

The Prodigy

by
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FADE IN:

EXT. INNER CITY - DAY

The credits roll over a tracking shot of a somewhat depressed inner city while Alanis Morissette's 'Ironic' plays.

Morissette's vocals are replaced by those of a ten year old girl, LAURA SAMPSON, the closer we get to the triple decker her family lives in.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The shot moves up the stairs and into her families second floor apartment, into the living room where we first see her standing on a hassock singing while strumming a beat-up old tennis racket guitar. She begins to jump up and down on the hassock, wildly strumming the tennis racket, singing louder as the third chorus of 'Ironic' begins. Her Mother, ANGIE, comes into the room as the chorus ends.

ANGIE

Laura, would you get out of here.
That thing is starting at the park.
You better be getting there now.

Laura stops singing and jumps off the hassock.

LAURA

How come I got to go? How come
Robin doesn't have to go? How come.
. .

ANGIE

. . .I'm going to smack you if you
don't get out of here. Stop asking
so many questions and get out of
here.

Laura swings the tennis racket petulantly as she walks past her mother. The racket whacks into the door frame. And if you don't stop swinging that damn thing in the house I'm going to smack you.

Laura continues to walk through the house and you hear the door slam shut as Angie sits down. You can hear the television that ROBIN, her fourteen year old brother, is watching drone in the background.

ANGIE

Finally. Peace.

ROBIN (V/O)
Ma, get me a soda.

ANGIE
Get your own damn soda. And get me
a beer while you're at it.
(Pause)
I don't hear you moving.

SND FX Robin stomp as he gets up.

ROBIN
What am I, a slave? How come I got
to do everything?

ANGIE
Because I said so.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is leaning against a chain link fence inside a group of four public tennis courts in a park with a group of kids around her age. She's kicking the fence with her heel and alternately hitting it with the tennis racket. A young tennis pro, SCOTT RANDOLPH, is standing on the court talking to the disinterested group.

SCOTT
Remember to keep your head up and
move into the ball. You've got to
keep your feet moving. Okay, let's
see what happens.

Scott takes a couple steps back and reaches into a ball bucket. With his racket he waves BOY #1 forward. He runs forward to the baseline and stops.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Remember to bounce on the balls of
your feet.

Boy #1 looks confused but jumps up and down.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Good.

Scott easily hits a ball towards Boy #1 who startles before running towards the ball. He runs to far and the ball hits him. Some laughter rises from the kids leaning on the fence.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Let's try it again.

This time make sure to keep your eye on the ball. Scott lofts another ball towards Boy #1 and he makes contact. The ball hits the ground before it reaches Scott.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Great. Good job. Next.

Boy #1 stands still for a moment as BOY #2 steps to the baseline.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Okay, let's keep this moving. Get back in line. You'll be back in a minute.

Boy #1 walks back to the line glaring at Scott.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Okay, let's keep this moving.

Scott feeds a ball to Boy #2 and he hits it into another court.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Good. But remember to move your feet. Next.

Boy #2 moves back into line and BOY #3 runs up, is fed a ball and hits it out of the court. Everyone watches it sail into the park.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
You don't have to swing with all your might. And make sure you don't tilt your racket face up. Go get that, will ya. Before a dog gets it.

Boy #3 races out of the court.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Next.

Laura runs up to the baseline. Scott feeds her a ball and she hits it perfectly at Scott. He makes a reflex volley back to her which he approaches and hits down the line deep.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Good.

Scott feeds her another ball, this time a backhand, which she races to and hit cross court towards Scott who volleys it to the middle of the court.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Great.

Laura runs over and hits a forehand deep into the court.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

Whoa.

Boy #3 throws the ball over the fence towards Laura's backhand and she steps towards it and rips it down the line.

BOY #1

How come she gets to hit more balls
than me?

The other kids in line begin to complain and Scott stops short of feeding another ball to Laura.

SCOTT

All right. Next.

He says watching Laura walk back into line.

SCOTT

So, you've taken lessons before?

Laura doesn't even turn around as she runs back into line.

LAURA

Nope.

She stands in the back of the line and immediately starts bouncing off the fence. First time. Scott looks at her as he feed balls to Boy #4.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Scott is walking towards a field house with Laura.

SCOTT

You did real good. Are you sure
you've never played before?

LAURA

Nope. It was fun.

SCOTT

Do you think you'd like to play
again?

Laura shrugs her shoulders.

LAURA

I guess.

They reach the field house and walk inside.

INT. PRO SHOP - CONTINUOUS

An older man, REGGIE DUNLOP, is stringing a racket in what passes for the pro shop. He looks up for a moment when Scott and Laura walk in but goes right back to work.

SCOTT

Reg, this is Laura and she's quite a good little player.

Reggie stops stringing the racket and reaches his hand out to shake Laura's hand.

REGGIE

Is that so? Did you like playing, Laura?

LAURA

I guess.

REGGIE

Well, it is a fun game.

Reggie starts to go back to stringing the racket.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

And the good part is that no matter how good you are, you can enjoy it all your life.

Scott gets frustrated that Reggie isn't understanding him.

SCOTT

No, Reg, this kid is really good. I mean it was amazing. She never had an off center hit and she moves like lightening. You've got to see her. And she's never had a lesson.

Scott grabs Laura's racket which she doesn't release.

SCOTT (CONT'D)

And look at this racket she's using.

Reggie is annoyed but Scott doesn't notice and Laura doesn't see it. He stops stringing and steps from behind the machine.

REGGIE
Is that so.

Reggie leans down to reach Laura's height.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
So. . .what was your name again?

LAURA
Laura.

REGGIE
Laura. So, Laura, are you as good
as my assistant here says?

LAURA
I don't know.

REGGIE
Well, why don't we hit a few.

Reggie puts his hand on Laura's shoulder and begins to lead her out of the field house.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura standing on the baseline with Reggie standing next to her. Scott is standing at the net feeding Laura balls which she effortlessly hits. Reggie is impressed.

REGGIE
Do you know what cross court is,
Laura?

Laura shakes her head no as she hits another ball perfectly. Reggie holds up his hand for Scott to stop feeding balls.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
That's when you try and hit the
ball to the other corner of the
court. For example. . .

Reggie signals for Scott to feed him a ball to his forehand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .you'd hit your forehand over
here.

Reggie hits his forehand deep into the cross court corner.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And your backhand. . .

Scott feeds Reggie a backhand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .over here.

Reggie walks over to Laura.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Do you understand that?

Laura shakes her head yes.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
So, if that's cross court, can you
tell me what down the line would
be?

Laura looks puzzled for a second looking back and forth
between Reggie, Scott and the court. Unsure, she points her
racket down the line.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Exactly. Perfect.

Laura smiles.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
So what I'm going to do is have
Scott feed you a forehand and then
a backhand and I'm going to call
out where I want you to hit the
ball. Do you think you can do that?

Laura shrugs her shoulders.

LAURA
Yeah.

REGGIE
All right, why don't we take a
look.

Reggie signals for Scott to feed her a ball starting with her
backhand. The ball floats towards Laura, she runs up to it,
positions herself, begins her two-handed preparation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Down the line.

Laura complies. Scott feeds to her forehand. Laura runs over
and begins her preparation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Down the line.

Laura complies. Scott feeds to her backhand. Laura runs over and begins her preparation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Down the line.

Laura complies but when she runs past Reggie she gives him a dirty look. He laughs. Scott feeds to her forehand. Laura runs over and begins her preparation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Down the. . .cross court.

Laura makes the correct changes and hits a perfect cross court shot. She smiles running past Reggie who is laughing. Scott feeds to her backhand. Laura runs over and begins her preparation.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Cross court.

Laura hits another perfect shot and begins to run past Reggie again but he stops her mid court.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Hold on a second, Laura.

Laura stops, a little winded, and looks up at Reggie who's obviously happy. Scott climbs over the net and walks towards them.

SCOTT
Real good job. Didn't I tell you
she was great?

REGGIE
She is good, quite a little tennis
player. But a long way to go before
great.

Reggie puts his hand on her shoulder.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Wouldn't you say so, Laura?

Laura shrugs her shoulder.

LAURA
I guess.

REGGIE
Did you have fun?

LAURA
Yeah.

REGGIE
Would you like to do this again?

Laura is a little more animated with her answer this time.

LAURA
Yeah.

REGGIE
Okay, well then, have your mother
come down here tomorrow. I'd like
to talk to her about putting you in
a more advanced group so I want to
see if that'd be all right with
her.

LAURA
It'll be all right. She'll let me.
You don't have to ask her.

REGGIE
That's probably true, but I'd still
like to meet her. You don't mind
now, do you?

Laura shakes her head no.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Good.

Reggie pats her on the shoulder as Scott begins to gather up
the balls.

REGGIE
I'll see you tomorrow then.

LAURA
I have to go?

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE
Well, all the courts are taken and
I do have a lesson, but, no you
don't have to go. You can go over
and hit against that wall over
there.

Reggie points to the field house. Laura smiles, picks up a ball and starts to run out of the court. Just as she passes Scott she stops, turns around and yells across the court.

LAURA

Thank you.

Reggie smiles and waves at her as he talks to his next STUDENT, a balding, overweight middle aged man, who is obviously agitated by the late start of his lesson and the fact that Laura yelled across the courts.

STUDENT

She may hit well for a little girl
but she should learn some
etiquette.

REGGIE

She hits well for anyone.

Reggie points the Student in the direction of the baseline and begins to walk toward the other side.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

As a matter of fact, I predict in
six months she'll kick your ass.

The Student is obviously aggravated at Reggie's temerity.

STUDENT

I seriously doubt that.

Reggie stops at the net and turns to face his student.

REGGIE

A hundred bucks.

The Student is now shocked by this turn of events.

STUDENT

Excuse me?

REGGIE

A hundred bucks says that in six
months she kicks your ass all over
this court.

STUDENT

You aren't seriously proposing that
I play that little girl, are you?

REGGIE

Six months from today. Two out of
three. A hundred bucks. What do you
say?

The Student stares at Reggie like he's insane for a moment
before he looks and finds Laura hitting a ball against the
side of the field house. She doesn't miss.

STUDENT

You're on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Laura's mother and Father - KURT - are sitting on the couch,
Robin is on a chair and they are trying to ignore Laura and
watch television as she bounces in front of them holding her
tennis racket.

LAURA

So then he let me hit with this
other guy, I think his name was
Reggie. . .

ROBIN

. . .that's a stupid name.

LAURA

You're a stupid.

Robin grabs at Laura who's standing too far away to be
touched by his feeble attempt.

ROBIN

But at least I'm not an idiot.

LAURA

I'd rather be an idiot than a
stupid, puss head like you.

Kurt reaches across Angie and swats at Robin who is too far
away to be hit.

ROBIN

Would you two shut the hell up. I'm
trying to watch TV.

He looks at Angie.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Can't I get some relaxation after working my ass off all day? Is that too much to ask? Is it?

ANGIE

Settle down and let your father watch his show.

Robin wags his finger at Laura who ignores him and everyone else. She's just waiting a second to continue her story.

LAURA

So, this Reggie guy says I was good. You should have seen me. I was the best one. This boy hit himself in the head with the racket. It was funny. But I didn't do anything like that. He told me to hit the ball with my backhand. .

.

Laura positions herself for a backhand.

LAURA (CONT'D)

. . .this is how you hit a backhand.

Laura swings her racket.

ROBIN

Hey, watch it, stupid. Dad, she almost hit me with that stupid racket.

KURT

If you both don't stop making a racket I'm going to hit you. Angie, would you do something here?

ANGIE

Laura. Sit down. We're glad you had fun but your father wants to watch his show.

KURT

In peace.

ROBIN

Yeah, what he said.

Kurt swings and misses Robin again.

KURT
I said in peace.

Robin folds his arms and begins to sulk and talk under his breath.

ROBIN
I didn't even do anything. She gets
to swing a racket all over the
house but I can't even. . .

Kurt leans over and this time makes contact with Robin who screams.

KURT
. . .I said shut up. Get me a beer.

Robin jumps off the chair and runs to the kitchen mumbling all the way. Laura stands there banging the racket against her leg waiting to continue her story. She gets back into the backhand ready position and continues.

LAURA
So, he told me to hit a backhand
cross court.

Laura swings and follows through on her backhand.

LAURA (CONT'D)
That's when you hit it to the other
side of the court.

Laura moves her feet like she's running.

LAURA (CONT'D)
And then he had me run across the
court and hit a forehand.

Laura gets into the forehand ready position.

LAURA (CONT'D)
This one he had me hit down the
line.

Laura swings and follows through on her forehand.

LAURA (CONT'D)
And then. . .

Laura turns and her racket hits a knickknack that crashes onto the floor.

KURT

. . .what the fuck? Is this shit
going to go on all fucking night?

ANGIE

I told you not to say the 'F' word
in front of the kids.

Kurt leans in and motions for Laura to step towards him.

KURT

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.
Fuck.

Kurt turns to Angie.

KURT (CONT'D)

And fuck you too.

Kurt stands up and starts walking out of the room.

KURT

I just want to come home and have a
nice quiet evening but you and
these little bastards always fuck
that up.

ANGIE

Where are you going?

KURT

The club. I'll be back when they're
in bed.

We hear the front door close just as Robin walks back into
the room with the beer.

ROBIN

Where'd dad go? I've got his beer.

Robin hold up the beer and Angie takes it as she walks out of
the living room. Laura starts picking up the broken glass.

ROBIN (CONT'D)

I told you you're stupid.

LAURA

I'm not stupid. I'm a tennis
player.

ROBIN

I doubt that. But even if you are,
you're a stupid tennis player.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - DAY

Angie and Laura are sitting while Reggie rewraps the grip on a tennis racket.

ANGIE

I don't know, I mean, I like that she has something to do, but I don't know if it's such a good idea that a ten year old plays with those older kids. I mean, she just started playing a month or so ago.

LAURA

But those kids I've been playing with weren't good. I want to play with the good kids.

ANGIE

Be quiet, Laura, Mommy's talking.

Angie pauses and addresses Reggie.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

And I don't think my husband is going to go for the private lessons. We really don't have the money for something like that.

LAURA

I'll make the money on my own money. I have a birthday coming up.

ANGIE

I said be quiet, honey.

Laura slumps down in the chair and wraps her arms around her tennis racket.

REGGIE

I think we can work something out as far as the lesson rates. But I really think that Laura has some potential. I'm not saying she'll make the pro tour. . .

LAURA

. . .yes I will.

Reggie smiles at Laura.

REGGIE

With an attitude like that you just
may.

Laura looks at Reggie puzzled.

LAURA

What's the pro tour?

Reggie laughs.

REGGIE

It's a place where you get to play
with the best tennis player in the
world.

LAURA

That's who I want to play with.

REGGIE

Well, let's build you a game and
then we'll start thinking about the
pro tour.

ANGIE

All this sounds pretty good, but,
isn't tennis a real expensive
sport?

Reggie waves his arms around at his stark surroundings and
laughs.

REGGIE

Maybe in some places.

Reggie leans on his desk and looks at Angie.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Sampson. . .

ANGIE

. . .Angie.

REGGIE

Angie. I'm not promising miracles here. Your daughter likes the game. It's a great game. And maybe she can play in some tournaments. You never know, she may even win a couple. Maybe, if we get real lucky, she'll be able to pick up a scholarship to school. But that's supposition. The reality is she likes the game. And, no matter what happens, she'll have a game that she'll be able to play for the rest of her life.

ANGIE

And what's in it for you? I mean, no offense, but this is your job and you're offering to do it for nothing? That's not too smart, you know.

REGGIE

Well, I never said that I'd do it for free.

Angie gets an 'I knew it was too good to be true' look.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

I said that we may be able to work something out.

ANGIE

And what do you mean by that?

REGGIE

Well, the meager abilities I have should be compensated. So, here's what I propose.

Reggie reaches into his desk and pulls out a form letter and starts writing on it.

REGGIE

And, just so you know, this is all contingent on how good I do my job. I propose that, in perpetuity, I get ten percent of Laura's tournament winnings.

Reggie turns the paper around to show Angie the paper.

ANGIE

What does this mean?

REGGIE

Well, it means that if Laura wins a tournament I get to keep the trophy for thirty-six and a half days a year.

He points towards the trophy case behind his desk.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Does that sound fair to you, Laura?

Laura shrugs her shoulders.

LAURA

I guess.

Angie alternates looking at the paper and Reggie.

ANGIE

I still don't get this. Why would you want her trophies for a month?

REGGIE

I don't. Look, I get a salary by the city to be here. So I get paid whether I'm on the court or sitting here. Call me crazy, but I'd rather be out on the court teaching tennis.

Angie stares at Reggie confused.

ANGIE

So this wouldn't cost me nothing?

REGGIE

Well, ten percent.

ANGIE

And this will keep her out of the house for a few hours a day. And, you know, off the streets.

REGGIE

It'll do more than that.

Angie looks at the paper, picks up a pen and signs it.

ANGIE
Okay, but only because she likes
it.

Angie stops signing and looks at Laura.

ANGIE (CONT'D)
And, you do like it, don't you,
Laura?

Laura nods yes enthusiastically and Laura finishes signing
the paper and pushes it back towards Reggie who picks it up.
He calls loudly.

REGGIE
Scott, come in her a minute, will
ya?

Scott walks into the room.

SCOTT
Yeah?

REGGIE
Take a look at this paper and sign
it.

Scott reads the paper and smiles.

SCOTT
Hmmm, ten percent, huh?

Scott looks at Laura.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Your trophies will probably fill
that case.

Scott turns the paper back towards Reggie.

REGGIE
Do you have any questions, Laura?

Laura thinks for a second before coming up with her question.

LAURA
How come I don't get anything to
sign?

Reggie and Scott laugh. Reggie turns the paper toward Laura.

REGGIE
Already she wants to take control
of her career.

Laura signs the paper while a big smile spreads across her face.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Is that it? Do you have any
questions?

Reggie looks at Angie who is already getting up to leave.

ANGIE
Nope, I guess that's it.

REGGIE
Okay.

Reggie gets up and extends his hand to shake Angie's. She shakes his hand and then reaches over and shakes Scott's.

REGGIE
So, we'll see you tomorrow at nine
AM, Laura.

Reggie leans down and shakes Laura's hand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And we'll fit you with a new
racket.

Laura's smile grows even larger as she jumps off the chair and joins Angie who is moving toward the door.

LAURA
See you tomorrow.

Angie and Laura exit the room. Scott picks up the piece of paper.

SCOTT
Do you want me to file this with
the other ones?

REGGIE
Yeah.

Reggie looks at his scheduling book and then up at the clock.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
I've got to get to the courts.

Reggie exits as Scott walks over to a filing cabinet, opens it and jams the piece of paper in a drawer that is overcrowded with identical pieces of paper. He closes the drawer with some difficulty and exits.

SCOTT

We've got to get a new cabinet.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Angie on a tennis court six months later playing the Student Reggie made a bet with. She's running him all over the court and he is drenched with sweat and barely able to move. Angie hits a drop shot that the Student barely gets to. Angie anticipates where his return is going, gets there in plenty of time and hits a perfect lob that the Student doesn't even reach for. Angie runs up to the net and extends her hand.

ANGIE

Game, set, match.

Angie stands at the net smiling with her hand extended. The Student slowly moves towards her. He finally reaches her and hardly touches her hand as he passes on the way to the seat on the side of the court. He plops onto the seat, puts a towel over his soaked head and drops his head between his legs. Angie walks over to the seat crisply, puts her racket in her bag, zips it up and begins to leave.

ANGIE

Good match, mister.

Angie walks past Reggie as she leaves the court.

REGGIE

How'd it go?

LAURA

Straight sets. You were right. I couldn't do anything with his first serve except hope to get a racket on it. But he had nothing on his second. It still moved a little more than I'm used to but I returned most of them. After that, all I had to do was keep the ball in play and move him around. Thanks for setting up that match, Reg, it was fun.

REGGIE

My pleasure.

Laura exits the court and Reggie walks towards the Student who is still sitting down with his head between his legs. Reggie reaches him and puts his hand on the Student's shoulder.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Did you have a good match?

The Student rips the towel off his head and turns halfway around to face Reggie.

STUDENT

That little brat nearly ran me to death. It was like hitting against a wall. I don't think she ever missed.

The Student turns back around and towels off his face.

STUDENT (CONT'D)

The only pleasure I got was when I aced her.

REGGIE

It must give you a warm feeling to know you can blast an ace past an eleven year old.

The Student pulls the towel away from his face.

STUDENT

You bet your ass it does. She almost killed me out there.

REGGIE

This may not be the best time to bring this up, but, it looks like you could die any moment.

Reggie pauses until the Student gives him his total attention.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Can I get my hundred bucks now?

The Student reaches into his bag disgustedly and pulls out his wallet.

STUDENT

I sure as hell didn't plan this.

The student hands the cash to Reggie who puts it in the pocket of his shorts.

STUDENT (CONT'D)
My wife's going to kill me when I
tell her how I lost this.

The Student wipes his face while watching the smiling Reggie.

STUDENT (CONT'D)
You must be getting a big kick out
of this.

Reggie laughs as he begins to exit the courts.

REGGIE
As much as you took out of aching an
eleven year old.

Reggie turns his head and calls back to the Student.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
Thanks for donating to the Laura
Sampson lesson fund.

Reggie leaves the court as the Student puts the towel over
his head and his head between his legs again.

EXT. MILDWIND COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Reggie and Angie watching Laura play the defending champion,
LESLIE ROBBINS, in the twelve and under state championships
at Leslie's home club, the Mildwind Country Club. The
scoreboard shows that it is the third set with Leslie having
won the first set 6-2 and Laura winning the second 7-5. Laura
is serving for the match at 5-4. The players are sitting down
during the change waiting for the UMPIRE to tell them when to
start the next game.

UMPIRE
Time.

Laura and Leslie get off their seats and walks to their
respective side. The sun is in Laura's eyes during her
service game.

REGGIE
If Laura can hold her serve this'll
be the biggest win of anyone ever
at the center.

ANGIE
You just want the trophy for a
month.

REGGIE

One month, five and a half days, to
be exact.

Angie chuckles as Laura bounces the ball a few times as she concentrates on the spot she knows her serve will land. Her service motion is fluid. The ball toss is perfect. The ball hits the outside service line and Leslie barely gets her racket on it. A groan waves through the partisan crowd.

UMPIRE

Fifteen-love.

Laura walks confidently across the baseline thinking about her second serve. All day long she's been pulling Leslie out of the court wide. She knows that's what Leslie expects. Reggie knows what she's thinking and whispers to no one.

REGGIE

Don't change a winning game, Laura.
Stick with what's working.

Although they could barely hear him, a MALE CLUB MEMBER sitting behind Reggie and Angie taps him on the shoulder, when Reggie turns around the Club Member puts his index finger to his lips.

MALE CLUB MEMBER

Shhhh. Reggie smiles at the Male
Club Member.

REGGIE

I'll shut up the moment you can
prove to me your dick can get as
stiff as your upper lip.

The Male Club Member looks at a FEMALE CLUB MEMBER with a 'we really shouldn't let these people enter the tournament' look. The Female Club Member nods.

FEMALE CLUB MEMBER

It used to be such a wonderful
tournament. The sound of a ball
popping off Laura's racket brings
everyone's attention to the court.

Laura serve's down the middle of the court.

REGGIE

No.

Leslie returns the ball to the middle of the court. Reggie whispers to Angie while stealing a look at the Female Club Member. He winks at her. She averts his gaze.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
She really shouldn't have done
that. She should have gone in for a
quick kill.

Laura approaches on the return and hits a slice low and deep into Leslie's backhand corner. Leslie has hit a lob off each approach of this type so instead of pushing closer to the net Laura takes two steps back and is in a perfect position to hit an overhead winner to the opposite corner. Leslie never moves for it.

UMPIRE
Thirty-Love.

A smattering of polite applause dies down quickly.

REGGIE
I was wrong. I don't even know
where she learned that. This girl
really is special.

Laura stands at the baseline waiting for Leslie to get into her position. Leslie is grimacing and looking into the stands. Club members start to cheer for her and call out words of encouragement. Laura bounces a ball off the face of her racket while waiting. Her expression never changes from a concentrated glare. Finally, Leslie is in position and Laura begins her service motion. She is about to make contact with the ball.

LESLIE
Hold it.

Laura tries to stop her serve and halfheartedly lofts a ball towards Leslie who pounces on it and hits it for a winner. The crowd cheers.

UMPIRE
Thirty-fifteen.

The crowd cheers. Laura looks between Leslie and the Umpire as she walks towards the umpire chair.

LAURA
She said hold it so I tried to stop
serve.

UMPIRE

I never heard anything. Thirty-
fifteen. Please resume play.

The crowd begins to whistle and call out for play.

LAURA

I heard her say hold it.

Laura looks at Leslie who is standing just inside the
baseline.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Didn't you say hold it?

Leslie stands there looking at her for a moment. Then she
looks into the stands. When she does the crowd begins to
clamor more urgently for play to resume. Laura looks back at
the Umpire.

LAURA (CONT'D)

How come I could hear her but you
didn't?

UMPIRE

I'm going to start the clock, Miss
Sampson.

More jeers spill from the crowd.

LAURA

Did anyone hear her say to hold it?

ANGIE

I heard her, honey.

MALE CLUB MEMBER

Of course you'd say that, you're
her mother.

Angie turns around about to confront the Male Club Member but
Reggie holds her back.

REGGIE

Let it go, Ang. Let Laura finish
the match.

He turns Angie back and starts to clap.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

Come on, Laura, let's finish this.

Laura looks up at Reggie and determinedly walks back to the baseline to serve.

UMPIRE
Thirty-fifteen.

Laura begins her service motion again. The ball sits in the air for a split second before her racket makes contact. A dead perfect pop flies off the strings. The flat serve was hit directly at Leslie who is handcuffed and barely makes the return. Laura followed the serve into the net and puts away an easy volley. Leslie looks at Laura incredulously. The crowd boos at this perceived unsportswoman-like conduct. Only Reggie and Angie cheer. Forty-fifteen. Leslie doesn't move. She is rubbing her right wrist and contorting her face into a faked pained expression.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Are you hurt?

Leslie pushes out a few light tears before she nods yes. MRS. ROBBINS and the CLUB PRO jump over the small fence and rush to her side. The crowd sits silently as Mrs. Robbins and the Club Pro attend to Leslie.

REGGIE
She's faking.

MALE CLUB MEMBER
You are heartless. Your ruffian could have injured that little girl.

FEMALE CLUB MEMBER
And she has quite a lovely career ahead of her. Unless some serious damage was done.

MALE CLUB MEMBER
I hope you're proud of the way you teach your players proper conduct.

Angie begins to turn around to face the people.

ANGIE
You can't. . .

Reggie puts his hands on Angie's shoulder.

REGGIE
. . .Angie, don't bother. We're here to win a tournament, not an academy award.

MALE CLUB MEMBER

Obviously he teaches that horrid inner city 'any way necessary' style.

FEMALE CLUB MEMBER

And what kind of aberration is the name 'Angie'? She doesn't look like one. She probably married one of them. No wonder their daughter is a hooligan.

The Male Club Member begins to get out of his seat. He reaches down to help the Female Club Member up.

MALE CLUB MEMBER

Come, Eustes, let's see if we can be of any assistance. The quickly move through the stands.

Reggie pauses a moment after they're gone and smiles at a visibly upset Angie.

REGGIE

Eustes? What kind of aberration is that? Unfortunately, she does look like one. Ewww, and it sure looks like she married one. No wonder their daughter ran away to become a roadie for the Daughter's of Sodom.

Angie smiles uneasily.

UMPIRE

Miss Robbins forfeits. Game, set, match by default to Miss Sampson.

Only Reggie and Angie stand to applaud. The presentation is limited to an amateur tennis association OFFICIAL, who is also a concerned club member, walking over to Laura and handing her a trophy.

OFFICIAL

Congratulations little lady. You must be quite proud of yourself. Good luck in the nationals.

Before Laura can say anything the Official rushes back to Leslie's side and helps lead her out of the court. Laura is standing in the middle of the court alone. Reggie and Angie finally reach her side and hug her. Laura begins to cry.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

A year later where Laura, preparing to defend her twelve and under title, is running through drills with Scott as Reggie, Angie and Kurt watch from the side of the court.

KURT

What the hell are you talking about? You think it would be better if she went to a tennis school? How much would that cost?

REGGIE

She needs more concentrated coaching. She needs to be around a better quality of players. Nationally ranked players. She's beat almost everyone here and I'm talking about adult men.

KURT

And how much does that cost?

ANGIE

Kurt, can we just listen to Reggie?

Kurt glares at Angie.

KURT

You're not the one busting your ass working two jobs just to keep paying all these damn tournament fees.

ANGIE

A lot of them have been covered by club members.

KURT

But not enough of them. No, there's no way we can swing sending her to some tennis school.

REGGIE

I know how tough it is to try and build a tennis player, Kurt. But, like I told you and Angie a couple of weeks ago, the guy who runs this school said that, for certain future considerations, he'd take Laura in on a scholarship.

KURT

What certain future considerations are we talking about? They want a piece of her, don't they?

REGGIE

If you're interested I'll put you in touch with these people and you can see what they mean for yourself.

ANGIE

Do you think it'll be good for her?

REGGIE

I do. She's gone as far as she can with me. It's time to move her to the next level to see if she's going to make it.

KURT

Yeah, but why should these guys get everything just because they run some hot shot tennis school? It's my daughter we're talking about here. I should get some consideration, if you get my drift.

REGGIE

Listen, I don't know what they're going to offer you.

KURT

What did they offer you?

REGGIE

I'd rather not get into that.

KURT

What do you mean you'd rather not get into that? You got paid, didn't you?

REGGIE

I got a consulting fee.

Kurt addresses Angie.

KURT

See, I told you mister altruistic here was in it for something. I knew the bastard was getting paid.

REGGIE

My fee, even though it's none of your business, basically amounted to was the cost of my time in lessons I've given her over the last year. I also got a few companies to donate some rackets to the center. And, now, I may be able to get some touring pros to stop over here and give a clinic. That's all gravy. My bottom line is Laura. What's good for her. What's good for her game.

KURT

Fuck you. You're getting paid so I want to get paid. Put me in touch with these endorsement guys and this school. I want to talk numbers with them.

REGGIE

I think you should consult a lawyer before you talk numbers, Reggie. There's an entire gray area that may jeopardize her college career. She may not be able to get a college scholarship if you start signing contracts now.

KURT

Forget college. She won't be going. I'm cashing in now. Just get me the meetings and I'll do the rest.

Laura comes running over.

LAURA

How'd I look, Reg?

KURT

You looked great, baby. Just great.

Reggie is visibly perturbed at Kurt's insurrection.

REGGIE

Great as usual. Grab a shower. After that I want to go over a few things about the tournament this weekend and then I have to make a few phone calls for your father.

Laura gets excited.

LAURA

You're going to let me go to the
Vasaturo Tennis Academy?

Laura screams with glee.

LAURA (CONT'D)

That's great.

She grabs Reggie and hugs him followed by Angie and then
Kurt. When she gets to Kurt he begins to talk.

KURT

It may be even better than that,
baby. Much better.

Reggie grabs her arm and starts to walk her towards the field
house.

REGGIE

Let's go, Laura. It's going to be a
long night.

Reggie leads a bouncing Laura out of the courts. Kurt smiles
at her for a second and then addresses Angie.

KURT

That little brat's going to make us
rich.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is surrounded by officials holding the trophy over her
head smiling at the applauding crowd.

ANNOUNCER

Join us in congratulating this
years twelve and under national
champion, Laura Sampson.

The applause continues as Laura looks around the stands.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Our next match, the twelve and
under national boys championship,
will begin in fifteen minutes.

An official puts his hand on Laura's shoulder and begins to
lead her off the court. The official walks Laura out of the
court area and hands her over to another official, who has
Laura's bag and rackets, who brings her under the stands and
to the locker room door.

There she hands Laura her bag and turns to walk back to the court. Laura walks into the locker room alone.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Laura walks into the locker room. The only other people in the room are the GIRL she just beat and her COACH. The coach is consoling her student. They only look at Laura for a moment before they go back to comforting each other.

Laura walks past them to her locker, puts her bag on the floor and sits on the bench. She looks at the trophy in her hand for a moment and then sticks it in her bag. Laura stands up and begins walking towards the pay phone. Once there she dials her home number collect and waits for a moment.

LAURA

Mom, it's me, Laura, I won.

She waits another moment while the phone rings. Robin picks it up and hears Laura's recorded voice.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Mom, it's me, Laura, I won.

ROBIN

Mom's not home. And I don't care.

Robin hangs up the phone.

RECORDED OPERATOR (V/O)

The call was not accepted. You will not be charged for this call.

Laura hangs the phone up and walks back to her locker where the TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR is waiting for her.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR

I just wanted to remind you that your flight home is in two hours. Do you need to go back to your sponsor house to retrieve anything?

LAURA

No. They're watching their son play doubles.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR

Oh yes, that's right.

The Tournament Coordinator leans in and whispers to Laura.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR (CONT'D)
He's losing right now in straight
sets.

The Tournament Coordinator leans back.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR (CONT'D)
I'll let you get changed and we'll
head right to the airport. See you
in a few.

The Tournament Coordinator begins to exit but stops.

TOURNAMENT COORDINATOR (CONT'D)
Oh, by the way, congratulations.
You played wonderfully.

LAURA
Thank you.

The Tournament Coordinator exits and Laura sits down and
starts getting changed in silence.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Laura getting out of a taxi in front of her house. She pulls
her bag and trophy out and begins to walk up the stairs.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Laura walks in and the first thing you hear is the
television. Laura walks past the living room and sees Robin
on the floor and Kurt sitting on the couch. They don't look
at Laura.

LAURA
Where's mom?

KURT
Out. Get me a beer.

Laura looks dejected and begins to walk towards her bedroom
to put her bag and trophy down. Robin gets up and runs
towards her. He reaches her as she get into her bedroom and
grabs the trophy.

LAURA
Hey.

ROBIN

I bet you think you're a real big shot, don't you?

LAURA

No. Just give me that.

ROBIN

This doesn't mean you're anything special, you know.

LAURA

I know. Just give me that.

Laura reaches for the trophy and Robin holds it away from her and starts to move further into the room.

ROBIN

Try and get it.

LAURA

Just give it to me.

Laura reaches for it, Robin pulls it back and the trophy smashes her bedroom window. He pulls the trophy back in and tosses it to Laura.

KURT (V/O)

What the hell is going on in there?

ROBIN

Laura tried to hit me with her trophy and missed. It broke the window.

Kurt reaches her bedroom.

LAURA

I did not. He was holding it away and I tried to get it. He put it. .
.

Kurt slaps Laura in the back of the head and grabs the trophy out of her hands. Laura was surprised but she never cries.

KURT

You're such a little bitch. You and all this tennis shit. You might be a big shot to your little tennis friends but you're just a spoiled brat to me.

LAURA

He did it.

Kurt raises his hand to slap her again. She cringes. He doesn't hit her.

KURT

Don't mouth off to me. You're going to pay for a new window. Clean up this mess.

Laura moves towards the broken window.

KURT (CONT'D)

And get me my beer.

Kurt starts to leave the room.

KURT (CONT'D)

Spoiled little brat. All this shit I put up with had better pay off.

He tosses the trophy at her as he exits the room. It sails past her and out of the window. Robin laughs as he follows Kurt out of the room. Laura moves towards the window and looks out on her trophy, in pieces, on the ground.

LAURA

That'll sure make it easier to give Reggie his ten percent.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Kurt is sitting with TONY VASATURO, owner of the Vasaturo Tennis Academy, JULIAN DANDO, a representative from a shoe company, RUSSELL FAY, an agent, BARBARA GOULD, a representative from a racket company, BIFF WAINRIGHT, a representative from a clothing company and Reggie. Everyone, except Reggie, is laughing at whatever Kurt says.

KURT

So this little bitch ripped her off on a ball that I know hit the lines in the back. . .

REGGIE

. . .the baseline.

KURT

Huh? What? Yeah, that. And then,
and this is the great part, Laura
hit a ball that barely made it over
the net. . .

REGGIE

. . .a drop shot.

KURT

Yeah. So. This other girl. . .

REGGIE

. . .Stacie Cummings.

KURT

Whatever. Well, this girl comes
charging in. . .

REGGIE

. . .she approached the net.

KURT

What the fuck's with you? Why don't
you just let me tell a fucking
story to these guys?

REGGIE

Two reasons. One is that you don't
know a fucking thing about this
game. Every time you try to talk
about it you sound like a moron.
And, two, you weren't even there.

KURT

But my baby was and she told me all
about it.

REGGIE

Like you've ever listened.

Reggie takes a long sip from his drink while Kurt glares at
him.

TONY

Can we move the discussion to
what's best for Laura?

Kurt stops glaring at Reggie and a rapacious grin crosses his
face.

KURT

And isn't that what we're all here
for? To turn my little Laura into
our own little ATM.

Kurt pauses as he looks over everyone collected at the table.
He's coalesced their thoughts perfectly. Except for Reggie.

KURT (CONT'D)

Our own little Amazing Tennis
Machine.

Everyone except for Reggie laughs too hard. When they stop
laughing there is a fairly uncomfortable pause where everyone
looks at Reggie.

BARBARA

Well, I know my company will split
her first years tuition, including
room and board, if she goes to
Tony's school.

JULIAN

And we're ready to sign an offer to
pick up her travel and tournament
expenses for certain
considerations.

Kurt pauses looking over the group and stops at Biff.

KURT

And what about you? What would you
like to do for Laura?

Biff looks thoughtful for a moment before he speaks.

BIFF

Let's just say that we're willing
to pick up any incidentals that
might arise.

Everyone except Reggie laughs. Kurt laughs a moment too late
and a decibel too loud.

KURT

Well, this all sounds fine for
Laura.

Kurt pauses and looks over the group.

KURT (CONT'D)

But, I have a family and another, less talented, son that I also have to care for. Having Laura away from the family like that may cause a break down of the nuclear family. So, I don't know if. . .

TONY

. . .all I can tell you, Kurt, is that if Laura comes to the academy, whenever you feel that familial tug you can hop on a plane and bring everyone down and spend a week, all expenses paid, of course, at a condo we own near the facility. I think that will fulfill your parental urges.

Kurt is impressed but working hard not to show it. He's looking for something more.

KURT

These are all generous offers. . .

REGGIE

. . .but.

KURT

Why do you keep busting my balls?

TONY

Could we take this fight outside? Reggie, I know you're new to this but, we're all just interested in what's best for Laura. She has quite a talent and the reason we're all here is to make sure she lives up to her potential. Isn't that why you're here?

Reggie looks over the group.

TONY (CONT'D)

Well? Isn't it?

Reggie shakes his head yes. He knows when he's outclassed.

TONY (CONT'D)

Good. Now, can we get back to what the father feels is best for his daughter?

A surge of adrenaline races through Kurt as his innate greed takes over.

KURT

All of this is fine, but, like I said before I was so rudely interrupted, I have another kid and a family to take care of.

BARBARA

So, what do you want?

JULIAN

I think we can work together.

BIFF

Within reason.

KURT

It's more of what I don't want. I don't want to go work on the loading dock tomorrow. I don't want to continue living in this shit hole city. I don't want you all to make money off of my daughter and not get my share.

The group stares at Kurt barely able to hide their collective glee. His greed is his downfall and they know it. Reggie lowers his head and picks up his drink.

REGGIE

A toast.

The rest of the group lifts their glasses. To the purity of the sport. The group pauses before taking tentative sips from their drink. Reggie grins as he sips his drink.

BIFF

This is a great sport. It's given us. . .

KURT

. . .fuck that. I want cash.

The abruptness of Kurt's demand catches the group off guard. Reggie laughs long and loud.

REGGIE

That's it Kurt, go right in for the kill.

KURT

That's right. You may want to live in this fucking city, working your little job for the rest of your life but I've got plans. I've got a little girl that can change my life.

REGGIE

No matter what it does to her.

KURT

Fuck you. This is an amazing opportunity. And, in case you've forgotten, this whole thing was your doing in the first place.

REGGIE

True. I do want her to get the best instruction available, but not at her expense.

TONY

Reggie, I think you misunderstand us. We all want what's best for Laura, but, we also know that over the next three to five years everyone at this table is going to invest quite a bit of time and money into creating Laura's game. Just as you've done over the last year. And, correct me if I'm wrong, but weren't you paid for that time?

Reggie shakes his head yes.

TONY

Then bring yourself down from the pedestal. The only difference between you and Kurt is that Kurt is man enough to come out and tell us what he wants.

Reggie sits there silently seething.

KURT

And Kurt wants money. Lots of it. Now.

TONY

Well, I think there may be some positions opening up at one or more of these companies.

Tony motions toward the three reps.

JULIAN

We are looking for a rep to
specialize in junior development.

BIFF

And while you're doing that, you
could probably fill our position as
junior liaison.

BARBARA

And we're always looking for up an
coming player to use our equipment.
I could probably get you a job as
director of junior development.

Kurt is dazed.

TONY

Of course, all of these offers are
contingent on whether Laura comes
to the academy and if you offer us
some future considerations.

Kurt is still dazzled by these offers. All of a sudden he
notices that Russell hasn't made him an offer. He's not
going to leave any offer in the open.

KURT

What about you? What are you going
to do for my little girl?

RUSSELL

I'm going to make sure that she
lives up to her earning potential.
If you hire me, I'll make sure she
lives up to her earning potential.

TONY

Russell's an agent and I highly
recommend him. He represents almost
all of my best students.

KURT

Sounds good to me. So. . .

Kurt leans in to Russell conspiratorially.

KURT (CONT'D)

. . .do these offers sound good to
you?

RUSSELL

Well, I haven't seen the offers in writing or heard the amount they're willing to offer you for your services, but I've worked with these people in the past and find them to be equitable.

KURT

You're good. Yeah, what are we talking about in money here? How much are you, um. . .

Kurt leans in and speaks to Russell.

KURT (CONT'D)

. . .what was that phrase you used?

RUSSELL

Willing to offer you for your services?

KURT

Yeah, that's it.

Kurt sits back and confidently addresses the reps.

KURT (CONT'D)

How much are you willing to offer me for my valued services.

Kurt is proud that he thought fast enough to add the word valued.

JULIAN

I think that position pays sixty k per annum.

BARBARA

Sixty grand a year.

BIFF

We offer our liaisons a starting salary of sixty thousand dollars per year with a generous benefit package.

Kurt is shell-shocked. He leans in and talks to his new best friend Russell.

KURT

Are they saying they'll each offer me sixty thou a year?

Russell shakes his head yes. Each one of them? Russell shakes his head yes.

KURT (CONT'D)
So that adds up to. . .

Kurt starts to do the math.

RUSSELL
One hundred and eighty thousand dollars per year. Plus, I'm assuming, bonuses depending on Laura's performance levels.

All of the reps nod yes.

KURT
Sign my ass up.

RUSSELL
I'll have them forward the offer sheet and terms to my office. Do you have any other questions?

Kurt is too happy with his current situation to want to rock the boat.

REGGIE
I have a question, if it's all right.

The group sits there silently not wanting him to speak but hoping someone else tells him not to.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
These are generous offers. . .

Reggie reaches over and shakes Kurt's hand.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
. . .and I'm sure you'll do a great job. But, if you'll allow me, Kurt, I'd like to ask just what this is going to mean to Laura? I mean, in future considerations.

The reps look at Russell and he answers.

RUSSELL
Well, usually in situations like this, the company takes a small percentage of the players possible future earnings.

BARBARA

And that's a huge risk.

JULIAN

That's true. Do you know how many of these offers we make in a year and not have the player not even make the tour?

BIFF

The risk is totally ours.

REGGIE

If it's such a big risk why do you offer it? I mean, if Kurt had actual tennis experience wouldn't that lessen the risk?

TONY

It's done to alleviate any stress the player may experience during the split of the family unit. We've found that if a parent is at some of the tournaments the player feels less stressed and they are less likely to become distracted.

(To Kurt)

But, all of this is contingent on the fact that Laura actually comes to, can pass the entrance test and remains at my academy.

KURT

Oh, I don't think we'll have any problems with that. After all, how many other under twelve national champions do you have?

TONY

Right now? I think eight past under twelve champions.

KURT

Yeah, well, that may be true, but how many current twelve and under champs?

TONY

Our current class has the under twelve boys title holder.

KURT

Yeah, but how many current girl
champs do you have?

TONY

None yet.

KURT

See! I told you she was unique.

Kurt finishes his drink.

KURT

I've got to take a piss.

Kurt stands up.

KURT (CONT'D)

I'll be right back.

The group watches Kurt walk away. When they can't see him
anymore Tony addresses Reggie.

TONY

Are you trying to blow this deal?

REGGIE

Hey, I don't care that you take
care of that jerk, I just want to
make sure Laura's taken care of.

BARBARA

I know everyone at this table has
her best interest in mind.

REGGIE

Are you sure?

TONY

Our combined investment in this
girl up to this point is larger
than the budget you have for your
entire tennis center for a year. We
have to have her best interest in
mind. So stop your worrying and let
us take it from here.

The group sits silently for a second.

RUSSELL

Let me ask you, Reggie. Is Kurt really that much of a simpleton? I mean, is he so stupid that he'd sell a piece of a possibly major commodity away for one hundred and eighty a year?

REGGIE

You could have had him for half that.

BIFF

Shit. I told you we should have low balled this idiot.

TONY

Don't worry about it. Whatever we spend we'll more than make up her first year in endorsements alone. She's so cute and fresh faced everyone will want her face on their product. We just have to groom her and get her away from that pinhead.

Kurt arrives at the table and sits down.

KURT

So, did I miss anything?

The group nods their heads and murmurs no.

KURT (CONT'D)

While I was pissing I thought of another story. You're going to love this one. It's not a tennis story, but you can probably use it in her bio. When she was four. . .

EXT. VASATURO TENNIS ACADEMY - DAY

Laura, Angie and Kurt on a tour of the Vasaturo Tennis Academy with Tony. They are walking past standard government issue dormitories. Between each building is a set of tennis courts. They are all occupied. Many kids and adults walk through the scene and they all seem like they have a purpose. Laura looks a little bit overwhelmed as she watches the cream of the junior tennis world walk by.

TONY

And this is the dorm where Laura will be residing. And over there are the courts we will build this kid into a champion.

ANGIE

Where will she be going to school?

KURT

Weren't you listening?

Kurt points to the courts.

KURT (CONT'D)

Right there. Geez, and you get on my ass.

ANGIE

That's not what I. . .

TONY

. . .I think she means real school. You know, the three R's.

KURT

The only three R's I'm interested in are: Rankings, Revenue and Riches.

Tony laughs. Angie glares.

TONY

I couldn't agree more, Kurt, but the law says we have to send these future champions to school. So, to answer your question, Angie, there is a private school just down the road that all of the children are bussed to every day. That is, when they're not at tournaments. I can guarantee you the education she will receive will be top flight. But, if you'd like to take a trip to the school and check it out for yourself I can have someone take you to the school.

KURT

That won't be necessary.

Kurt turns his full attention to Angie.

KURT (CONT'D)
Will it, hon?

Angie sheepishly nods her head no.

KURT (CONT'D)
Good, now, isn't it time that our
little champion her got her butt on
the court?

Kurt tousles Laura's hair.

KURT (CONT'D)
You want to get out there and start
strutting your stuff, don't you
kid?

Laura nods without any confidence.

TONY
Actually, Kurt, her first lesson is
not until the morning. We find that
the new students need a little time
to get used to the facility and
meet their big sister.

Tony addresses Laura for the first time directly.

TONY (CONT'D)
And wait until you meet your big
sister. And do we have a big sister
for you. You've heard of Susan
Donnolly, haven't you, Laura?

Laura nods with a new level of awe.

TONY (CONT'D)
Well, you two will get to know each
other real well because she is your
big sister and roommate.

Tony puts his attention back to Kurt and Angie, mostly Angie.

TONY (CONT'D)
We find that by giving the new
students a guidance figure the
transition to this new situation is
smoother. And we also give the
rooms points for all of the match
wins and other credits they get for
other things.

It's also a way of keeping the camaraderie of the academy up. The kids love it and really pull together.

Now Tony turns his attention more towards Kurt.

TONY (CONT'D)

And it doesn't hurt that the older players give the new ones a few tricks of the trade.

Tony pats Kurt on the shoulder and leads everyone into Laura's dorm.

INT. DORM - CONTINUOUS

The group walks past a few rooms until they reach the room of SUSAN DONNOLLY, the top ranked 18 and under woman in the US. It is now also the room of Laura. It is decorated with photos and ad mock-ups featuring Susan. And this is the room that you will share with Susan. Tony opens the door without knocking. Susan are you here? Susan is stretching on the floor with a video tape of one of her matches in the VCR. She begins to speak as she gets up and walks towards Laura.

SUSAN

Hi. I take it that this is Laura.

She extends her hand and Laura shyly moves through the adults to shake it.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It's a pleasure to meet you. I saw some of your national match. You hit rockets off your groundies. I'm glad I'm a few years older and won't have to play you until the tour.

TONY

Mr. and Mrs. Sampson, this is the currently ranked 18 and under junior in America, Susan Donnolly.

Angie and Kurt take turns shaking her hand. Angie is weary.

TONY (CONT'D)

I think Laura will be in good hands with her, don't you?

KURT

Damn straight.

Kurt turns Laura around and has a father/daughter dialogue with her.

KURT (CONT'D)
And, you little miss, better listen
to Susan here because she's where
you want to be in a few years,
right?

Laura nods.

KURT (CONT'D)
So she knows how to get there and
she'll give you the inside
information on getting there, won't
you, Susan?

Susan smiles a killer smile.

SUSAN
That's what I'm here for.

Susan protectively puts her arm around Laura and draws her into the room.

TONY
Well, why don't we let these two
champions get better acquainted and
get you two a meal at the best
restaurant in the city.

ANGIE
Well, couldn't Laura come with us?
I mean, I'm not going to be seeing
much of her for the next month or
so. If we could just. . .

KURT
. . .you heard Tony, Angie, we need
to give these two some time
together to get acquainted.

Kurt turns to Tony and they begin to walk out of the room.

KURT (CONT'D)
So, what type of food does this
great place have?

Kurt glances over his shoulder.

KURT (CONT'D)
Come on, Angie, we ain't got all
night. Bye, Laura. Play hard. Well,
for hard cash.

Kurt and Tony laugh. Angie stands there for a second and
Laura walks over to her and they hug.

ANGIE
I love you, honey.

LAURA
Me too, Mom. I'll miss you.

Susan reaches into the embrace, gently pulls them apart and
moves Laura back into the room.

SUSAN
Don't worry, Mrs. Sampson, I'll
treat her like she was my real
little sister.

Susan gives Laura a sisterly one armed hug.

SUSAN
You better go before they leave
without you.

Susan gestures towards the departed men. Angie pauses to look
at Laura and then turns to leave. Susan waits a second, walks
to the door and closes it behind her. She turns around and
Laura is standing stock-still smiling at her. Susan walks
past her. Laura blurts out quickly.

LAURA
I'm glad that they put me in a room
with you. I think you're great. I
can learn a lot from you. I saw you
play in Kalamazoo last year and. .
.

SUSAN
. . .shut the fuck up.

Susan open a draw and takes out a pack of cigarettes. She
slams the drawer shut. As she talks she lights her cigarette.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Here are the fucking rules. You do what I say, when I say, how I say. If you touch my shit I'll tear your fucking head off. If you get in my way a serious shit storm will follow you around. You are here to do whatever I say and if you're lucky and do everything I say this place won't be too much of a nightmare.

Susan picks up the VCR remote and turns off the tape. A music video bursts onto the screen and Susan turns it up loudly. Susan screams over the din.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Welcome to the Vassalage Torture Academy.

Susan falls onto her bed enjoying her role. Laura stands in the middle of the room dumbfounded. Susan enjoys her confusion. After a long moment Susan explains.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Vassalage means serf, slave, minion. . . you. Go to the cafe and get me a beer. Tell them you're my new servant and they won't give you a hassle.

Laura stands there for a moment. A moment too long. Susan picks up a tennis ball and throws it at Laura.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Get a fucking move on.

Laura hurries out of the room and closes the door easily behind her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

What kind of brain dead fuck did they stick me with this time?

Susan leans back shaking her head as she begins to concentrate on the music video again.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I've got to talk to Tony about this shit.

EXT. TENNIS COURT MORNING

Laura is running line sprints with a group of 14 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 CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR has drill sergeant style in expensive tennis togs.

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

Slowly everyone stops and looks at the conditioning instructor.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
So, is that it, Sampson? You think
you're special because you've won
some dumb ass national
championship?

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

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (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
national 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.

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

Laura nods no as the Conditioning Instructor reaches her.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Look up when I speak to you,
Sampson.

Laura's head snaps up.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
Take a look around, Sampson. Half
these people are national
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.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)
You make me sick.

The Conditioning Instructor jogs off the court blowing a
whistle.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (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.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (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.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (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.

CONDITIONING INSTRUCTOR (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's off and running.

INT. HER ROOM - NIGHT

Laura is lying on her bed exhausted. There is no sound except from her breathing because the TV and the radio are not her's and she knows better than to touch them. Into this silence Susan explodes into the room with the top ranked 18 and under boy, MARK PASSEMATO. Susan tosses her bag across the room as she enters. Mark saunters over to Laura's side of the bed.

SUSAN

Look what they gave me for the
Florida win.

Susan says waving her arm at Laura.

MARK

Shit, all they gave me was a car.

Mark sits on the edge of Laura's bed. She attempts to slide away but there's not much room on the twin bed.

MARK (CONT'D)

I could have used a slave.

SUSAN

At least the car can get you
places. Did you hear what happened
to her today?

Fucking embarrassed the shit out of me. Laura is panic stricken. She doesn't know what she did but she knows it'll cost her.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

This fat fuck came in last on each
of the AM sprints. Every last
fucking one of them.

LAURA

I did better the second time.

SUSAN

I did better the second time. Stop
your fucking whining. I don't give
a shit how you do when it doesn't
count. That was done to fuck with
you because you're stupid. All I
care about is that this room wins
and you are a fucking loser. I
can't believe they stuck me with
this talentless street punk.

This remark surprised Laura but, truthfully, she knew it shouldn't have. Where she comes from has been the topic of conversation with the other students since she got there.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, I know all about the
fucking slum you slimed your way
out of.

Susan climbs on Laura's bed and begins to jump up and down. Laura reacts in pain as her already sore body is jostled.

SUSAN

And if you fuck up this rooms
chance of getting a weekend off you
couldn't even imagine the shit I'll
put you through.

MARK

Cut her some slack, Susan, she's
kind of cute. And she'll try
harder, won't you?

Mark reaches out and gently strokes Laura's face. She's not sure how to react. She feels that it's genuine but she already knows that nothing here is how it seems.

SUSAN

This from a guy who dangled his
serf out the window because he
piped in a tiebreaker.

Mark jumps off the bed.

MARK

True, but, let's face it, he wasn't
cute. And he strung a piss poor
racket. Let's get out of here,
Derek's waiting.

Mark walks out of the room as Susan jumps off the bed. Once on the floor she leans in to Laura's face.

SUSAN

I swear I'll fuck you up so bad if
you don't shape up soon that you'll
be begging Tony to let you go home.

Susan begins to walk out of the room. And that would be the happiest day of my amazing fucking life. Susan reaches the door and as she leaves she slams it shut. Laura lays there still for a moment.

LAURA

And there's no way in hell I'll
ever make you happy.

Laura makes herself comfortable in her bed and smiles.

MONTAGE

Laura lifting weights, practicing, working out, going to school, making friends (including TONYA ROBBINS but each of these friends shots is disrupted by Susan and they are all in tennis related environments, no outside activities are shown), impressing the Conditioning Instructor and other instructors (including JOHN O'CONNOR who is her lead instructor), playing matches in stadiums and clubs while we watch her ranking in the nation rise, but she also gets continually abused by Susan and other students.

The abuse ranges from simple things like having her locker filled with balls, her sneakers nailed to the floor, all of her rackets strings filed down just enough so that after a few hits all of her rackets need restringing, her alarm messed with so that she's late for workouts and gets screamed at, her entire room filled with balls, but it exacerbates to things like applications to tournaments go missing, she's woken up by tennis balls shot at her from a ball machine, her tournament's in one city and all of her equipment's in another and the only clothes a rep has for her is just a little small and the racket's just a little large, and all through this Susan continually yells and belittles Laura.

The good and bad should be intertwined within each other. All through it, Laura is just sanguine about everything whether good or bad. Her parents are not in this montage.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - NIGHT

Laura is nearing the end of a volley drill with John O'Connor. She is being run from forehand to backhand and back. She is drenched with sweat and in full concentration.

Outside of the court are Kurt, Angie and Robin. They are now dressed in full upper middle class regalia. Kurt is, of course, obsequious. Robin is heavier and more of a bratty little twerp than he was back in the city.

And Angie, although she is the least affected, has an air of someone who could get used to this. They haven't seen Laura since they dropped her off six months ago (so much for the old familial tug, huh?) and they feel like she is now somewhat beneath them. After all, to them, she's the same child they left in the city.

The only sounds we've heard up to this point are John's instructions, the sounds of balls and Laura's shoes and breathing.

JOHN

That's it, Lau, keep the head up
and snap the ball into the corner.
If you don't keep the ball deep. .
.good. . .the percentage of you
being passed increases three fold.
Snap it deep. Keep your feet moving
in anticipation of a lob. You'll be
hit with a ton of them in the early
rounds of the nationals.

John hits a lob, Laura takes three steps back and pounds it deep into the corner.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good, but I kind of gave you that
one, didn't I? A little
telegraphing if you ask me.

He feeds her another ball, shallow, barely clearing the net that Laura really has to stretch for. She pops a forehand volley deep to John's backhand that he doesn't even move for. He just picks another ball out of the bucket and lofts an offensive lob into the court. Laura reacts quickly, takes three quick steps back, leaps and hits a winning overhead into John's backhand corner.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good job, Laura.

John says jogging towards her standing at the net.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Real good reactions. You still tend
rely too much on depth, which is
good, your placement is probably
the best in the 14's, but we've got
to put a little more pace behind
it. Some bite.

LAURA

Come on, John, we both know once I
get to the net the points as good
as mine.

JOHN

Most times, but like I said, in the 14's. If we skip the 14's season and move right into the 16's you'll find it less of a sure thing. And what if you get that wildcard into the Jacksonville tour stop? Then you'll really find the big truth.

LAURA

Come on, John, first, that tournament's six months away. And besides, you really think I have a shot at that? Tony only hands those wildcards to his favorites and that's never been stamped on my forehead.

JOHN

You know that's not true. It's based. . .

LAURA

. . .on merit. Yeah, I've heard that, John, but we both know the truth. Come on, we're buddies, you don't have to preach the gospel with me anymore. What's my real shot?

JOHN

Boy, Lau, you sure are a hardass.

LAURA

That's what this place was designed to do. Make my ass as hard as Tony's head.

John laughs but then quickly looks around and stops.

JOHN

All I can tell you, and this is just between the two of us, is I've been on his ear and if I keep on it he may throw us this crumb.

There's a silence where they both know their relationship is just a little different now.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But I've got to tell you that it's not just you. I've got to keep my ass clean if we have a shot at this. John pauses knowing more than he's letting on. I want it just as much as you do, Laura.

LAURA

I know you do and I appreciate that.

Laura shifts the seriousness and starts toying with him.

LAURA (CONT'D)

And, you know, when I'm kicking ass on tour I'll remember the little people who may have had a little to do with my huge success.

They start jostling each other and laughing.

JOHN

Oh yeah? You will, will you? How about them? Think you'll remember any of them?

John points towards her family. Laura notices them for the first time, smiles, waves and then turns back towards John and tells him in a flat, emotionless tone.

LAURA

Maybe one of them.

Laura runs towards the fence where her family is standing.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Mom!

Laura reaches the fence, jumps on it and hangs there.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell me your were coming?

KURT

We didn't know we were going to have time to stop by and we didn't want to get your hopes up for nothing.

LAURA

Where are you on your way to?

ROBIN

Boca for a couple of days for a stupid convention and then to Disney for a family vacation.

Robin loves the fact that he got to be the one to drop this information.

ANGIE

It's a thing for your father's work.

Laura tries to hold back any snippiness but it doesn't work.

LAURA

Oh, they finally assured him a spot as Goofy?

Of course, Kurt misses the point totally.

KURT

It's nothing like that. Just a little pow wow in Boca with the big boys and then, because I've been doing such a killer job, they're putting us up at Disney for a week. Just the perks of the job, kid.

Kurt pauses for a moment straighten out his already flawless shirt.

KURT (CONT'D)

Speaking of job, kudos on the escalating ranking. But, aren't you a little weak in the 16's? I mean, honorable mention?

Laura is exasperated to have to talk tennis with him. She let's go of the fence and lands on the ground as she speaks.

LAURA

I've played two 16's and reached a quarter and a 16. I'm lucky I'm mentioned at all.

Kurt's not listening and Laura knows it but doesn't really care.

KURT

And what's the deal with your volley? There's no depth to it at all. It looks like it's just floating from here. You'll never make the big bucks if your volley sucks. Shouldn't you snap your wrist or something to get a little more power behind it?

LAURA

I'll take it under advisement.

KURT

You do that.

Kurt looks at his watch.

KURT (CONT'D)

Why don't you get cleaned up so we can get in some dinner.

LAURA

I'm supposed to go to a lecture tonight.

KURT

Don't worry I cleared it with Tony. He said it'd be all right.

LAURA

And how is Tony?

ANGIE

What do you mean? Isn't he your teacher?

LAURA

I haven't seen him since I got here.

KURT

Oh please, Angie, he has to spend his time where the money is. She'll get enough of his time once she hits the tour. Right now she's under the tutelage of some of the finest instructors in the world, isn't that right, Laura?

LAURA

John's great.

Laura says pointing her racket at John as he starts to leave the court. John waves walking towards the gate.

LAURA (CONT'D)
He was on the tour before he hurt
his knee in. . .

KURT
. . .that's great, listen, we've
got to get a move on if we're going
to get dinner. We've got to be at
the airport in two hours.

Laura just stares at the members of her family as if she's never seen them before. She feels this'll be the longest hour of her life.

LAURA
I'll be out in fifteen minutes.

Laura starts walking to the gate. She sees that John has been lingering there and begins to run towards him.

LAURA (CONT'D)
John, wait up.

KURT
Could you make it ten? I've got a
few calls to make on the way.

Laura reaches the gate and looks back at her family and smiles.

JOHN
Family.

John's condescending tone is masked by a big smile. The same type of 'for public consumption' smile that Laura has mastered so quickly and is shown off so well here.

LAURA
Vultures.

Laura looks at John and the fake smile shuts down.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Want 'em?

JOHN
Fuck that. Why do you think I
killed my own family?

Laura and John laugh. It's gallows humor like this that is a necessary part of her education.

LAURA
Self preservation?

JOHN
Nah, big money in the estate.

John and Laura laugh as they jog back to her dorm.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Kurt is eating hurriedly, checking his watch incessantly. Robin is sitting back staring blankly. Angie is eating absentmindedly. Laura is eating with her head down. And then we finally see Susan. It's policy of the academy not to allow any of the younger students out in public without a chaperone. After an awkward silence Susan finally speaks.

SUSAN
It's nice to see all of you again.
I've got to tell you that Laura has
really been improving. She's been
working real hard and it shows.

KURT
Don't be modest, Susan. You know
you've been one of the main reasons
for her recent success. Your
guidance has been invaluable.

Kurt talks to Laura like he's a tennis Rhodes Scholar.

KURT (CONT'D)
Tony was telling me that she goes
over match films with you every
night and hits with you for at
least an hour a day. Experience
like that is truly invaluable so I
hope you've been appreciative,
Laura.

Laura purposefully stops eating and gently wipes her mouth.

LAURA
Oh, Dad, I think that Susan knows
what she means to me. Don't you,
Susan?

Laura looks at Susan and smiles the smile we've seen before.

LAURA (CONT'D)

And it's not only tennis she's
taught me. She's taught me about
the camaraderie that only comes
from striving for the same goals.
Isn't that right, Susan?

Susan silently fumes at Laura's obvious sarcasm. But, of course, no one else at the table notices.

SUSAN

It's what the academy's all about.

Susan pushes her chair back and wipes her mouth.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Will you please excuse me for a
moment.

Susan puts her hand on the back of Laura's chair.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Would you come with me, Laura?

Susan pulls Laura's chair out a little roughly.

LAURA

Why of course, big sister.

Laura gets up and they head to the rest room. The Sampson's remain quiet for a second watching them leave the room.

KURT

See, they get along great. I don't
even know what we're doing here.
Tony said her game's coming along
great and that she's ahead of
schedule.

ANGIE

It's just during her phone calls
she makes it sound like she never
has any fun and that Susan's always
on her case.

KURT

That's just normal kid stuff. It
happens when kids live together.

Kurt messes Robin's hair as he tries to pull away.

KURT (CONT'D)
Isn't that right, son? You two used
to fight all the time.

Robin successfully pulls away and begins to fix his hair.

ROBIN
Can we go? I'm bored.

Kurt looks at his watch again.

KURT
Shit, it is getting late. As soon
as they get out of ladies we'll get
out of here.

Kurt looks around for the waiter.

KURT (CONT'D)
Hey, buddy, can I get the check.

Kurt looks back at Angie and smiles.

KURT (CONT'D)
Another check, another deduction
for the expense account.

Kurt sits back and smugly smiles at his luck.

KURT (CONT'D)
Is this a great country or what?

INT. LADIES ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Laura's stands there while Susan fixes her make-up.

SUSAN
And what's with this sarcastic
camaraderie bullshit? Listen you
little fuck, I'm pretty pissed off
that I got stuck being here with
your low rent family so don't bust
my balls.

LAURA

Sarcasm? Me? I wasn't being
sarcastic. It was the truth. You've
taught me that there is no such
thing. This is a game where you
live and die on your own. Everyone
in front of you thinks you're scum
and everyone behind you hates you.

(Pause)

No wonder you have so many
wonderful friends.

Susan turns around quickly and grabs Laura's arm and spins
her into the wall.

SUSAN

Listen you little shit. I've got
five more months here then I'm 18
and gone. In the mean time if you
don't want your life to get worse
you'd just better stay the fuck
away from me.

Susan pushes off Laura and begins to walk away.

LAURA

Life's already hell, what can you
do to me that you haven't already
done?

With that Susan spins around quickly and kicks Laura in the
stomach. Laura crumples to the ground and Susan stands over
her.

SUSAN

That, for starters.

Susan checks her face in the mirror again, smiles and begins
to walk out.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Let's not keep the low 'rents
waiting.

Susan reaches the door and opens it.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

And if your fat stupid brother and
mouth breathing father don't stop
staring at my tits I'll rip yours
off.

Laura slowly gets off the floor, regains her composure and splashes water onto her face.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Everyone is standing there waiting for Laura.

KURT
Where the hell is she? If we miss
this flight I'll kick her ass.

Susan leans in towards Angie nodding and whispering.

SUSAN
She's got stomach cramps.

Angie nods knowingly as she watches Laura enter the restaurant. When Laura nears Angie hugs her.

ANGIE
It'll be all right, maybe it's
something you ate.

Laura looks at Angie like she's finally lost it and forces a smile.

KURT
Finally, now let's get out of here.

The group begins to leave the restaurant and Kurt let's Laura and Susan catch up to him. He puts his arm around both of them.

KURT
And, because we're running so late,
you two won't mind taking a taxi
back to the academy, will you?

Susan smiles at him as they reach outside.

SUSAN
Of course not.

KURT
Great.

Kurt hurries off to have the VALET call the limo. Robin follows quickly behind.

ANGIE
Are you sure it's all right?

Laura looks at Angie sadly for a moment and nods her head yes.

LAURA

Yeah, I've been taking taxi's for years. It's no big thing.

SUSAN

And don't worry, Angie, I'll make sure she gets back safely.

KURT

Come on, Angie, we've got to get out of here.

Kurt climbs into the limo and, as an after thought, calls to Laura.

KURT (CONT'D)

Laura, come here.

Laura slowly walks over to the limo and Kurt gives her a cursory one armed hug.

KURT (CONT'D)

See you at the nationals, Lau.

Kurt pulls away.

KURT (CONT'D)

See you, Susan. Keep up the good work with our little investment. Would you get the hell in here, Angie.

Kurt throws himself back into the limo. Angie walks towards Laura and leans down to hug and kiss her.

ANGIE

Are you sure everything's all right, honey?

Laura looks at her with a look that is much older than she should have.

LAURA

Just go.

KURT

Would you get in the fucking limo?
(Kurt addresses Robin)
What the fuck is her problem?

ROBIN

She just doesn't get it, does she dad?

KURT

I guess that's it.

Angie gets in the limo.

KURT (CONT'D)

Finally. It's not like you'll never see her again. The nationals are in five months.

Angie closes the limo door and it pulls away. The valet waves for a taxi while Susan and Laura wait. The valet opens the door and Susan smacks Laura in the stomach to push her away. Susan gets in the cab.

SUSAN

Get your own fucking ride.

Susan slams the door and the taxi pulls away. The valet looks at Laura with no expression as he waves in another taxi. Laura gives the valet a tip (she's the only one that did) as she holds her stomach getting into the taxi. The taxi pulls away as the valet folds the bill into his pocket.

EXT. TONYA'S ROOM - DAY

Laura and Tonya are reading tennis magazines. Just because they're talking about fairly adult things it's never far from the surface that they're just 14 year olds.

TONYA

I don't know, Laura. Sometimes I wonder if it's all worth it. I mean, I like to play and I like to win, but I sure don't like to play as much as I did before I came here.

LAURA

Sure, it is a pain, but once we're on tour and on our own none of this will matter. I think you'll feel better the first time your picture is on the cover.

Laura holds up a tennis magazine and mugs.

TONYA

I don't know about that. You might make it but I don't think I will.

LAURA

That's right, you suck. You'll be the guy walking through the airport with an armful of rackets and people will ask you if your're a sales rep.

TONYA

I'm kind of serious. I walk around here and I don't feel like I belong. Like I'm not good enough but they just haven't found out yet to kick me out.

LAURA

Yeah, that's right, you suck. Please, you're ranked one in the 16's. What are you talking about?

TONYA

Yeah, but what'll happen if they enter you in the 16's? That's all everyone keeps talking about. I can't beat you.

LAURA

What are you talking about? We haven't even played yet. Geez, get a grip. They'll never put me in the 16's because with both of us ranked number one they own junior tennis.

TONYA

Let's not talk about this anymore. I've got a cute boy alert.

Laura puts down the magazine and pays full attention for the first time. They scoot closer together conspiratorially.

TONYA (CONT'D)

Have you seen the new guy, Ken Walker from New Zealand?

Laura shrugs needing more information.

TONYA (CONT'D)

I know you've seen him. You did serving drills in the court next to him yesterday.

Laura still doesn't know who it is and it exasperates Tonya.

TONYA (CONT'D)

You know, he's the one who always wears a red bandanna.

Laura gets excited because she now knows.

LAURA

Yeah, yeah, yeah. He wears it real tight around his head.

TONYA

That's the one. Isn't he cute?

Laura shrugs.

LAURA

His backhand sucks.

Tonya is even more exasperated this time.

TONYA

Who cares about his backhand. What about his backside?

Laura thinks for a second before breaking out in a smile.

LAURA

All right, that doesn't suck.

Laura and Tonya laugh.

TONYA

I knew you looked.

Laura and Tonya are startled out of their reverie by a VOICE OVER banging on the door. Who is it?

VOICE OVER

It's time for your challenge match.

TONYA

Who's it against?

VOICE OVER

Sampson. Have you seen her?

Laura and Tonya look at each other a little panic stricken. This is a moment that most tennis players dread: the time when you have to play your friend for real. You always know it's inevitable but you still try to pretend it's just for fun.

But that never works because, in the end, everyone knows that only one can be the winner. And, most times, everyone knows the outcome before anyone steps onto the court.

LAURA

I'm here.

VOICE OVER

Good. Twenty minutes. Court seven.

Laura and Tonya look at each other in silence as they uncomfortably move around the room. Tonya starts putting together her bag as Laura watches. Laura breaks the unbearable silence with fake cheeriness.

LAURA

Well, I better go get my stuff.

Tonya doesn't look up as she continues to make a production of packing her bag.

TONYA

Yeah.

LAURA

Yeah. Well. See you out there.

TONYA

Yeah.

Laura exits the room and after the door closes Tonya looks up for the first time. Her expression tells you that she knows their friendship won't be the same after this match.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Laura's leaning against Tonya's door with the same expression.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

The scoreboard in back and hear Tonya screaming at the top of her lungs. The scoreboard reveals that Tonya lost the first set at love and is behind in the second set 3-5. Laura is standing at the baseline watching Tonya scream with just a hint of sadness on her face. John sits in the umpire chair watching Tonya scream.

TONYA

How can you call that ball out? I saw it hit the line. Do you need the points that bad you jerk? And you, how come you're the umpire? You'll always side with her. Why couldn't we get someone who was at least a little impartial out here? This is a joke. She'll lie and you'll swear to it. I can't believe you'd cheat on a friend.

LAURA

Tonya, the ball was out. I wouldn't cheat you.

JOHN

Tonya, can we resume play?

TONYA

Why bother? I'm not going to get a call for the rest of my life.

Tonya begins to walk off the court and tosses her racket into her bag.

JOHN

Tonya, if you leave the court I will have to default you.

TONYA

Big fucking deal.

Laura jogs towards Tonya.

LAURA

Tonya, come on, let's play. I'll give you the point.

TONYA

See, I knew you were lying. I knew that fucking ball was in.

LAURA

It was out.

TONYA

Then how come you're so quick to change your call?

LAURA

It's one point, Tonya, it's not worth fighting about. Come on, let's finish.

TONYA

Oh, it's one point. What's that supposed to mean? You're kicking my ass so you'll give me a gift. Go fuck yourself.

Tonya pushes past Laura and walks out of the court. John climbs out of the umpires chair and stands next to Laura.

JOHN

It was a good call and that was a nice gesture. It didn't really matter because you were kicking her ass anyway. She's just pissed because of that.

Laura stands there still watching Tonya walk away.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come on, hit the shower. There's a full academy meeting in thirty minutes.

John pats her shoulder and gently pushes her towards her bag. Laura walks over in a numb trance and follows John out of the court. As they walk out the gate Laura sees Tony standing there. He has a big smile on his face.

TONY

Good match, kid. You really showed me a lot out there today.

Laura's voice betrays no trace of victory as she walks by him.

LAURA

Thanks, Tony.

TONY

You were the better heads up player. You're really getting a grip on this game.

LAURA

Thanks, Tony.

TONY

Okay, now get to the shower and get ready for the meeting. I've got a few things to go over with John.

LAURA

Okay.

Laura walks away slowly. Tony and John begin to walk the opposite way.

TONY

So, was it as one-sided as it looks?

JOHN

Worse. Tonya was out of it from her first serve. I don't like the fact that Laura let up and gave her a few games in the second set, but, yeah, Tonya was never in it.

TONY

What about their personal relationship? Do you think they'll still be friends?

JOHN

Over.

TONY

Good. But, to be on the safe side, I'll send Susan over to make sure it's dead.

JOHN

They were getting too friendly and it was distracting her. I'm still plenty pissed off she let up and gave her a few games.

TONY

That's what friendship does, it distracts. Better to keep it all professional.

JOHN

I couldn't agree more.

John and Tony shake hands.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'll see you at the meeting.

TONY

Good job, John. You've done a great
job with Laura.

John smiles and then jogs off.

INT. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The entire academy is seated. The stage is filled with Tony, John and other pros. One person is handing out papers to everyone else. Most of the pros, one especially, looks aggravated. As we look around the auditorium seating we see Susan sitting with a still fuming Tonya. Laura is sitting in the middle of the auditorium surrounded with other players but no one is talking to her. The vocal is just your everyday crowd chatter of people who know this just isn't a 'how ya doin'?' meeting. Finally Tony walks to the microphone and begins.

TONY

Okay, can I have everyone's
attention.

The noise slowly evaporates until you hear one lone voice.

MALE VOICE

I can't shit before a tournament
match.

Everyone laughs except, of course, the constipated one.

TONY

Well, we'll have to see what we can
do about that.

Tony pauses as the laughter dies down.

TONY (CONT'D)

Okay, let's calm down here.

(Pause)

Thanks. I know some of you may be
wondering why we're here. Well,
it's time to announce the traveling
team that's going to be playing
other academy's and clubs until the
nationals.

Crowd chatter interrupts but Tony just talks over it.

TONY (CONT'D)

I'm pleased to say that I feel this years group will do even better than last years. This is always a special moment for me. A time when I get to repay you all for working so hard this year. I'm really proud of the games that you all have built and the friendships you've made that will carry you past your tennis life.

Tony looks down at the paper he has in front to of him.

TONY (CONT'D)

And this years 12 and under girls singles player that will represent the Vasaturo Tennis Academy will be. . .Lee Ann Small.

A smattering of applause accompanies each announcement.

TONY (CONT'D)

Doubles will be Heidi Andera and Elan Ahlstrom. The 14 and under singles, Janice Caines. . .

Tony keeps talking as we pan to the shocked face of Laura and then past her to the smiling and joking Susan and Tonya.

TONY (CONT'D)

Doubles will be Suzy Sherman and Terri Shank. . .

Laura is still shocked because she should have at least got to play doubles. She is now under the complete impression that it is all about favoritism and she is thoroughly disjoined at this moment. Much to the glee of Susan and Tonya.

TONY (CONT'D)

The 16 and under singles will be covered by Laura Sampson.

There is an audible gasp from Tonya as Susan consoles her for a moment before Tonya runs out of the auditorium with Susan close behind. Laura sits there in utter shock as she watches them run out of the room. Tony pauses just long enough to allow everyone to watch the scene. He and John look at each other for a moment and there is a self-satisfied smile on each of there faces.

TONY (CONT'D)

Well, now that the melodramatics
are over let's fill out the rest of
the team. 16 and under doubles will
be handled by Christy Nyahay and
Karen Stewart. In the 18's. . .

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Susan and Tonya are sitting on a bench with Susan is
consoling her.

SUSAN

I wouldn't worry about it, Tonya,
we both know she's not ready for it
and will get the shit kicked out of
her.

TONYA

I worked all year for that spot and
that little bitch comes in and
takes it because of one match where
she spent all day ripping me off on
line calls.

SUSAN

I know. I told you she was a shit.
But I wouldn't worry about it. You
just stay here and work hard and by
the time the nationals come up
she'll be all beat up and you'll
beat her when it counts.

Tonya looks up at her taking in the words of wisdom and
enjoying the attention.

TONYA

I wish you were my big sister.

SUSAN

Me too. But. . .

Susan stands up with a flourish.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

. . .I may not be your big sister
but I sure can take care of that
bitch for you.

Tonya stands up and hugs Susan.

TONYA

Oh, Susan, you're the best.

SUSAN

Anything for a friend.

Tonya hugs Susan harder as we see Susan nod at John standing at the doorway of the auditorium. He nods back and walks back into the auditorium.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You just work hard and it'll all pay off at the nationals.

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Tony is sitting around a conference table with a professional looking woman, DR. JENNIFER LEIGH and the reps that we've seen before, Julian Dando, Russell Fay, Barbara Gould and Biff Wainright. Also in the room is a PERSONAL ASSISTANT of Tony's. He sits off to the side and takes notes when Tony motions him to do so. Everyone is listening intently to what Dr. Leigh has to say.

JENNIFER

Psychologically speaking, it was a wise decision to place Laura in Tonya's place. Even though Laura is having some serious antisocial tendencies it would have been a mistake to send Tonya on tour. Her current profile puts her in a high risk breakdown category.

BIFF

Which means she's ready to snap? Shit, we can't have her zooing out on the court. There's too much money riding on. . .

TONY

. . .would you shut the fuck up, Wainright? Honestly, your whining makes me want to fucking strangle you. And, let me tell you, that puts you in a high risk category in my book.

Tony looks at Jennifer with an expression that asks her to continue.

JENNIFER

To answer your question, I don't think that you've wasted your investment, as you call it, she is still a fine player and with a little counseling to get her self doubt and stress under control she may well make the tour.

TONY

Let me just ask you this question, doc.

Jennifer noticeably bristles at the word doc. Tony notices but doesn't care.

TONY (CONT'D)

Can you guarantee that Tonya has the head for the tour?

JENNIFER

Tony, you know that I can't do that. She is in a very tenuous state right now, but it's not likely, as Mr. Wainright so deftly put it, that she'll zoo. Tony, she's just a kid and she is under real world adult pressures. For her to have gone this far is a tribute to her mental toughness.

TONY

All right. . .

Tony motions to his Personal Assistant who finally begins taking notes. . . .

TONY (CONT'D)

so what's you're suggesting is that we take her off the fast track and give her something a little more leisurely?

JENNIFER

I think that would be the best move for her right now.

TONY

So, it's agreed, we move Tonya's training back a few notches. We'll just recoup her investment over time.

Tony pauses for a moment, looks over his notes and seems to be winding down.

TONY (CONT'D)
So, are there any other potential problems that you see, doc?

JENNIFER
Not outside of the normal dysfunction's you'd expect in a situation such as this.

TONY
And the traveling team is mentally solid?

JENNIFER
Outside of some of the younger kids normal fears it should be an uneventful trip.

TONY
Great. Glad to hear it.

Tony reaches over to shake Jennifer's hand.

TONY (CONT'D)
Thank you again, doc. If you'll excuse us we have some other things to go over.

Jennifer gets up as she speaks.

JENNIFER
Not at all. I'll schedule an appointment for Tonya for the morning?

TONY
Why don't we just wait a few days. With the traveling team leaving and everything everyone's going to be pretty busy.

Jennifer is exasperated but she's been through this before. She just gathers up her papers and goes through the motions.

JENNIFER
Okay, I understand. I'll put her in for a session first thing next week.

TONY

Perfect.

Jennifer exits but does not write down Tonya's appointment. The room remains quiet until she is out of the door.

TONY (CONT'D)

Okay, now that that's settled,
let's take a look at the new
campaigns.

Julian, Barbara and Biff jump up and take out oversized ads that prominently feature the gutsy face of Laura Sampson.

JULIAN

We feel that if we cross categorize
Laura we can maximize the impact of
her first tour stop after the
nationals.

RUSSELL

I've already placed stories with
the major sources that will run
after the nationals trumpeting the
newest, youngest, cutest world
beater.

JULIAN

Aren't we ever going to come up
with something different?

RUSSELL

It works and you remember what Rod
Laver said. . .

Julian, Barbara and Biff stand there dumbfounded. Russell shakes his head in despair and Tony laughs before he answers.

TONY

Never change a winning game. That
angle works, keep working it.

Julian, Barbara and Biff nod and make busy with their displays.

BARBARA

Are you going to address her urban
upbringing?

BIFF

She's got a point there. The urban market for tennis clothes is limited at best.

RUSSELL

Yes, we are going to make that a focal point. Tennis has been on a decline in urban areas for some time now and we feel Laura is someone who can rejuvenate that dormant marketplace.

TONY

As a matter of fact, after the nationals we're going to have her visit that hell hole she started in for some of that conquering hero homecoming shit.

RUSSELL

We'll flood the market, we sell some product and in a few months we do it all over again.

(Pause)

Correct?

Julian, Barbara and Biff vocalize in the affirmative and nod as the continue to adjust their displays.

INT. ROOM - DAY

Laura is sitting on her bed dialing the telephone. All of Susan's photos and ad mock-ups are off the walls. It's obvious that Susan has packed up and isn't planning to come back. We hear the phone ring. Angie picks it up. Her country club metamorphosis has completed.

ANGIE

Hello?

LAURA

Mom? It's Laura.

ANGIE

Honey, how are you?

LAURA

Fine, we're just getting ready to leave for the tour and I wanted to see if you and dad are going to make it to any of the matches.

ANGIE

Well, honey, it's just that there's so much going on at the club this time of year I don't know if I can break away. But I know your father will make a couple of the stops. He says there's this really talented 12 year old from. . .oh. . .one of the clubs you're playing that he's working on.

Angie pauses, puts on a sweater and checks her watch.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Honey, I really hate to rush you but I've got to go now.

Laura is dejected but that's an emotion she is well used to by now.

LAURA

That's okay, I've got to get to the bus anyway.

ANGIE

You do good now honey. Make us proud.

LAURA

Okay. Bye.

ANGIE

Bye.

Laura hangs up the phone and looks at it for a second before picking it up and dialing again.

REGGIE

Dunlop.

ANGIE

Reggie, it's Laura.

Reggie is genuinely happy to hear from her.

REGGIE

Well, if it isn't the little tennis star. I see things are going pretty well for you, kid. You should see the walls around here, they're covered with your clippings. You're really inspiring to the kids around here. And, remember that guy you beat a couple of years ago? Well, you should see all the credit he takes for working out with you.

There's an uncomfortable pause before Reggie fill is.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

So, to what do I owe this pleasant surprise?

(Pause)

Is everything all right, Laura?

Laura answered hesitantly.

LAURA

Yeah, I just missed you and Scott and everybody and this is going to be my last chance to call before the nationals.

(Pause)

It's just not how I really expected it to be.

Reggie tries to put a little levity into this uncomfortable call.

REGGIE

Most things aren't kid. But hey, you've got the nationals soon and after you win you're going to bring that bad boy to me so that I can put it in my case, right?

LAURA

A deals a deal, Reggie.

Laura and Reggie are startled by the banging on the door.

VOICE OVER

Let's go, Sampson, bus leaves with or without you in two minutes.

LAURA

I've got to go, Reggie. I just wanted to say hi.

(Pause)

Oh, yeah, and I wanted to ask if they've sent you all the rackets and stuff like they said they would.

Reggie doesn't want to drag Laura into this so, at first he doesn't answer.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Well?

REGGIE

Those guys are busy. I bet they're just planning on bringing them up with you.

LAURA

Come on, Reggie, you don't believe that. I'll see him on the bus and ask him about it.

REGGIE

It's not a big deal.

LAURA

It is. A deals a deal.

Laura pauses and looks around the room for a moment.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I've got to go Reggie, give my love to everyone.

REGGIE

See you soon, kid. Good luck and have fun.

Laura pauses for a moment before seriously answering.

LAURA

One I don't need and the other I don't get enough of. See you, Reggie.

Laura hangs up the phone and walks out of her room. We follow her as the students not going on the trip mill around in a faked determination.

Just before she exits the building she sees a teary Tonya and her parents, a stern looking MR. and MRS. ROBBINS. Mr. Robbins has Tonya's bags and Mrs. Robbins is comforting Tonya. Laura is surprised and bewildered by this scene.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Tonya, what's going on?

MRS. ROBBINS
This is none of your concern,
missy.

The Robbins' brush past Laura who stands still for a moment and then rushes up and stops them.

LAURA
Where are you going?

Tonya won't look at Laura.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Tonya, what's up?

The Robbins' stop.

MRS. ROBBINS
If you must know, Tony said that
Tonya needs a rest before the
nationals so she's leaving the
school for awhile.

LAURA
Does this have anything to do with
our match? Because if it does. . .

Tonya looks up at Laura for a second and buries her head back into her mother after her sentence.

TONYA
. . .what do you think? You cheated
me.

MRS. ROBBINS
I hope you and your parents are
proud of the way you stole your
friends spot on the traveling team.
Some friend you turned out to be.

Laura looks hurt.

LAURA
I am a friend and I won fair.

Mrs. Robbins reaches out and condescendingly pats Laura's shoulder.

MRS. ROBBINS
Keep believing that. She'll still
be seeded number one at the
nationals. Even you can't cheat her
out of that.

The Robbins' push past Laura but not before Mr. Robbins adds one last comment as he pokes Laura in the shoulder.

MRS. ROBBINS (CONT'D)
You better watch yourself at the
nationals, kid.

The Robbins exit the building leaving a dejected looking Laura standing alone. After a moment we hear Tony bellow.

TONY
Sampson! Let's go, let's go, let's
go.

Laura leaves the building and walks with real determination towards the idling bus. She keeps her eyes on Tonya and the Robbins' getting into their car. No one else seems to notice them.

Tonya looks back at Laura for a moment and a sad smile crosses her face. Laura holds her glance for a second before continuing towards the bus. Tony's standing outside the bus with a large group of teaching pros, students, reps and parents of possible future students with cameras.

This traveling team is a big public relations tool for Tony and this is when he schedules parents and possible students (who will never make the tour but are the cash infusion that's needed to keep the school going) down for a visit. No one pays attention to the Robbins' car pull away.

TONY (CONT'D)
Let's get a move on, Laura. We've
got a lot of ground to cover today.

Laura reaches Tony and stops before getting on the bus.

LAURA
I was just talking to Reggie from
back home and he said he hasn't got
the rackets and equipment he was
promised.

TONY

Did he call you and bother you with trivial details like that? I'll call that. . .

LAURA

. . .I called him to say hello and asked him. How come he hasn't got the equipment by now?

TONY

I'll look into it. Get on the bus and it'll be taken care of in the morning.

LAURA

Why can't it just be looked into now? I mean, you have a phone right there. I think you could make one phone call and have a nice big package to him by morning.

Tony stands there fuming at Laura but he knows he can't lose his temper at this time. Not prudent, you see, with a group of parents with cameras. So, Tony pulls out his phone and starts dialing. He pauses for a second before the phone is answered.

TONY

Let's get right to the end of this.

Tony pauses for a moment before his Personal Assistant answers.

TONY (CONT'D)

It's Tony. Listen, I just heard that Laura Sampson's old instructor didn't get some of the equipment he was promised.

LAURA

None of the equipment.

Tony's expression changes to pure anger for the slightest of a moment. And he repeats what Laura said in a clinched teeth style.

TONY

None of the equipment.

PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Tony, you told me to forget that asshole.

TONY

I don't care who screwed up. We promised it and he should have got it. So, gather everything up and FedEx it to him for the morning. Do you understand?

Tony pauses before shutting off the phone and putting it back in his pocket. He looks at Laura for a second and pulls out a big smile as he pulls Laura closer.

TONY (CONT'D)

This is the kind of student we build here at the Vasaturo Tennis Academy. Not only the top 14 year old tennis player in the nation, but also one who will never forget where she came from.

Parents and possible students applaud and take pictures. Slowly the pros and other students add their smattering of applause. After standing there smiling at the cameras for a few moments Tony gently nudges Laura towards the bus. But, we have a schedule to keep so we've got to get a move on. Laura walks in to the bus and the door close behind her.

TONY (CONT'D)

Let's hear it one more time for the cream of American tennis.

We hear the applause, loud at first but dying out as the bus pulls away.

Everyone on the bus is staring at Laura as she walks down the aisle. She is definitely not welcome to share a seat with anyone.

The bus is filled with THE DRIVER, Laura's instructor John, three other instructors, AL FINN, BILL GILPATRIC and MANDY TYLER; and the players: the 12's single: LEE ANN SMALL, the 12's doubles: HEIDI ANDERA, ELAN AHLSTROM; the 14's singles: JANICE CAINES, the 14's doubles: SUZY SHERMAN and TERRI SHANK, the 16's doubles: CHRISTY NYAHAY and KAREN STEWART, the 18's singles: Susan; the 18's doubles: LYDIA KIGER and MICHELLE STRATHAM.

On the boy's side we have the 12's single: BRYAN WEBB, the 12's doubles: DOUG BOWEN and DOM CIRINO; the 14's singles: FRED HENDERSON; the 14's doubles: GEORGE MANFRA and MAURICE TATE; the 16's singles: RICK PRIOR; the 16's doubles: RON COX and STEVE ALBRECHT; the 18's singles: Mark and the 18's doubles: JOE PULLI and RON GOODMAN.

The older 18 year old have made it perfectly clear to the 12's that they are not to associate with Laura; the 14's think that she's playing above her station; the 16's don't think she should be with them and definitely not their #1; and the 18's, well, they're lead by Susan. Must anything else be said?

Laura continues to walk down the aisle until she finds three rows of seats covered in tape that has printed on it 'Reserved For The Bitch Queen'. She ignores the scoffs and laughs as she tears the tape off the seat. Once she finishes she sits down and stares straight ahead.

After a long moment she whispers to herself in a dry tone. She's not being too sarcastic she is just repeating a statement made just moments ago by Tony.

LAURA

This is the kind of student we
build here at the Vasaturo Tennis
Academy.

Laura slumps back into the seat as John stands up in front.

JOHN

All right, listen up, we've got to
go over some rules right now.

The students, following the lead of the 18's, make mocking sounds and catcalls.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yeah, right, rules. Just because
you're away from the school it
doesn't mean that you can run wild.

MARK

That's what he thinks.

Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and Michelle whoop it up and trade high five's.

JOHN

Keep it down.

John's obviously been through this before and knows that this is like a graduation trip for the 18's. He thinks for a second and remembers the time he did it and smiles. Lightly.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Come on, I'm already tired of being here. Let's just get this shit out of the way and, as long as you don't go crazy, and you know what I mean by that Mark. . .

Mark feigns shock.

MARK

. . .I'll be a good guy.

JOHN

But if one person gets truly out of line I'll ship their ass back to the academy in a body bag.

Steve raises his hand but doesn't wait to be called on before talking.

STEVE

So, uh, John, what is truly out of line?

Mark, Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and Michelle stifle laughs as John walks towards Steve. John reaches Steve, leans over slowly before he answers.

JOHN

That line moves as my mood changes and, as far as you're concerned, it's a very thin one.

Mark, Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and Michelle stifle more laughs as John walks by and smacks Mark in the head.

MARK

Hey, what did I do?

JOHN

Just shut up, Mark and don't get these people started.

MARK

I haven't done anything.

JOHN

Yeah, I'm sure it was Bryan, Doug and Dom's idea to tape out Laura's seat.

Bryan, Doug and Dom trade nervous glances at each other. They may not be exactly sure what a body bag is but they are sure it's not something you'd like to be shipped back to the academy in.

MARK

If my mind serves me, it was their idea. I tried to stop them, but you know these spoiled. . .

John has to scream to be heard over the cacophony of Bryan, Doug and Dom protesting and everyone else laughing. Well, except for Laura.

JOHN

. . .shut the fuck up.

It only takes a second for everyone to realize that John is totally serious and the bus becomes silent except for the busses hum.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm not going to tell you who to like and who not to.

(To Laura)

Sorry, Laura.

Laura just nods noncommittally.

JOHN (CONT'D)

But I don't want anyone to go out of their way to torment anyone else on this team. For you older ones, this trip could turn into potential cash.

This gets Mark, Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and Michelle's attention.

JOHN (CONT'D)

How'd your sponsors feel if they found out you were kicked off the tour because you couldn't be adult enough to leave some kid alone? I'm not a prognosticator but I'm sure it would cost you down the line.

Mark, Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and Michelle sit still for a moment a little pissed at being scolded.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, I see that I've finally found
a way to get through to you. Do we
have an understanding?

John stands and looks at Mark, Joe, Ron, Susan, Lydia and
Michelle for a moment before they all nod affirmative.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Good. Now that we're one big happy
fucking team, let's go over some of
our opponents and all of the ground
rules. First is the big one,
curfew. . .

Everyone groans as John continues and the bus rolls gently
down the road.

JOHN (CONT'D)

. . .ahh, I know it's never the
favorite but, this is the way it's
going to be. The 12's, they're all
tucked in by 9 even if they don't
have a match the next night.

Groans explode from the 12's, laughter from everyone else.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I know it sucks, but this is life
on the big bus.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

All of the players from Vasaturo are lined up on one side of
the tennis court and all of the corresponding PLAYERS from
the Maynard Tennis Academy are lined up on the other. The
parents love this pomp but all of the players hate it. The
12's are a little excited but they dutifully follow the lead
of the 18's.

When the ANNOUNCER cues them all of the players walk towards
each other and exchange patches or some such trinket from
their corresponding club. Most of these gestures of goodwill
get left behind in the hotel room. Well, except for the home
club. After the matches you see the mothers gleefully
grasping on to these trinkets.

ANNOUNCER

And to round out today's play, in the boy's eighteen and under doubles it will be the number three doubles team in the nation, Joe Pulli and Ron Goodman against the number one ranked team in the nation our own twin terrors, Jeff and Jeremy Hanson and in eighteen and under singles it will be Mark Passemato, the number one ranked player in the nation versus our own nationally ranked Craig Lawler. And now, let's give them all a hand as they exchange the ceremonial gift to solidify the sportspersonship that is the hallmark of this wonderful game of tennis.

The crowd applauds as the players walk across the court and basically shove the gifts at each other. To add to the hip quotient that is so badly used in situations like this, the announcer closes with an inane and inappropriate announcement that brings twitters from the crowd and makes the players roll their eyes.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Okay now, players to their respected courts, good luck to all and. . .let's get ready to rumble!

The players pair up with their opponents and begin to walk to their courts. We follow Laura and her opponent to their court and we watch them warm up for a minute. Laura is the poster girl for no nonsense.

We notice that the audience for their match is sparse. Most of the people are at the boys and girls singles 18's.

We begin play and follow a little of the matches from the boys 18's down to Laura's match. The matches are close and the play is stunning. These really are the top junior players in the nation and the next faces on the covers of tennis magazines all over the world.

By the time we get to Laura's match it is almost over, she won the first set at love and is serving for the match at 5-0, 30-15. But, the most surprising thing is that the stands are now about half full. It is a phenomenon in the tennis audience grapevine that will fill the stands of the buzz match. And this, my friends, definitely constitutes as a buzz match. An UMPIRE calls the match.

Laura walks to the ad side with no expression on her face. It's just business and nearing clock out time. A tiny grunt is emitted from Laura as she follows her wide serve to the net and punches a forehand volley deep crosscourt, with the proper pace, of course. Her opponent makes an effort, albeit a bit halfhearted, and the shot turns into a winner. The crowd cheers loudly.

Although they may be a little like the crowds that used to make fun of Laura in the old days, they do know their game and know they are seeing something special.

40-15.

Laura wipes some sweat from her forehead and walks back to the baseline. She is tossed a ball from a boy not any younger than her. Laura nods at him, walks to the deuce side and hits a flat serve down the middle that is returned too deep to rush the net behind.

Laura slices a forehand to her opponents backhand and heads to the middle of the court behind it. Her opponent reaches the ball and puts up a lob that Laura camps underneath, let's bounce, waits for her opponent to commit her movement and slams a winner home into the opposite direction.

As the ball bounces away the crowd, which seems to have miraculously increased in the past couple of minutes, goes into sustained applause mode.

UMPIRE

Game, set, match, Ms. Sampson.

Laura walks the few steps to the net as her opponent dejectedly jogs in. They smile at each other and walk to their respected chairs. As they pass the umpire they shake his hand. Laura sits down and puts a towel over her head as John moves towards her.

JOHN

Great match, kid.

Laura grunts a response but doesn't take the towel off of her head.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Get ready because we have to talk
to some people and do a little
spiel.

Laura looks up with a semi-surprised expression.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yeah, well, what do you expect? You crush one of the top 16's and people are going to want to speak to you. So, don't forget to be gracious, remember to praise your hosts and opponent and, most importantly keep smiling and don't say anything embarrassing.

Laura stands up, grabs her bag and follows John out.

LAURA

Embarrassing? Like what? I think I got my period in the third game of the second set?

JOHN

Exactly. Remember to smile and thank everyone.

John leads Laura into the crowd who is standing around holding out programs and racket covers for the newest and hottest to sign. It's mostly kids but there are a smattering of adults. They all offer praise as she smiles and signs. Laura's a little embarrassed to be here at this moment but she is undeniably enjoying it. A woman speaks to her as Laura signs her program.

OLDER WOMAN

I just wanted to tell you how much my husband and I enjoyed your play. I've seen all of the greats from Virginia and Margaret and Evonne and Martina and Billie Jean and Rosie and that wonderful Chrissy girl and I want to tell you that if you keep at it you may be just as good as them one day.

It's obvious that the woman is stuck in the tennis 70's but Laura smiles as another fan is tallied up by John. He moves away from Laura and the crowd and pulls out his phone.

LAURA

Thank you. All I can tell you is that I'll try.

OLDER WOMAN

Can you believe how cute this one is? Your parents must be proud.

LAURA

One would think, wouldn't one?

John waits for the phone to be answered.

JOHN

Tony, it's better than we thought.
They love her. Get the PR up and
running. She's going to be it.

Tony walks through the academy nodding happily.

TONY

Great to hear it. I'll have
everything ready before the next
stop. Good work, John.

Tony disconnects the phone and smiles. John puts the phone
back in his pockets and watches Laura smiling.

JOHN

Fucking yeah. It's about time I got
a break.

As the autograph session is coming to a close John moves
towards Laura and starts pulling her away. Her new fans give
their best wishes as they move into the press room.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Now I don't want you to be worried.
This is just small town press.
They'll just ask you the normal
questions and you keep it smiley
and up. Just talk about the match
in the best possible way and tell
them how much you've enjoyed your
stay here. And don't forget to
mention the academy as often as
possible.

They reach the PRESS ROOM and there are about a dozen
obviously small town members of the press there. A couple of
the people are from their school newspapers. Just remember to
smile and be yourself.

LAURA

You mean there still is a myself?

An OFFICIAL from the academy takes Laura's hand and leads her
to the table in front of the room.

OFFICIAL

And, now, ladies and gentlemen, the newest phenomenon in tennis, Laura Sampson.

The press applauds as Laura sits down. John settles himself in the back of the room. Do we have any questions from the press?

REPORTER #1 from the local daily raises his hand and talk over everyone else.

REPORTER #1

Laura, how'd you get so good so fast?

LAURA

I'm not sure but if I ever find out I'm going to quit and open my own academy.

The press laughs and John smiles and takes out his phone. We hear conversation in the background as John talks on the phone.

JOHN

It's better then before. She's a natural. They're eating her up.

He disconnects the phone and puts it back into his pocket.

REPORTER #2

With all this pressure at such a young age, do you still like the game as much?

LAURA

This is more pressure than any match. But, as my father used to say, quoting a great philosopher from the nineteen seventies, 'Tennis. . .

Laura adds as an after thought.

LAURA

. . .and the Vasaturo Tennis Academy been berry, berry good to me.'

Reporters laugh and Laura smiles.

REPORTER #3

Do you have a boyfriend?

LAURA

Not at the moment. Why? How hard is
your. . .first serve?

More laughter as the scene fades with everyone happy.

MONTAGE

Laura winning and finding more and more fans and matches as she works her way to the nationals. Her photos are all over junior tennis and makes some inroads into larger circulation tennis and nonsport kid oriented magazines and local newspapers.

We also see the backstage machinations that Tony and the reps and her father concoct to rise the level of her profile and marketability. We also see that some of the team that she's traveling with now begins to gravitate towards her. The 12's at first, of course, but her personality and sheer ability draws people closer to her.

As the montage begins to wind down you even see the 18's begin to enjoy being in her company. She is, as you would expect, a little weary of the older players attentions, especially Susan's, but by the end of the montage all is forgotten and the entire team is friends and a cohesive unit. The montage ends.

EXT. BUS LOT - NIGHT

John and the other pros walking with all of the happy players to the bus.

JOHN

Man, am I glad that's over. But, I
want to say that all of you did an
amazing job of kicking some serious
ass.

The players cheer.

SUSAN

Especially Laura.

The players cheer louder. Laura is a little embarrassed but, by now, she has settled in to all of the adulation.

JOHN

Even I'm surprised at how well she played. Of course, with me as her instructor. . .

The players push and berate John in a playful fashion.

JOHN (CONT'D)

. . .get on the bus, guys.

The players and the pros get on the bus and begin settling down with John continuing a monologue. Laura is awarded the best seat in the bus and her teammates fill in beside and behind her. Susan is awarded the seat to Laura's right.

JOHN (CONT'D)

We've got a long way to go until we get to the hotel so try and settle down and get a little rest. We have a few days off and then we meet the rest of the tennis elite at the nationals and once we get there what are we going to do?

The entire bus erupts.

PLAYERS

Take over the world!!!

John smiles and sits down as the bus begins to pull out. He speaks to Mandy sitting to his right.

JOHN

Damn straight.

John pauses and smiles at Mandy.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Well, if they're marketable.

John sits back and closes his eyes. He knows that Laura is his ticket out of being just another one of Vasaturo's McPros. He hasn't been this happy since he was on the tour.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Everyone sitting around Laura chatting and we notice that Laura notices Lee Ann, Heidi and Elan standing at the periphery of the group and she halts all of the chatter for a moment.

LAURA
Susan, could you and. . .

She points to Mark and Joe in the seat in front of her.

LAURA (CONT'D)
. . .you guys scoot over a bit so
that Lee Ann, Heidi and Elan can
join us?

Susan is a little put out but she knows there's nothing she can do but move over as do the others. So, without much hesitation, and even a couple of smiles, they do and Lee Ann, Heidi and Elan rush into the fairly uncomfortable but blessed spot. They beam at Laura and she smiles back and then she leans back and closes her eyes.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Everyone exits the bus. Standing outside Mandy, Bill and Al hand out room keys to the players as they leave the bus and move into the hotel. The 18's players and Laura are the last off the bus just behind John. John stops, Mandy hands him his key and he turns around and faces the 18's.

JOHN
And just because this is the last
night it doesn't mean that the
rules are any different.

MARK
We understand, John, it's still a
school night.

JOE
And we are still ambassadors of the
tennis world.

RON
But more important than that, we
are the representation of. . .

All of the 18's join in.

PLAYERS
. . .The Vasaturo Tennis Academy.

JOHN
Yeah, whatever. Just keep it from
seeping out into the world, okay?

The players ignore John as they get their keys. So, he makes it impossible to ignore him by yelling.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I said okay?

The players, even Laura, snap to attention. John's not much of a yellor and this caught them by surprise. They all nod and give him their words.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good.

John turns to walk into the hotel.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Goodnight. I hope I don't hear a sound out of you people until seven in the morning.

The players grouse about the hour.

SUSAN
Come on, John, why so early? Don't we deserve at least. . .

John keeps walking away and doesn't turn around.

JOHN
. . .you deserve to go to your rooms and hit the bus at seven.
(Pause)
And don't be late.

Mandy and Al walk past the players and say their goodnights. Following fairly closely behind is Laura.

LAURA
Goodnight, guys. See you in the morning.

Mark jogs up to Laura and stops her.

MARK
Hey, what's the rush? We're going to hang out for awhile and listen to some music. You know. . .

The other 18's catch up and circle around.

MARK (CONT'D)

. . .celebrate the end of this hell
tour and the beginning of the cash
tour.

The 18's congratulate each other.

LAURA

I don't know, maybe I'll just get
some rest. You guys go and have
fun.

SUSAN

Come on, Lau, this is probably the
last time we'll all get to hang out
together.

LYDIA

Yeah, right after the nationals
I've got to go home for a couple of
weeks and then it's off to college.

MICHELLE

And I've got a couple of pros to
test out the waters. If I do well,
I'll probably stick with it, if I
don't, I guess I'll just take the
scholarship.

MARK

Yeah. . .

Mark puts his arm around Laura. It's obvious that she has a
crush on him. . . .

MARK (CONT'D)

and I'll be on a totally different
tour. We'll only get to see each
other at the grand slam events.

JOE

Come on, Laura. It'll be fun.

RON

You never join us, come on.

Laura stands there with Mark's arm around her shoulder
conflicted. She may be able to be in total control on the
tennis court but she's still a fourteen year old and peer
pressure is a much more stressing situation. She finally
looks around at her friends and smiles.

LAURA

Oh, all right, I'll just go change
and be there in a while.

The 18's cheer and every starts moving into the hotel. Mark shows Laura his room key.

MARK

All right, meet us in my room as
soon as you can.

Laura smiles and walks off towards her room.

LAURA

See you guys soon.

The 18's whoop and play just like normal eighteen year olds on the way to their rooms.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - NIGHT

The party has obviously been going on for some time. Everyone is pretty well drunk and stoned. The room is not wrecked, but it is seriously rearranged. At first the music and conversation is so loud that no one hears Laura's timid knock but after a few seconds of harder pounding Michelle runs to the door and opens it.

MICHELLE

Hey, it's about time you got here.
I thought you were blowing us off.

Laura enters the room.

MARK

Or you forgot about us.

LAURA

How could I do that? You called
every five minutes.

Mark rushes/stumbles to greet Laura.

MARK

Just making sure you didn't get an
early case of auld lang syne
disease.

Laura looks at him like he's lost his mind. Either that or he reminds her of the old days with her father.

RON

What the fuck are you talking about? Auld lang syne disease? What the fuck is that? She started listening to some old Canadian guy sing about old something never coming to mind?

Mark is a little confused but he still thinks he right.

MARK

Yeah, right, that never coming to mind disease.

LYDIA

I think you mean Alzheimer's.

MARK

That's what I said. Alzheimer's.

SUSAN

No, you didn't Mark. You fucked up.

Mark thinks for a second, quite a chore in his current state, then changes his mind or, more likely, forgets what he was thinking about.

MARK

Ahh, fuck it. Get in here, Lau and let's get this festive occasion cranked up.

He reaches into a refrigerator and pulls out a bottle of beer. Players like this would never be caught dead drinking out of a can. Laura hesitates before taking it.

MARK (CONT'D)

Come on, this is a celebration.

Mark jumps on the closest bed and begins his proclamation.

MARK (CONT'D)

And we are here to crown the newest, youngest, most galaxian tennis player that's every walked between the lines. . . Laura Sampson.

Everyone cheers but then again at this time they'd cheer the revolution of toilet water. Laura just stands there with the unopened beer in her hand watching everything.

MARK (CONT'D)

Well, that is unless you include
the rest of us at one time or
another.

The 18's laugh because they know it's true. And so does
Laura. She remembers walking into Susan's room for the first
time and seeing the ad slick covering the wall. Mark bounces
and then leaps off the bed and almost knocks Laura over. They
laugh as he regains his balance.

MARK (CONT'D)

Let me open that for you my lady.

LAURA

I don't know if I should, Mark.

SUSAN

Oh don't worry about it, it's kind
of a ritual.

Susan reaches over and hands Mark a joint.

MICHELLE

Yeah, I remember when I finished a
tour for the first time. Sophia and
Alexia got me so drunk I fell off
the bed because it was spinning so
fast and then I puked under the
bed.

HEIDI

I remember that. You smelled so bad
everyone thought we'd killed you
and tried to hide the body under
the bed.

The 18's laugh because they've all been through it. Not just
the puking, being the next star, the brightest light. They've
seen the machine spit people out and they know it'll never
change.

Mark opens Laura's beer and stands there smiling at her.
Laura stands there and looks over the room. As much as there
is a pull to be one of them there's an equal and opposite
reaction.

MARK

Come on, Laura. Relax for once.

Mark takes another hit off the joint and passes it to Laura who nods no. Mark shrugs, takes another hit and passes it to Joe. Mark blows the smoke at Laura who smiles and takes a hit from the bottle. It's all that subtle and normal.

MARK (CONT'D)

All right, let's crank this sucker up.

Mark pauses and listens to the song for a second. All of a sudden he comes to a realization. Hey, turn that up. I love this fucking song. The music gets louder, the dancing gets wilder and we go into party MONTAGE mode.

Laura's original hesitation is slowly melted away as she joins into the festivities with an ever increasing abandon. It is obviously much later as we come out of the montage and everyone is shown much the worse for wear.

The song changes as we come back to real time and it we see Mark, Joe and Ron wildly dancing, but mostly just rubbing, against Laura and singing the new song at the tops of their lungs.

Susan, Lydia and Michelle are semi-paying attention but, for all intents and purposes, crashed throughout the room.

Mark begins to kiss Laura as Joe and Ron back off a couple of steps and continue to sing and urge Mark on. Laura breaks free but is quickly pushed back into play by Ron and Joe.

Mark begins to grope and slobber over Laura as the song pounds on. The scene is full of disorienting shots and angles. Laura works hard but it is now that we fully realize that she is just a fourteen year old playing in a world she is not fully prepared for. She has no defense mechanisms for this situation.

We see Mark's hand tear at Laura's clothes and shove her down. We see the anguish in Laura's face but we never hear a sound from her. Whether it's because the music is too loud or she just has no sound to convey her fear is left for interpretation.

As Mark continues the rape Joe and Ron crowd around in anticipation. The song that is being sung during this scene is 'Why Don't We Get Drunk And Screw'.

INT. MARK'S ROOM - MORNING

Ron is on the floor. Mark and Susan share a bed as do Joe and Lydia.

Michelle is staggering into the room from the bathroom. She cloudily looks over the room as she assesses the damage.

MICHELLE
Hey, where's Laura?

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A teary Laura sitting with her head down on a chair across the room from John. His expression is noncommittal.

JOHN
We have to be real careful here,
Laura. Before this goes any further
let me talk to Tony and see how
this should be handled.

Laura continues to sob but doesn't answer.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You haven't told anyone else, have
you Laura?

Laura shakes her head no.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good. . .

John stands. Laura's head snaps up. He stops dead still but continues to speak.

JOHN (CONT'D)
. . .like I said we have a real
problem here and we should talk to
Tony and see what should be done
about this. Is that what you want
to do, Laura?

Laura looks like she wants to say something but, in the end, she just shrugs her shoulders.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Okay, great. I'll call Tony now and
we'll take care of this back at the
academy. We have to be real careful
here because if this gets out we'll
all have a serious shit storm on
our hands and you don't want that,
do you Laura? I mean, you've worked
real hard to get this far, you
don't want to blow it now, do you
Laura?

John pauses expecting an answer but doesn't receive one so he just continues.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I promise you that this'll all be
taken care of at the academy. And
I'll make you this promise, it'll
never happen again.

John smiles as Laura looks right through him.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Why don't you get ready to leave
and I'll call Tony now.

Laura gets up and exits the room without a sound. John waits a moment before picking up the phone. He dials Tony's number and waits for a moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Tony, John. Mark's at it again.

INT. TONY'S OFFICE - DAY

Kurt, John, Julian, Russell and Barbara in conference with Tony.

TONY
I don't think you understand, Kurt.
We're talking millions of dollars
down the tubes if this gets out.

KURT
But my daughter was raped by that
asshole.

RUSSELL
That's yet to be determined.

KURT
What the fuck does. . .

TONY
. . .Kurt, listen. We have kids,
more adult than kid actually, and
we know how things can get out of
control at that age. One minute
everything's fine and then in the
morning come the second thoughts.

KURT
But I looked in her face.

TONY

We all did. But haven't you ever done anything and then the next morning thought of the consequences and had second thoughts?

KURT

Of course, but. . .

TONY

. . .that's all I'm trying to point out, Kurt. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone covers-up.

Kurt is definitely in a quandary. He's too dumb and selfish to take the high road. The road he lives on now is much nicer than the old one and he knows that what he does now will have repercussions for the rest of his life.

KURT

But she said she was raped. She sat in her room and cried and told me.

RUSSELL

No one is saying her version isn't valid. It's just that we have to consider both sides and, through that, come up with the larger truth.

KURT

What larger truth?

TONY

How it affects the corporation as a whole. And all of our investments in Laura.

JULIAN

Not to mention Mark.

BIFF

Please, don't even say that. Kurt, I've got to tell you, if this gets out, no matter how much I personally like Laura, I'm sorry to say, but our firm will drop her.

BARBARA

I think Biff speaks for all of us here.

KURT

What about Mark? Are you going to drop him?

TONY

You see, Kurt, tennis is a small world built on loyalties. When one of our loyal friends is in trouble we all gather around to protect them. We take this loyalty very seriously.

Tony pauses for a moment and stares Kurt down. This is the showdown moment for this situation and everyone knows that Kurt is not a player.

TONY (CONT'D)

So, Kurt, are you loyal?

Kurt looks around the room. Thoughts of Laura barely glance through his head. The new car, the new house, the new life are his primary concerns right now. Laura is an item. She ceased being a human once it was found out that she could hit a fuzzy little yellow thing better than most people in the world. Laura is a commodity to be bought and sold at will. And it's never her will.

KURT

I'll have a talk with her.

The tension in the room lessens and everyone buries this little indiscretion without a second thought.

TONY

We knew we could count on you. And don't think we're not grateful. I think you'll be happy with our little gift to you and yours.

Tony rustles some papers and turns them over to Kurt.

TONY (CONT'D)

We're going to give Laura the Jacksonville wildcard.

Kurt is beside himself with joy. His thoughts are centered on his '...own little ATM'.

TONY (CONT'D)

We were going to give it to Susan but we feel that this is the least we can do to make up for this incident.

KURT
Damn straight.

Kurt pauses while looking over the application.

KURT (CONT'D)
So, if she wins the nationals will
she get an appearance fee?

Tony smiles.

TONY
We'll see what can be worked out.
But, first things first. She has to
win the nationals.

KURT
Not a problem, she a tough little
kid.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Laura is working out with John. Laura is drenched with sweat and there is absolutely no emotion on her face. During this ordeal she barely speaks. All she does is play tennis with an intensity that borders on obsessive. John runs down a shot and hits it out wide.

JOHN
Good shot, Laura. Nice depth.

John jogs to the net.

JOHN (CONT'D)
That's it for today. Why don't you
take the rest of the day off. We
want to be rested for tomorrow now
don't we.

Laura walks to the net and starts picking up balls.

LAURA
I'm just going to serve for a
while.

John walks around the net to Laura's side.

JOHN
Hey, I'm all for hard work too but
even you can over do it.

John places his hand on Laura's shoulder and she flinches and moves away. It's not really a reaction to the physical rape as much as it's a reaction to all the betrayal.

LAURA

Don't worry, I'm just going to hit a bucket.

Laura picks up a bucket of balls and walks to the far end of the court. John just stands there and shakes his head.

JOHN

Whatever makes you happy.

John picks up his bag.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Just make sure you're on time for the car tomorrow.

Laura answers with the snap of a well hit serve. Followed by another and another and another.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

Laura is beating Tonya quite handily in the finals of the 16 and under national championships. It's 1-5, 30-30 in the second set with Tonya serving. Laura won the first set 6-2. Tonya is in disarray. Laura is steely. The outcome is all but determined. Tonya misses her first serve, Laura moves in and hits an easy winner off of her second serve.

UMPIRE

Championship point.

Tonya looks uncomfortable as she bounces the ball before her serve. There is nothing on her serve. It's like she's lost the will to compete. Laura, on the other hand, has no such problem and jumps all over the weak serve and hits an outright winner.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Game, set, match, Miss Sampson. Our new US nationals 16 and under champion. Congratulations to all of our competitors.

Laura jogs to the net after winning the biggest match of her life and it is totally joyless. In the crowd we see the cheering Sampson's, Tony, Julian, Russell, Barbara, Biff and John in the crowd. Each one of them is basking in the glow of their bank accounts.

Tonya reaches the net and gives Laura a half smile. They both know, now, that they were set up but it is an ever widening chasm between them and they'll never be friends again. Tonya returns the half smile during their handshake and they part.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIALS and PHOTOGRAPHERS converge upon Laura, congratulate her and hand her the trophy. She holds the trophy up for all to see but her expression never changes. Stoic is the word newspapers will use as a catch phrase.

Laura continues to hold the trophy aloft and all of a sudden breaks into a smile and runs towards the stands. She passes her family, biological and corporate, and jumps into the arms of Reggie and Scott.

LAURA

Reggie! Scott! What are you guys doing here?

REGGIE

You didn't think I was going to let them take all the credit.

Reggie gestures towards her families.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

After all, I'm the one who discovered you.

SCOTT

Hey, I'm the one who found her.

REGGIE

Semantics. The only thing that matters now is that you are quite a little tennis player. And, kudos on the win.

LAURA

It means so much to me that you came. But why didn't you tell me you were here?

REGGIE

We only came for the finals. After all, we didn't want to travel all this way if you were going to lose. It wouldn't have been as dramatic if you were a loser.

Laura giggles like the kid she is and hugs Reggie and Scott again.

LAURA

It's so great to see you guys.

REGGIE

I think we've already covered this ground. Now, let's get to the important part.

LAURA

And what's that?

Reggie holds out his hand.

REGGIE

I'm here to collect my ten percent.
Give it up, kid.

Laura smiles broader and pushes the trophy into Reggie's waiting arms.

LAURA

Here you go, coach.

Photographers take pictures and just behind them we see the families hiding their anger behind their 'for public consumption' smiles. Laura, Reggie and Scott group together and smile. Really smile.

All of a sudden Laura's smile begins to fade and, for a moment, we see a look of realization cross her face. She looks up at Reggie and her smile returns. I wish I'd never left. Reggie looks down at her and, because of the crowd noise, really didn't hear her.

REGGIE

What'd you say, Laura?

LAURA

This is what it's all about,
Reggie. Having you and Scott here
makes me realize it. Thanks.

Laura hugs Reggie and Scott once again and the cameras continue to capture the moment. Laura seems at peace for the first time in quite a while.

REGGIE

I should be thanking you. Well, let
me see how these pictures turn out
and then maybe I'll thank you.

Laura, Reggie and Scott continue to smile and embrace.

LAURA

I can't wait to get back to the club. I really miss it.

REGGIE

And we miss you too, kid. We really do.

INT. TONY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tony, John and Kurt are finalizing the plans for Laura's entry into the Jacksonville tournament. Laura sits there silently, a tad beatific actually, as her team discusses her burgeoning career.

KURT

So, if she gets to the 16's at Jacksonville she'll be able to get into the Philly draw, is that right? How much can she make there?

TONY

Kurt, let's go over this once again. We are going to retain her amateur standing for another year. That means she won't be getting paid for these matches.

KURT

But if the money's there why are we passing it up?

TONY

Because we want to set her up as a recognizable name first and then put her on tour. If we put her out too fast we risk the chance of injury or burnout. She's still growing and we want to protect her potential long term revenue stream.

KURT

It all makes sense, kind of, but I still think we should be grabbing the cash.

TONY

There's plenty of time for grabbing over the next ten to fifteen year, Kurt. Right now we play it safe and maximize our potential. You've got to think long term, Kurt.

Kurt looks thoughtful.

KURT

Yeah, long term. I guess you're right.

(Pause)

I still feel like a chump for leaving cash on the table though.

TONY

Always leave something for the peons, Kurt. It gives them a little hope.

Kurt nods at this perceived bit of wisdom as Tony smiles and bangs his hands on the table and addresses Laura for the first time.

TONY (CONT'D)

Great. Now that that's settled, what do you think of our plan?

Laura looks around the room.

LAURA

You're the masterminds, I'm just the product.

KURT

I couldn't have said it better myself.

EXT. UNDERNEATH THE STADIUM - DAY

Laura's first pro match. Laura's walking towards the court with her opponent, a mid ranked journeywoman pro, JACQUELINE MARIE, the tournament officials figured she wouldn't give Laura too much trouble. She's a draw and they would like her to at least play a few matches so she'll face no seeded players until she reaches the round of 16.

They reach the court and, although Laura's played in some impressive stadiums, this one does tend to take her breath away. She walks out and is all smiles. She waves at the adoring crowd and is fully enjoying this moment. The ANNOUNCER introduces them as they walk into the court.

ANNOUNCER

Stepping into the stadium court now, from Bethesda, Maryland, currently ranked 87th in the world, Jacqueline Marie.

The crowd offers up polite applause.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And her opponent, playing as an amateur in her first professional match is the current United States 16 and under girls champion, the fifteen year old phenomenon from The Vasaturo Tennis Academy, Laura Sampson.

The crowd goes crazy and Laura smiles and waves from her seat at courtside. Ladies, please begin your warm-up. Laura and Jacqueline walk to their sides and begin a short warm-up. During the warm-up Laura looks into the crowd and seems to be devouring every sensation of this day. She even waves to her families. They all wave back in hopes of getting on television.

Once the warm-up is over the match begins and we get right into a tightly fought match in quickly edited bursts of play. Laura loses the first set 6-4 but that's more attributed to nerves than the superiority of Marie's game. Laura is truly having fun playing the game that was always fun just a few years ago.

Her mind wanders back to hitting her very first ball. Playing that fat guy. Listening intently to Reggie and Scott's instruction. The pure experience of running after a ball and knowing that you've just made perfect contact. No matter what, they can never take those feeling away from you.

Laura goes on to win the second set 6-2 and she jumps ahead quickly in the third. Marie is fairly ineffectual whenever Laura approaches the net. Laura's volley's are crisp and seem to be guided by radar. Her air game is flawless. This is tennis at it's purest. Laura is in, what is affectionately called, the zone.

She's up 5-1, 30-15 in the third set on her serve. Laura looks over the court and then takes a second to look around the crowd. Everyone is on the edge of their seats because who doesn't like being in the presence of perfection? Especially for the bragging rights years later when Laura's in the tennis hall of fame in Newport, Rhode Island and you can always say that you were there during her very first victory.

Laura serves and, remembering not to change a winning game, approaches the net. Her first volley is good, not on the level of the rest of her day, but a passable volley. Marie returns it crosscourt to Laura's backhand. It's a good return that Laura really has to stretch for. But, being deeply embedded in the zone, it's not too difficult a volley.

Marie approaches and hits a backhand slice crosscourt that looks like it'll fall in for a winner, one of Marie's few today.

Laura lunges, stretching as far as she can, she gets her racket on it before a scream drowns out the pop of the ball on Laura's string. Laura screams in pain as she slams into the court as Marie steps forward and hits an easy winner.

All of the air is sucked out of the stadium (and that's quite a trick for an outdoor stadium). The crowd is silent as TOURNAMENT PERSONNEL rush to her side. Her family rushes out of the stands and is stopped at the gate by security.

A doctor is summoned and a stretcher is brought out to transport Laura. She is carried past her family (are their expressions of concern for her or them?).

UMPIRE

Miss Sampson defaults in the third set due to injury.

Our next match will begin momentarily. We catch a glimpse of Laura and a smile is building across her face as she is placed in the ambulance. It's a sad smile, but definitely a smile. The ambulance pulls out as the next players walk in to a smattering of applause.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A mid to late twenty year old Laura is mindlessly washing a few lunch dishes in a gleaming, upscale KITCHEN while looking out the window at her eight year old DAUGHTER running around a tennis court.

She looks down to pick up another as a tennis ball machine starts up. The whoosh and pop of a ball are followed by her daughter's laughter. Laura smiles because her daughter often turns on the ball machine and runs around after the balls.

Laura turns her attention back to her dishes. The pop of dead center hits and laughter from her daughter snaps her attention to the court. The pops continue, Laura's expression fades from smile to concern as Alanis Morissette's 'Ironie' begins to play.

FADE OUT.