

The Prodigy - version 2

by
Chris Zell

czell@comcast.net

FADE IN:

EXT. INNER CITY TENNIS COURT - DAY

JONAH picks up a tennis ball from the deuce court and hits it across the net. He gets into the ready position awaiting the serve.

MALE (O.S.)

Five three. Serving for the set.
You ready?

JONAH

Let's go.

Jonah's expression falls into a painful state of concentration. He bounces on the balls of his feet. It's a false sense of readiness though. His outward appearance is that of a sweaty, beaten tennis player.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

The serve doesn't have much speed on it but it has a pretty good kick on it and it's so well placed wide to the right handed Jonah's forehand that it draws him sluggishly off the court and forces a high slice return.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

SND FX Sneakers Squeaking on a Court

Jonah takes off to the best of his cement legged ability. He slides into the ball and barely gets his racket on it.

SND FX Ball weakly Hitting The Net

MALE (O.S.)

Thirty love.

Jonah plods to the ad court to await serve. There's none of that false bravado this time. Jonah leans in with a mixture of disappear and frustration.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

Jonah jumps on the well placed down the middle serve. He's a little late but he gets there in time to get the ball into play and get into the ready position on the center mark of the baseline.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

Jonah gets a look on his face like he's got a second chance or, at least, a second wind as he races to his backhand side to return a ball that's on the sideline. This forces him to take a couple extra steps but he reaches the ball and returns it. Jonah attempts to get the ball but he only takes a couple of steps before stopping as the ball passes him deep to the furthest side of the court from him.

MALE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Forty love. Match point.

Jonah grumbles to himself as he heads to the ad court. He has nothing left and it shows. He doesn't even bother pretending to think he has a shot at coming back in this match. The quintessential look of defeat.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

Jonah slides to the ball but this is a very desultory backhand. It's a high slice that's embarrassed to have been included in this match. Jonah straightens up and makes a move back into the court.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

After his step Jonah gives up. It's in his face and flows without stopping to his legs as he watches the ball float past him and deep into the court.

MALE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Game, set, match. Good game, Jonah,
but I told you it would be a tough
one.

Jonah, spent and sweating, walks towards the net and is greeted halfway in the service box by a man dressed in jeans, a shirt that has 'Henderson Auto Parts' stitched on the right side with the name 'Kurt' in a patch over left, and work boots. This man whose shirt doesn't lie. He is KURT SAMPSON.

JONAH
You weren't lying.

Jonah and Kurt shake hands and continue walking towards the net where they are met with the smiling, effervescent and fresh as a spring shower twelve year old LAURA SAMPSON. She and Jonah shake hands.

LAURA
Thanks for the match. I had a lot
of trouble with your serve at the
beginning.

Jonah smiles gamely as he looks down at Laura. He wants to say many things. He wants to say he's been emasculated, embarrassed, annihilated by someone whose serve isn't as fast as his groundstrokes. But, he doesn't. He just smiles.

KURT

So, Jonah, my man, it's time to
give it on up to the cause.

Jonah looks at Laura and smiles one last time before bowing his head and walking over to court side. Jonah reaches into his bag and pulls out a twenty dollar bill. He looks at it for a moment before standing. He holds out the bill, Kurt deftly pulls it from his fingers and slips it into his pocket.

LAURA

Dad, can I go hit against the wall
or something?

Kurt is distracted watching Jonah pick up his bag.

KURT

Hey Jonah, want to go double or
nothing next week?

Jonah walks past Kurt and chuckles.

JONAH

Maybe. If I can explain how I got
my dick beat into the dirt and lost
twenty bucks to a twelve year old
to my wife.

Jonah catches himself and looks at Laura embarrassed.

JONAH (CONT'D)

Sorry Laura. Laura shrugs her
shoulders.

LAURA

No problem. Daddy says worse words
at home.

Kurt laughs and pats Jonah on the shoulder.

KURT

Yes Daddy does.

LAURA

Daddy, can I go hit against the
wall or something?

KURT

Why don't you practice your serve.
She needs some work on her serve,
doesn't she, Jonah?

Jonah shrugs his shoulders.

JONAH

It's well placed but it needs a
little more pace. But she'll grow
into that.

KURT

Yeah, but a little practice never
hurt anyone.

Kurt nods for Laura to head back to the service line and she
gleefully does it.

Kurt and Jonah begin to walk out off the court as Laura's
first serve rings in the background.

KURT (CONT'D)

Wanna grab a beer? I'm buying.

Jonah thinks for a moments and then smiles as another serve
pops in the background.

JONAH

You mean she's buying.

Kurt laughs.

KURT

And it's not for the first time.

The third serve shakes the fence as Kurt and Jonah reach the
gate.

KURT (CONT'D)

Keep practicing, honey.

Laura runs to the other end of the court to retrieve the
balls. She only has three of them so this happens all the
time.

LAURA

Okay, Daddy. Have fun.

Kurt and Jonah exit the courts as Laura picks up the balls
and runs to the service line. She puts two of the balls on
the line and begins her service motion. It's a good stoke.
More natural than schooled.

She's only twelve so the balls don't have a snap behind them but the pace is good but the placement is flawless. She could hit a dollar in the dark. Her face is full of joy to be hitting this little yellow fuzzy thing.

Laura picks up another ball and begins her motion. She repeats this action and runs to the other side of the court. She picks up a ball with her racket as she runs by and continues to the back fence where she leans over to pick up another ball.

MALE (O.S.)

Hi.

Laura looks up unconcerned but doesn't stop looking for and running to her last ball.

LAURA

Hi.

Laura picks up the ball and runs to the service line. She puts two balls down and begins her service motion.

MALE (O.S)

You should toss the ball a little higher. Get some more extension on your stroke.

Laura stops her service motion and the ball falls to the ground and bounces into the court. She slowly turns towards the voice. Her best petulant expression screwed to her face.

LAURA

And you know. . .what?

REGGIE DUNLAP laughs, pulls away from the fence and starts to head into the court.

REGGIE

I know that's one lame ass serve.

Laura now fully stops and glares at Reggie as he walks into the court.

LAURA

It wasn't to lame ass to beat that guy. I saw you watching.

REGGIE

He had a lame ass game.

Laura starts to object but Reggie will be a party to none of that.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I've watched you and your father.
He picks guys with bigger ego than
games. They spend the first two
service games trying to blow you
off the court. The problem is they
blow their first serves so you end
up with their lame seconds. All you
have to do is keep the ball in
play, and you do that pretty well.
. .

LAURA

. . .thank you.

REGGIE

It's not really a compliment.

Owwwwwww, that doesn't set to well with Laura. But, Reggie
just ignores her and continues.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

All you do is wear them down in the
first three games and, if you get a
break, which you will because
they'll start over hitting and hand
you one, you coast until the sets
over. You've got good placement
(pause)
that was a compliment.

Laura just stares at him. Reggie chuckles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

But, you've got to have get a
little more racket speed if you
want to get that lame ass shit past
real players. And that's going to
take some work on your form.

Laura laughs.

LAURA

You know, all you guys got the
talk. You see this little kid and
think you'll roll her over.

Laura starts to bounce a ball.

LAURA (CONT'D)

So, are you just talk?

Laura bounces the ball with serious intent. Reggie laughs again. This sends Laura into apoplexy.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I don't have time for you, mister.
I've got to practice my lame ass
serve unless you want to go. It's
twenty a set.

Reggie laughs again.

REGGIE
I'm not going to take your money,
kid. But I'll tell you what I'll
do. I'll prove to you that you have
a lame ass serve. You give me your
best serves in one game. If you win
one point I'll give you fifty
bucks.

LAURA
And what if I don't?

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE
You've already lost, kid.

Laura stares at Reggie confused.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You're already wondering about
losing.

Laura gets learns that lesson quickly and gives Reggie a quick smile. Reggie is impressed.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Quick study.

Reggie begins to walk to the other side of the court.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Wanna bring on that lamb ass shit,
meat?

Laura bounces the ball rapidly.

LAURA
I think you've seen 'Bull Durham'
too much.

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE
It is one fine feature film.

Reggie crosses the net.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
It's no 'Slap Shot' but it ain't
bad.

LAURA
Slap Shot?

Reggie reaches the deuce service line.

REGGIE
Before your time, kid. You ready to
bring on. . .

Laura screams.

LAURA
. . .my shit's not lame ass.

Reggie spins his racket calmly.

REGGIE
I'll be the judge of that.

Reggie bounces a few times on the service line and then abruptly stops. He drops his arms to his side and takes a few steps into the court. Laura glares at this obviously attempt at gamesmanship. It does get to her but she tries not to show it. Full on transparent. She tries to get herself together so she holds the ball aloft to make sure Reggie is ready. Reggie nods and Laura begins her service motion.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Hold on, hold on, hold on.

Laura abruptly stops her motion and lets the ball fall to the ground. She's perturbed and Reggie loves this.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You do know the stakes, right?

Laura picks up the ball and shrugs at Reggie.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Let me remind you. You win one
point off your. . .

LAURA
. . .it's not a lame ass serve.

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE

We'll see. But, if you win a point
I'll hand you fifty. And you don't
even have to tell your father about
it.

LAURA

And if I don't?

REGGIE

There's that thinking about losing
again.

Laura smiles but works hard not to show it.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

But, when you don't, you meet me
here tomorrow and we spend a couple
of hours working on your serve.

Laura looks at him for a moment questionably.

LAURA

That's it?

Reggie, who knows what direction this is taking, decides to
push it a little.

REGGIE

Well. . .

Laura looks at Reggie for the first time like he's just like
all the rest.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

. . .maybe if we have some time
we'll take a look at that weak
volley.

Laura laughs despite herself.

LAURA

Yeah, but you've got to get past
this first.

Laura holds the ball aloft. Reggie nods to signal that he's
ready. Laura goes into her service motion. She puts all she
has into it. She into this serve. She'll show him. Reggie
takes another step in and pounds her serve cross court at a
speed Laura's never seen before. Reggie doesn't even look up.
He just walks to the ad court.

REGGIE

Love fifteen.

Laura is still amazed at Reggie's return but shuffles over to the ad court and begins her motion. Her serve is good. Deep to his backhand. But it's a twelve year olds serve and he tees off on it. Laura's only a foot away from it but she can't move on it.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Love thirty.

Reggie heads back to the deuce court as does Laura. For the first time in her life she really believes she has a lame ass serve. She begins her motion and her first serve is way long. Reggie just watches it float by. He bounces on the balls of his feet getting ready for Laura's second serve. She's hesitant. Her usually smooth motion now has a small hitch in it. The ball hits midway in the net. Reggie walks calmly to the ad court.

LAURA

Love forty.

Laura walks to the net to retrieve the ball and slowly heads back to the service line. She bounces the ball a few times before she sets to begin her serve. She stops when Reggie holds up his hand. Laura looks at him.

REGGIE

I just wanted to tell you to
approach the net because I'm going
to hit a drop shot.

Laura glares at Reggie and bounces the ball a few times before going into her service motion. She puts everything she has into it. This is the best serve she's ever hit in her life. Reggie steps in and hits a perfect drop shot. Laura's never seen anything like it in her life. That was the best shot she'd ever hit and this guy handled it like it was morning coffee. She's still going over that point, staring at the ball slowly rolling across the court before it comes to a complete stop only a couple feet from the net.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow about ten.

Laura looks up and watches Reggie walk out of the court. She wants to say something, anything. Ask a question. Tell him she doesn't have a lame ass serve. But all she does is watch him until he's out of sight before exiting the courts by running out the gate behind her.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is pressing her face against the chain link fence looking into the empty courts blanketed by the midmorning sun. The only sound is the intermittent sounds of traffic and a constant rippling ping as Laura kicks the fence. She may have only been waiting for ten seconds but that's an eternity to a kid on a mission.

Laura gives the fence one last ferocious kick as she pushes herself away and picks up her racket and three balls. The fence reverberates so hard it takes a few seconds before it shudders to silence. Laura has a slight impression of the chain link fence on her face. Her face has the expression of a kid who is used to being let down by adults. This guy from yesterday is just another one. Laura glares into the empty court. She is a study in concentration. Her ball and racket at the ready she exhales and leans forward to begin her serve.

LAURA

Lame, my ass.

Laura begins her service motion and it is a smooth motion. Very raw but her natural grace and intense desire makes it more than it should be. She finishes the serve and watches the ball bounce once outside of the service box before it hits the fence.

REGGIE

You should be able to hit the fence
straight from the box.

Laura looks up to see Reggie and stifles a smile. He walks into the court with a bucket of balls, a plastic milk crate and a few rackets and heads over to Laura who stands still on the baseline.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

You've got a good stoke and real
good placement but we've got to put
some juice into the ball.

Reggie reaches her and puts the bucket, crate and all the rackets except one down. Laura still stares at him cautiously. Her natural skepticism is never far from the surface. But she's intrigued by this guy. He seems to know something about the game even if he does think her serves lame. Reggie reaches into the bucket and pulls out a couple of balls. He walks to the service line forcing Laura to back up.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You've got to get a little more
height on your toss.

Reggie tosses the ball up as he speaks.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
That way. . .

Reggie's stroke is textbook flawless. He hits the ball effortlessly. The ball flies off his racket, hits the corner of the service box and sticks into the fence.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .you go into the stroke with a
full extension.

Laura tries not to stare or seem impressed but it's a transparent act.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Right now you have no extension so
although you have a good stroke. .
.

Reggie tosses the ball barely over his head.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .you're cramping yourself and
that's stopping you from getting
any pace on the ball.

Reggie goes into his serve and looks rather silly hitting a serve like this but he makes his point as the ball, which hits the exact place in to service box, weakly bounces to the fence. The ball comes to a stop on the ground under the ball that stuck in the fence.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Want to try?

Laura almost jumps out of her skin. She walks over, reaches into the ball bucket and pulls out one. This alone makes her feel like a big shot. She's never seen so many balls in one place. And they all have fuzz on them. This is the big time. She takes a few more steps to the service line but Reggie doesn't budge.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Put the racket down. Laura looks at
him like he's insane.

LAURA

What are you talking about? How am
I going to hit serves without a
racket?

Reggie reaches out for her racket. Laura reflexively pulls it
back.

REGGIE

Who said anything about serves? I
was asking if you'd like to try the
toss.

Laura looks at Reggie like he's insane.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Without a good toss. . .

Reggie tosses a ball perfectly.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

. . .you can't have a good serve.

Reggie crunches another ball that clangs into the fence
forcing the first ball to fall out of the fence. Reggie
turns, smiles at Laura and holds out his hand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Want to try?

Laura's internal battle rages. This seems stupid. But it
makes sense. Her quest to improve defeats her deeply
ingrained belief that people are generally selfish jerks.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Good. Get in your service position.

Laura gets into the service position as he walks behind her,
puts her racket on the ground with the others, picks up the
bucket of balls and milk crate and steps behind Laura. She
quickly spins around to face him. He ignores her jumpiness
and places the milk crate behind her. He then steps in front
of her and puts the bucket of balls about a foot in front of
her lead foot. He walks back behind her, steps on the milk
crate so that now he stands almost twice her height over
Laura. She looks up at him and squints from the sun.

LAURA

What are you doing up there?

REGGIE

My part of the job.

Reggie extends his racket over Laura.

LAURA

That's not all that much shade, you know. Reggie smiles.

REGGIE

True but it's not supposed to be. I want you to hit the face of my racket and have the toss fall into the bucket one hundred times in a row.

Laura spins around, still squinting while looking up at him.

LAURA

A hundred times?

REGGIE

In a row. Why? Is that too many for you to do? Want to start at ten?

Laura tries to glare at Reggie but she looks more like she's trying to sneeze. With saying anything she gets back into position and begins a toss. She looks at gangly without a racket as she goes through the entire stroke. The ball barely hits the frame and ricochets down the court.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

No, just with your tossing arm.

Laura picks up another ball still not really convinced this is much help. She gets back into position and tosses the ball too hard. It bounces hard into the court and rolls away.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

No, no, no no, no. The toss is nice and soft. Remember, this is the only time you have total control over a ball that you hit. So make sure you are in control of it all the time.

Reggie picks a ball out of the bucket and rolls it around his hand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

So be gentle with it. Hold it lightly. Think of it like a handful of Jell-O.

Laura scrunches her face.

LAURA

Jell-O?

REGGIE

Yeah. I know you've held a handful
of Jell-O.

Laura laughs.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, everyone has. But you
know that if you squeeze to hard. .

.

Reggie squeezes the ball and forces it out of his hand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

. . .plfpt, Jell-O everywhere.

Laura laughs as she hands Reggie another ball. He takes it
and holds it lightly, reverently.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

But if you hold it gently and with
control. . .

Reggie puts his hand to his mouth and makes sucking sounds.
The ball sticks to his mouth so his next couple of words are
muffled as Laura laughs at this nut.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

. . .you get a heaping helping of.
. . .

Reggie spits the balls out and licks his lips exaggeratedly
to get the taste of the ball out of his mouth

REGGIE (CONT'D)

. . .that's better. You get a good
heaping helping of cool, delicious
Jell-o.

Reggie jumps back up on the crate and extends his racket.
Laura watches him for a moment before taking a ball out of
the bucket. She holds it lightly and stares at it for a
moment. She puts her face real close to it and licks the
ball.

LAURA

Ummmm, lemon. My favorite.

Reggie laughs as Laura gets into her serving position. She
pauses for a moment and begins her toss.

It's a little hard and bounces off the face of the racket and bounces into the court.

REGGIE

A little too hard. Remember, soft,
light, controlled.

Laura picks out another ball and begins again. You can barely hear the ball hit Reggie's racket. It falls perfectly back into the bucket. Laura turns with the biggest smile on her face. Reggie smiles down at her.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

That's one. Ninety-nine more in a
row to go.

Laura's smile fades but it's not because she's mad at the short duration of the celebration. She knows he's right. It's just the beginning. She goes right back into her toss. We pull back to show the entire court. Empty except for the strange view of a guy on a crate holding a racket over a girls head while the girl tosses balls into his racket.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

By the way, my name's Reggie.
Reggie Dunlap.

Laura tosses another ball perfectly. She bends to pick the same ball out of the bucket.

LAURA

Laura.

Another perfect toss. We continue to pull out and just before we fade Laura messes up and the ball rolls down the court.

REGGIE

Let's begin again.

LAURA

I know. Laura picks up a ball and
goes into her perfect toss.

LAURA

One.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

All the shadows from the last scene have switched sides in the mid-afternoon sun. Reggie and Laura are still at it but at least Laura's actually getting to hit serves.

And hitting them well as Reggie returns them into the net so as not to annoy the people playing their version of tennis in the adjoining courts. Her serve is not overpowering to Reggie but it is the best serve we see amongst the rabble on the other courts.

Laura pulls the last ball out of the bucket and hits another technically brilliant serve. She picks up the bucket and runs to the net to begin picking up balls of serves she missed. Reggie slowly walks to his side of the net wrangling balls for ease of scooping.

REGGIE
Not bad, Laura.

LAURA
Not bad? I'm hitting the shit out
of the ball.

REGGIE
It's a good start.

Laura doesn't understand Reggie's lack of enthusiasm. She figures it's just one more in a long line of not being given her due credit by the adults in her life. She just shrugs her shoulders.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Laura, you've done great today.
Amazing actually. But it takes a
long time and a lot of hard work to
make a champion.

This peaks Laura's attention.

LAURA
You think I can be a champion?
Reggie smiles.

REGGIE
I think you can be a really good
player. You've got great natural
tools. If you did well in some
local twelve and unders you may be
able to get a college scholarship.

LAURA
But you said if I worked hard I
could be a champion. I'll work
hard.

Reggie laughs. He hasn't felt this good about the game of tennis in a long time.

REGGIE
I know you will.

Reggie pauses and looks at Laura for a moment.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And I wouldn't bet against you
being a great one.

LAURA
A champion. A real one like, um. .
.

It's here, during Laura's lapse of knowledge, that Reggie gets his first inkling of how little she actually knows about tennis.

REGGIE
Suzanne Lenglen. Hazel Wightman.
Helen Wills Moody. Sarah Palfrey.
Little Mo Connolly. Althea Gibson.
Virginia Wade. Margaret Court.
Rosie Casals. Billie Jean King.
Evonne Goolagong. Chris Evert.
Martina Navratilova. Tracy Austin.
Hana Mandlikova. Graf. Seles.
Hingis. Sabatini.

Laura listens to this litany of names with a combined expression of awe and confusion. Reggie sees that and smiles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
People have been playing tennis for
a long time, Laura. Would you like
me to bring you some books?

LAURA
That would be great.

REGGIE
Okay, I'll bring some. . .

KURT (V.O.)
. . .so, how much have you taken of
this guy, Laura?

Kurt walks up to Reggie but ignores him. Laura's expression is a combination of fear and excitement.

LAURA
None, Daddy. Reggie's been showing
me how to hit a real hard serve.
Want to see?

Laura picks up a ball.

KURT

Maybe later. Kurt looks at Reggie.

Reggie holds out his hand to shake Kurt's. Kurt pauses for an uncomfortable second as he looks Reggie over. Kurt finally shakes his hand.

KURT (CONT'D)

So, you've been teaching my girl a few things, huh?

REGGIE

A few.

LAURA

He says I could be a champion.

REGGIE

If you work hard.

LAURA

I will. Reggie smiles at Laura and then looks back at Kurt.

REGGIE

But, I'm pretty sure if her game continues to improve she can at least get a college scholarship. She's quite a natural.

LAURA

Did you hear that, Daddy? I can go to college.

Laura primps a little.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm a natural.

Kurt's barely listening. He's scanning the court looking for her next opponent.

KURT

Yeah, a natural.

He spots him. An semi-out of shape guy in real tennis clothes and a nice bag (an anomaly in a place like this) sitting by himself at the end of the court.

KURT (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

Kurt runs down the court through the other courts annoying the players. Reggie and Laura watch as Kurt makes his deal.

REGGIE

Well, we better clean up. It looks like your father's getting you a match.

Reggie picks up the remaining balls as Laura's expression clouds.

LAURA

I'd rather keep working on my serve.

Kurt and the guy start running, this time behind the courts, back to the court. Reggie picks up the last of the balls just before they arrive.

REGGIE

Laura.

Laura looks up at Reggie.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

This is a perfect time to work on your serve.

Reggie leans in conspiratorially.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I'll make you a deal. I'll spend one hour teaching you for every ace you hit against this guy.

Kurt and the guy arrive. Kurt is winded. Laura is thinking about Reggie offer.

KURT

This is Bob. He's new in town. Just moved here for his job.

BOB holds out his hand for Reggie and Laura to shake it. Laura looks at him for a second before a smile crosses her face. She takes his hand and looks at Reggie.

LAURA

You've got a deal.

Laura turns to Bob.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Nice to meat you, Bob. I'm Laura
and this is Reggie.

Bob holds out his hands and Reggie shakes it with a smile.

KURT
All right, here's the deal. Because
Bob looks like a good player.

Laura and Reggie stifle a chuckle. Kurt glares at them but they just ignore him.

KURT (CONT'D)
We're going to play this even up.
Fifty dollars a set.

Bob looks at this little kid and feels a twinge of guilt.

BOB
I'll tell you again, Kurt, I did
play varsity tennis back in high
school. I just don't want to hurt
her or rip her off.

KURT
Don't worry about it, Bob. We grow
'em tough in the city.

Bob shrugs his shoulders. Fifty bucks is fifty bucks. He reaches into his bag and pulls out a new can of balls.

BOB
If you say so.

He hands the can to Laura and starts to walk to the baseline.

BOB (CONT'D)
You can serve first.

A huge grin explodes on Laura's face. She looks at Reggie and he looks like he's about to burst.

LAURA
Thanks, meat.

Reggie laughs lightly and Kurt grimaces as Bob turns around. He's not sure he heard what he thinks he did. No, he decides, he didn't hear that. Laura continues walking to the baseline as Reggie and Kurt walk off to the side of the court.

REGGIE
Have a good match, Laura.

Reggie looks to see if Bob is out of ear shot. He is.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And take it easy on him. He looks
like he'd come back weekly once we
hooked him.

Laura hears him but she has other plans in mind. She reaches
the baseline as Reggie and Kurt stand by the side of the
court. Kurt looks at Reggie and smiles.

KURT
So, you think she's pretty good?

Reggie holds his index finger up as Laura goes into her
service motion. It's a thing of beauty. And an ace.

LAURA
Yes!

Laura pumps her arms but quickly catches herself before she
walks to the other side.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I mean, fifteen-love.

REGGIE
To answer your question, yes, she
is good.

He quiets himself as Laura goes into her next serve. Ace.

LAURA
Thirty-love.

REGGIE
Too good for this place much
longer.

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball on Strings

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball Hitting Court

SND FX Pop of a Tennis Ball Hitting a Fence

LAURA
Forty-love.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Bob looks shell-shocked. He's serving but his heart is just not into it. All the bravado from earlier has evaporated. He adjusts himself on the baseline and holds up the ball.

BOB
Fifteen-forty. Match point.

Bob goes into his serve and it's a stroke with a couple of hitches in it. The antithesis of Laura's smoothness. The serve is to Laura's forehand and she steps up and tees off on it. Bob doesn't even attempt to get it. As he walks to the net he reaches into the pocket of his shorts. Kurt is at the next before Laura and Bob shakes his head and hands the money to Kurt.

KURT
Thanks.

Kurt puts the money in his pocket as Laura reaches the net and shakes hands with Bob.

KURT (CONT'D)
So, want to give it another go next week?

Bob looks at Kurt like he's insane.

BOB
Are you kidding? I just got my ass handed to me by a twelve year old.

Bob walks off the court and picks up his bag.

BOB (CONT'D)
I don't think my ego could take another humiliation. Not to mention my wallet.

Bob begins to walk away mumbling to himself.

BOB (CONT'D)
Six-love. The fucking kid aced me twelve times.

He turns and looks back at Laura, Reggie and Kurt.

BOB (CONT'D)
Amazing. You've got talent, kid.
Good luck with it.

LAURA

Thanks.

Bob exits. Laura turns to face Kurt. He's not happy.

KURT

What the fuck was that?

REGGIE

Hey, back off here. She was just using what she learned. Knowledge as a weapon.

Kurt stares at Reggie like he's the stupidest guy in the world.

KURT

Great. And what does she do? Kick the shit out of a perfect mark.

REGGIE

She made the money.

KURT

Right. Once. If she'd just gave him a couple of games, kept him on the ropes some he'd come back every week.

Kurt begins to walk out of the court.

KURT (CONT'D)

Now we only get fifty off him.

Kurt turns and looks at Laura.

KURT (CONT'D)

I'm a little disappointed.

Kurt turns around without missing a step. Laura is visibly unnerved by this.

KURT (CONT'D)

Get home for dinner and tell your mother I'll be home in a couple of hours.

Reggie watches Kurt walk out like he's the stupidest guy in the world because he doesn't know what he has in this little kid right here. Reggie paternally pats Laura on the shoulder.

REGGIE

Excellent match, Laura.

Laura breaks into a half smile.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Twelve aces in three games.

Reggie tousles her hair. She starts grinning wider.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You can't do much better than that.

Laura is now playful.

LAURA
Well, I did think of giving up some
points to pad the ace count.

Reggie laughs and leans down to pick up a racket.

REGGIE
Thanks for taking it easy on me.

Reggie holds out the brand new racket. Laura looks at it excitedly and with trepidation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Just think how good you do when you
get rid of that shitty racket.

LAURA
You're giving this to me? What's
the catch?

REGGIE
The catch is you promise to always
use it to the best of your ability.

Laura slowly holds out her old, beaten racket and takes the brand new, high-tech model. She pulls the racket to her chest.

LAURA
You sound like some stupid jock
motivational poster.

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE
How old are you, really?

Reggie pats Laura on the shoulders again.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You better get home for dinner.

Laura looks at Reggie for a second as he picks up his rackets, basket and milk crate before she starts to run out of the court. Reggie watches her and she stops at the baseline. At the baseline she turns around.

LAURA
Reggie?

REGGIE
Yeah?

LAURA
Thank you.

REGGIE
You're welcome, Laura.

Laura turns around and begins to run out of the court again. Swinging her racket gleefully. Reggie watches her and smiles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And it's only the beginning, kid.
Reggie turns and starts to walk out
of the courts.

FADE TO:

MONTAGE

Laura running lines on the court with Reggie. Laura hitting a forehand past a Jonah. Jonah pays off a smiling Kurt. Laura hitting groundstrokes against a wall in the rain. Laura hitting volleys with Reggie. Jonah waving Kurt off nodding his head no way.

Laura alternating forehands and backhands with Reggie. Bob waving Kurt off nodding his head no way. Laura hitting overheads with Reggie. Laura practicing her serve on an empty court.

Bob, Jonah and two other GUYS waving Kurt off nodding their heads no way. Kurt walks away from Bob, Jonah and the guys. The two guys walk to the other side of the court and they start warming up.

KURT
I can't believe you grown men are
afraid to play a little girl.

BOB
She might be a little girl.

Bob hits a groundstroke.

JONAH

But she kicks our ass like a grown
man.

Jonah hits a groundstroke.

BOB

Maybe it's time she picked on
someone her own size.

Bob hits a groundstroke and Kurt resigns himself to the fact that the beer money well has gone and dried up. He begins to walk off the court.

Kurt arrives at the court Reggie and Laura are working out on. He watches them from the net for a moment before walking into the center of the court keeping his hand on the net.

Reggie and Laura ignore him while trading groundstrokes. They hit the balls past Kurt without every coming too close to him.

Finally Kurt sees that he has to be proactive so when one of Laura's groundstrokes comes over the net he reaches out for it. It stings a bit and Kurt reacts accordingly and begins shaking his hand.

KURT

Holy shit. That mother stings.

Reggie and Laura approach the net. Both stifling grins.

LAURA

Then what did you do it for?

Kurt looks up at Laura and her impudence but lets it go. He has more on his mind than the impudence his DNA imbedded in her.

KURT

So, Reggie, what were you saying
about tournaments and things for
Laura?

LAURA

I told you he'd come around.

Reggie isn't as convinced.

REGGIE

He only came around because it's impossible to raise beer money around here anymore and he has something else in mind.

Kurt laughs a greasy chuckle and pats Reggie on the shoulder. Reggie holds back his reaction. It wouldn't have been a good one.

KURT

Damn right I have something else in mind.

Kurt reaches into the back pocket of his oil stained pants and pulls out a stained, but otherwise new, issue of a tennis magazine. He riffles through the pages until he comes up with that he's looking for. He looks up and hands the magazine to Reggie. Reggie takes it with no real interest. He's pretty sure what page he's turned to. Yep, the earnings page.

KURT (CONT'D)

Look at that, some fifteen year old has made over four hundred and fifty thousand dollars this year alone. And it's only August.

Kurt looks at Reggie and Laura like he's just discovered the cure for stupidity.

KURT (CONT'D)

Sure beats taking twenties off those guys.

Kurt nods back at his ex-pigeons never taking his eyes off Reggie.

KURT (CONT'D)

So, when can we start her on the pro tour?

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE

It's not that easy, Kurt. You can't just walk up to the front gate and get into a tournament. You have to go through the juniors. Do well there.

KURT

That shouldn't be a problem for our little champ here.

Kurt tries to tousle Laura's hair but she slides away in a well practiced move. Kurt's hand flails in the air spastically.

REGGIE

It's a little different to play
people of your own caliber then
hustling bumpkins for beer.

If Kurt was insulted by that he never showed it.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

These kids have the best coaching
in the world. The best equipment.
They've been playing competitively
since before they were in school.
This is a big leap.

KURT

But our little. . .

Kurt reaches out to Laura again but this time she skitters well out of reach.

KURT (CONT'D)

. . .girl here can hold her own.

Kurt pauses and for the first time and asks a serious question.

KURT (CONT'D)

Can't she?

Reggie looks at the expectant faces of Kurt and Laura. Their expectation is for different reasons but it weighs heavily on both of them. Finally Reggie gives a little half nod and shrug.

REGGIE

I think she can hold her own in the
twelve and unders.

Laura's eyes register a happiness we've rarely seen. Finally, someone believes in her. Kurt's eyes cash register a happiness we've never seen. Finally, a way out of the work-a-day world.

LAURA

What do we have to do next?

REGGIE

Well, let me see what local tournaments are in the next couple of weeks and see how we do.

(Reggie address Kurt)

You'll be available to bring her when I set it up, right, Kurt? You would have thought someone had asked Kurt if he'd like to be shaved with a cheese grater.

KURT

Well, I, um, I thought you'd be taking care of this stuff. It is part of her tennis thing and I don't. . .

REGGIE

It's more of a parental thing, Kurt.

KURT

We're kind of backed up at Henderson's and I just don't know if I can afford to take the time off.

Laura stands there hurt. She's not hurt all that bad. She's used to being let down by adults. But this is the first time it's Reggie doing it.

LAURA

Why can't you come, Reggie?

Reggie stares down at this innocent face. There are a million reasons on his face. Non of them have to do with Laura.

KURT

Yeah, why can't you, Reggie? I mean, you are her coach. Shouldn't you be there?

Reggie's reluctance slowly begins to melt. He's obviously going through some serious soul searching to get to whatever decision he's going to make.

KURT (CONT'D)

Well, I her mother could take the car and she could. . .

REGGIE

. . .no, I'll do it.

Laura's joy envelops the scene. Kurt's relief floats over the scene.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I'll do it.

Laura reaches over the net and hugs the stiff Reggie. He pats her back. He's not totally comfortable with the decision he's just made.

LAURA

With you there I'll kick everyone's
ass.

Reggie continues to stiffly pat the ecstatic Laura while Kurt looks off into the world of untold riches as we

FADE TO:

EXT. WELL MAINTAINED TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is pounding balls with grim determination. She is dressed better than any other time we've seen her. Her game has matured. We see the banner and it reads: USTA/New England 12 and Under Girl's Championship. Under the banner is a scoreboard. Laura sure is making quick time against her opponent. The scoreboard reads:

Sampson 6 5

Abrams 1 0

Laura hits a clean winner and jogs to the net with hands held high as the UMPIRE high in his seat address the crowd over a public address system.

UMPIRE

Game, set, match, Miss Sampson, six
one; six love. Please join us in
saluting our new twelve and under
USTA/New England champion, Laura
Sampson.

The crowd continues to cheer as Laura and ABRAMS shake hands at the net. Abrams walks off dejectedly as Laura looks through the crowd. She spots who she wants and waves. We pan and see a wildly cheering ANGIE SAMPSON then her much more subdued, too coolly so, husband, Kurt and then someone we think could be Reggie. He's cheering but his face is covered almost completely with a baseball hat and dark sunglasses.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Please remain seated for our award ceremony.

Reggie, Kurt and Angie sit. Laura walks to the center of the court with the confidence of someone who has experience with this. Her opponent makes her way over also but at about the same speed as some executive members of USTA/New England, the PRESIDENT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR and JUNIOR COORDINATOR, make their way to Laura in their blazers and deck shoes.

They talk momentarily and shake hands all around before handing Abrams her trophy first who waves it slightly and poses for a few pictures. They hand Laura her trophy and she lifts it up for the pictures. She and Abrams get close, not too close, for some more pictures.

We now see the audience still applauding except for one guy who is walking the stands towards the Sampson's and Reggie. Reggie spots him first and seems to draw further into himself. Kurt sees Reggie retreat and laughs.

KURT

It's like you're embarrassed when she wins. You always slink away. You should be eating this up. I sure am. She's a champion and she's on her way. But, of course, if it wasn't for me she would have never taken up the game.

REGGIE

That's why you should. . .

MAN (V/O)

. . .excuse me.

Kurt turns from Reggie and looks at this well dressed, well tanned stranger. The man extends his hand. Kurt checks. There is no grease under his finger nails.

KURT

Yes?

Kurt sourly takes the hand of NEIL BROWNE, an Australian who runs the most successful tennis school in the world.

NEIL

Hi, I'm Neil Browne and I just wanted to congratulate you on your daughters play.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Hi, I'm Neil Browne.

Angie takes his hand and is immediately won over by him. In truth, it doesn't take much to win Angie over.

ANGIE
Hi, pleased to meet you. I'm Angie Sampson, the champs mother.

Neil turns his smile to the other piece of the trio. He figures he's her coach but, although he looks familiar, he knows he doesn't work as a teaching pro anywhere and never has. He knows because he's checked.

NEIL
And you are?

Reggie reaches out with his head down and takes Neil's hand. Neil holds it with two hands.

REGGIE
Reggie Dunlap. Friend of the families.

ANGIE
Friend of the family my ass.

Angie quickly looks around to the slowly dispersing crowd. A few people give her disapproving looks. She cringes and makes a mental note to clean up her language.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
I mean, not that he's not a friend of the family but he's more than that, he's her teacher.

NEIL
Really? You've done a remarkable job.

Neil turns to play to the family while never taking his hands from Reggie's.

NEIL (CONT'D)
This kid comes from nowhere and cleans up her section.

Neil turns back to Reggie who finally pulls away from Neil.

NEIL (CONT'D)
What is your secret?

Reggie stands there wiping his hands on his pants.

REGGIE

No secret. Just find yourself a
great player and let her do her
job.

ANGIE

He's so modest.

Everyone looks at Angie and that makes her nervous.
Especially Kurt looking at her.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Well he is. All this time je spends
with her and, I don't know much,
but I know she's real good now.
Much better than when he had her
out hustling. . .

Kurt throws Angie a look while interrupting her.

KURT

. . .so, ummmm, Mr. . .

NEIL

. . .Browne. Call me Neil.

KURT

Neil. What do you want?

Neil laughs.

NEIL

A man who gets right to it I like
that.

Kurt, Angie and Reggie just stare at this man. They know he
wants something (they were expecting that) but they're just
not sure what it is yet. Neil sees that they're not going to
be brought into his frivolity so he just trudges on.

NEIL

Well, as I said, I'm Neil Browne
and I am the. . .

REGGIE

. . .he runs a big tennis school.

Neil didn't like Reggie impudence and it flashes in his face
for a moment. Kurt and Angie missed it. Reggie didn't. Neil
regains himself and goes into his happy mode sales pitch to
Kurt and Angie.

NEIL

The biggest and most successful.

Neil turns back to Reggie and stares at him hard.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And I'm glad to see that my
reputation precedes me.

Neil turns back to Kurt and Angie.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And I'm always on the lookout for
players of Laura's caliber.

ANGIE

To go to school for tennis?

Angie is incredulous and confused about this. She's never heard of such a thing. But, Neil has seen it all before and his salesmanship never falters.

NEIL

It's more than just a school for
tennis. All of our children go to a
local private school so they have
the best scholastic education and
then they come back to the academy
for the best tennis education.

Kurt figures that this guy is just looking for new students so he's lost interest.

KURT

That's great, Neil, but we can
barely afford public school and
these damn tournaments so I think a
private school and a private tennis
school is just a little out of our
price range.

Kurt begins to walk past Neil by pushing Angie slightly into motion. Just as Angie passes Neil he steps directly in front of Kurt who almost bumps into him. Kurt just stares at him with a combination of surprise and anger. Where he's from you smack a guy who fronts you. Kurt turns and psychotically grins at Reggie in a bonding moment. Neil breaks this bond easily.

NEIL

Maybe I didn't make my intentions
clear.

I'm here to offer Laura a full
scholarship to the Browne Tennis
Academy.

Kurt's grin fades to a realization that this is the first
true step on the road to riches. Reggie sees that look and
slumps. Kurt turns around with a big grin on his face.

KURT
A full scholarship?

ANGIE
I don't know. She's. . .

NEIL
. . .being offered a complete
scholarship. Browne Academy are
always on the lookout for extreme
talent. . .

LAURA (V/O)
. . .Reggie? Mom? Dad? Come down
here and have a few pictures taken
with me.

Angie waves at Laura and begins to slowly make her way down
the stadium stairs. Kurt waves her mostly off. Reggie just
smiles helplessly and waves. Neil never takes his eyes off
Kurt. He knows he has him. He puts his hand on Kurt's
shoulder as he nods his head back to Laura.

NEIL
And I know talent, extreme talent
when I see it.

Neil leads Kurt into the stairway. Reggie slowly takes up the
rear as they walk towards a smiling and bouncy Laura. Neil
leans in and whispers to Kurt.

NEIL (CONT'D)
You don't have any contracts with
him do you?

Kurt shakes his head no.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Good. Real good.

They reach Laura and she runs past everyone else up to
Reggie. She thrusts the trophy to him and he inspects it
proudly.

REGGIE

Good match, Laura. You kept pulling her wide and never let her grab a rhythm. Excellent.

LAURA

Thanks. But it was your game plan.

REGGIE

But I couldn't have pulled it off without you.

Neil extends his hand and Laura takes it absentmindedly.

NEIL

Great match. I'm Neil. . .

LAURA

. . .thanks.

Laura looks past Neil to Angie.

LAURA (CONT'D)

This is a keeper, wouldn't you say, Mom?

Angie proudly takes the trophy.

ANGIE

Yes it is, honey.

KURT

Laura, Mr. Browne was talking to you.

NEIL

As I was saying, I'm Neil Browne and I'm here to offer you a scholarship to my tennis school. I see big things in your future and the staff at the Browne Tennis School can help you reach your full potential.

Laura thinks for a moment and looks at Reggie.

LAURA

No thanks, I have a coach.

MAN (V/O)

Laura, of you want that picture come on over. I've got another appointment.

LAURA
Be right there.

Laura looks at everyone. A nervous Angie. A stoic Neil. A masked Reggie. And a very agitated Kurt. If it was possible to sweat blood Kurt would be doing that right about now.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Come on everyone. Let's get our
picture taken.

They all begin to slowly walk over to the photographer.

NEIL
Loyalty, we like that.

KURT
Fuck loyalty.

Kurt grabs Laura's shoulder and they all stop.

KURT (CONT'D)
You don't understand, Laura, this
is the guy who owns the top tennis
school in the world and he came
here personally to give you a pro
career.

NEIL
Well, that's a bit off but, do we
think Laura, with the right
coaching, has the potential to go
pro? Yes we do.

Neil looks at Reggie.

NEIL (CONT'D)
No offense, but you know you have
limited resources to bring out her
full potential.

LAURA
He's done great so far. Neil looks
away from an impassive Reggie to
Laura.

NEIL
Yes he has.

Neil looks back at Reggie for a moment.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And I'm sure I speak for the rest of the family when I say thank you. But, we have the top coaches in the world and the opportunity to give her twenty four hour a day attention. We also have relationships with clothing and equipment companies. We're represented by the top management firm in the game and all of these contacts help us create a potential little tennis empire.

KURT

And, ah, how much potential could this little empire have?

NEIL

Right now, if we play our cards right, she could come into the game with endorsements alone in the neighborhood of five million dollars a year.

Kurt is stunned. Up until this moment he thought four hundred thousand was a nice neighborhood. He'd never even considered endorsements. This is all to Neil's advantage and he sees that.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Then if she has the pro game we feel she will, well, that's just a beginning. One of our top juniors just signed a life time contract with a racket manufacturer worth a million a year for life with a five million dollar signing bonus.

KURT

When does she leave?

Neil laughs as Laura looks at Reggie in a panic.

REGGIE

What happens if she doesn't make the tour?

KURT

She'll make it.

REGGIE

But what if she doesn't? What if she gets hurt? Burns out? I've heard some stories about schools, I'm not saying yours, abandoning students who don't cut it.

NEIL

That's nice, a caring coach. We can use caring people like you at the school. Do you have a resume?

Reggie stands in front of Neil not moving a muscle. He thinks Neil must know something about him.

REGGIE

Let's just talk about Laura right now.

NEIL

All right, in the slim possibility that Laura doesn't make the tour she will have more than enough skills to get a tennis scholarship to any college in the world. We have many contacts. . .

REGGIE

. . .what if she doesn't play tennis anymore? Then what? Will you guarantee her a college education?

Neil bristles for a moment but regains that perfect smile and continues.

NEIL

All right, although it will never happen, if it makes you happy, I'll personally guarantee her a full scholarship to any school in the world for as long as she wants.

REGGIE

In writing?

Neil is pissed but just laughs it off as he addresses Laura.

NEIL

I can see where you got your tenacious game from.

He looks at Reggie and smiles.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Yes, in writing.

That's the last time he looks at Reggie. He's been to much of an annoyance. It's time to close the sale so he circles Kurt and Angie and goes in for the kill as he walks them towards the awaiting photographer. Reggie and Laura take up the rear.

NEIL (CONT'D)
How does that sound, Mr. And Mrs. Sampson?

ANGIE
I don't know. I think Laura may be a little. . .

KURT
. . .it sounds great. Doesn't it, Angie?

Angie cowers and nods yes.

KURT (CONT'D)
This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and we do want to give Laura the best chance at fulfilling her true potential, don't we?

Kurt turns and looks at Reggie. Reggie looks at Laura and then at Kurt. He nods yes.

KURT (CONT'D)
And you've taken her just about as far as you can, right?

Reggie nods again. Neil smiles. It's chilling.

LAURA
But what if I don't want to go?

Laura looks at Reggie.

LAURA (CONT'D)
What if I want you to be my coach?

REGGIE
They have resources I don't. I'll always be there for you but, and we both knew this would happen, there was going to come a time when you'd out grow me.

Reggie motions to Neil.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I just thought they'd wait until
you were a teenager.

NEIL

It's changed a lot since you were a
kid. It's getting younger and
younger.

REGGIE

And no matter what, she'll get that
college scholarship.

NEIL

Guaranteed.

REGGIE

And I'll visit anytime you want.

NEIL

Any time. All of you. All expenses
paid, of course. The same goes for
any tournament she plays in.

Neil stops. Everyone stutter steps to a halt behind him.

NEIL (CONT'D)

But, of course, you cannot derail
any of our teaching methods.

Reggie pauses for a moment and looks at the back of Neil's
head.

REGGIE

Of course.

NEIL

Good.

Neil leads the rest of the crew to where the PHOTOGRAPHER
points to. They begin to line up. Laura in the middle with
her trophy. Reggie next to her with Angie next to him to
Laura's right. Neil next to Laura with Kurt next time her on
Laura's left. Kurt leans in to talk to Neil as the
Photographer checks his lighting.

KURT

This sounds great and all, Neil,
but I'm a working man. I can't just
be taking time off to go to
tournaments and stuff.

Neil smiles. He's got him.

NEIL

No problem. We can arrange a little
loan on her future earnings.

Kurt's eyes ch-ching.

KURT

How much of a loan are we talking
about?

The photographer finishes and goes back to his camera.

NEIL

Well, like I said, her first year
endorsements, if we play our cards
right, should be around five
million. So, we don't like to loan
too much off potential earnings so,
how about ten percent?

Kurt tries to do the math but he's coming up blank as a fart.
Neil sees this and it makes him very happy. He goes in to
help the simpleton.

NEIL (CONT'D)

So, how about when we sign the
papers I bring along a check for
five hundred thousand?

Finally, a number he understands. Doesn't comprehend it but
he likes the sound of it. An explosive smile spreads across
his face. He was thinking more in the neighborhood of a years
salary. Not fifteen years. Not that he could do the math to
come up with that.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Everyone say 'champeen'.

Everyone says 'champeen' except for Kurt. He doesn't need
artifice to smile. He needed half a million dollars. The
camera flashes and this picture is frozen for all eternity.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

Reggie, sans sunglasses and hat, is sitting in his well
appointed living room with Laura. A tennis match is playing
on the television.

LAURA

You could coach me all the way to the pros. You said you could get me a college scholarship. How come I have to go to tennis school?

REGGIE

Laura. . .

LAURA

. . .and how come you always wear that stupid hat and glasses at all the tournaments? You look ridiculous.

REGGIE

Laura. . .

LAURA

How come you don't want to coach me anymore?

REGGIE

Laura. . .

LAURA

Aren't you going to say anything to me?

Reggie looks away from Laura to the television when the applause starts. He watches the replay.

REGGIE

Nice shot. Watch how her slice approach stays low so that the return has to come up to her.

Laura looks at the television intently. Then, realizing Reggie is just subtly changing the subject goes back to the attack.

LAURA

Come on, Reg, are you going to tell me why you don't want to coach me anymore?

Reggie pauses for a moment as he slowly turns to face Laura.

REGGIE

Laura, it's not that I don't want to coach you. . .

LAURA
. . .then what is it?

REGGIE
Well, if you'd shut up for a minute
I'd tell you.

Reggie pauses with a smile on his face.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
The school can give you things I
can't.

Laura begins to interrupt but Reggie holds up a hand and she
doesn't follow through.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Sure, I may be able to give you the
tools but I can't get you in.
(Pause)
You see. . .

Reggie gets off the couch, walks over to a cabinet and opens
it. Inside are quite a few aged trophies. Laura gets off the
couch and hurries over. She's impressed.

LAURA
You've got more than me. You must
have been good.

Reggie smiles at her and pulls out a scrapbook. He flips it
to the end and shows Laura a twenty year old picture of
himself under a caption that reads in bold headline: 'Carroll
Suspended.' Under it in smaller type it reads: 'ATP votes
unanimously in gambling scandal.'

REGGIE
The funniest part is I didn't do
it.

Reggie closes the book in Laura's shocked, confused face.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
I was protecting a friend and was
told it would all be taken care of.
I thought they meant I'd be
reinstated after a few months. They
meant that they'd pay me off.

Reggie waves grandly in his living room.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And they do pay well.

Reggie puts the scrapbook back into the cabinet and closes the doors forcing Laura to move. Reggie walks back to the couch but stops in front of the television to listen to an announcer, JOHN LOUI, interview the winner, LISA CROUSE.

JOHN
I'm John Loui here with today's victor, Lisa Crouse. So, Lisa, how do these spoils feel?

LISA
Huh? Oh, ah, yeah, I guess.

JOHN
So, when did you know victory was within reach?

LISA
Ah, well, John, pretty much early on when I took the first set at love.

John chuckles unctuously

JOHN
That sure is a good sign.

Now John becomes all serious and in-depth.

JOHN
So, how do you top this stunning victory? Where do you go from here?

LISA
To the shower.

John is ultra attentive until it registers what she said. Then a look on confusion covers his face.

JOHN
No, I mean, the big where do you go from here?

LISA
Oh, wherever the tennis winds take me, John. Because, as we both know, tennis been very, very good to me.

John chuckles again.

JOHN
And me also, Lisa, and me also.

John looks into the camera and does his outro.

JOHN (CONT'D)
This has been John Loui with
today's stunning victor, both in
talent and beauty. . .

Lisa makes a scrunched up face.

JOHN (CONT'D)
. . .Lisa Crouse.

They stand there with frozen expressions until Reggie turns off the television. He walks to the couch and then looks at Laura.

REGGIE
One day that'll be you answering
John's asinine questions.

Laura plops on the couch next to him.

LAURA
Gee, that's something to work
towards.

Laura and Reggie chuckle for a moment before Laura gets serious.

LAURA (CONT'D)
That paper said some guy named
Carroll was gambling.

REGGIE
That's my real name. Even after
twenty years people still remember
so years ago I changed my name to a
name from my favorite movie.

This is way too much for a twelve year old to comprehend and Reggie knows that. So, he treads lightly.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
I was just starting out on the tour
and was befriended by a well known
player who just happened to be
gambling on matches. He got caught
but because of who he was he got
protected and because I was his
acolyte, drinking buddy and a tour
nobody they made a deal with me.

Reggie leans back on the couch.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I didn't know at the time I'd be kicked out of the game. I was so stupid. But, I've probably made more money by selling out than I would have in the game.

Reggie leans forward into Laura's face.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

That's why it's probably better that you go to Browne's before someone finds out that you are connected to me.

Laura's smart so she does figure out that Reggie's right. It doesn't make it any easier but she understands.

LAURA

Do you miss the game?

Reggie looks at Laura for a long beat.

REGGIE

At first, every day. I'd go out of my way to avoid tennis courts. After a while I could watch and slowly I went back and played a little. But I didn't have any feeling for it.

Reggie picks up Laura's tiny hands.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Until I met you. I want you to be the best player you can be and have every possibility to be that player. Will you make that promise to me?

Laura stares at Reggie with full love and trust.

LAURA

I will.

Laura reaches up and hugs Reggie. After a beat he hugs her back.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A DRIVER is placing Laura's meager baggage into the trunk limousine.

A few neighbors gawk from their windows or stoops at this scene. Neighborhood kids swarm around the car. Limo's are a rare commodity in this neighborhood.

Laura is standing on the stairs to the triple decker that has been her only home. Reggie, in hat and glasses, is standing in front of her on the sidewalk. Because of this, they appear the same height.

Kurt and Neil are going over some papers on the hood of the limo. Angie is three steps behind Kurt angling her best to see what Kurt is signing. Every time she moves he moves to block her view.

Kurt flips over the last page and with a flourish and a smile takes the pen Neil has been dangling in his face. With equal panache Kurt signs on the bottom line, shakes Neil's hand and turns to his family as Neil folds up the contract and places it into his suit coat pocket.

KURT

Let's go, Laura, the plane won't wait.

Laura has a look of apprehension on her exhausted face. She looks at Kurt, Angie and then Reggie. They half smile at each other for a moment before she leans forward to awkwardly hug him and whisper in his ear.

LAURA

How come doing the right thing sometimes feels so bad?

Reggie smiles sadly.

REGGIE

That's when you know you're all grown up.

Reggie breaks the hug and slowly leans back.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And you're too young to be all grown up.

KURT

Let's go!

Laura and Reggie snap their attention to the bellowing Kurt.

REGGIE

Better get a move on, Laura.

Laura steps down from the stairs. She looks so tiny to Reggie now. She looks up at him and squeezes his hand before moving away. Laura holds Reggie's hand for as long as she can before he slips from her grasp.

Immediately after their touch is broken Angie grabs her little girl into her arms and squeezes.

ANGIE

Oh, your father and I are so proud
of you. We can't wait to see you on
the TV.

Laura pulls away.

LAURA

You'll visit me before then, won't
you?

It takes Angie a second to comprehend what Laura means. After she does she scoops her back into her arms again.

ANGIE

Oh, honey, we'll be there in a few
weeks. Neil says that there's some
school thing and. . .

KURT

. . .could we get this fucking
thing moving or what?

Angie quickly releases Laura and steps away so that she can move to the limo unimpeded. After a beat Laura walks over to Kurt. She stands in front of him for a moment before he leans down and gives her a quick hug and pat on the back.

KURT (CONT'D)

Play good and work hard. Make us
all proud of you.

Laura takes a step back and walks past Neil to the door the Driver is holding open.

LAURA

I will, Dad.

Just before she disappears into the car she looks over to Reggie one last time. They trade smiles. They both know the moment she gets into that car nothing will ever be the same again.

LAURA

I'll make you proud of me, Reggie.

REGGIE

I already am, Laura. I already am.

Laura disappears into the car. Neil walks over to Angie and shakes her hand and smiles at her. Reggie can't hear what they're saying but it doesn't seem to assuage Angie's guilt.

Neil turns around to the hovering Kurt and gives him a hearty handshake. After the handshake Neil reaches into his pocket and hands Kurt two envelopes. Kurt hungrily takes them and shoves them into the back pocket of his jeans. After one more handshake Neil walks towards the back-door that just swallowed Laura whole. Just before he gets in he looks up at Reggie and smiles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

You really should think about sending on your resume, mate. I'm pretty sure we know some of the same people.

Reggie doesn't acknowledge anything as Neil and his smile fade into the car. The Driver shut the door in almost total silence before scurrying to the drivers side and pulls the limo carefully into the street. Kurt turns away from the car as soon as it pulls from the curb and begins to walk back towards his house. Angie and Reggie watch it until it turns left and out of view.

KURT

Here.

Reggie's a little taken aback to see that Kurt is standing in front of him holding out an envelope. Without thinking, he takes it from Kurt.

KURT (CONT'D)

Open it.

Reggie's a little curious so he tears open the envelope. He looks in and pauses. He takes off his sunglasses and coldly stares into Kurt's eyes.

KURT (CONT'D)

Neil said, I mean, we thought it was best if you were paid for, um.
.

Kurt turns to Angie who is standing there staring at the sidewalk.

KURT (CONT'D)
. . .what did Neil say this was
for?

ANGIE
Services rendered.

KURT
Yeah, services rendered. We wanted
to thank you for getting Laura
started. So, take it. Thanks.

Kurt begins to walk past Reggie. Reggie places his hand with
the envelope in it on Kurt's chest stopping him cold.

REGGIE
No thanks. What I did I did for
love. Love for the game and love
for Laura. You better keep this. It
may come in handy.

Kurt takes a step back putting his hand over the envelopes
and pulling it back with him.

KURT
It doesn't matter if you take it or
not. She's not your student
anymore. We were trying to do the
right thing with you. So, thanks
and fuck off.

Kurt walks past Reggie and bounds up a couple of stairs
before turning around.

KURT (CONT'D)
Angie! Get up here!

Angie sheepishly walks up to Reggie and looks up at him
sadly.

ANGIE
It's for the best, Reggie. It
really is.

KURT
Angie!

Angie shakes her furtive glances from Kurt to Reggie before
scurrying up the stairs. She turns around when she's one step
past Reggie.

ANGIE
She'll never forget you, Reggie.

Reggie smiles and puts his sunglasses back on.

REGGIE

Be careful, Angie and take good care of her. She is special.

KURT

Angie! Get the fuck up her right this minute.

REGGIE

And don't let him make all the decisions.

Reggie begins to walk towards his car. Angie watches him for a moment before trudging up the stairs. She reaches Kurt and stops. They both watch Reggie get into his car. As he begins to pull away Kurt pulls the check out of the envelope Reggie gave back to him.

KURT

Fuck!

ANGIE

What? And would you watch your language?

Kurt waves the check in Angie's face.

KURT

How are we going to cash this?

SND FX Short Berp of a Car Horn

Reggie drives past.

KURT (CONT'D)

The fucker didn't sign it.

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

SUSAN DONNOLLY and TONYA ROBERTS are standing like the bored teenagers they are. Travelers walk past them as Tonya, the lower ranked of the two, is halfheartedly holding up a handwritten sign that reads: Lori Samstrung.

SUSAN

So who do you think this one is supposed to replace?

TONYA

You, of course.

SUSAN

Hey!

TONYA

Come on. You've seen her picture.
Blonde, blue eyes. The only
difference between the two of you
is the ten pounds of come you've
swallowed.

Susan laughs and slaps Tonya's shoulder.

SUSAN

You don't know that for a fact. She
is an 'inner city' kid after all.

Susan and Tonya laugh as Laura comes through the gate. Susan quiets Tonya and fumbles to make her hold up the sign. Tonya waves it like a fan. Laura looks around confused carrying her motley collection of bags. She sees two girls looking at her fanning themselves with a sign. She looks past them. Susan and Tonya look at each other like this is the stupidest kid in the world. Tonya starts rattling the sign.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Lori Samstrung. Is there a Lori
Samstrung here? Going to the Browne
Tennis Academy?

Laura stops when she hears the name Browne and looks back at the girl. Susan stares at her and Tonya holds the hand in both hands. Now that the area is pretty much empty Laura doesn't have much choice but to approach these strangers.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Lori Samstrung?

LAURA

I'm Laura Sampson. Are you from the
Browne. . .

SUSAN

. . .yeah.

Susan turns around and begins to leave with Tonya, who jettisons the sign with a flourish, close behind. Laura repositions the bags on her shoulders and steps over the incorrect sign in her haste to catch up.

EXT. PICK-UP/DROP-OFF AREA OF THE AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Susan and Tonya are sitting in a red sports car. Tonya sits in the back. Susan revs the engine as Laura gets close.

SUSAN

Toss your crap in the back with
Tonya and get in. We're late.

Laura jogs over to the car and hands her bags to Tonya. Tonya places them next to her paying careful attention to Laura's racket bag.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And don't scratch the car or Neil
will get pissed.

Once all the bags are in the car Laura slides into the front seat. She puts on her seat belt and extends her hand to Susan.

LAURA

I'm Laura Sampson.

Susan pulls out of the illegal parking spot with a squeal.

SUSAN

I'll remember your name if you last
the week.

As Susan drives out of the airport we see Tonya pull Laura's rackets out of her bag. She pushes the strings.

TONYA

You may need these rackets strung
soon. Seems a little mushy to me.

Tonya keeps one hand on the racket and reaches into her purse. As the car pulls away we see a glimmer flash near the strings of Laura's rackets.

FADE TO:

EXT. BROWNE TENNIS ACADEMY - NIGHT

The red sports car squeals to a stop in front of a lit court. The players on the court, 10 year old RON ROSETTI and his coach, FRED HENDERSON, pay little attention. Laura looks at it very impressed. She's never seen a lit court.

SUSAN

Let's go. It's time for your first
challenge match.

LAURA

What?

Susan and Tonya get out of the car and begin to walk to the
courts.

SUSAN

You've got to start sometime.

TONYA

Didn't they tell you?

LAURA

No.

SUSAN

We've got to put you in the
rankings so we need to get you a
match.

LAURA

I'm kind of tired. This was my
first time on an airplane and I'm
still a little. . .you know.
Couldn't I. . .

SUSAN

. . .no. Get your rackets out of
the car and let's get going.

Laura, confused, alone and knowing that what she chooses to
do here will always be with her, goes to the car and grabs
her racket bag.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Good.

Laura begins to walk past Susan and Tonya to the court and
she's stopped by Susan. Laura looks up at Susan. A mixture of
fear and confusion on her face.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You'd better beat this kid because
you know what happens if you don't?

Laura looks at Susan and shakes her head no.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It means you're the lowest player
on the ladder. And do you know what
the lowest player on the ladder has
to do?

Laura looks at Susan and shakes her head no.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You have to wash all of Neil's
cars.

TONYA

All of them.

Susan leans down real close to Laura. She's a little
intimidated.

SUSAN

And I hate living in a dorm with
the lowest player on the ladder.

Susan pauses for a moment before stepping aside. Laura waits
an extra beat before heading into the court.

She walks up to Ron with her hand extended. He cracks off
another forehand, quite impressive for a ten year old, that
must be why he's ranked number one in the nation, and ignores
her. He jogs over to the other side of the court to begin the
match. Henderson, a very large man, jogs up to Laura. She
extends her hand but he also ignores it.

FRED

You ready? We really don't have
much time for a warm-up.

Laura nods a tired yes and tosses her bag out of the way
towards the fence. Fred walks to the net and addresses Ron.

FRED (CONT'D)

Ready?

Ron nods yes bouncing on the balls of his feet.

Fred turns to a flat footed Laura.

FRED (CONT'D)

Ready?

Laura nods yes.

FRED (CONT'D)

Let's play. Because of time
restraints we'll only be playing
one set. This is to determine
Laura's place on the ladder.

SUSAN

And who's going to wash Neil's cars
tonight.

Susan and Tonya find that so amusing.

FRED

Let's play. Challenger serves
first.

Laura picks a ball out of a bucket and moves the bucket to the fence. Laura moves to the service line and holds the ball aloft. Ron nods that he's ready. Laura goes into her perfect service motion. Her face finally becomes animated. She's back in her element. The toss is perfect. Her motion is flawless. Her hips lead her into the serve. Her racket begins to snap into the ball. The ball hits the middle of her strings as it has done thousands of times before. Her string breaks. The ball barely makes it to the net before stopping. Susan and Tonya stifle laughter.

FRED (CONT'D)

Fault. Second serve.

LAURA

Broke a string.

FRED

Get another racket.

Laura looks at Fred and then Ron while she shows them her broken string. She tosses the racket toward the fence as she runs to her racket bag. She leans in and pulls out her final racket. She runs back to the service line and begins her second serve. Again, her toss is perfect. Again, her motion is incredible. Again, her string breaks.

FRED (CONT'D)

What the fuck! Why don't you kids
take care of your equipment? How do
you expect to play your best
without your best equipment?

Laura stands there looking at her strings.

TONYA

I told her they looked a little
frayed.

Susan and Tonya laugh together sitting on the body of the
car.

FRED

Bring out another one.

LAURA

I, um, I don't have another racket.

FRED

What the fuck? Don't we give enough
to you kids?

LAURA

I just. . .

FRED

. . .I don't want to hear your
shit.

Fred addresses Susan and Tonya.

FRED (CONT'D)

Do you girls have any rackets with
you?

They both vigorously shake their head no.

SUSAN

No, Fred, we were just supposed to
pick her up from the airport.

Fred turns to Ron.

FRED

What about you Ron?

RON

I only brought two. What if I break
a string?

FRED

Damn.

Fred leans down and picks up his racket. He holds it out,
grip first, to Laura who has to run to get it. She wraps her
hand around it and it looks like she's wrapping her hand
around a two by four. This is a man's racket and way too big
for Laura.

FRED (CONT'D)
Ready to play? It's love fifteen.

LAURA
Isn't there a smaller racket around here?

FRED
Are you going to be a prima donna after ten minutes here?

LAURA
No, I. . .

FRED
. . .I sure hope not. Play or forfeit.

Laura looks at the racket. Spins it around in her hand. She can barely control that. But, she runs back to the service line.

FRED (CONT'D)
Love fifteen.

Laura begins her perfect service motion and it is. Until she begins the forward motion of the racket. The racket is too heavy and it throws her motion all off. She does hit the ball but she hits it far long.

FRED (CONT'D)
Out.

Susan and Tonya laugh in the background. Laura doesn't look at them as she picks up another ball and walks to the service line. Laura goes into her serves ready position and her face doesn't have that old confidence. That old spark. That old instinct. But, she goes forth with it.

FRED (CONT'D)
Double fault. Love thirty.

Laura looks older than we've never seen before as we

FADE TO:

EXT. NEIL'S PARKING AREA - NIGHT

Laura is looking over Neil's vast collection of luxury, sport and classic cars. It's a daunting array. She sighs and picks up her instruments of car cleanliness.

SUSAN

I feel so bad for you, Laura.

TONYA

Yeah, I can't believe they'd put someone with your shitty game in here with us.

SUSAN

Well, maybe Neil's branching out into training car wash attendants.

Susan and Tonya laugh as they wander away from Laura and her task.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hope it doesn't take all night. You have a busy day tomorrow.

Laura watches Susan and Tonya laugh and walk away. She turns and looks back over the cars. With a sigh she pulls a sponge out of the bucket and splashes it on the first car.

EXT. FRONT OF THE DORMITORY - MORNING

A drenched and exhausted Laura looks at the soaked and running number on a piece of paper she could barely pull out of her pocket without destroying. It matches the number on the building so she enters the building.

INT. LAURA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Laura and her wet clothes and squishy shoes finally finds her room and opens the door and turns on the light. It's a very sparse room. A bed. Alarm clock/radio. Desk. And a closet. One her unmade bed are her sheets and blankets, her bags, broken stringed rackets and a three ring binder. She reads the words embossed on the binder: Rules & Regulations for players at The Browne Tennis Academy. Under that is a strip of athletic tape with Laura's name written on it in magic marker. A note is stuck under the tape that reads: 'We'll emboss your name on it when your ranking get's respectable.' It's not signed but Laura's pretty sure where it came from. She picks it up and tosses it onto the desk. It lands with a plastic thump. She tosses her bags and rackets on the floor and begins to make her bed.

SND FX Poounding on her Door

Laura jumps out of her skin.

MALE (V/O)

Let's go, Sampson, in the office
next to the front door in ten
minutes. And bring all your gear
with you.

Laura's fright is quickly overridden by abject fear. Is she being kicked out already? She didn't play too bad considering. But he was ten years old. All these things are going through her mind as she sits on the still unmade bed and begins to take off her wet clothes.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Laura is standing in front of the open office door. She looks in and sees KEVIN O'CONNOR, the quintessential tennis instructor at his desk. He senses someone standing in front of him and slowly looks up. He laughs with abandon when he sees a rather disheveled and forlorn Laura standing there with all her bags.

KEVIN

I meant just your tennis gear.

Laura begins to turn to head back to her room but Kevin quickly stops her.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hold it. Come in here and put all
your stuff over there.

Kevin points to a couch. Laura quickly walks over and puts everything except her rackets over there.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Them too. How were you going to use
them with no strings? You've got to
think here, Sampson.

Laura puts her rackets on top of her stuff.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Besides, you'll be using this brand
of racket from now on.

Kevin picks up a few plastic wrapped, newly strung rackets from the top of his desk and holds them out to Laura. She walks towards the desk.

LAURA

How come I have to use these?

KEVIN

They pay your tuition; you use
their equipment. That's how it
works.

Laura takes the rackets from Kevin.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

And here.

Kevin picks a pile of new tennis clothes and some sneakers
from the floor and tosses them towards the couch.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

From now on you only wear this type
of clothes and that type of
sneaker.

Laura looks at all the clothes confused for a second. She
looks back at Kevin and smiles.

LAURA

They pay my tuition; I wear their
clothes.

Kevin laughs.

KEVIN

Pretty close. There may be hope for
you yet. But, they pay your
expenses; you wear their clothes.

LAURA

Got ya.

KEVIN

Now go into that bathroom there and
change into your new identity.

Kevin points to a door off to his left. Laura picks out some
clothes and a pair of sneakers from the pile and heads off to
the bathroom.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

And you'd better do a whole hell of
a lot better in your next challenge
match or I'll be honest with you,
Laura, a whole shit storm will fly
up into your face.

LAURA

From that girl who picked me up?

KEVIN

Susan? Kid, she's the least of your worries here.

The new Laura Sampson steps out of the bathroom.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Good. Now run over to court seventeen for your morning conditioning. I'll catch up with you later for a private lesson.

Laura stands there for a second looking at her nice new clothes, her nice new racket and her nice new sneakers but she doesn't know if politeness is used here much less required.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Get a move on. Class starts in three minutes and the instructor hates if anyone's late. Especially on their first day.

Without another word, Laura bolts out of the office. Kevin watches her leave for a moment then nods his head and goes back to some paperwork.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is running line sprints over a tennis court with a group of 12 and under players. Although she is as good a player as everyone on the court, their conditioning is vastly superior. Seven days a week of this type of relentless training will do that to you. Laura is always the last one to touch the lines. The MIKE WOOD has drill sergeant style in expensive tennis togs.

MIKE

What the fuck is wrong with you, Sampson? Quit dogging it, Sampson. Do you think anyone here gives a fuck that you're a USTA champion, Sampson? Everyone stop. Stop, stop, stop.

Slowly everyone stops and looks at the Conditioning Instructor.

MIKE (CONT'D)

So, is that it, Sampson? You think you're special because you've won some dumb ass USTA championship?

A sweat drenched Laura continues to stare at her feet and nods no.

MIKE (CONT'D)
I don't know, Sampson, you sure seem to act like a prima donna. All right, let's see just how special you are. All those who've won a USTA title in any age division please raise your hand. Half the sweating group raises their hands.

The Conditioning Instructor walks over to Laura counting the hands along the way.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Whoa, I don't think I can count this high. Can you, Sampson?

Laura nods no as the Conditioning Instructor reaches her.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Look up when I speak to you, Sampson. Laura's head snaps up.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Take a look around, Sampson. All these people are champions. Half the god damn students in this hell hole are national champs. Shit, I think the ones that aren't could kick your out of shape ass.

The Conditioning Instructor slowly leans down until his face is almost on top of the backwards leaning Laura. This is the first time his voice isn't in full bellow.

MIKE (CONT'D)
You make me sick.

The Conditioning Instructor jogs off the court blowing a whistle.

MIKE (CONT'D)
That's it, get to your next class.

All the other students run off the court except for Laura who jogs out last. As she's about to pass the Conditioning Instructor he blocks her way out.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Where do you think you're going, Sampson? This is your next class.

The Conditioning Instructor walks past her on his way to his observation post in the back of the court.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I think you know the routine by
now, Sampson.

He turns and watches her walk back into position. She stands there with her back to him. She's moments from cracking but she will not give him the satisfaction. She thinks of him like her brother with a whistle. She kind of smiles.

MIKE (CONT'D)

And this time let's see if you can
move faster than a 2400 baud modem.
Is that okay with you, Sampson?

With that, Laura is off and running.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is bouncing on the court to the best of her exhausted ability. She hasn't slept in over 36 hours and it shows. But, she keeps bouncing and keeps her head up in this overhead drill.

SND FX Roar and Pop of a Tennis Ball Machine

Laura gets her head up and points to the ball to set-up her overhead. She cracks it.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Great, Laura, two more.

SND FX Roar and Pop of a Tennis Ball Machine

Laura takes two steps back and finesses the ball over the net.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Come on, Laura, hit the ball. You
have to win overhead points
outright. Don't give your opponent
an opportunity to take it away from
you. One more.

SND FX Roar and Pop of a Tennis Ball Machine

Laura scans the sky for the ball, sees it and points to it, legs bent, racket ready, she waits for it to descend to her optimum contact spot. The ball arrives there and Laura pounds her overhead deep into the court. A winner in any league.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Excellent.

Kevin turns the ball machine off. The motors whines to a halt. He walks to the net to meet with Laura. He looks at this little exhausted kid and laughs.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Tough day for you?

Laura can only manage a weak nod of her head.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Welcome to the big time, kid. Why don't you go catch a shower and hit the rack early tonight.

Kevin will have receive no argument from this twelve year old.

LAURA
Thank you, Kevin.

KEVIN
My pleasure. You've got all the tools. You could be a good one.

LAURA
Thank you.

With that Laura turns and runs to the fence to collect her gear. She kneels down to pack up her stuff.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Did you beat that little prick in your challenge match?

Laura looks up confused. The late afternoon sun makes it difficult to see who it is but she knows.

LAURA
What challenge match?

SUSAN
Are you dense?

Susan addresses her ever handy partner in crime, Tonya.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
Is she dense?

TONYA
Looks that way so far.

Susan looks back down at Laura with her full impudence flowing.

SUSAN

You didn't show up to the match?

Laura stands up with her bag slung over her shoulder.

LAURA

I did know there was a match.

SUSAN

How could you not know?

LAURA

No one told me.

SUSAN

No one told you? What kind of lame excuse is that? Everyone knows that if you lose a challenge match you have to play them until you win or lose three times in a row. And do you know what happens if you lose three times in a row to the last player on the ladder?

Laura nods a tired no.

TONYA

Tell her, Susan.

SUSAN

You get taken off the tournament side and get placed with the B's.

TONYA

The B's are all the sucky players.

SUSAN

And I hate B's in my dorm.

All of a sudden, Susan's attitude goes from deathly to airy.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

But, that's not my problem. You already lost so I guess you have to do the duty tonight.

LAURA

I already washed all Neil's cars.

SUSAN

I remember that. Are you saying
that I'm stupid?

LAURA

No.

SUSAN

I didn't think so. Tonight you get
to serve the top players, me
included, dinner at Neil's house.

Susan and Tonya push away from the fence and begin to turn
away.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Be there at six thirty and wear
your best dress. Even if you have
to borrow it.

Susan and Tonya laugh as they walk away from the court. Laura
shifts her gear and begins to walk out of the court to her
dorm.

LAURA

Bring on your lame ass shit, meat.

INT. NEIL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Susan is sitting at one end of the long dining table. Tonya
is sitting to her right midway down the table. At the
opposite end of the table is MARK PASSEMATO, the top under 18
at the school and a total blue chipper. To his right midway
down the table is his partner in crime, GEORGE MANFRA. Mark
raises his glass in toast.

MARK

To six more weeks here and then a
lifetime on the tour.

Susan, Tonya and George raise there glasses in agreement.
Susan puts her glass down first, picks up a little bell and
ring it. A door at Mark's end of the room swings open and
Laura enters. She's wearing her best dress, as requested. The
problem is it's a very formal dress and looks ridiculous in
this situation. Of course, Susan, Tonya, Mark and George see
this and laugh. Laura ignores them and walks over to Mark and
opens the pizza box.

SUSAN

You're the servant here, Sampson.

TONYA

Yeah, you're not a guest.

SUSAN

Mark, do you think it's a good that the help is dressed better than the guests?

MARK

It isn't the norm, but she sure looks fine.

SUSAN

Hey, Sampson.

Laura looks down the long table to Susan.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Keep your slut ass away from my man.

Mark reaches out and pulls Laura closer.

MARK

Don't listen to her. You can put your slut ass against me any time you want.

Laura glares at Mark with a smile plastered on her face. She waits for Mark to choose a slice, pulls it out with a spatula, closes the box and moves down to Tonya. Tonya looks up to her with derision as she points to a slice.

TONYA

Is this the entire menu tonight?

LAURA

There's also shit on a stick but it looks like that's what I'll be having.

Mark and George laugh as Tonya boils. Susan wants to laugh but knows better.

SUSAN

Sampson, get your ass down here before the pizza gets cold.

Laura finishes serving Tonya and walks down to Susan.

LAURA

Madam bellowed?

Susan slaps the pizza box and the remaining slices fly into Laura's face and dress.

SUSAN

What a fucking klutz. Clean that
shit up and get the other box now.

Laura leans over and picks the slices and remnants off the floor. She stands up and begins to pick pizza off her face and dress. Susan slaps her hand.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

No, don't clean yourself off on our
time.

Laura stops as a piece of cheese drops off her face onto the top of the box. She smiles, picks it off the box and sticks it back to her face. With that, amongst laughter from the boys, she heads back into the kitchen.

MARK

This is going to be a tough one to
break.

GEORGE

She does have balls, Susan.

SUSAN

Shut the fuck up. Everybody breaks.

Laura enters the dining room with pizza slices on her head and even more pizza on her than when she left. Mark and George explode with laughter.

MARK

Maybe not everyone.

Susan glares at Laura as she walks towards her with a big smile and an open pizza box. Laura reaches her and, with a big smile, offers Susan her choice of pizza. Susan points at one offhandedly and Laura gleefully serves it. As she leans over to put it on her plate Laura leans in to her and whispers.

LAURA

I'm much harder on myself than you
could ever be.

Laura stands up and walks toward George to serve him.

SUSAN

We'll see.

Susan takes a big bite of pizza as she watches Laura walk to the door and enter the kitchen.

INT. NEIL'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Laura tosses the pizza box on top of the others and walks over to a stainless steel pan hanging from a hook. She looks at her ridiculously distorted and stained face. One tear slides down her cheek as she pulls the pizza from her face and hair.

MONTAGE

Laura walking into the locker room and having all the other girls laugh and point at her. Laura practicing serves on the only lit court in the school. Laura beating the ten year old, Ron Rosetti, at love.

An Xacto knife being inserted into Laura's shoe. The tip of the Xacto knife slips through the sole for a moment before it disappears and slices inside the shoe.

Laura running side lines and her shoe splits open and she goes into a fierce tumble.

The Browne Tennis Academies ranking board with Laura's name being placed at number twenty. Laura shaking hands with one of the older girls who laughed at her earlier in the montage.

Laura walking into the locker room and having all the other girls turn and ignore her. Laura in her room holding up her sliced up clothes and smashed racket. Laura finishes screwing a hasp onto her closet door and throws a combination lock on it. She even put her sheets and alarm clock in there.

The Browne Tennis Academies ranking board with Laura's name being placed at number nine. Neil looking at the mock-up of an advertisement of Laura and smiling.

Laura acing Tonya and running to the net. Tonya walks off the court without acknowledging Tonya.

The Browne Tennis Academies ranking board with Laura's name being placed at number two. The only name above her on the challenge board is Susan's.

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - DAY

Neil sits behind his huge desk with something that looks like a placemat in front of him.

In front of the desk, sitting as far away from each other as possible while still being in the same room, is Laura and Susan.

NEIL

I'm very proud of you both. You've both worked very hard to get to where you are. Both of you are a credit to the academy. And, as you know, there should be a challenge match between you two.

SUSAN

Bring on this punk, I'll crush her.

LAURA

I've seen your game, Susan. Lame ass doesn't even begin to describe it, meat.

Susan begins to get up quickly followed by Laura. Susan is at least half a foot taller but Laura never backs down. Neil pounds on his desk.

NEIL

Sit the fuck down. After a moment they do.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Good. That's great. I love that combativeness. That's what it's all about.

Neil pauses for a moment and comes back very calmly.

NEIL (CONT'D)

But if I ever hear of that combativeness happening outside of the walls of this school I'll fucking eviscerate either one of you. Do either of you doubt me?

Susan nods vigorously. Laura less so. Not because she's all that tough but because she doesn't know yet how far Neil's reach can go.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Good. Now, as you know we need a challenge match. But here's my problem. Susan's is leaving for her first tour even this week and I don't think it would be beneficial for her game to have such a tough match before her debut.

SUSAN

It wouldn't be that tough a match.

LAURA

I'd be nice and take it easy on you.

NEIL

Enough. I have a solution. I was fortunate enough to come up with a solution. I got Laura a spot in the draw.

Susan sits mouth agape. Laura is confused.

SUSAN

What the fuck is this, Neil? I work all these years and she's here for six weeks and she get's a spot? That sucks.

NEIL

Maybe it sucks but it's great press. You know about getting great press, don't you, Susan?

Susan looks down and nods softly.

NEIL (CONT'D)

I knew you would. And just because you're in the same tournament doesn't mean you'll end up in the same half of the draw. And. . .

Neil picks up the large sheet of paper from the desk and hands it to Susan. Susan takes it and a huge smile crosses her face. Laura looks at the poster for a moment before looking away. We see that it's an advertising poster with Susan's pretty face and a few shots of her in action. Susan is joyous.

NEIL (CONT'D)

I told you it would all work out. All you have to do is get to the quarters of this tournament and by next month this ad will be in every tennis publication in the world. And, if you get to the finals. . .

Neil reaches into his desk, pulls out a video tape and waves it at Susan.

NEIL (CONT'D)
. . .this TV ad will be featured on
every televised match from now
until the U.S. Open.

Neil puts the tape back in the desk.

NEIL (CONT'D)
How does that sound?

The glee on Susan's face is palpable. All the time, all the
work and the payoff is finally in sight.

NEIL (CONT'D)
So, both of you take it easy for
the rest of the week and be ready
to leave on Friday.

Neil picks up his telephone and hits speed dial as Susan and
Laura stand up to exit.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Kev? Neil. Schedule a soft week for
Laura and Susan. They'll be flying
out on Friday morning.

Susan and Laura exit the office. Neil pauses for a moment.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Has the draw come in?
(Pause)
Great. Is it good?
(Pause)
Perfect. We're going to get a ton
of press with this. Tell some of
the younger kids and let it filter
through that way.

Neil hangs up the phone and smiles.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Susan, Tonya, Mark and George are standing outside the fence
watching some other kids run hitting drills. Susan is holding
a many times crumpled piece of paper and shaking it wildly.

SUSAN
When the kids were talking about it
earlier in the week I thought it
was just a rumor. Now I know this
is one of Neil's tricks.

TONYA

Come on, Susan, this is a pro
tournament. he can't set that up.

SUSAN

Please, Tonya, wake the fuck up.
Look at this draw.

Tonya pulls the paper from Susan's hand and looks at it.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I play Laura in the first round.
You think that's a coincidence?
Please. What the fuck am I going to
do?

MARK

Are you afraid of her?

Susan pauses for a moment. She's not too sure of her answer.

SUSAN

She's been hitting the ball a ton.
She has nothing to lose and I have
everything to lose. So, yeah, does
this sound like one of Neil's
upsets in the making? You bet your
ass. Think of the press he'd get
with that?

Susan pulls the paper out of Tonya's hand and looks at it
before crumpling it up again and throwing it on the ground.
Mark moves towards Susan and pulls her close.

MARK

I'm sorry, baby, don't worry, I'll
see what I can do.

Susan pushes him away and exposes her huge smile.

SUSAN

You will? What will you do?

MARK

Just a little meeting with her. See
if I can reason with her. I do have
that unbeatable charm, you know.

Susan hugs him.

SUSAN

That you do.

EXT. FRONT OF GIRLS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Mark and George are leaning against the wall as a parade of pretty little tennis players pass and smile at them. These are the top male players in the school and recipients of many crushes. Finally Laura appears and Mark and George block her way. Laura barely looks up but has to when it looks like she's not going to get past them without some type of confrontation. She looks up at Mark who is smiling down at her.

MARK
Congratulations.

LAURA
Thanks.

MARK
I really mean it. You've sure come
a long way since the dinner party.

Mark and George laugh.

MARK (CONT'D)
You sure did put Susan in her place
that night.

Laura cracks a little smile.

MARK (CONT'D)
Coming back with the pizza on your
head. That was too much. Wasn't it
George?

GEORGE
Sure was.

MARK
It was about time someone stood up
to her. She's not all that, you
know.

LAURA
We'll see next week.

MARK
Yeah, and what about that? You
pulling her in the first round?
That's kind of amazing, don't you
think?

LAURA
Luck of the draw.

MARK
You've got her scared.

LAURA
Yeah right.

MARK
Well, maybe not about the match
(Mark moves closer to
Laura)
but about us.

Laura is a little taken aback by this but she also has to realize that she's no different than any other twelve year old girl. She thinks he's cute and any attention is good attention.

LAURA
Please.

MARK
I'm serious. She sees how I look at you. Listen, why don't we go out tonight and get some pizza or something.

LAURA
I have to go over some things with Kevin tonight.

MARK
All right, I understand, your career comes first. How about if I just walk you back to your dorm?

Laura is blushing and excited about the attention. But she's also cautious.

LAURA
What about Susan?

MARK
She's gone tomorrow. I'll be gone in a few weeks so we'll probably only see each others at the majors. But you, you'll be here for a few more years. I'll know where to find you.

Mark gives Laura the smile that will sell a million rackets and she gives in.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'll see you in awhile, George.

George and Mark shakes hands goodbye as Mark leans in.

MARK (CONT'D)
Tell Susan everything's fine.
(Mark looks at Laura)
Just fine.

George exits as Mark turns to Laura with that big smile still in place.

MARK (CONT'D)
Let's go. I've got to get our
future hall of famer home safely.

Laura chuckles as they start to walk toward her dorm.

LAURA
Hall of famer. Just like Lenglen,
Wightman and Helen Wills Moody.
Sarah Palfrey, Little Mo, Gibson,
Wade and Court. Casals, King,
Goolagong. Chris, Martina, Tracy
and Hana. Graf, Seles, Hingis, and
Sabatini.

Mark looks at her with bewilderment. He knows so few of those names.

MARK
Yeah, Sabatini. She's a hot one.

They reach Laura's dorm. She looks at the building and then Mark. She smiles and holds out her hand.

LAURA
Thanks for walking me home. It was
nice of you.

Mark takes her hand in both of his. They are much larger and cover hers completely.

MARK
I was wondering if you would do me
a favor?

Laura looks at Mark trying to figure out what he wants.

MARK (CONT'D)
Do you have any pictures of you in
your room?

Laura looks quizzically but nods yes.

MARK (CONT'D)
Cool.

Mark puts his hand on Laura back and guides her gently.

MARK (CONT'D)
I'd like it if you'd autograph one
for me.

Laura is excited by this. He's going to be one of the best
and he's asking her for an autograph.

MARK (CONT'D)
You're going to be special and I
want to be able to say I knew you
when.

Without any resistance they enter the dorm.

INT. LAURA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Laura holds the door open and Mark walks into her barren
room. Laura closes the door and goes to her closet and begins
working the combination lock.

MARK
Where's all your stuff?

LAURA
I was having problem with my stuff
and decided this was the the best
thing to do.

Laura finishes and her stuff slides out of the closet.

MARK
I guess you need a larger closet.

Laura laughs as she rummages through her stuff to find a
picture. She finds one and stands up. Mark had moved right
behind her and she bumps into him. She leans back to show him
the picture. He looks at it and smiles before taking it out
of her hand and tossing it on the stripped bed. Mark then
grabs her in a bear hug and lifts her off the ground.

MARK (CONT'D)
That's not really why you wanted me
to come to your room, is it?

Laura is confused but she feels fear so she tries to pull away. She can't. Mark carries her over to the bed.

MARK (CONT'D)
You know why you wanted me her.

LAURA
Mark, let me go or I'll scream.

Mark doesn't wait for that information to even sink in. He swings a backhand into her mouth. Any strength she has vanishes from her eyes. She's back at her family home and Kurt is in charge. Mark places his hand over Laura's face and shoves her head to the bed. He falls on top of her and all of the air is forced from Laura's lungs. Mark moves his hand down to cover just her mouth and he smiles.

MARK
This can be easy. . .

Laura screams but it is quickly rendered silent by Mark putting his hand on her throat. She gurgles ineffectively.

MARK (CONT'D)
. . .or difficult.

Mark leans in to Laura's face.

MARK (CONT'D)
And between you and me, I love
difficult dates.

Mark deftly picks Laura up and spins her around. He buries her face in the rough mattress. She can hardly breath and each time she moves her head the mattress leaves a tiny scratch on her face.

With his other hand he tears her shorts with a few hard pulls. He tosses the shorts towards the closet and then with one burst he pulls her underwear off. He expertly undoes his tennis shorts and let's them fall to the floor. He pulls on the strap of his jock strap and it rips and joins his shorts on the floor. Mark leans close to her face as he begins to work himself inside of her.

MARK (CONT'D)
I've always wanted to date you.

Mark leans back and a guttural cry emits from deep inside of Laura as Mark thrusts forward.

INT. DORM HALLWAY - LATER

Mark enters the hallway holding a piece of paper and takes one last look into Laura's room. He smiles.

MARK

Thanks for the date.

He holds up the paper and it's an autographed picture of Laura. Personalized to Mark with the salutation, 'Love, Laura Sampson' in juvenile perfect autograph handwriting.

MARK (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I won't tell Susan so she won't have to kick your ass.

Mark closes the door, looks at the picture and smiles as he exits the dorm. A few seconds pass before the door to Laura's room opens. Laura steps tentatively into the hallway. She's dressed in warm-up's zipped to her neck. Her face has faint scratches from the roughness of the mattress. She looks up and down the hallway. No one is around. Laura steps into the hallway and walks softly up to the payphone. She picks up the phone and calls a number collect. After a few seconds someone answers because Laura finally begins to cry.

LAURA

Reggie?

REGGIE (O.S.)

Laura? How are you?

LAURA

Reggie, they won.

REGGIE (O.S.)

Laura? What do you mean?

KEVIN (O.S.)

Laura? Is that you? Are you ready for our meeting?

LAURA

I've got to go. Laura hangs up the phone and runs back to her room.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'll be there after a shower, Kev.

Laura enters her room.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reggie is sitting in his living room holding a dead phone. Confusion and fear on his face. He hangs up the phone and picks it up again quickly. He speed dials a number and waits a moment. His face contorts as we hear the telltale sound of a disconnected number.

OPERATOR (V.O.)

The number you have reached, 617-
555-3825 is no longer in service.
No further information is available
on. . .

Reggie hangs up the phone.

REGGIE

Where the fuck did her parents move
to?

Reggie picks up a piece of paper near the phone. He dials the phone.

RECEPIONIST (V.O.)

Browne Tennis Academy, how may I
transfer your call.

REGGIE

Laura Sampson, please.

RECEPIONIST (V.O.)

And your name is?

REGGIE

Reggie Dunlap.

RECEPIONIST (V.O.)

I'm sorry, your name is not on the
approved contact list. If you'd
like to leave a message I will give
it to her coach.

Reggie hangs up the phone distraught.

INT. NEIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Neil sits behind his desk looking at a frightened, self hugging Laura and a cocksure Mark. Standing behind them pacing is Kevin.

NEIL

What you're saying, Mark, is that
she came on to you and now is
having second thoughts.

Mark smiles and nods yes. Neil looks at Laura.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And what you're saying is you were
raped?

Laura nods softly.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And you say you were in your office
and heard nothing that would have
alerted you to trouble?

KEVIN

Correct.

Neil looks at this situation in front of him and shakes his
head gravely.

NEIL

This is not good. This is not good
for the school or your careers. If
it gets out that you're a rapist no
company is going to hire you for
endorsements. And if you're lying
about this. . .

LAURA

. . .I'm not lying.

MARK

That's your take.

NEIL

Shut the fuck up.

Neil composes himself.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Laura, I wasn't there. I'm not
saying that you don't feel violated
but I have no evidence either way.

MARK

I do.

Laura spins her head and looks at Mark for the first time.
Mark smiles and stands up. On his seat is a photograph.

He picks it off the seat and hands it to Neil. Neil looks at it for a moment and then looks at Laura.

MARK (CONT'D)
She gave it to me after the
'supposed' rape. How many rape
victims give out autographed
pictures afterwards?

NEIL
Well? Did you give him the picture
after having sex.

LAURA
He made me.

NEIL
How did he make you?

Mark takes the picture back from Neil.

MARK
Yeah. Did I hold you at dick point?

NEIL
Shut up, Mark.

Neil is dead calm serious and Mark backs off.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Well, Laura?

Laura has no answers so she picks at her sneakers looking all of twelve.

NEIL (CONT'D)
This is still a serious issue.
Laura.

Laura looks up slowly.

NEIL (CONT'D)
Do you want to press charges?

MARK
What the fuck? She wanted. . .

Neil silences Mark with the wave of a hand.

NEIL
. . .think long and hard about
this.

Neil picks up the phone.

NEIL (CONT'D)

I'll call the police. Just be aware that the moment I do both of your tennis careers are over. No matter how the trial comes out. Laura looks up at Neil.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And I will tell you the three ways this could go. One, he's guilty and goes to jail. Two, he walks. Three he pleads down to statutory rape and endangering a minor. He's only seventeen so he probably won't do any time. Whichever way it goes, your careers are over and it will probably damage the school.

Neil pauses and gives Laura his best paternal smile. It's spooky. Laura thinks for what seems like a decade to her. She slumps further in her chair.

LAURA

Forget it.

And with that, everyone in the room relaxes. Neil becomes jubilant.

NEIL

All right, with that behind us, why don't you and Kevin go out for a light hit. You want to be sharp for your big debut, don't you?

Laura gets up working hard to avoid all contact with anyone. She walks past Kevin and he follows behind.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Close the door on your way out, Kevin.

Kevin closes the door. Neil waits a beat.

NEIL (CONT'D)

What the fuck is your problem?

MARK

Hey, she's cute.

NEIL

You could have fucked up with this one.

MARK

You say that every time. You tied up her family and it's not like you haven't helped with my little hobby.

Mark looks at the picture.

MARK (CONT'D)

Having them sign this picture is a fucking stroke of genius.

Mark holds the picture out to Neil.

MARK (CONT'D)

File this for me.

Neil grabs the picture and puts it on his desk.

NEIL

Can you do me a favor? Please? You're out of here in four weeks, can you keep it in your pants until after that?

Mark stands up and holds out his hand to Neil.

MARK

For you? Sure.

Neil stands up, picks up the picture with one hand and shakes Mark's hand with the other as he walks from behind the desk. They walk towards the door together but stop at a file cabinet. Neil pulls out a keychain and unlocks the cabinet. He pulls out this file filled with pictures and shoves Laura's in.

MARK (CONT'D)

Ahhhhh, memories.

Neil forces the folder back into the file cabinet and slams the drawer shut.

NEIL

Just get out of here and be ready for the weekend.

MARK

I'm always ready.

Mark opens the door and exits. Neil swings it shut behind him.

NEIL

I'm getting too old for this shit.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Neil is leading his charges onto the plane. Susan is right on his heels with Tonya close behind. Laura takes up the rear wearing headphones as far away from them and still be part of the parade.

INT. PLANE - CONTINUOUS

Neil is still in front as he waves the players into there seats. Neil sits in the front of first class with Susan and Tonya sitting right behind him. Laura waits a respectful distance while they all stow their gear before attempting to get into her seat. Everyone's gear safely stowed, Laura tosses her bags into storage and collapses into her seat. She closes her eyes and listens intently to her music. Her seats is shaken as someone sits next to her. She opens her eyes slowly and then goes pale in fright. Mark smiles at her.

MARK

Hi Laura.

Laura doesn't speak. She tries to wedge herself as far away from Mark as possible.

MARK (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I won't touch you.

Mark leans in close.

MARK (CONT'D)

But you got to admit it was fun.

Laura pulls the headphones off and jumps from her seat. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT is startled by this sudden movement.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Can I help you?

LAURA

Can I change my seat?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm sorry, all the seats on this flight are booked.

By now Neil has become aware and stands up.

NEIL

Is there a problem, Laura? Mark?

MARK

No. I just thought I'd give my pal
Laura here some advice on getting
to Susan.

SUSAN

Shut up, Mark.

Mark smiles.

MARK

See how easy it is?

NEIL

Laura? Are you going to sit down?

Laura looks at Neil before slumping into her seat.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Mark?

Mark holds up his hands.

MARK

Hey! Perfect gentleman. I'm just
helping out a fellow tennis player.

Neil sits down and calm falls over the flight. Mark leans
towards a defensive Laura.

MARK (CONT'D)

Let me tell you how to get to her.

Mark looks around conspiratorially.

MARK (CONT'D)

First, you lick the back of her
neck.

Laura turns her back to a laughing Mark and puts her
headphones back on.

EXT. TENNIS STADIUM - DAY

A CAMERA MAN is setting up in front of Neil, Susan, Laura and
interviewer John Loui (who's standing between Susan and
Laura) who's paying little attention while he primps in a
hand held mirror.

JOHN
This is kind of exciting, wouldn't
you say, Neil?

NEIL
Yeah but by Monday afternoon half
of my students will be out of the
tournaments.

JOHN
Hahaha, yeah, tournament.

John is finally happy with his look and tosses the mirror on
top of his bag just out of the television cameras view.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What about you two? Are you excited
to be here?

Laura glances around the stadium. Susan opens her mouth to
answer but the Camera Man stops her.

CAMERA MAN
We're ready, John.

JOHN
We're ready. Live in five, four,
three.

John says nothing but his lips continue the countdown, The
Camera Man points and John begins.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hi, this is John Loui with the next
generation of tennis stars. And
they were created at the premiere
tennis academy in the world for
turning out the next generation of
tennis stars for how many
generations now, Neil? Oh, I should
introduce you shouldn't I? This is
Neil Browne and two of his brights
new stars, the newly
professionalized, Susan Donnolly
and the still amateur but from what
I've seen, professional quality,
Laura Sampson. So, Neil, the answer
to my question please.

Neil stands there lost.

NEIL
And that question would be?

John stands there confused for a moment.

JOHN

Damned if I remember. So, let's ask the girls a question.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How's it feel to be playing your first pro tournament against each other? I mean, here you are, school chums thrust into battle on the pro tour.

Susan pauses a beat too long and Neil nudges her.

SUSAN

Oh, um, it feels a little strange.

Laura and I have trained side by side together and we've built up a camaraderie but I know that won't stop us from going at each other on the court, isn't that right, Lau?

LAURA

That's right, Susan.

JOHN

Isn't that the spirit of competition. Two friends putting their personal feeling behind to give it their best on the field of battle. Touching actually. So, Neil, who are you rooting for this afternoon?

NEIL

That's a tough one, John, but I'll tell you, I'm a great fan of the game of tennis and I'm sure these girls won't let down the audience or the Browne Tennis Academy. Isn't that right, girls?

SUSAN

That's right, Neil.

LAURA

That's right, Neil.

JOHN

That's what we all like to see. A
desire to win that won't come
between two great friends. I'm John
Loui with the combatants of our
next match, Susan Donnally and
Laura Sampson. Let's take it back
to the booth.

John smiles at the camera.

CAMERA MAN

We're out.

JOHN

That was great. That'll air just
before the match. Thanks Neil.

John and Neil shake hands and John leans back to shake
Susan's hand

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good luck, Susan. Welcome to the
pro tour.

John turns to Laura.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And good luck to. . .

John stands there, his hand dangling. They all watch as Laura
runs out of the stadium. John looks back at Neil with a
confused expression. Neil laughs.

NEIL

Nerves.

JOHN

Yeah, that must be it.

The Camera Man takes John's microphone and John starts to
walk away leaving Neil and Laura alone looking at each other
lost.

EXT. TENNIS STADIUM - DAY

The stands are pretty full for a first round match between
two relatively unknowns. Susan and Laura are on the court
warming up. Susan is hitting fairly well but Laura is all
over the place. She's flat. She doesn't hit more than two
balls in a row over the net.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

We are witnessing the future of tennis today. Susan Donnolly, in her first professional match is facing off against her classmate at the Browne Tennis Academy, thirteen year old tennis phenom, Laura Sampson.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

Well, for a phenom she sure seems to spraying the ball around like buck shot today.

INT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Reggie is watching the warm up with a stricken expression.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

This is a big outing for her. She's playing her best friend at the Browne Tennis Academy and, from what I've heard, somewhat of a role model.

REGGIE

My ass.

EXT. TENNIS STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

You know, it must be hard for little Sampson playing her first really big match in front of whole world with her parents in the stands and having the match be against her role model.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

That's got to be a difficult one and it does explain the nerves she's showing in warm-up.

UMPIRE

Time.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

Well, it looks like we're ready to start this first round match in the Transgigantic International Open between the eighteen year old Susan Donnolly and thirteen year old sensation Laura Sampson. With Sampson to serve let's go to the match.

Laura holds up the balls. She exhales. Her arms spread. They rise in unison. She releases the ball at the apex. She arches her back. The racket begins it's forward motion. Contact is made. With the side of her racket.

Everyone in the stands watches this ball soar out of the stadium. A ripple of laughter follows the ball as Laura slumps in despair. Kurt watches the ball fly over his head before placing his face in his hands. Angie isn't quite sure what to do so she claps in encouragement.

ANNOUNCER #1 (CONT'D)

Break out the tape measure.

ANNOUNCER #2

Now there's a shot Mark McGuire could call his own.

INT. LUXURY BOX - CONTINUOUS

There is grim determination on the faces of the assorted BUSINESS TYPES in the box as they watch the ball disappear. One man, ROBERT (never Bob) VENTULLO, President of Prospects Racket Company, turns his head slowly to an ashen Neil.

ROBERT

I hope we're not making a mistake with this one, Neil.

NEIL

I'm telling you, Robert, she's the real deal. She's still young but I'm telling you. . .

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Double fault. Love fifteen.

NEIL

. . .she's the future of tennis.

Neil holds up a mock-up of an advertising poster. He and Robert look at it.

It shows Laura in full concentration hitting a volley. The racket and it's name is fully readable. The headline reads: The Future of Tennis is here. Across Laura is the sub-header that reads: Laura Sampson uses Prospects Gold to bring us the future. One point at a time.

ROBERT

She'd better be. Robert looks at Neil.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

For all our sakes.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Love thirty. Neil brings out his best, most confident smile.

NEIL

Excuse me. I have to go check in with Laura's coach.

ROBERT

You'd better.

Neil begins to walk through the rather dour throng.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Love forty. And straight into the Luxury Box next door.

INT. LUXURY BOX - CONTINUOUS

You'd think by the reactions of this group of BUSINESS PEOPLE we are witnessing the greatest match in the history of tennis. The moment Neil walks in he is treated like royalty.

BUSINESS MAN

Man, this is a turkey shoot.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Game, Miss Donnolly.

We hear polite applause from the crowd but raucous cheers from this group.

BUSINESS WOMAN

Neil, have you seen the poster we're ready to pass out at the gate after this match?

NEIL

No.

The Business Woman unfurls a poster of Susan in full stretch.
The caption at the bottom of the poster reads: That's One.

BUSINESS WOMAN

This is historic. We've already got
our people in place to hand them
out in the stands right after this
match. When Susan becomes the best
player in the world people who have
this are going to have quite a
memento.

NEIL

That they will.

EXT. TENNIS STADIUM - LATER

Applause ripples through the stadium as Laura and Susan jog
to the net and exchange a quick handshake.

UMPIRE

Game, set, match, Miss Donnolly.
Six love six love. Thank you ball
boys, ball girls and lines people.

Susan bows to the stands as Laura collects her gear. She
begins leaving the court before Susan's done reflecting in
her accolades. Head bowed Laura heads right to the exit area.
Just as she enters the area under the stands stops dead in
her tracks.

KURT

That sucked. We spent all this
money. . .

ANGIE

. . .it was on the school, Kurt.

KURT

Well, I took all this time to come
down here and this is the best you
can do? You played better when you
were just hustling assholes.

Laura walks up to Angie, hugs her and begins to cry.

KURT (CONT'D)

Oh great. This isn't my little
girl. My little girl never cried.
Snap out of it, Laura.

Laura pulls away from Angie.

LAURA

I want to come home. I don't want
to do this anymore.

ANGIE

Well, maybe you can come home for
awhile. We'd have to see what Neil.
. .

LAURA

. . .don't you understand? I don't
want to go back there. I don't want
to do this anymore.

Laura drops her gear and runs.

ANGIE

Neil's not going to like this.

KURT

You think I'm all that fucking
happy about it?

INT. LUXURY BOX - LATER

Someone has torn the poster of Laura in half and
unceremoniously tossed it on the floor. Laura stares at Neil
as he speaks with Kurt and Angie.

NEIL

I can understand her desire to take
some time off.

LAURA

I'm never going back there.

NEIL

A lot of kids say that after their
first big loss. But Laura's a
fighter. She can't be out of the
action for too long.

LAURA

You want me to tell them about the
action I got?

Neil reddens. Kurt is just plain pissed but Angie wonders.

NEIL

Listen. Let's not get into a
pissing contest here. You want to
take some time off? Fine. I'll give
you three weeks. By then you should
be back to your old chubby self,
sick of living at home and be dying
to come back.

LAURA

Doubt it. Neil stands up and walks
in front of Kurt.

NEIL

But remember this, if she's not
back within the three weeks the
contract is null and void.

Neil leans in close to Kurt's face.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And that means your loan becomes
due.

Fear shakes Kurt as Kurt leans back up.

KURT

I'll personally guarantee she'll be
back.

NEIL

See that she is.

Neil walks past Angie and Laura on his way out the door.

NEIL (CONT'D)

And don't get too fat, Laura.

Neil exits. The Sampson family sits still for a moment.

Kurt turns his head and forces a smile at Laura.

KURT

Welcome home, Laura. Wait until you
see the new house.

Laura closes her eyes and drops her head.

INT. SAMPSON'S HOUSE - DAY

Laura is sitting on a very plush couch in a very eclectic
living room. Too much money spent with too little knowledge.

The worst thing is that neither Kurt nor Angie had a moment of buyers remorse when they saw it all put together. Kurt is pacing in front of the couch waving some papers. Angie is sitting in a chair, equally plush to Laura's, behind Kurt.

KURT

Do you know what this says? This says that you have to go back to the academy. And do you know what I say? Get your fucking tennis playing ass back to that school now.

Laura sits on the couch expressionless. This pins the meter of Kurt's blood pressure.

KURT (CONT'D)

Do you want us to lose everything? If you don't get back there all this is gone. And you know what the worst part is? We're going to have to pay back the entire amount of the loan and we've spent a lot of it. Have you seen your bedroom?

LAURA

Yeah, it's bigger.

KURT

You bet your ass it's bigger. It's almost as big as our entire old house.

LAURA

But the furniture's the same.

KURT

We just didn't think you were going to be home so quick. We planned on buying you stuff, didn't we, Angie?

Angie nods yes.

KURT (CONT'D)

See. This is for you too.

LAURA

No, I'll tell you what's for me.

Laura stands up and walks up to Kurt.

LAURA (CONT'D)

It's up to me to say whether I go back or not.

Like a flash Kurt slaps an unsuspecting Laura in the face. She registers more surprise than pain. Angie rushes over to Laura.

ANGIE

Honey, Dad's sorry. He didn't mean that. Did you, Kurt?

Kurt does not look like the poster boy for contrite. He shrugs his shoulders and rubs his hand. Laura stares at them like she's never seen them before. Laura breaks away from Angie and runs out of the room. Kurt follows quickly behind.

KURT

You're going back. You're not going to fuck it up for us. We're not going to lose everything because of you, you spoiled brat.

SND FX Door Slam

Kurt turns and sees Angie.

KURT (CONT'D)

I don't know what's gotten into her. She would have never talked back to me before she went to that school.

ANGIE

And you want her to go back there?

KURT

Fuck yeah. You think I want to lose my shit?

Kurt plops down on the couch and picks up the remote. The large screen television fills the room with a ghostly glow.

KURT (CONT'D)

Get me a beer.

Angie stands there.

KURT (CONT'D)

Are you going to get in my face too? What? I'm just trying to better our lives.

ANGIE

Even if we hurt our daughter?

Kurt looks away from Angie.

KURT

The only way she'll be hurt is if I
have to come up with half a million
dollars. Then you'll see hurt.

Angie exits the room.

KURT (CONT'D)

And don't forget my beer.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - NIGHT

A still red faced Laura has returned to the place where it
all started. No one is on the courts. Laura sits on a net
looking the place over. It seems sadder than she remembers.
So does she.

REGGIE (O.S.)

I was wondering when you were going
to finally get back here.

Laura turns and runs to Reggie and they embrace.

LAURA

Reggie, I'm so glad to see you.

REGGIE

Me too, kid.

They stop hugging and Reggie examines Laura's face. She just
shrugs her shoulders.

LAURA

Some things never change.

REGGIE

Do you want me to. . .

LAURA

. . .change the subject. This isn't
bad at all.

REGGIE

All right. On to the next thing you
won't want to talk about. What was
the phone call about?

LAURA

Very perceptive. Just kid stuff. I
was just nervous about the match.

REGGIE

Bullshit. You've never been nervous about a match. What happened?

Laura fidgets for a moment. She doesn't want to lie to Reggie but she just wants it all behind her.

LAURA

Nothing. I'm leaving it at the school with everything else.

REGGIE

Fine. I won't pry. So, what brings you to your humble beginnings?

LAURA

It's the only place I knew I'd be safe.

Laura looks up at Reggie and smiles.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Of course, it took a forty dollar cab ride. Where the hell did they move?

REGGIE

I'm not sure. I'm don't run with their crowd.

They stand there both knowing that too much has past. They'd never really be able to explain it all. They both lean against the net.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

So, what are you going to do?

LAURA

I don't know. If I don't go back they lose the house and crap. If I do go back I'll end up just like them but at least I'll get on the tour.

REGGIE

Do you still want to do that?

LAURA

A few weeks ago, after that match.
. .

REGGIE

. . .that horrendous match.

Laura laughs.

LAURA
That horrendous match.

REGGIE
Thankfully I taped it and so I can
torture you for the rest of your
life.

Laura's smile fades and she becomes very serious for a moment.

LAURA
I'd really like that, Reggie.

REGGIE
You are one sick little kid.

Reggie shoves her around and they laugh.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
So you do want to try the tour?

LAURA
Yes. But if I don't go back to
Browne I'll never get another
chance. They'll take my parents
house and. . .

REGGIE
. . .fuck your parents. Sorry. They
have a diamond and they treat it
like glass.

Reggie pauses to try to get himself back together.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Sorry. It just pisses me off.
Listen, I've been doing some work
on this and I think I may have a
couple of solutions.

LAURA
What?

REGGIE
I can't tell you right now because
I'm not sure if it'll work. But. .
.

Reggie pushes away from the net.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .if it works you'll know more
about winning than you would if you
spent a lifetime at Browne. You
could be a star.

LAURA
Could?

Reggie laughs as Laura pushes off the net and stands next to him.

REGGIE
Well, you didn't start out too
good.

Laura stops Reggie.

LAURA
Please don't joke about that. I
know you don't know but I don't
want to be reminded of it.

They begin walking again.

REGGIE
I'll even burn the tape.

LAURA
Are you nuts? One day I know I'm
going to want to see how far that
ball went. I really got a hold of
that sucker.

They arrive at Reggie's car.

REGGIE
Get in and let me give you a ride
home.

Laura looks at him stricken.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Nothing we can do about that right
now, Laura. Kidnapping isn't my
style. But here.

Reggie reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a cellular phone.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
If he comes near you again call the
cops.

Laura takes the phone and looks at it.

LAURA

Is that the only time I can use
this?

REGGIE

Still a hustler, aren't you. No,
but keep the bill below the
national debt, will you?

LAURA

That shouldn't be a problem. You're
the only other person I'd call.

EXT. TENNIS STADIUM - DAY

John Loui is finishing his stand-up for later broadcast. His
Camera Man stands eerily still.

JOHN

And that's why I feel the woman's
game is much more exciting right
now. More rallies. More excitement.
More passion. For the men's game to
catch up they'll have to do
something radical. Like ban these
jet rocket rackets and have a
personality transplant. I'm John
Loui and this is my view.

John waits a few seconds before dropping the smile. He begins
to collect his microphone cable.

REGGIE (O.S.)

You always liked to talk, didn't
you John?

John stops and allows the Camera Man to collect the
microphone and wander off before turning around.

JOHN

And you always liked to listen.

They don't move towards each other. Reggie is dressed in his
hat and dark glasses.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

REGGIE

Still cut to the chase, I see.

JOHN
Would you?

REGGIE
I need a favor.

JOHN
Fuck off. You get paid.

John begins to walk away. Reggie runs in front of him to stop him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Do I have to call security?

REGGIE
Would you just listen to me for a minute? You owe me that.

JOHN
Ha. That's funny. If I remember correctly you've been on my payroll for the last twenty years.

REGGIE
I threw away my fucking career for you.

JOHN
You had no career. You had no game.

John gets in Reggie's face and Reggie backs off.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You still don't have any balls.

John takes a step and Reggie grabs him. He stares at him for a moment before releasing him.

REGGIE
Maybe I could have.

JOHN
No. You were lucky you took the rap for me. Trust me, you made more money this way.

REGGIE
But you took the game away from me. You took my life away from me.

JOHN

And what do you want now? You and me to play some master's tournaments? Fuck off and enjoy your checks.

John begins to walk away and this time Reggie let's him. John gets about ten feet away before Reggie runs after him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What?

REGGIE

Please. Five minutes. It's been twenty years. It must be important for me to do this.

John looks at Reggie. A flicker of a long ago friendship shines. John nods his head.

JOHN

Go.

REGGIE

Remember the girl you interviewed a few weeks ago?

JOHN

You did this to meet some girl?

REGGIE

No. I did this to see if you'd teach this girl.

JOHN

I'm not a teacher. You know that.

REGGIE

Yeah, I do. But she has a game. I just want you to see if she has the balls I think she does.

JOHN

You think she has it?

REGGIE

Without a doubt.

JOHN

You always had an eye. Who is this kid?

REGGIE
Laura Sampson.

Reggie thinks for a few seconds before laughing.

JOHN
Is that the kid who blasted a ball
into another zip code?

REGGIE
Yeah, but. . .

JOHN
. . .no fucking butts. The kids a
menace to the fans.

REGGIE
That wasn't her game. Something was
wrong. Something happened.

John thinks back for a moment.

JOHN
That was a weird interview. I knew
it was all scripted but that kid. .
.Sampson? Is that her?

REGGIE
Yes.

JOHN
Wasn't there at all. I think she
ran off right after the interview.
I thought it was pretty strange.
But, strange things happen at
Browne.

REGGIE
Like what?

JOHN
Just rumor. But you spent some time
on the tour, uh, it's Reggie now,
right?

REGGIE
Yes.

JOHN
So you have some idea. Reggie is
crestfallen.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But what do you have to do with
Browne?

REGGIE

Nothing. She was my student and she
just left the school.

JOHN

That's not good.

REGGIE

I know. So that's why I need you.

JOHN

Sorry, Reggie. I have a great life.
I'm in the hall of fame. I get to
be the legend. This isn't the type
of things I do.

John begins to walk away.

REGGIE

Don't let this kid go. You could
toss me. You're right, I wouldn't
have been much. Thanks for giving
me a comfortable life. But this kid
is something special.

John slows down but doesn't stop.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Please. Just look at her.

John continues walking away. Reggie slumps. Crushed.

JOHN

Monday. Noon. I'll meet you and
this talent at the address we send
the checks to. No promises but I'll
take a look. If I don't like what I
see, you pay for my flights.

REGGIE

You've got a bet.

JOHN

Don't say that.

John takes a set of stairs two at a time while Reggie pounds
his fists in the air and begins running out of the stadium.

INT. JOHN'S LIMOUSINE - DAY

John and Reggie sit in the back of the limousine. A few rackets and a bag are sitting beside John.

JOHN

I can't believe I'm doing this.
It's good that you live out of the
loop. It really wouldn't do me any
good to be seen with you.

REGGIE

It's nice to see you too, John.
They have a very uneasy silence.

JOHN

I am sorry it turned out the way it
did.

REGGIE

You were right, I didn't have a
game anyway. I should be thanking
you.

JOHN

Cool it with that false bravado
shit. Something you said to me the
other day stung. When you said I
took the game away from you. That's
why I did it. I didn't want the
game taken from me.

John looks at Reggie with total sincerity.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I know the money will
never make up for that.

The limousine comes to a stop.

REGGIE

We're here. Then do this and I'll
call it even.

They begin to crawl out of the limousine. John picks up his rackets and bag.

JOHN

Would you stop with the betting
talk?

EXT. TENNIS COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Reggie and John walk towards Laura who is pounding serves that hit the fence and echo throughout the neighborhood. John watches her with a well trained eye. He's pleased.

REGGIE

Laura.

LAURA

Hold on.

Laura reaches into the bucket and pulls out the last ball. She goes into her stroke while Reggie and John walk up to her. Flawless stroke production.

JOHN

Nice stroke. Good job, Reggie. You always did understand the mechanics.

John and Reggie walk up to a sweating Laura.

REGGIE

Laura, this is John Loui. A tennis great.

LAURA

But a lousy interviewer.

JOHN

I'll have you know, young lady, that I'm aware of that.

They all laugh. Reggie more so because he thought she'd just blown it.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But, it's just an act. The producer told me if I came off as a flake I'd be more likable. And you know what? The bastard was right. The moment I stopped talking strategy my rating went through the roof. So, what we need to learn from that, young lady, is listen to people who know more about their craft than you. Even if you don't agree with them at first.

LAURA

Is this my first lesson?

John looks at Reggie and smiles.

JOHN

She does have balls. But let's see
if she's got a game.

Reggie walks over to the other side. He places the rackets he won't be using and the bag next to the net post. Laura watches him before she looks at Reggie.

LAURA

That guy's older than my Dad. What
kind of match is he going to give?

Reggie pats her on the shoulder on his way off the court.

REGGIE

Don't be deceived and don't let
down.

JOHN (O.S.)

I'm ready, Laura. Give me your
best. Oh, and, Laura?

LAURA

Yes?

JOHN

Try to keep it in this time zone.

Laura fumes as Reggie picks up a seat and refuses to look at her. John assumes the ready position and sways back and forth. Laura checks the spot she's going to hit the ball into. She exhales and begins her service motion. It is a work of art. But then so is John's game. Her excellent serve is returned easily for a winner by John. Laura is not used to this. She doesn't win all her serves but no one treats it like a floater anymore.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Love fifteen. But it was a good
serve for a girl. And I see
Reggie's taught you where the
service box is.

Laura storms over to the ad court to serve. She regains her composure and begins her service motion. She figures that she'll draw him wide to his backhand and approach for an easy volley. Laura begins her motion and approaches right behind the ball. Perfect technique. John slides wide and cracks a backhand topspin that crosses in front of Laura during her approach. She can't believe that she sees.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Love thirty.

John jogs to the net to speak to Laura. She stands there glaring at him. That makes him smile.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Laura, I don't have much time today
so can we just see how you do with
the return of serve?

LAURA
Sure. I have a much better return.

JOHN
We'll see. They both part to their
end of the court.

Laura is total focus. John has a bounce in his step that hasn't been there in quite some time. John prepares to serve and cracks one down the line.

Laura barely gets her racket on it but John is impressed that she did. John begins his second serve. He goes for an ace down the middle but Laura is there for the return. Her return doesn't have a lot of pace on it but she did muscle it back deep.

John, who wasn't expecting it to come back, adjusts to get to the ball. He hits a forehand crosscourt and a rally begins. John is in total control of the point but Laura is willing every ball back. After a few balls, John gets a short ball and hits a fantastic drop shot that Laura had no chance at but that didn't stop her. She bangs into the net to regain her balance. John walks over and holds out his hand.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good point.

Laura shakes his hand quickly.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Reggie was right. You are good and
it is inside of you. Do you want to
do this, Laura? Do you want to be
the best?

LAURA
Yes.

JOHN
Are you prepared to give everything
up to do this?

LAURA

Laura.

JOHN

Good. Let's start now.

Laura begins to run back to the baseline.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Hey, where are you going?

Laura stops and turns around while John walks over to the net post.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come here.

John kneels down and unzips his bag just as Laura arrives.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now, you have to admit that I am the superior tennis player here.

Laura chokes on that.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Admit it.

LAURA

Yeah.

JOHN

Yeah what?

LAURA

Yeah, you're the superior tennis player here.

JOHN

But only for the time being if you work hard enough and do whatever I say.

Laura looks at John askew.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I'm not from Browne.

Panic crosses Laura's face as John slowly nods his head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Laura's eyes get wide and she steals a glance at Reggie.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'll let you tell him
when it's right for you.

LAURA

How did you know?

JOHN

I've been around a long time,
Laura.

John finishes pulling out a chess board. Laura wants to ask but doesn't. She'll wait to see how this plays out. John ignores this but continues opening the chessboard as he talks.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But, because I am the superior
tennis player here I should give
you a chance to compete with such a
brilliant player such as myself.
Have I told you I'm in the hall of
fame? Well, never mind. We'll visit
my shrine at a later date. What
I'll do is play you in other sports
and games and for everyone you win,
I'll spot you a game. For instance,
if you beat me in this game of
chess, you get spotted a game.

LAURA

But I don't know how to play chess.

JOHN

Don't worry about it. You know how
to play tennis.

LAURA

Yeah?

JOHN

Well, tennis is just chess with
sweat.

LAURA

You are one weird guy.

JOHN

That may be true but you have a couple of weeks to see that I'm right. I have to go to Europe for their season. If you can beat me before I leave, and I mean in every game, I'll see that you get into the qualifiers of the U.S. Open.

LAURA

What do I get after that?

JOHN

The rest is up to you and Reggie.

John holds out his hand and Laura shakes it. He points to the ground and motions for her to sit in front of the chessboard.

LAURA

Can you at least explain how to move these things?

John smiles. She has it and he knows it.

JOHN

All right, but the rest is up to you. These pieces are called pawns.
. .

MONTAGE

John pounding a ball past Laura in table tennis.

John putting a hole in one at miniature golf.

John hitting free throw after free throw while Laura just passes the ball back to him.

John way out in the lead of Laura in a sprint.

John hitting doubles and triples in a batting cage while Laura barely fouls them off.

John walking into a candle pin bowling alley carrying a ten pin ball. Laura laughs as John leaves an impossible split. John complains about the little ball. Laura nods okay.

John catching up to a failing Laura during a long distance run.

John and Laura at the end of their push-up competition. Laura collapses and John finishes the last one and stands up victoriously.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - EVENING

John and a very tired and dejected Laura are standing at the net.

JOHN
Well Laura, you have one last
chance to get a game off me.

LAURA
Sure, we've been playing all your
games. We're in my world now.

John reaches into his pocket and takes out a quarter.

JOHN
Kid, this was my world before you
were into swimming. Call it.

John flips the quarter.

LAURA
Heads.

John catches the coin, looks at it and smiles before he shows it to Laura.

JOHN
It's tails. Guess that means we
both start at love.

John jogs to his baseline.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Let's go. I won today so I serve.

Laura slowly walks back to her baseline. She prepares to return serve with very little enthusiasm. John holds balls up and Laura nods. John begins serving and Laura watches the ball go by.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Fifteen love. You better try a
little harder next time. Maybe
salvage some dignity after today's
disgrace. You ready?

Laura nods.

LAURA
Fuck you.

John's serve a blasts past her.

JOHN

Thirty love. Maybe Reggie was wrong
about you.

Laura bristles for a moment but dejectedly walks back to the
deuce court.

LAURA

Maybe today.

MONTAGE

Laura reading a book on chess while playing with Reggie.

Laura pounding table tennis balls against a turned up table.

Laura, with a pile of golf balls beside her, continually
putts balls through the windmill.

Laura practicing free throws in Reggie's driveway with Reggie
tossing the balls back to her.

Laura running sprints with Reggie timing her. Then she turns
around and sprints back.

Laura in a batting cage making good contact.

Laura bowling a strike then hustling back to grab a ball from
a prepared Reggie.

Laura and Reggie jogging at a good pace through a park.

Laura and Reggie doing push-ups together. Laura's matching
Reggie one for one.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - MORNING

John gets out of his limousine with a bag and hurries up to
Laura and Reggie. He's happier than we've ever seen. No
matter what he'd admit, this has been a great and
rejuvenating time for him. He's back in the biz and it shows
in his step.

JOHN

You've been doing pretty good.
You've learn a lot in the last
couple of weeks. You've even taken
some non-spotted games from me.
You're right, Reggie, she is a
player. So, you ready for our last
lesson?

LAURA

Bring it on.

JOHN

That's what I want to hear.

John pulls a chessboard out of his bag and shakes it at
Laura.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You ready?

LAURA

Being it on, hall of fame boy.

MONTAGE

Laura's in bed on the cellular phone moving a white knight on
the chessboard on her lap. John is in his living room on the
phone making the same move. John shakes his head slowly.
Laura raises her arms over her head as the chess pieces
bounce around and off her bed.

Laura serves a table tennis ball wide. John returns it and
Laura blocks back a backhand for a winner. Laura putts
through the windmill for a hole in one.

Laura hits a free throws and runs to get the ball. When she
picks up the ball we see Kurt leaning out a window yelling at
her. Laura calmly runs back to the free throw line again and
sinks another one.

Laura catches up to and passes John in a sprint. Laura and
Reggie look at John's plaque at the Tennis Hall Of Fame.

John hitting doubles and triples in the batting cage while
Laura pounds home runs.

Laura throws a strike in ten pin bowling and throws her arms
up in victory.

John and Laura pulling it into the stretch run. Laura and
John trade leads for a moment before Laura kicks in and pulls
out for the victory. John and Laura in push-up unison.

Laura looks at John as he begins to struggle. Laura keeps pushing it harder until John falls.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - NIGHT

A ragged looking John and a vibrant Laura walk up to Reggie. He smiles when he sees John beaten.

JOHN

Wipe that smirk off your face. I had a cold. My bunions hurt. My agent called with news that my stock options in Zell dot com didn't triple like the Randolph Internet Stock Guide said it would.

LAURA

Cut that crap. I kicked your ass.

JOHN

That may be true but

John takes a quarter out of his pocket.

JOHN (CONT'D)

you haven't won it all yet. Heads or tails?

John flips the quarter.

LAURA

Tails. John slaps the coin on the back of his hand.

Looks at Laura and smiles.

JOHN

Never trust luck.

John takes his hand off the coin, looks up and smiles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Heads.

John tosses the coin to Reggie and then takes Laura's hands in his.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If you listen to nothing else I've told you, listen to the last thing I said. Never trust luck.

John lets go of Laura's hand and runs toward the other side of the court.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Let's play. You're up five love in
the first set. Four love in the
second.

John arrives at the baseline.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You ready?

Laura opens a new can of balls and spills the first two out of the can. She stops the third and squeezes it then tosses the can aside. She walks confidently to the service line.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You ready to play, Laura?

LAURA
I've been ready all my life.

Laura holds the ball up in her tiny hand. John nods. Laura drops the ball to her side while watching it fall. She looks up and catches John's eye.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Hey John?

JOHN
Yeah?

LAURA
Stick the gimmes up your ass. We
play it straight.

John fights not to give in to Laura impudence. Reggie is beside himself.

JOHN
Let's go, kid. But remember. . .

LAURA
. . .yeah, I've seen your hall of
fame exhibit. What have you done
lately?

Laura begins her service motion. An ace glows off her racket.

FADE TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - LATER

SND FX One Person Clapping

SND FX Two Person Clapping

John is standing at the net clapping while Laura stands demurely in front of him. She holds out her hand and John stops clapping and shakes her hand before he pulls her close and hugs her. Reggie walks up smiling and still clapping.

JOHN

I wish you didn't take away the
gimmes.

LAURA

Why?

JOHN

I would have been off the court an
hour ago. Damn. You are a player.

LAURA

So you're going to help me get into
the qualifiers of the U.S. Open?

JOHN

It's the least I can do.

Laura jumps for joy and then over the net to hug John and Reggie.

LAURA

I'm on my way.

Laura pauses for a second and becomes serious. John and Reggie know what she's thinking and stems her thoughts.

REGGIE

Stop worrying.

Laura is a little taken aback because she thinks Reggie has read her mind. Reggie smiles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Just play tennis.

JOHN

Yeah, let the adults do the
worrying. You just play.

Laura looks at them questioning for a second before a smiles crosses her face. The sad part is these are the only people who have her best interests at heart. The good part is that these are the people have her best interests at heart. She knows this.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Go to the car and they'll drive you home.

LAURA

Is that okay?

JOHN

Yeah, I'm sure even a fuck up like Reggie can get me to the hotel.

Laura wants to laugh but chokes it back. Reggie sees that and smiles.

REGGIE

Aren't you getting close to curfew?

Laura laughs and begins to run to the limosuine. John and Reggie watch her.

JOHN

Have you seen our man about her problem?

REGGIE

Yes.

JOHN

Good. She's a player.

REGGIE

Damn, you never said that about me.

John starts to walk off the court as the limosuine pulls away.

JOHN

Sorry man, you knew the game, look at Laura play, but you never had a game. Reggie watches

John walk off the court knowing what he says about Laura is just as true as what he said about him.

REGGIE

Hey John?

JOHN

Yeah?

REGGIE

How come you didn't get her
straight into the draw? Anyone can
get into the Q's of the open?

JOHN

She needs more matches. Besides, if
she's going to be great she's going
to have to work for it.

REGGIE

That's why you're in the hall, huh
John?

JOHN

That and my monster forehand.

REGGIE

It was a masterpiece.

John bangs on the roof of Reggie's car.

JOHN

Hey, you going to get me to the
hotel or am I going to have to
bribe a cab driver into coming to
this neighborhood?

Reggie laughs and begins to walk off the court.

INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laura is laying on a bed with headphone on while she reads a
chess book and bounces a table tennis ball on a table tennis
paddle. A shadow shades the light from her book. Laura looks
up slowly just in time to have a hand pull the headphones
from her head.

KURT

I was fucking talking to you.

Laura stops bouncing the table tennis ball and it rolls to a
stop on the sheet. Kurt slaps the book out of her hand.

LAURA

Sorry. I didn't hear you.

KURT

No, you mean you didn't listen to me. You never listen to me.

Laura reaches over and pulls the cellular phone from under the pillow, presses one button and slides it under the sheet.

KURT (CONT'D)

I got a call from Neil today and he says your time is up. You have to go back to school.

LAURA

I'm not going back to school. I'm staying right here at home. I like living at 212 Clifford Way.

Kurt grabs Laura and pulls her out of the bed.

KURT

You're not going to fuck up my life.

LAURA

I'm not fucking up your life.

Kurt slaps Laura, throws her back to the bed and leans over her.

KURT

If you don't go back to school we lose everything. Do you want that?

Laura pulls into a protective position.

LAURA

I. . .

ANGIE (O.S.)

. . .Kurt, the police are here.

Kurt is totally shocked. He stands up and exits Laura's bedroom.

KURT (O.S.)

Yes officers, how can I help you?

Laura searches around the bed and finds the phone. She puts it to her ear.

LAURA

Thank you. Did you tape that?

Laura pauses and smiles.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Could I get a copy?

EXT. ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - DAY

Laura and the now familiar hat and glasses of Reggie are looking over the large draw sheet with the caption U.S. Open Tennis Championship Women's Qualifiers. Laura scans for her name amongst the throng of hopefuls while Reggie flips through a guide book.

LAURA
I'm playing Lee Ann Small. Can you find her in the book?

REGGIE
She's twenty three. Been a pro for five years. Her ranking in the world has been as high as fifty three but right now she's at two hundred thirty eight.

LAURA
Piece of cake. Reggie laughs.

REGGIE
You know Laura, right now she's looking you up and you know what? She can't find you.

LAURA
Mystery is good. Let's get to court eighteen.

Reggie and Laura walk out of the throng and up to Kurt and Angie.

KURT
So explain this to me again. How much does she get?

REGGIE
She's a long way to the money, Kurt.

KURT
Then way are we here? We've got to get her to make some money. Neil's.
. . .

REGGIE
. . .I don't give a shit about
Neil.

KURT
It's not your house.

REGGIE
It's not yours either.

LAURA
Will you two knock it off. Daddy,
I've got to start somewhere so this
is where I start.

Laura adjusts the bag on her shoulder.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Let's get to the court. We'll meet
you two back at the hotel.

ANGIE
You don't want us to watch?

LAURA
You'll make me to nervous.

KURT
Then why the fuck did we come here?

LAURA
Moral support. Laura and Reggie
exit.

KURT
Moral support. The only support I
want is cash based.

Kurt taps Angie on the shoulder.

KURT (CONT'D)
Let go to the bar.

Kurt and Angie begin to make their way through the crowd.

EXT. TENNIS COURT AT ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Laura is warming up on an outside court with few spectators.
LEE ANN SMALL is a hard hitter with a big serve. The
intricate brace on her left knee explains her drop in the
rankings.

UMPIRE

Time.

Laura and Lee Ann stop their warm up and Laura walks to the service line to begin. She holds up two balls and Lee Ann nods. Laura looks around the court while she smiles and nods.

LAURA

I'm going to like this.

Laura's smile fades to concentration as she begins her first serve. Ace.

UMPIRE

Fifteen love.

LAURA

Yeah, I'm really going to like this.

MONTAGE

Laura shaking Lee Ann's hand. Reggie standing by himself applauding.

Laura's name being moved to the second round.

Laura outstretched to hit a volley winner.

Kurt sitting in a bar pounds back a beer.

Laura's name being moved to the third round.

Laura in a tense rally. She takes a short ball and approaches the net. She looks up at a lob. Takes three steps back. Camps under the ball and hits an overhead winner.

Angie has joined Kurt at the bar.

Laura's name being moved to the round of sixteen.

Laura races back to retrieve a ball and slices a backhand down the line just out of the reach of her opponent that lands on the line. Reggie applauds along with a crowd.

Laura's name being moved to the quarter finals.

A sweaty and drained Laura regains her composure for a moment on the service line. We can see the scoreboard and it's been a close match: 4-6, 7-5, 5-4 and now Laura is serving for the match at forty thirty. She shuts her eyes for a moment before serving. She spins a ball wide and approaches behind it. Her opponent barely gets her racket on it and the return is high.

Laura continues to approach the ball, she takes the volley high and angles it crosscourt for a clean winner. Laura raises her hand in victory and turns to a cheering Reggie and her new fans.

Laura's name being moved into the main draw of the U.S. Open.

EXT. ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - DAY

John is standing in front of the large draw board with his microphone. In front of him is his Camera Man and off to the side, just out of the television camera's view, is Laura, the hat and glasses we've come to know as Reggie and an impeccably dressed man, SCOTT RANDOLPH. Way outside the television camera's view is Kurt and Angie with a gaggle of people.

CAMERA MAN

We're rolling.

John waits a second and then begins.

JOHN

I'm John Loui and I'm here to tell
you about the story of the U.S.
Open even before the first match
has begun.

John walks a few steps over to Laura for a television two shot.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And that story is this little girl
right here. Laura Sampson. This
thirteen year old phenom battled
her way through this years
qualifying tournament for the
privilege of having to battle her
way through the main draw.

John pauses and faces Laura.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Laura, how do you feel, after
having worked your way through the
toughest tournament of your young
life only to have an even tougher
campaign staring you right in the
face?

LAURA

Bring it on. I've got nothing to
lose.

JOHN

A very cocky attitude from someone
whose only other tournament began
with a fine from the FAA.

INT. TELEVISION PRODUCTION TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The DIRECTOR stands over the ASSISTANT DIRECTOR with the
SOUND ENGINEER to the left and a TAPE TECHNICIAN to their
right. We watch John's stand-up on the trucks air monitor.

DIRECTOR

Roll tape.

The Tape Technician press the play button on the tape deck.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Take tape.

The Assistant Director presses a button and the tape of
Laura's air born serve plays.

LAURA

That was then and this is now.

DIRECTOR

Take one. The monitors now show a
three shot of John, Laura and
Reggie.

JOHN

Yes it was. And a lot has changed
since that match with this summers
hottest player, Susan Donnally. You
parted ways with Neil Browne and
his world respected tennis school
and went back to your original
coach, someone from way outside the
tennis establishment, Reggie
Dunlap.

DIRECTOR

Who is this guy?

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Some nobody.

DIRECTOR

No, there's something familiar
about him.

EXT. ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN
So Reggie, how'd you find Laura?

REGGIE
She was hustling matches to get
beer money for her father.

Kurt's not too happy to have this tidbit stick to tape.

JOHN
So instead of game, set, match he'd
say this bud's for me?

John is the only one to chuckle at his lame joke.

JOHN (CONT'D)
But I've heard rumors that there
were some deeper problems then just
using his daughters gift to get
juiced.

REGGIE
When he enrolled her at Browne's
academy he also took a loan on
Laura's future earnings. Now,
that's not unusual, but now that
she's dropped out of the school
they want their money back.

JOHN
That seems fair.

REGGIE
Without question. The other problem
was a contract her father signed
that gives Browne a cut of her
income wether she's a student of
his or not.

JOHN
That doesn't seem fair.

REGGIE
That was are problem, John.

JOHN
So, I assume, that's why this
gentleman is here. He's Judge Scott
Randolph from the Massachusetts
court system.

SCOTT

Hello. Mr. Dunlap and Miss Sampson approached the courts because of these business dealings and some personal safety issues they asked us to consider giving Miss Sampson emancipation from her parents.

KURT (O.S.)

What?

SCOTT

Because of Miss Sampson's age this was a very difficult decision. But, we've found Miss Sampson to be a very mature and capable thirteen year old. So taking that along with the guardianship Mr. Dunlap offered into consideration we have ruled in favor of the emancipation of Miss Laura Sampson.

KURT (O.S.)

What?

JOHN

Your Honor, in terms I can understand, what does this mean?

SCOTT

It means that all contracts signed by Mr. Sampson on Laura's behalf are null and void.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Neil is watching this interview. Without emotion he picks up the phone and dials.

NEIL

Are you watching this? Win some. Lose some. Get those bastards out of that house, freeze their accounts and let's hope it doesn't get worse.

Neil hangs up the phone.

EXT. ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

So, Laura can begin the Open with a clean slate and no one can make any claims against her?

SCOTT

Correct. Her father is responsible for contracts he signed personally. We were also concerned about her safety because he has shown aggressive tendencies in the past.

KURT (O.S.)

What?

Kurt bursts from off camera to on. John grabs Laura and pulls her away. Scott backs off. Kurt runs smack into Reggie, slamming him into a wall knocking his hat and glasses off. Reggie grabs him and wrestles him to the ground as two SECURITY OFFICERS come and lift a fighting Kurt away. John releases Laura and looks into the television camera.

JOHN

I guess we don't need any more proof of his aggressive tendencies, do we, your Honor?

SCOTT

I guess not.

JOHN

Laura, what do you think of all this?

LAURA

I'm sad that it had to come to this but I didn't want to go back to the Browne Academy and I didn't want to be connected to them for the rest of my life. So, I had talks with two people I truly trust and they helped me get in touch with Judge Randolph.

JOHN

Obviously, Reggie is one of these trusted people but who is the other one?

LAURA

He'd rather stay behind the scenes.

JOHN

He sounds like a great and valued friend with much wisdom.

LAURA

Sometimes. But most times he's just a big mouth.

JOHN

Well, if the rest of the Open is as exciting as this story we're in for one hell of a tournament. So Laura, how do you think you'll do?

LAURA

Win.

JOHN

This is John Loui with the future champion of the U.S. Open, Laura Sampson.

John and Laura smile at the camera for a few seconds.

CAMERA MAN

We're out.

The Camera Man starts to pack up. John shakes Scott's hand as Scott walks away. Reggie walks up to John and Laura adjusting his hat and glasses. John hugs Laura and then shakes Reggie's hand.

JOHN

It's going to be an interesting couple of weeks if you have anything to say about it.

INT. TELEVISION PRODUCTION TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The DIRECTOR stands over the TAPE TECHNICIAN.

DIRECTOR

Rewind that tape to the fight. The point where that asshole runs into the girls coach.

The Tape Technician rewinds the tape and gets to the point just before Kurt runs into Reggie.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Slow it down at the point of
contact.

The tape runs slowly. We see the contact. We see Reggie's hat fly off. We see Reggie's glasses fly off. We see Reggie's face.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Freeze.

The tape stops and the Director leans close to the screen

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
I fucking knew I knew him.

The Director picks up a walkie-talkie.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Melinda, get me everything you have
on that betting scandal from about
twenty years ago.

The Director puts the walkie-talkie down.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
John was right. This is going to be
a very interesting couple of weeks.

EXT. ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM - DAY

Laura is walking off one of the premiere courts to a rousing standing ovation. She smiles and waves to the crowd. She meets Reggie at the court gate and he doesn't have a look on his face of the coach of someone who just won the first round at the U.S. Open. Laura stands and signs autographs of mostly people bigger than her.

REGGIE
We've got a problem.

Laura finishes signing things and they walk through the crowd. Everywhere she goes little groups of people applaud at her. She unfailingly turns and smiles at them. Reggie leads Laura into the media area where they see John pacing. He sees them and stops pacing. They walk up to him and he leads them into the building.

INT. OFFICE - LATER

The Director from earlier is sitting in front of a large desk when John, Reggie and Laura walk in. Behind the desk is the producer of the U.S. Open for television, SAM BUCKLEY.

JOHN
Here they are, Sam.

SAM
Thank you, John. Laura. Reggie.
Nice to meet you. Good match,
Laura.

LAURA
Thanks.

SAM
Please, sit down.

Sam waits a moment while everyone sits.

SAM (CONT'D)
Mr. Dunlap. It's come to our
attention that your real name is
Dennis Carroll and you were banned
for life from tennis.

Reggie looks at Laura.

REGGIE
I told you this would happen.

Reggie looks at Sam.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You spotted me when Kurt rammed me
and my hat came off, right?

SAM
The director of the segment did.

Reggie looks at the Director.

REGGIE
Good memory.

SAM
Here's our problem, Dennis. Or do
you prefer Reggie?

REGGIE

After all these years, Reggie feels more like me.

SAM

Fine. Our problem is that we have a great story already with Laura here. We don't want to screw that up. But, if we found out it's only a matter of time that someone else does.

REGGIE

True.

SAM

Then, when we told John about the story he told us an even bigger one.

Reggie looks at John.

REGGIE

After all these years?

JOHN

I couldn't do it again.

SAM

So it is true?

Reggie and John look at Sam.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll admit I doubted you at first, John. I thought you were just protecting an old friend.

JOHN

No. I never protected my old friend. I will protect my new friends though.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

John is sitting on a stage being given a countdown by the FLOOR DIRECTOR.

JOHN

This is John Loui with some sensational news from behind the scenes of the U.S. Open. Today it was revealed that Laura Sampson's coach, Reggie Dunlap, is in reality banned player, Dennis Carroll. Carroll was banned from the sport twenty years ago in a gambling crackdown. It's not often that I'm part of a story but in this case I am a big part. Dennis was a good kid. Not a great player but he knew the game. I was heading towards the end of my career and we got together to play some doubles tournaments. We'd hang out but Dennis knew nothing of my gambling problem. One day I got stung. It would have looked bad if it got out that one of it's top players gambled on matches. I never tanked a match but I did gamble on my own matches. So, I explained my problem to Dennis, my place in the history of tennis, how it could hurt the game if I got banned. I basically talked to him until he offered to take the fall. I will admit that we made it look like he was only going to get a slap on the wrist when we knew we were flushing away his career. I didn't care then. But I do care now. I know it's too late for Dennis to recapture what I stole and for that I am sorry. But I hope that he can forgive me now.

John stands up and Reggie walks into the studio. He slowly walks up to the stage. He stops just before stepping on the stage. He looks up at John before he steps on the stage and hugs John.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Dennis. There is no excuse.

They halt the embrace and Reggie looks at John.

REGGIE

You killed Dennis many years ago.
My name is Reggie Dunlap now.

John stands there uncomfortable. Reggie seems stronger than he ever has.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And for Dennis, Reggie accepts your apology.

John hugs Reggie again.

JOHN

I'm sorry, Reggie. I'm sorry I took your life.

John stops the embrace and motions for Reggie to sit down.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now we come to our latest problem. You see, because of me Reggie was suspended from tennis for life. That means he is not eligible to coach at any United States Tennis Association event, which the U.S. Open is a part of. So, this morning I had a meeting with the United States Tennis Association and told the truth. And, you know, it felt great. They scheduled an emergency meeting and they have rescinded Reggie's suspension and cleared his record. So, from this moment on he doesn't have to wear a disguise to coach the brilliant Laura Sampson.

Laura walks onto the set with Reggie's hat and glasses. She stops in front of Reggie and places his sunglasses on the stage. She smiles at him and stomps his glasses to dust. She holds out his hat and pulls out a pair of scissors. After cutting the hat into ribbons she hugs Reggie.

LAURA

I'm so glad that's over. I always thought you looked like a dork in that hat and glasses.

REGGIE

Hey!

LAURA

Come on, you know you looked stupid.

REGGIE

Yeah, but I looked stupid for you,
Laura.

Laura and Reggie hug again as John wraps up the segment.

JOHN

It may have taken me twenty years
but I am so glad I've finally told
the truth. I'm John Loui with two
of my best friends in the world.

MONTAGE

Laura plays a fast and furious game as she battles through
the U.S. Open draw. Her matches are close. She fights for
every point. The crowd loves her.

A Constable serves Kurt with eviction papers.

At this time in the history of the world Laura is the best
female tennis player on the planet. We watch her climb
through the draw to the finals. We read her name in the
finals bracket followed by the name of her opponent: Susan
Donnolly Laura and Susan walk together into the stadium for
the U.S. Open Women's Finals. The court shines. The stands
full. Laura and Susan walk towards their chairs.

LAURA

Hey Susan, remember when he were on
the plane going to that tournament?

Susan barely acknowledges Laura but that doesn't stop her.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Well, Mark told me your weakness.

Susan turns and faces Laura.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Yeah, but I don't think I'll use
his technique. I think I'll just
aim three feet lower and kick your
ass instead.

Susan's face reddens as Laura walks onto the court to a stand
ovation. She raises her hands to the sky and spins around to
look at every part of the stadium. She spins into a slight
blur as the ovation becomes louder.

When the blur lifts we see Laura with the biggest smile a
human can contain on a face holding the U.S.

Open Women's Championship Trophy aloft. She runs toward the coaches area to Reggie they kiss. John runs up to them for an interview.

JOHN

Laura Sampson, the youngest U.S.
Open Women's champion in history.
How do you feel?

LAURA

How do I feel? When are you going
to get some better questions? But,
if that's the best you can do I
should try to come up with an
answer.

Laura looks thoughtful for a moment.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm glad the two people who have
always been there for me could
share this with me. I'm also pretty
sure when school starts next month
I can get a boyfriend.

REGGIE

Over my dead body.

JOHN

Over my dead body.

They all laugh while John reaches into his pocket and pulls out a quarter.

JOHN (CONT'D)

This has been a great day for you,
Laura. But I'm sure it's just one
of many.

LAURA

Thank you, John. I couldn't have
done it without you and Reggie.

JOHN

So, heads or tails? John flips the
quarter high into the air.

We see John's hand waiting for it to fall.

SND FX Metal Clanking

Laura places the open trophy over John's hand to catch the
quarter.

LAURA

I don't trust luck.

Laura, Reggie and John embrace as people applaud, pat them on their backs, Robert Ventullo, the executive from the Prospects Racket Company who was concerned with Laura's ability from her first match, works his way to Team Laura holding a contract, cameras flash and whir as we

FADE TO BLACK.