LOVE and BASKETBALL

written by

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THIRD DRAFT

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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-on-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.C.)
You wanna be Kareem?

CAMERA REVEALS: QUINCY MCCALL, ten years old, dribbling a basketball in front of KELVIN and JAMAL, also ten. 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 <u>your</u> 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 baseball 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. Braids tumble down, framing a soft brown face and bright eyes. She is MONICA WRIGHT, ten years old.

JAMAL
Ah man, he <u>is</u> 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 a 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 and his hand hits her face.

THE BALL FLIES FROM HER HAND AND SHE CRASHES TO THE GROUND, HOLDING HER MOUTH. 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 -- 35, wipes the blood from her mouth with a washcloth.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.C.)
Eeew.

Her sister, LENA -- 13, leans in the doorway, making a face. She is a mirror of their mother, with relaxed hair and painted nails.

Her father, NATHAN -- 38, moves behind Lena, holding a box.

NATHAN
How are you feeling, munchkin?

Monica nods. He smiles.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Yeah, you're tough.

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 mouth and bares her teeth in the mirror. HER FRONT TOOTH HAS BEEN KNOCKED OUT. 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 29, beautiful, with effort. She smooths the frosting with a spoon.

ZEKE -- 31, 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. 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 wild braids. 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 --)
I know my cooking is a lot better than store-bought.

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
(shrugs)
It was just a baby tooth. I'm going to get money for it.

QUINCY
How much?

MONICA
Fifty cents, prob'ly.

QUINCY
That's good money.
(beat, then --)
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 <u>do</u> 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, turns and does a back flip. 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 kneels 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 large box.

CAMILLE
Monica, keep still. And don't sit on your knees, they'll turn black.

Camille pulls a yellow dress from the box. 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 garage.

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 for a minute, I've been running around all day.

Just then, Nathan enters. He holds up two suits 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 suits 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 tomorrow so you'll know somebody your first day.
(MORE)

CAMILLE (cont'd)
(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. A giggle from Moms, a laugh from Pops brings a smile to his face.

Quincy climbs out of bed, wearing Spiderman Underoos. 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.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MCCALL AND WRIGHT HOUSES - MORNING

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

Monica emerges, walking her banana-seater. She is looking hella 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 on 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 you.

Monica doesn't move.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
Come on.

MONICA
I don't have to do what you say.

QUINCY
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, a WOMAN in a STANFORD BASKETBALL sweater.

A fine-ass BROTHER leans in the doorway, sporting a letter jacket with a "Q" on the chest. He gets as much attention as the game. A couple of 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 nails a jump shot. Now SEVENTEEN AND A HALF, her athletic figure has a few curves, but her baggy shorts and loose jersey do little to show them off. Her hair is a mess and her knees are dark with bruises.

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 -- EIGHT 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 is up by six.

Her teammates dribble out the clock. The buzzer sounds and they dance across the floor. Monica looks up in the stands. THE WOMAN FROM STANFORD IS GONE.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

Camille, now forty-two, stands at the stove cooking up dinner. Lena, 20, and pretty, stands next to her, watching and learning.

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. At the table, Monica is in mid-conversation with her Dad.

MONICA
Dad, you have talk to Coach for me.

NATHAN
And what am I supposed to say to the man?

MONICA
A recruiter from Stanford was there and he has me riding the bench the whole second half.

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...

The whole room just stops. Camille glares. Nathan quickly 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 exits his front door with a GIRL in tow.

Just shy of EIGHTEEN, 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.

Quincy and the Girl slob each other down on his front steps. Monica watches, and her Mom's droning voice disappears...

EXT. MCCALL HOUSE - SAME TIME

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

QUINCY
Yo, Felicia, my Moms is 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 saunters to her car. Quincy watches her go with a cocky-ass smile.

SMASH CUT TO:

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 booty and muscular thighs. 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, as REPORTERS throw questions.

REPORTER #1
Quincy, I notice you've been driving the lane a lot more.

QUINCY
Yeah, I decided to start exploiting my quick first step, try to get some points from the line.

REPORTER #1
(to Zeke)
That was your game.

ZEKE
'Still is.

The Reporters laugh.

REPORTER #2
Quincy, word has it you might make the jump to the NBA --

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

REPORTER #2
You could make my career by telling me where.

ZEKE
Gotta wait 'til the press conference.

REPORTER #3
But you'd love for him to play at USC like you --

ZEKE
I'd love for him to get a good education.
(then --)
That's it guys.

The Reporters cross 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
Or 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.
(then --)
We'll play this weekend.

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 over.

QUINCY
What's that?

MONICA
Some note Shawnee Easton told me to give 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.

Beat, then --

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
I'm not the one who knocked a tooth out my mouth --

QUINCY
God, here we go...

MONICA
-- when we were ten 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 - LIVING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Quincy steps inside, drops his bag on the floor. His Mom, Nona, rises from the couch.

QUINCY
What's up, Moms.

Nona holds up a pair of large hoop earrings.

NONA
What are these?

QUINCY
Uh, your earrings?

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

QUINCY
What are you doing in my room?

NONA
Quincy, I told you about these fast-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 and getting 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 - SAME TIME

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 sweats and a tank top. 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 T-shirt. 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 braids her hair against her head.

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 ass 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 butt.

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? Damn, Lena, I'm not some charity case.
(beat, 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
Trust me, if you were tore up I would not be claiming you.

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 butt 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 should really 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 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. One... 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 four.

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

Monica nails a three-pointer in the girl's face. 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

A local R&B BAND jams on stage, 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. Monica glances up at the folded up basketball hoop near the ceiling.

ANGLE ON: Quincy 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 arm 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 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 the 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 played real good in your game.

MONICA
(brushing him off --)
Thanks.

QUINCY
So who is this clown?

MONICA
He ain't Spalding.

QUINCY
'Guess not.

MONICA
So you took Shawnee, huh?

The R&B BAND starts playing a sweet slow jam.

QUINCY
(embarrassed --)
You know, it was late and she asked --

JASON
You want to dance, flyness?

Jason stands behind her chair. Monica smiles shyly.

MONICA
Sure.

Jason puts down her glass 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.

Quincy pulls Shawnee to the middle of the floor, and ends up next to Monica and Jason.

Monica is 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 <u>really</u> been kissed. Jason pulls away, smiles.

JASON
That was nice.

MONICA
Yeah.

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. His hand moves across her breast. Monica's eyes pop open.

MONICA
Wait...

JASON
Shh. It's okay.

He slides her body down. Naive and inexperienced, Monica shuts her eyes tight...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGHT HOUSE - NIGHT

A car pulls off. Monica slowly moves to her front door. She looks in the 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...

EXT. MCCALL AND WRIGHT HOUSES - NIGHT

Quincy pulls his Jeep into his driveway. He cuts the motor, sits for a moment. Finally, he climbs out.

MONICA (O.C.)
Psst.

Quincy looks over, and is surprised to see Monica leaning out her window. He walks over.

MONICA (CONT'D)
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 y'all 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. Then --

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 he 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, then --

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. She falls back onto the grass as a tidal wave of relief washes over her.

Quincy smiles.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
Congratulations.

Monica sits 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 hug. In seemingly an instant, their hug turns into a kiss. They pull away, then break into nervous laughter.

MONICA (CONT'D)
What was that about?

QUINCY
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 (CONT'D)
(softly)
You want to stop?

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

FADE TO:

BLACK.

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. SPORTS ARENA - 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
(MORE)

COACH MILLER (cont'd)
player.
(then --)
I know the four of you coming in are used to being the best. Shayla, you're Southern California's Player of the Year. Dora, you're Oregon State's Ms. Basketball. Chris, you averaged seventeen rebounds a game. Monica, you averaged twenty points, nine assists a game.

Monica smiles.

COACH MILLER (CONT'D)
But that don't mean a rat's ass.

Monica's smile disappears.

COACH MILLER (CONT'D)
What you <u>were</u> 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 --)
Tamecka!

TAMECKA -- 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 am.

The team pounds down the track, pushing through a two mile run. Monica and her freshman teammate/roommate SHAYLA -- Black, 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. LYON CENTER - MORNING

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

COACH MILLER
Way to work, Nikki.

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. LYON CENTER - 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 DAWN and LISA crack up.

DAWN
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 charge?

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.

SIDRA (CONT'D)
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 soft-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 QUAD - 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 econ?

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 grabs her up, cradles her like a baby.

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 and lets her up. She shoves him, playfully. Beat, then --

MONICA (CONT'D)
'Must be nice though.

QUINCY
What?

MONICA
Having the red carpet laid out for you.

QUINCY
Only when you're walking down it with me.

Monica smiles. Quincy smiles back.

INT. LYON CENTER - 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 kicking Monica's ass, but Monica starts to come on. She does a quick cross-over and puts up a shot in Sidra's face. SWISH!

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

Sidra scowls as she runs down court. She gets a pass in the corner, tries 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 gets 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
Excuse me?

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 her shower. Shayla sits next to her.

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

LISA
Tamecka, I know you're gonna shower first.

TAMECKA
I don't smell bad.

DAWN
And she wonders why she always gets her own seat on the bus.

Nikki and another TEAMMATE 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. Shayla smirks.

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

Toni tries to step in.

TONI
Sidra, let it go.

MONICA
What are you talking about?

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

LISA
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
Fuck Tonya Randall.

MONICA
I'm telling you, Coach thinks she made a mistake recruiting me.

QUINCY
Then prove her wrong.

MONICA
I don't have it easy like you, alright.

QUINCY
So you're gonna act salty all night?

Monica broods. Quincy sighs. Then --

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

MONICA
That is so weak.

QUINCY
Who cares if you're never known as the first girl in the NBA. You'll get more play being 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 ass.

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.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Like taking candy from a baby.

Quincy pulls off his sweats, leaving him in just boxers. 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.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

Sportscasters DICK VITALE and ROBIN ROBERTS give alternating commentary through...

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

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

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT - GAMPEL PAVILION - NIGHT

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

INT. LYON CENTER - LATE NIGHT

Monica practices alone in the gym, shooting jump shot after jump shot, 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. BERKELEY - KAISER ARENA - NIGHT

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

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

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

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE - THOMSON BOLING ARENA - NIGHT

Monica drives through the key, lays it up between two defenders, as...

INT. MONICA/SHAYLA'S DORM - NIGHT

Monica lays on her bed, with a playbook propped on her chest. Quincy sits at her feet, bored, rubbing an ice cup on her shins, as...

EXT. USC CAMPUS - DAY

Quincy kicks it on the benches with a couple of teammates. Girls flirt, he drinks in the attention, as...

INT. SPORTS ARENA - NIGHT

Sidra is fouled hard. She 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. Clientele is mostly retired athletes, a few groupies.

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

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

Zeke just nods as the BARTENDER crosses over.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
They can't stop me, Pop...

BARTENDER
What are you having, Zeke?

ZEKE
Guinness. And a Coke for my kid.

The Bartender nods, moves 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. Okay?

QUINCY
(beat, then --)
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 I met two times, "hi" and "bye" at a party. Now I'm supposed to be her baby's Daddy.
(then --)
Anyway, I told your Mom I wanted to be the one to tell 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 years 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.

INT. MCCALL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nona sits on the couch, drink in hand, looking tore up. The front door suddenly opens. 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 do 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, OF ZEKE AT A PARTY. IN ONE PHOTO, HE TALKS TO A YOUNG WOMAN. IN ANOTHER, HIS ARM IS AROUND HER. IN ANOTHER, THEY KISS. AND YET ANOTHER, THEY EXIT TOGETHER.

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 cement stands. 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 to his every word like he's God or something...
(then --)
Man, how stupid am I.

MONICA
You're not stupid.

Quincy stares at her, wishing he could believe her.

QUINCY
'Even had me wanting to play for the "Clippers."

Monica puts her arms around him. They sit there, quiet.

Monica glances up at the clock tower, reacts. Beat, then --

MONICA
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. Coach has us on eleven o'clock curfew.

Quincy looks at her, almost in shock. Finally --

QUINCY
Well, don't let me keep you.

MONICA
I can stay a few more minutes.

QUINCY
Nah. Don't sweat it.

MONICA
Quincy...

QUINCY
I'm being for real.

MONICA
You sure?

QUINCY
Definitely.

Monica gives him a kiss, stands.

MONICA
Will you call me when you get in?

Quincy nods. Beat, then Monica turns and reluctantly crosses away.

INT. MONICA/SHAYLA'S DORM - NIGHT

The lights are off but Monica sits up in bed. 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. I know it's rough, girl, but you're gonna 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:

EXT. CAMPUS - MORNING

Quincy and Monica walk to class, backpacks over their shoulders. Quincy walks with his hands in his pockets, his attitude distant. Monica steals a glance at him. Silence, then --

MONICA
You finish the worksheet for discussion?

QUINCY
No.

Monica starts to pull her backpack from her shoulder.

MONICA
Here, copy mine, then.

QUINCY
I ain't pressed.

MONICA
It's due in ten minutes.

QUINCY
Whatever...

Quincy suddenly smiles as a Teammate passes.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
What up, dog?

They give each other a dap. The Teammate continues on and Quincy's smile immediately fades. Monica looks at him, knows she messed up.

MONICA
Hey, why don't we hook up after class, do something.

QUINCY
I've got weights.

MONICA
After that.

QUINCY
I've got tutoring.

MONICA
After that, then.

QUINCY
My boys are coming by later. And after that you've got curfew.

There is nothing Monica can say to that. They walk on in silence.

INT. SPORTS ARENA - LATE DAY

USC vs. UCLA, 'nuff said. The good-size 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, Tamecka Artian!

Tamecka 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 sophomre, Dawn Perez!

Dawn 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, this is the last time us seniors are playing UCLA and we are not about to lose. So you youngsters better leave everything out on that floor, you got that? Ready? One, two, three...

TEAM
Intensity!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PAULEY PAVILION - LATE DAY

A sellout crowd for the men's 'SC/UCLA 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 UCLA crowd chants, "Airball, airball..."

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...

CUT TO:

INT. SPORTS ARENA - SAME TIME

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 a pass to a wide-open Dawn 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. PAULEY PAVILION - SAME TIME

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

INT. SPORTS ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - DUSK

The female players continue to celebrate as they undress. 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.

DAWN
Nah, I think she took that, too.

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

More laughter. Monica glances over at Toni, sitting quietly on a bench.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Yo, T. We beat UCLA for you, why you looking so down?

TONI
(beat)
I don't want to go play overseas.

NIKKI
I thought you were hyped about going to Portugal.

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.

DAWN
Nah, there's always a McDonald's.

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

SHAYLA
(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, law school makes more sense.

COACH MILLER (O.C.)
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 two big games coming up back-to-back and I want to shake things up a bit, so you're starting at point Saturday.

MONICA
(confused --)
I thought Sidra's ankle was okay for next game.

COACH MILLER
Do 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 rap joint.

Monica is dancing and chanting along with the rest of the crowd, including Shayla, and Quincy's roommate/teammate, REGGIE -- Black, 18.

Quincy stands in front of Monica, drinking a forty and barely moving his body. Girls dance nearby, trying to grab his attention, or stare him down from the sidelines.

Quincy looks down at Monica, bored.

QUINCY
I'm going outside.

MONICA
Why?

QUINCY
(beat)
My feet hurt.

He moves off the floor, heads for the balcony. Monica reluctantly follows. Two of Quincy's TEAMMATES stand in the doorway. Quincy looks at them, waiting for them to move.

TEAMMATE #1
Oh, what, you looking to pass?

TEAMMATE #2
Nah, not the "Q-man."

Quincy steps through them, Monica follows...

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

A cheer goes up as they step through the glass doors. But for the first time, the applause is for her, not him.

STUDENT
Way to go, girl.

MONICA
Thanks.

Monica drinks in the attention as Quincy leans against the railing, just drinking. Shayla steps outside, followed by Reggie. She smiles at Monica.

SHAYLA
What's up, superstar.
(then, to Quincy)
Your girl was on tonight. She tell you about the game?

QUINCY
I heard.

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

QUINCY
You make it off the bench tonight, Reg?

Monica leans against Quincy, affectionately.

MONICA
He's just playing, Q...

QUINCY
You think for once we could talk about something besides ball?

SHAYLA
Sure.

REGGIE
Whatever's clever.

They all fall silent. Quincy shakes his head.

QUINCY
Forget it.

The three crack up as Quincy crosses over to the cooler for another forty.

SIDRA (O.C.)
Monica.

Monica looks over, sees Sidra standing in the doorway. There is no escaping this confrontation. She glances at Shayla, then crosses over. Sidra steps back into the party...

INT. HOUSEPARTY - CONTINUOUS

MONICA
What's up?

SIDRA
'Just wanted to say good game.

MONICA
But?

SIDRA
No buts. '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. Beat, then --

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 - SAME TIME

Quincy pulls another forty from the cooler. KERRY -- 20, and spandexed, stands directly in front of Quincy, flirtatiously.

KERRY
Excuse me.

QUINCY
Excuse me.

He steps aside as she grabs a wine cooler. Shayla looks over.

KERRY
I like watching you play. Number twenty-two.

QUINCY
'Guess you didn't see the game.

KERRY
Hey, it's hard carrying a team the way you do. 'You ever need someone to cheer you up...or something, let me know.

Quincy knows he should blow her off, but he's digging the attention.

QUINCY
What's your name?

KERRY
Kerry.

QUINCY
Q.

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
I'll see you, Q-man.

Kerry swishes past Monica.

MONICA
Who was that?

QUINCY
Nobody.

MONICA
Who's nobody?

QUINCY
Look, this party's wack, you ready to go?

MONICA
We just got here.

QUINCY
I'm not feeling it.

MONICA
Quincy, I'm sorry you had a bad game. It'd just be nice, you know, to celebrate mine for a minute.

QUINCY
So celebrate. I'm out.

MONICA
Why, 'cause it's not all about you?

QUINCY
Now that's some funny shit.

MONICA
Damn, why are you tripping?

QUINCY
Oh, you want to get loud?

Folks on the balcony look over.

MONICA
(even louder)
I ain't thinking about them.

QUINCY
One halfway decent game and suddenly you're just the shit, huh?

MONICA
This isn't about my game.

QUINCY
Let me know when your swelling goes down.

He starts to walk away.

MONICA
Quincy --

QUINCY
Oh, by the way, congratulations.

He goes. Monica stares after him, livid.

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

Quincy pushes through his front door, then stops short in his doorway. Zeke sits on his 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 can explain about the pictures --

QUINCY
You looked me in the eye and said she was just some "girl" you said "hi" and "bye" to.

ZEKE
I messed up, 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.
(MORE)

ZEKE (cont'd)
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.
(beat, 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, then --

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
From your mouth.

ZEKE
(desperate --)
I know you're 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, seemingly without a care in the world.

Quincy watches her, then turns and walks away...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPORTS ARENA - LATE DAY

SLOW MOTION. Monica's eyes are on fire as she races an Opponent for a loose ball. Both dive for it, slide across the floor. Monica grabs it up, screams for a timeout 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 playing Nintendo's "Duck Hunt".

MONICA
Hey, Reg. You seen Quincy?

REGGIE
Yo, Q!

Monica starts for Quincy's room, when suddenly he crosses in, tucking in a freshly ironed T-shirt.

MONICA
I've been trying to find you.

QUINCY
Here I am.

MONICA
I know. You weren't at my game.

QUINCY
You win?

Quincy glances around for his wallet. Monica looks at him, thrown.

MONICA
Yeah, I hit a three at the buzzer...
(beat, then --)
So what's going on?

QUINCY
What do you mean?

MONICA
'There something we need to talk about?

QUINCY
There's always stuff we could talk about.

MONICA
So let's talk then.

QUINCY
I can't now.

A knock on the door.

MONICA
Why not...?

Kerry, the spandexed girl from the party, stands in the doorway.

QUINCY
Hey, you.

KERRY
Hi.

Quincy gives her one of <u>those</u> hugs. Monica stares at him in disbelief.

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, <u>I'll</u> 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 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 <u>ballplayer</u>. 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
What are you talking about...

QUINCY
Besides, 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
Quincy...I mean, we can fix this.

QUINCY
I don't think so.

Quincy struggles to stay cold.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
But...I'd still like us to be friends.

MONICA
Friends?

Monica looks at him, fighting back tears. Quincy has to look away.

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

MONICA
Uh huh.

Monica grabs her bag and hurries into the dorms.

INT. MONICA/SHAYLA'S DORM - SHORT TIME LATER

Monica gets inside the door just before the tears fall. She tries to fight them, but her pain, hurt and confusion are too much. Finally, she gives in, and cries...

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
(in a thick 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 amongst 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 -- they 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 -- "VIGO".

As she hits center court, a smile suddenly breaks through her game face. Standing opposite her, playing for the opposing French 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 French?

They move into position. The ball is tossed up. Spain wins the tip and the ball is passed to Monica. She puts up a jumper. Swish.

Monica hounds Sidra 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, rougher.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

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
Four years ago. I was staying in this tiny-ass town with like fifty people and a thousand goats, and it gets dark at four. Then the team loses three games in a row and I get blamed. So they fire me.

MONICA
Just like that?

SIDRA
Yup. 'Last three years, I've been playing with this French club.

MONICA
How's that been?

SIDRA
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, then --)
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
It hasn't exactly been a picnic. 'First three months, only person I could talk to was this chick Luisa, who knew like ten words of English from watching old "Different Strokes" reruns. Swear to God, I had to tell her if she said, "What you talking about, Willis" one more time, I was gonna kick her ass.

Sidra laughs. They watch the madness out on the dance floor, then --

SIDRA
So what are these Spanish guys like?

MONICA
I wouldn't know.

SIDRA
What? Seven months over here and you ain't tapped anything?

MONICA
(beat)
Just not my type, I guess.

SIDRA
Shoot, French boys love them some Black women. They can't keep their hands off me.

Monica smiles. Beat, then --

MONICA
You ever think about going back?

SIDRA
Sure. But what's the alternative, not playing?
(then --)
You remember big Toni?
(off Monica's nod --)
She quit last year, now she's working at some bookstore. You and I are 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. 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 the Laker players jog onto the floor for warm-ups.

Quincy tugs on his blue and gold Laker sweats as he moves into the lay-up line. He is TWENTY-THREE, a man. His shaved head and tired eyes make him look older.

A ball is tossed to him. He jogs toward the hoop, lays it up...

INT. ZEKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A television plays the Laker game. ON SCREEN: A LAKER PLAYER scores in the fourth quarter.

ANGLE ON: A ratty-ass two-bedroom, with no thought to decor or cleanliness.

Zeke sits alone on the couch, rolling a basketball in his hands. He is forty-five now. His paunch has become a roll.

We hear the commentary of Laker analysts CHICK HEARN and STU LANTZ.

CHICK HEARN (V.O.)
Stu, this game is in the refrigerator. The door is closed, the lights are out, the butter's hard and the Jell-O's jiggling.

STU LANTZ (V.O.)
And here come the subs.

Zeke perks up.

INT. LOS ANGELES FORUM - SAME TIME

Quincy pulls off his sweats and jogs onto the court with the rest of the subs.

STU LANTZ (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 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 (V.O.)(CONT'D)
Watch out folks, it's showtime.

Quincy takes off from the hash-mark and throws down a monster tomahawk 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 sees Nona exiting a room, with an empty water pitcher in hand.

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
(beat, then --)
He tore his ACL.

Zeke's shoulders slump. Beat, then he looks back at her.

ZEKE
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. DANIEL FREEMAN HOSPITAL - QUINCY'S 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.
(beat, then --)
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
(beat)
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. Finally --

ZEKE
I just couldn't.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT - INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL - MORNING

A long line of exhausted passengers file through the gate.

Monica moves through with a ton of bags, looks around. Her mother and father stand, waiting, behind the gates.

Nathan wraps her in a strong, warm hug. Monica turns, and she and Camille give each other a hug.

As they pull away, Monica catches her mother glancing at her jacked-up braids. Monica touches her hair, self-conscious, as they move toward the exit doors...

INT. DANIEL FREEMAN HOSPITAL - QUINCY'S 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.C.)
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, then --

MONICA (CONT'D)
So, how you doing?

QUINCY
Alright. I heard you were in Spain.

MONICA
I was.
(then, smiling --)
I can't believe you're bald.

Quincy rubs his head, 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.
(beat, then --)
My Dad said you tore your ACL.

QUINCY
Yup.

MONICA
What are the doctors saying?

QUINCY
(shrugs)
'Say 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, then --

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 announced...I tried you again.

MONICA
'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. A moment is building.

QUINCY (CONT'D)
So, when do you go back?

Beat, then --

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. And then --

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
Quincy!

Quincy and Monica turn, as KYRA KESSLER -- Black, 26, beautiful, rushes into the room. She wears a flight attendant's uniform.

She goes to Quincy, gives him a kiss. Monica reacts.

KYRA (CONT'D)
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. Beat, then she finally 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 it.

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

QUINCY
Thanks.

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

INT. CAR - SHORT TIME LATER

Monica sits in her car, completely 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
(beat, then --)
'Need any help?

CAMILLE
I can manage.

Monica nods. She moves to a barstool, sits.

CAMILLE (CONT'D)
Your sister's bringing the baby later.
You should try and be here.

MONICA
Yeah. 'Can't wait to see him.

Monica falls silent. Finally --

MONICA (CONT'D)
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
(beat)
Maybe she is.

Camille looks up, studies Monica for a moment. Then --

CAMILLE
I thought you were over him.

Monica shrugs. Long beat, then --

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 is no going back.

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

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, then --

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 washing his drawers --

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

CAMILLE
Dammit, 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
(MORE)

CAMILLE (cont'd)
get ready. That's what I came to care about.

Beat, then, softly --

MONICA
That's all you cared about. I must have played in a thousand games and I can only remember you being at 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 crosses out.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

EXT. DANIEL FREEMAN HOSPITAL - DAY

The sliding glass doors open and Quincy rolls out in a wheelchair. Passersby glance, recognize Quincy. Kyra plays it up as she helps Quincy into his Land Cruiser.

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. TUX SHOP - DAY

Quincy stands uncomfortably as he is fitted for his wedding tuxedo. Kyra stands two inches from the tailor, fussing about the look and cut of the tux.

She glances up at Quincy, blows him a quick kiss. He forces a smile.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The posters are down, the trophies are packed away.

Monica sits at her window, staring out. Across the way, Quincy and Kyra exit his ride and walk up the steps of his Mom's house. Monica just sits and watches.

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 THE PHOTO, TAKEN IN BY THE PURE JOY IN HER DAUGHTER'S FACE. She sits down on Monica's bed, with the photo in hand, still staring...

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - 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. Then --

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 up 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 his front stoop.

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

Monica shows off an imaginary bruise. Quincy smiles.

MONICA
You visiting?

QUINCY
(nods)
Kyra's gone for a couple days. 'Figured I'd keep Moms company.

MONICA
Who's this guy I always see her around?

QUINCY
Darryl. He's alright, 'little 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
It's okay. I'm probably...you know, busy.

Quincy nods. An awkward beat, then --

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 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
Fine.

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

ANGLE ON: Camille watches from the kitchen window...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WRIGHT HOUSE - PATIO - NIGHT

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 (CONT'D)
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 misunderstandings. 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 crosses inside.

INT. WRIGHT HOUSE - MONICA'S ROOM - LATE 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, 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. Beat, then --

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 ten and the shit won't go away.

QUINCY
(beat, then --)
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's who's about to get married.

MONICA
Better late than never, right?

QUINCY
Wrong.

Quincy starts back toward his window.

MONICA
I'll play you.

QUINCY
What?

MONICA
One game. One-on-one.

QUINCY
For what?

MONICA
(beat, then --)
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. I just, didn't know any other way. 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 you want me to stop you.

QUINCY
And what happens when you lose?

MONICA
(beat, then --)
If I lose, I'll buy you a wedding present.

Quincy stares at her, long and hard.

SMASH CUT TO:

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. Beat, then --

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

The music is blasting, the banners are waving, the crowd is screaming.

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

SPORTS REPORTER
(smiles --)
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 OLD 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
(calling --)
Let's go, McCall!

Monica, sporting a Sparks uniform with Wright-McCall on the back and the number twenty-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"