironing his drawers.

WHAP! Camille's humiliation is immediate and she cuts off Monica with a SLAP. Camille curses herself for losing it.

CAMILLE

Dammitt, Monica!

Monica is stunned, hurt.

MONICA

I'm sorry.

Camille stares at her daughter, devastated.

CAMILLE

Is that really all you think of me?

Monica can't answer.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

When I married your father, all I wanted was a nice house with a big kitchen so I could start my catering business. And then I got pregnant with Lena, and then I got pregnant with you. And I put it out of my mind because that's what you did.

Monica stares at her mother.

CAMILLE (cont'd)

But you want to know what day I remember? In high school, you getting ready for the Spring Dance. I put my pearls around your neck, told you you were beautiful and you looked like you were going to cry. That day I was happy I didn't have a catering business to run off to. My

family had three meals a day, had someone to pick up after them, and when my daughters went to a dance, I helped them get ready. That's what I came to care about.

MONICA

(softly)

That's all you cared about. I must have played in a thousand games and I can only remember you being to two.

CAMILLE

You had your coaches and your father for that stuff. It never mattered one way or the other if I went to your games.

MONICA

It mattered, Mom.

Camille looks at her daughter and is struck by the need in her eyes. Monica moves off the barstool and leaves.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - DAY

The room looks exactly the same. Trophies, medals, plaques. Basketball posters and her "strong women" wall.

Monica sits on her bed, staring up at a photo of her and Quincy, tacked up to her bulletin board, amid other photos of her childhood. THEY ARE EIGHTEEN, PLAYFULLY WRESTLING OVER A BASKETBALL.

Monica slowly rises, starts taking her posters down.

INT. REHAB CENTER - DAY

Quincy sits on a leg extension machine, with his left leg tucked under the padded bar. A TRAINER stands behind him.

Sweat and pain coat Quincy's face and scarred knee as he slowly lifts the light weight again, and again, and again.

INT. BANK - DAY

A long line of customers shift impatiently during the noon-time rush.

Monica sits with a BANK MANAGER at the "New Accounts" desk, learning the ropes. Her hair is done, she wears a simple dress. Behind her, hanging on the wall, are three framed photos of the bank presidents. ONE OF THEM IS HER FATHER, NATHAN.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Monica stands in her room, staring out at Quincy's window. She watches as Quincy and Kyra pack up some of Quincy's stuff. Quincy tries to take his basketball globe light. She laughs, "Hell no."

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - DAY

Camille enters, moves to Monica's garbage can, dumps the contents into her larger bag. Suddenly, she stops. She reaches into the garbage and pulls out a crumpled picture.

Camille smooths it. It is the photo of Monica and Quincy at eighteen, wrestling over a basketball.

CAMILLE STARES AT IT, TAKEN IN BY THE PURE JOY IN HER DAUGHTER'S FACE. She sits down on Monica's bed, still staring.

INT. FORUM - DAY

In the empty gym, Quincy jogs up and down the court. He is still tentative on his knee, but he keeps jogging.

And then, slowly, the determination melts from his face. His jog turns into a walk, and then he just...stops.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - QUINCY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Quincy stands in the middle of his room, taking in his life. Old, worn basketball posters still line the walls. Trophies and awards. USC memorabilia. His basketball globe light.

He walks to his window, looks out at Monica's window. Her room is dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. QUINCY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

Quincy tilts his face up to the shower head and rinses the soap from his face. He hears the bathroom door open. He shuts off the water and opens the curtain.

Kyra sits on the toilet, taking a pee. Quincy slams the curtain closed.

QUINCY

Damn, girl.

KYRA

What?

QUINCY

I don't wanna see that.

KYRA

Get used to it, babe.

She flushes. Quincy steps out, grabs a towel. A long scar runs across his knee cap.

QUINCY

Brother's gonna have to start locking doors.

Kyra laughs as she buttons up her flight attendant's uniform. They cross into:

INT. QUINCY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kyra packs up a suitcase.

QUINCY

So how long is this trip?

KYRA

Four days.

Quincy nods.

KYRA (cont'd)

So are you going to be the kind of husband who won't let his wife work?

QUINCY

Nah.

KYRA

(playfully)  
Why not?

QUINCY

You might be the only one with a job.

KYRA

Baby, don't talk like that. Your rehab's going well. You'll be back before you know it.

QUINCY

Sometimes I wonder if it's worth it. Busting my ass, for what?

KYRA

To do what you love.

QUINCY

I don't know sometimes.

KYRA

You're just scared. I know rehab is hard, and you have to worry about whether you'll be as good as you were but you will be. I believe in you. You just have to get back on the court. Like you'd get back on a horse.

QUINCY

(beat)

A horse?

KYRA

Don't make fun of me when I'm being wonderful and supportive.

(then)

You belong on the court. Just like I belong in the stands, looking cute and cheering you on.

She smiles, gives him a kiss, moves back to her packing. Off Quincy:

INT. BANK - DAY

Monica sits at her desk in a blouse and skirt, punching numbers into the computer. A man sits down in the chair opposite her. Monica glances up. It's her father.

NATHAN

Hey, munchkin.

MONICA

Dad. What are you doing here?

NATHAN

I was upstairs for a meeting. I've been hearing good things about you.

MONICA

That tends to happen when you're the boss's daughter.

NATHAN

So how's the job going?

Monica forces a smile.

MONICA

You know.

Nathan looks at her, nods.

NATHAN

I think I know what the problem is.

He pulls a GARBAGE CAN HOOP from a plastic shopping bag. Monica smiles. He attaches it to her garbage can.

NATHAN (cont'd)

There.

He shoots an ugly, imaginary shot. She laughs.

MONICA

You shoot like a girl.

NATHAN

I'll take that as a compliment.

He gives her a smile, and exits. Monica looks at the hoop, then crumples a piece of paper.

MONICA

(whispering)

And she gets the steal. Monica goes one-on-one against Jordan, she stops, pops...

Monica shoots. The paper drops through the net.

MONICA (cont'd)

(still whispering)

It's good! It's good!

She glances up, notices a few patrons watching her. Monica quickly composes herself and goes back to her work.

EXT. WRIGHT AND MCCALL HOUSES - DUSK

Monica exits her car, after a long day at work. She wears very low heels. But she still stumbles. She curses, then hears a laugh.

She looks up - Quincy sits on the grassy hill above her house.

QUINCY

I remember when your mom had to beat you into a dress.

Monica smiles.

MONICA

You visiting?

QUINCY

(nods)

Kyra's gone for a couple days. Figured I'd keep Mom company.

MONICA

Who's this guy I always see her around?

QUINCY

Darryl. He's alright, kinda corny.

MONICA

So...how's the knee?

QUINCY

Getting there.

MONICA

Strong enough to get you down the aisle?

QUINCY

Yeah. Two weeks.

(then)

I didn't get to send you an invitation, but if you...

MONICA

That's okay. I'm probably, you know, busy.

Quincy nods. Awkward beat.

QUINCY

Can I ask you something?

Monica looks at him.

QUINCY (cont'd)

You never told me why ball isn't fun anymore.

MONICA

It just isn't.

QUINCY

Because I'm kinda feeling that way, too.

MONICA

You had a rough couple years, that's all.

QUINCY

That a nice way of saying I rode the bench?

MONICA

And you tore up your knee. Rehab is tough.

QUINCY

Nah. I haven't dribbled a ball in four and a half months. Maybe I miss some of the attention, but besides that...

MONICA

You're serious.

QUINCY

Seems like I needed a ball when I was trying to be like my pops...or trying to be better than him. Now, I kinda think I need to try something else.

MONICA

Like what?

QUINCY

Maybe go back to school.

MONICA

Wow.

Monica stares at him, seeing a man in the boy she grew up with. Quincy looks away, self-conscious.

QUINCY

I mean, Kyra hasn't heard the school thing yet.

(then)

She'll probably say it's the painkillers talking.

MONICA

It's a trip, you know? When you're a kid, you see the life you want, and it never crosses your mind that it's not gonna turn out that way.

QUINCY

So why'd you give up ball?

MONICA

Why do you keep asking me that?

QUINCY

Cause I don't get it.

MONICA

Something was just missing.

QUINCY

What?

Monica is too hurt, too scared to tell him the truth.

MONICA

It doesn't matter, alright. Just leave it alone.

QUINCY

Find.

Monica turns, crosses to her house. She stumbles on her heels, kicks them off in frustration, and exits inside. Quincy walks back to his curb.

ANGLE ON

Camille watches from the kitchen window

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGHT HOUSE - PATIO - DUSK

Lena sits next to Camille. Her one year old son, L.P., sits on the ground at her feet. Monica sits quietly nearby,

watching.

CAMILLE

So you're still breast-feeding?

LENA

The doctor said it was okay. Anyway, I'm still trying to lose some of this baby fat.

She quickly looks over at Monica.

LENA (cont'd)

Shut up.

Monica gives her a small smile. Camille looks down at L.P.

CAMILLE

You might want to put a jacket on him, it's getting cold.

LENA

He's fine.

CAMILLE

(warning)

Okay.

Lena sighs, rolls her eyes. She picks up her son.

LENA

Come on, L.P. Grandma says it's too cold.

She exits inside. Camille makes a face.

CAMILLE

God. "Grandma."

Monica smiles. And then silence. There is still so much distance between them, so many misunderstanding. Camille stares at her daughter. And then...

CAMILLE (cont'd)

You know, I'd probably be a lot more "prissy" in the situation than you'd like, but the thing I always admired that drove me crazy, was the fight you had in you.

MONICA

What are you talking about?

CAMILLE

When I said Quincy could do better, I was thinking about you.

Monica stares at her mom. Camille stands and leaves.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Monica lies in her bed, staring up at the ceiling, unable to sleep. Her mind races with thoughts of her past, her choices, her future...

Suddenly, she climbs out of bed. She wears a tank-top and pajama bottoms. She crosses to her window, pulls it open and climbs out.

EXT. WRIGHT AND MCCALL HOUSES - CONTINUOUS

Monica drops down. She moves to Quincy's window and knocks quietly. Beat, then Quincy appears. Bare-chested and in a pair of shorts. He looks at her, then pulls open the window.

QUINCY

(half-asleep)  
What's going on?

MONICA

We need to talk.

Quincy just looks at her.

MONICA (cont'd)

Please.

QUINCY

Hold on.

Quincy disappears for a moment, then returns, pulling on a T-shirt. He climbs out of his window, drops to the ground.

Quincy looks at her.

MONICA

You asked me what was missing.

QUINCY

What?

MONICA

From basketball.

QUINCY

you woke me up to tell me that?

MONICA

It's not fun for me anymore because  
you're missing.

Quincy stares at her.

MONICA (cont'd)

What I'm trying to say is --

QUINCY

I heard enough.

MONICA

What I'm trying to say is, I've loved you  
since I was eleven and the shit won't go  
away.

QUINCY

We haven't talked since college and now  
you wait two weeks before my wedding to  
say something like this?

MONICA

I know, I probably should have said it  
two weeks ago.

Quincy doesn't even crack a smile. In fact, he glares.

QUINCY

You haven't changed. You still think the  
sun rises and sets on your ass. Well,  
guess what, it doesn't.

MONICA

Then why are you so upset?

QUINCY

Because you don't pull this on someone  
who's about to get married.

MONICA

Better late than never, right?

QUINCY

Wrong.

Quincy starts back toward the window.

MONICA

I'll play you.

QUINCY

What?

MONICA

One game. One-on-one.

QUINCY

For what?

MONICA

Your heart.

Quincy looks at her in disbelief, then laughs at the absurdity.

QUINCY

You're out of your mind.

MONICA

So you're gonna bitch up?

QUINCY

What's that supposed to be, psychology?

MONICA

I know why you broke up with me in college. And not that what you did wasn't messed up, but what I did was, too. So if you forgive me, I'll forgive you.

QUINCY

Monica, after that stuff with my dad, I couldn't trust anybody, okay. I mean, I was lost. So you are forgiven. But that was five years ago. I moved on.

Monica moves past him, reaches through his window. She drops back down, holding his basketball.

MONICA  
Prove it.

She throws him the ball.

QUINCY  
What will this prove?

MONICA  
You once said the reason I beat you was  
because you wanted me to.

QUINCY  
So?

MONICA  
So, if I win it's because deep down you  
know you're about to make the biggest  
mistake of your life, and deep down your  
want me to stop you.

QUINCY  
And what happens when you lose?

MONICA  
If I lose, I'll buy you a wedding  
present.

Quincy stares at her.

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - SHORT TIME LATER

Monica stands opposite Quincy. Both are suited up in  
basketball gear.

They stare at each other, ready to go to war. Monica tosses  
him the ball.

MONICA  
Check.

Quincy tosses the ball back. Monica drives. Quincy's knee  
is maybe at sixty percent and he can't keep up. She scores  
easily.

She walks to the top of the driveway, tosses him the ball.

MONICA (cont'd)

One, zip. Check.

Quincy rubs his scarred knee, then passes it back.

The game continues. Monica owns the first five points easily by exploiting Quincy's injury.

Monica drives for another lay-up. Quincy suddenly lets go of his fear, leaps and swats her shot.

He grabs the rebound and lays it up. He nods intensely, as he grabs the ball and walks back to the top of the key.

QUINCY

One, five. Check.

The game continues and now Quincy has the upper-hand, using his size and strength. He scores seven straight points.

The score stays close. It is a sexually-charged battle of wills -- Quincy pulls off his sweat-soaked shirt. Their bodies collide as they wrestle for the ball. Monica yanks off her jersey in frustration. Her ass bumps into his hips as she backs him in. Her hands slide across his chest as she guards him...

Finally, the score hits nine, nine. Monica slowly walks to the top of the key.

MONICA

Nine, up. Point.

She tosses Quincy the ball.

MONICA (cont'd)

Check.

Quincy tosses the ball back, drops low on defense. Monica fakes an outside shot and Quincy bites. Monica drives around him. SHE HAS A WIDE-OPEN LAY-UP. SHE PUTS IT UP..AND IT ROLLS OFF THE RIM. Monica can't believe it.

Quincy grabs the loose ball and clears it. He stares at Monica as he dribbles in front of her. She stares back.

He breaks for the basket. Monica stays with him. He goes up. Monica jumps, desperately tries to block his shot. Quincy dunks on her, knocking her to the ground. He lets go

of the rim, and tumbles to the ground also. GAME OVER.

Silence. Quincy stares at her. Monica looks back. Then:

QUINCY

(pointed)

All's fair in love and basketball, right?

Monica struggles to fight back her tears as she picks herself up. She slowly walks back toward her house. And then:

QUINCY (cont'd)

Hey.

Monica slowly stops, turns.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Double or nothing.

Monica stares at him, wonders if she heard right. Quincy limps to his feet, picks up the ball and holds it out to her.

Monica slowly walks back to him. They stare at each other. No more egos, no more bullshit. Just love.

In the moonlight, on the blacktop, they kiss...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. LOS ANGELES FORUM - NIGHT

Music is blasting, banners are waving, crowd is screaming.

Magic Johnson sits in a floor seat, watching the game. A

REPORTER interviews him.

SPORTS REPORTER

So, Magic, are you contemplating another comeback?

MAGIC

(laughs)

No more comebacks. Tonight I'm just enjoying being a spectator.

Behind him, in a second row seat, a ONE YEAR BLACK GIRL sits in a lap, bouncing, watching feet and legs ballin' on the court.

Quincy leans down, gives the little girl a kiss, then looks out at the court. It's the Los Angeles Sparks and the New York Liberty. The WNBA.

On the court, the women line up for a free-throw.

QUINCY

Let's go, McCall!

Monica, sporting a uniform with Wright-McCall on the back and the number thirty-two, looks over. Quincy takes their daughter's hand and waves it.

QUINCY (cont'd)

Go Mommy.

Monica smiles back, then steps to the line. The referee tosses her the ball. Monica stares at the basket, then bounces the ball twice, licks her lips and shoots.

FADE TO BLACK.

"THAT'S GAME"

END CREDITS