

BREAK POINT

by

Zachary Joel Johnson

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY

FAHEEMA NASSAR (17) clings to the toilet--

She VOMITS.

Her TENNIS DRESS is crumpled up around her knees. Her curly black hair, matted and sweaty.

Faheema presses a hand to her RED-BEET FOREHEAD--

She hurls again.

**LOWCOUNTRY CLASSIC 2021
CHARLESTON, SC
WOMEN'S SINGLES CHAMPIONSHIP**

Faheema steadies her petite frame--

She spits in the bowl and leans back--

Bulldozed by the heat exhaustion and dehydration.

A TOURNAMENT REPRESENTATIVE approaches outside the stall--

TOURNAMENT REPRESENTATIVE (O.S.)
Five minutes till disqualification.

Faheema closes her eyes.

EXT. CHARLESTON TENNIS CLUB - DAY

Faheema steps into HARSH SUNLIGHT--

She SQUINTS, taking in the MASSIVE TENNIS COMPLEX--

Crowds cheer from atop concrete walls that surround the court, a red clay surface, the color of dried blood --

A gladiator pit.

Faheema's opponent, ZHUO HONG (27), berates the UMPIRE--

ZHUO HONG
The *child* can't leave the court for
thirty minutes. That's a penalty!

Faheema heads toward the shit show--

She moves cautiously, wary of the big stage she's been thrust onto. A long-sleeved, conservative dress. Shoulders slouched. Faheema is a girl withdrawn, avoiding eye contact.

Safer that way.

The Ump spots Faheema and motions both players to the court.

UMPIRE
Play has resumed. Switch sides.
Third set tiebreaker. 4-2, Hong.

Zhuo fumes, shouldering past Faheema--

ZHUO HONG
Brat.

Faheema blinks.

CUT TO--

Faheema squats INTO FRAME--

She's poised, bouncing ever so slightly.

But it's only muscle memory. Something crucial is missing--

Focus.

A WHIZ! Startled, Faheema lunges for the ball! MISSES!

She shakes her head.

Faheema squats DOWN INTO FRAME once more--

She bounces, then -- GROWS STILL....

WHIZ! SMACK! WHOOSH!

Faheema sends Zhuo's service down the line! A WINNER!

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS--

Faheema slides into a forehand!

Zhuo's feet abruptly change direction!

Faheema digs for a slice backhand!

CUT TO THE BASELINE--

Faheema takes a deep breath--

She SERVES! AN ACE for the set!

UMPIRE
Match, Nassar.

Faheema bends over, relieved.

She makes her way to the net for THE HANDSHAKE--

But Zhuo stays rooted to the baseline, BASHING HER RACKET.

A HUSH GRIPS THE STANDS.

Zhuo tosses her destroyed racket and plows past Faheema.

Faheema's eyes dart, fighting back tears--

A humiliating end to a draining day.

INT. CLUBHOUSE LOUNGE - DAY

Faheema sits in an ANTIQUE ARMCHAIR--

She appears swallowed whole by it, her posture slouched.

DENNIS (36) paces the length of the lounge--

Far too buff to be a good tennis player, he's an instructor sporting a T-SHIRT with the logo, "TROUST TENNIS ACADEMY".

DENNIS

Fuck, we should be celebrating now.
No doubt Zhuo's using your half hour
escapade as an excuse.

FAHEEMA

(soft-spoken)

Sorry.

DENNIS

Next time if you can pummel someone
in straight sets, do it. Don't give
up a three game lead in the second
when she's missing half her volleys.

Faheema nods, muted--

She takes stock of the PORTRAITS on the wall--

Champions cry in joy. Winners scream in victory.

SNAPSHOTS OF GLORY. Frozen in time.

Dennis raises his hands, exasperated--

DENNIS (cont'd)

Stand up Faheema. Smile.

Faheema jolts to her feet--

DENNIS (cont'd)
Get with it. This title proves we can
graduate to the professional circuit.

Faheema shifts--

FAHEEMA
But... It's only June. Dad said I
didn't have to decide till September?

Dennis nods dismissively--

CLING! The door swings open and the COMMISSIONER enters--

COMMISSIONER
Dennis! Congratulations are in order!

DENNIS
Is the Main Hall ready?

COMMISSIONER
Yes, a small matter to tend to first.
(glances to Faheema)
Girls who enter through the Junior
Exempt Program rarely advance. We
think it best if the competitors
clear the air before the ceremony.

CLING! A SECRETARY enters--

She whispers in the Commissioner's ear.

COMMISSIONER (cont'd)
Ah! And Ms. Hong is on her way now!

The group turns to the DOUBLE DOORS, expectant.

Dennis places a possessive hand on Faheema's shoulder.

The Commissioner straightens.

Faheema's face tightens--

THE DOORS FLY OPEN!

But it's not Zhuo Hong.

CAROLINE WERBER (19). Her tight French braid is perfectly
symmetrical. Her sportswear, sleek and color coordinated.

If she babysat your kids, you'd feel insecure.

CAROLINE
 Caroline Werber. Aide to Mrs. Hong.

The Commissioner frowns.

Caroline extends a hand to Faheema, sweet--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 Is this overdue? I hope to be in your shoes one day. You were incredible.

Faheema reaches out and shakes her hand--

Caroline leans in--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 Don't worry about Zhou. She would have been a cunt regardless. You won.

Faheema blinks.

Caroline spins on a dime and exits.

Faheema stares after her...

INT. CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT

The Commissioner speaks to a LARGE BANQUET HALL--

COMMISSIONER
 --for Women's Singles, Ms. Nassar!

Faheema steps forward to accept a GOLDEN CHALICE--

From atop a STAGE, Faheema breaks into a grin. However, as the applause persists, her smile grows more and more forced.

Faheema's pride giving way to apprehension...

INT. CLUBHOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

A CHECK is slid across a desk -- \$60,000.

Faheema stares at it, concerned.

Across from her, a TOURNAMENT ACCOUNTANT taps A CONTRACT--

TOURNAMENT ACCOUNTANT
 Sign here to accept. Decline, here.

Faheema scans the contract--

She flips the pages, searching.

TOURNAMENT ACCOUNTANT (cont'd)
 It's all in the print hon'.
 (leans over, points)
 Acceptance of prize money results in
 the forfeiture of amateur status.

FAHEEMA
 So... this exceeds the NCAA cap?

TOURNAMENT ACCOUNTANT
 Yep. Colleges can't take Pros.

Faheema swallows--

The gravity of this moment sinking in.

TOURNAMENT ACCOUNTANT (cont'd)
 Do you need to talk to somebody?

Faheema adjusts, flooded with unease.

FAHEEMA
 (quiet)
 Um, no. I'm good.

Faheema taps the desk--

She clicks the pen. DECLINES THE MONEY.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

A commuter van barrels past a "WELCOME TO FLORIDA" sign--

Inside, Faheema leans against the window.

Her phone lights up -- "DAD".

Faheema stares at it a moment.

Silences it.

Across the aisle, Dennis spots Faheema's TROPHY laying down
 in the seat.

He reaches over and sets it upright--

DENNIS
 Things will move fast from here.

Faheema pulls her legs to her chest.

EXT. TROUST TENNIS ACADEMY - NIGHT

The van takes a wide turn into A VAST COMPLEX--

Sparse street lights cast a haunting hue over the TROUST TENNIS ACADEMY -- gyms and dorms fan out from a CENTRAL ROTUNDA, the buildings encircled by ROWS OF TENNIS COURTS.

The development sits in the MIDDLE OF NOWHERE SWAMPLAND.

The van SCREECHES into a ROUNDABOUT--

Faheema lugs off, slowed by her bag, nearly as tall as her.

INT. ROTUNDA - NIGHT

Faheema steps into the ACADEMY LOBBY--

BEBE (O.S.)
There she is, there she is!

BEBE TROUST (65) saunters forward, arms outstretched--

The Academy owner and a true lizard creature. Orange wrinkly skin. Sun-baked white hair. Oh, and he's wearing Oakleys.

BEBE
My top dog! Give Bebe some love.

Bebe pulls Faheema into an embrace--

BEBE (cont'd)
This win will put you in the top three hundred! I've seen loser hacks make jumps to the Pros on less.
(pulling away)
Next level baby! We play this right and we can line up a commitment to the Tour by August.

Bebe slaps her back--

BEBE (cont'd)
You fucking ready??

Faheema forces a smile, nods.

BEBE (cont'd)
I got a surprise but need you rested. Blast this shit on Insta! Tag Troust!

Bebe lumbers off, leaving Faheema alone.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Faheema opens a bland metal door. Flicks on the light--

ROOMMATE
(hiding under covers)
The fuck. Turn the light off.

FAHEEMA
Sorry--

Faheema quickly kills the switch.

INT. DORM BATHROOM - NIGHT

Faheema SOAKS IN THE TUB--

Her phone sits on the lip of the bath, A TIMER going.

Faheema reads from A NOTEPAD, practicing a speech--

FAHEEMA
What is truly wrong -- *wrong* no, um
ironic... Eh. Hypocritical. Yes--
(notates on her pad)
What's truly hypocritical is that our
legal system often arrests the wrong
person and then perpetuates the very
crime that they set out to punish --
the taking of an innocent life.

PING! The phone--

Faheema reaches over--

A TEXT MESSAGE IN ARABIC (English Subtitles) --

MOM: Just waking up here and seeing the news! So proud!

MOM: Have fun celebrating with your friends :)

Faheema slowly types...

FAHEEMA: Yeah! Having a blast!

Faheema swipes over to an INSTAGRAM POST in progress--

A PHOTO OF FAHEEMA HOLDING HER TROPHY IN THE CLUBHOUSE--

"First Pro Tournament. Many to come!"

Faheema studies the post--

She DELETES the caption. Types a new one--

"Excited to see my first WTA ranking!"

Faheema lowers the phone--

Her heart not in it.

Faheema SCROLLS DOWN HER FEED. Lands on an ESPN VIDEO--

A tennis player, CICI BELLIS (18), at a PRESS CONFERENCE.

ESPN REPORTER (ON PHONE)

Cici, as one of America's top Juniors I'm sure you had many choices. Yet, you turned down a full ride to Yale? Are you prepared to turn Pro at 18?

CICI BELLIS (ON PHONE)

I have to. College tennis, especially girl's tennis, isn't funded as well as other sports. I'd lose the quality competitive training I have now and my ranking would free fall without a full schedule of pro futures to play.

(matter of fact)

The truth is, if you aim to go big in the game, college doesn't make sense.

Faheema twists her lip.

She swipes up on AN OPEN INTERNET FORM--

A HALF FILLED APPLICATION for COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

Faheema studies it, invested.

INT / EXT. TROUST ACADEMY - VARIOUS

THE PHONE ALARM RINGS! 5:30AM!

Faheema jolts up in bed. Pitch black in the room.

INTERCUT SEQUENCE--

A WHISTLE! Dennis yells at a GROUP OF GIRLS on the courts--

DENNIS

Are we fucking country clubbers?!?

GIRLS

NO!

- The girls run laps! Faheema, on auto-pilot.
- Faheema sprints across the net, volleying for a drill.

DENNIS
Are we average athletes?!

GIRLS
NO!

- In a gym, Faheema throws a WEIGHTED BALL against the wall.
- Faheema and the girls do SUICIDES, their faces strained!

DENNIS
Are we ANIMALS?!

GIRLS
YES!

CUT TO--

Faheema hits again! And again! And again! An onslaught.

DENNIS
(spit flying)
Chase it! Lean on that leg for power!

WE GO SLO MO ON FAHEEMA--

She swings AND WE'RE CLOSE ON every detail of her face--

Muscles rippling. Hair flying. Body twisting.

The making of an American Pro.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Faheema lays on her mattress, exhausted.

On the opposite bed sits her roommate, LINDSEY (16) -- a Brit whose accent somehow doesn't help her sound smart. Her area is crammed with fluffy pillows and "Bachelor" posters.

Faheema's side of the room is modest -- tennis trophies, Debate Team placards, and a BULLETIN BOARD of photos.

Beth (16) swings open their door--

BETH
(to Lindsey)
Hey bitch. You wanna' hit?

LINDSEY
Fuck that.

BETH
No -- do you want a hit?

Beth pulls a BONG out from her backpack.

Lindsey's face transforms. She jumps to her feet.

BETH (cont'd)
Faheema, you want some?

LINDSEY
(we talked about this)
Beth.

FAHEEMA
Uh. Sure.

Lindsey rolls her eyes.

INT. MASTER SUITE - DAY

The three girls sit around the bong in an EMPTY DORM--

BETH
Fingers crossed for Ohio tomorrow.
The scout's been blowing up my phone.

LINDSEY
Eh. Penn State has the party scene.

FAHEEMA
(quiet; chiming in)
And the best mock trial team.

Lindsey and Beth exchange looks--

LINDSEY
Is that why you turned down sixty big ones? Because you wanted to play fake lawyer??

Beth snickers.

Faheema diverts her gaze--

FAHEEMA
Oh. Um. You heard about that?

Lindsey watches Faheema struggle to light the bong--

LINDSEY

Bebe won't shut up about it. Says you
should have gone big time right then.
(grabbing the bong)
It's not a bomb--

Lindsey expertly lights the bowl and DRAGS A GIANT HIT--
THUD! **THE DOOR!**

The girls' eyes go wide--

The knob JIGGLES. Voices MUTTER outside--

DENNIS

(opening the door)
And here is your room--

Beth throws the bong in a racket bag--

Lindsey inhales the smoke! GAGGING!

Dennis stops dead in his tracks--

DENNIS (cont'd)

The fuck??

Behind him is **CAROLINE WERBER**, the girl from Charleston.

She clutches a suitcase and stares in incredulously.

Lindsey hacks, COUGHING UP SMOKE.

Beth and Faheema exchange looks, unsure how to cover...

Caroline sidesteps Dennis, wielding a SING SONG VOICE--

CAROLINE

Faheema, so good to see you again!
(chipper)
The Weil Academy was a total waste of
my talent. Bebe asked me to transfer.

FAHEEMA

Oh.

A NANNY enters with more suitcases.

CAROLINE

I needed stiffer competition. After
all, good makes good better right?

Faheema is a deer in the headlights.

DENNIS

I'm going to grab the checklist. When I get back, some answers ladies.

(in the door frame)

Faheema. Down to the courts.

Dennis exits.

The Nanny unzips a suitcase, starting to unpack--

Bags of skin care products. Designer clothing.

Beth and Lindsey share a glance.

Caroline clears her throat--

The Nanny bows her head. Crosses her hands.

CAROLINE

(to Faheema)

So stoked to be here with you. Bebe says we'll push each other to the top this year. Should be a great summer.

Faheema is in sensory overload--

She nods to Caroline. Rushes out--

INTO THE HALL

Only to run smack into Bebe Troust--

BEBE

Faheema! There you are!

FAHEEMA

Sorry, going to the courts now--

BEBE

My number one can't be worn ragged.

FAHEEMA

Oh. Dennis told me to go--

BEBE

And you tell him to fuck off next time. You can't be so timid anymore.

(waving her along)

Follow me.

Faheema frowns, chasing Bebe DOWN THE STAIRS into--

THE MAIN ROTUNDA

A hub of activity since yesterday; AN EVENT BEING SET UP.
 From the ceiling, a BANNER is hung: "WELCOME TO EXPO DAY!"
 JOANNE (33) assaults Bebe with an iPad and attitude--

JOANNE
 The Stanford scout will be here in
 ten minutes. You need to change.

Bebe ignores her, honing in on some TECHNICIANS as they lay
 cable for speakers, setting up A STAGE.

BEBE
 Are you boys laying wire or a fucking
 booby trap? Clean it up.
 (back to Faheema)
 Tomorrow I have something important
 for you. I -- God, you look awful--

Bebe comes to an abrupt halt--

He glares at Faheema through his dark shades. A Sith Lord.

BEBE (cont'd)
 You need a Redbull--
 (an order)
 Joanne, get a bull for Faheema.

Bebe is moving again, Faheema and Joanne speeding after--

He leads the trio down a rotunda offshoot--

INTO JOANNE'S OFFICE

Joanne peels off to her desk to ANSWER THE PHONE.

Faheema follows Bebe past a FISH TANK into--

INT. BEBE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Venetian windows and a large desk scream Oval Office--

The trophies and FOUR LOCO CANS scream frat house.

The room would feel larger if not for the MAN ON THE COUCH--

FAHEEMA
 (grinding to a halt)
 Baba?

Her father OMAR (42)--

He could rock a V-neck but would never be caught dead in one. Bulky. Shaved head. Intimidating.

OMAR
(standing)
Faheema.

FAHEEMA
Wha--what are you doing here?

Bebe slaps Faheema's back--

BEBE
Yesterday's win drummed up a lot of interest. My surprise could become a legit deal. I asked Omar to drive up.

FAHEEMA
A--a deal? What surprise?

OMAR
A representative from Prince will be here tomorrow. They want to discuss the possibility of a contract.

Faheema's head spins--

FAHEEMA
But... I thought we had more time?

JOANNE (O.S.)
(shouting in)
GEORGIA'S ON THE LINE!

Bebe heads to his desk--

BEBE
That was before you sent a ninety mile ace up Hong's ass yesterday--
(accepting the call)
AL! How's my favorite bulldog?

The GEORGIA STATE COACH on SPEAKER--

GEORGIA COACH (O.S.)
Did Faheema accept our offer?

BEBE
We're weighing the options--

GEORGIA COACH (O.S.)
If she's already got a sponsorship don't drag me on. My spots go fast.

BEBE

Al. You're yanking my dick. We don't have to commit till November--

GEORGIA COACH (O.S.)

Is she thinking college or not?

BEBE

Look we're not saying it's out of the cards but she just beat an 80th seed.

Bebe tosses a REDBULL to Faheema.

GEORGIA COACH (O.S.)

Only the top 128 even qualify for Slams. When the WTA re-ranks she'll be what? Maybe 279? It ain't certain.

Faheema shifts.

GEORGIA COACH (O.S.) (cont'd)

It's a long, hard road Bebe. She could convert and still be peddling the lower ITF circuit years later.

Faheema frowns, this already heavy on her mind.

Bebe MUTES THE PHONE--

BEBE

Don't sip it Faheema. Pound it back.
(unmuting the phone)
Our girl can crush it! When you got a budget that can keep her competitive for the professional tour we'll talk.

Bebe HANGS UP THE PHONE--

BEBE (cont'd)

(points at Faheema)
You can't hang around the leeches tomorrow. It's eye on the prize. We seal the deal on this sponsorship and we can afford to start your **career**.

Faheema's eyes dart.

Omar squeezes her shoulder--

OMAR

You'll need to play on point for the Prince rep. Bebe found a girl that can stand up to you across the net.

FAHEEMA
 (connecting the dots)
 ...Caroline?

BEBE
 Yea baby! An Orange Bowl and National
 Qualifying Junior. Hit with her and
 you'll be looking like a rock star!

Faheema can barely download any of this. Bulldozed.

INT. TROUST CAFETERIA - DAY

An OPEN EATING LOUNGE. Girls chat across tables.

Faheema sits alone, staring at her food--

The plate barely touched--

Her stomach in knots.

Faheema takes out her phone, texting someone named SULA--

"Can you talk tonight? It's important..."

Caroline PLOPS DOWN IN FRONT OF FAHEEMA--

CAROLINE
 Glad I caught you.

Faheema is startled--

Her eyes land on a LUSH KALE SALAD on Caroline's tray.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 It's Bay Organic. Want to try? I'm
 getting Joanne to bring me in meals.

Faheema shifts.

FAHEEMA
 Does that cost a lot?

Caroline pauses mid-bite--

CAROLINE
 Huh. Not sure--
 (at Faheema's dress)
 Does a priest make you wear that?

Faheema pulls on her sleeves--

FAHEEMA

Uh... My Dad. I'm from Oman.

CAROLINE

Of course you are! Such nice skin...
 (takes a bite; chews)
 While I'm from Ojai. So F'ing basic.
 Been trying to move for years. All
 the best academies are in Florida.

FAHEEMA

That's why you said yes to Bebe?

CAROLINE

Mnm. Total no-brainer. Anybody who's
 ever been anybody trained out here.
 Agassi. Sharapova. And now, even you.

Faheema adjusts.

CAROLINE (cont'd)

Besides, talent like us has to stick
 together. Protect ourselves from all
 these wannabees whoring themselves
 out for the four year party pass.
 (takes stock of cafe)
 See how they're all eye-boning us...

Faheema surveys the room.

Girls divert their glances.

FAHEEMA

The girls at Troust aren't so bad...

CAROLINE

Faheema. You're the best one here.
 (a fact)
 They don't like you either.

Faheema blinks.

Caroline shrugs. Takes another bite--

CAROLINE (cont'd)

So. Who's reached out to you then?
 Nike? Prince? After Charleston I bet
 everyone wants to get in your pants.

Faheema looks down, uncomfortable--

FAHEEMA

Um. We're still working that out...

CAROLINE

I qualified for some Futures myself--
Tampa. Rock Hill. 25K draws. I didn't
advance far enough to get a rank--

(assured)

But I will soon.

Faheema studies Caroline--

She radiates commitment. A singular ambition.

The INTERCOM SYSTEM crackles to life--

INTERCOM (V.O.)

Faheema. Bus has arrived. Faheema.

CAROLINE

Let's hit when you get back. Four?

Faheema stands to go. Nods.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - DAY

A bland classroom. A SUMMER 101 CLASS of eight students.

MR. BURGESS (33), dark skin and a big smile, speaks loudly--

MR. BURGESS

The Supreme Court didn't cement the
power of judicial review until 1803.

Faheema writes down notes, engaged in the lecture.

CUT TO--

The class packs up.

Faheema approaches Mr. Burgess--

FAHEEMA

I've almost finished it--

MR. BURGESS

Already?! Wow.

FAHEEMA

Yeah, just trying to get the speech
under four minutes now.

MR. BURGESS

The team could help more if you got
out to practice every once in awhile.

FAHEEMA
--I'm trying--

MR. BURGESS
--Only once a week--

Faheema nods, exasperated.

Mr. Burgess smiles. Winks.

MR. BURGESS (cont'd)
We'll take you when we can. Email it
and we'll do notes. But I need you in
person for the competition. Promise?

Faheema nods.

Her phone's FACETIME APP lights up in her hand.

EXT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - DAY

Faheema plops down in A COURTYARD--

Her sister, SULA (24), is on the phone -- kind eyes and a
colorful hijab. A dingy apartment, NIGHTTIME WHERE SHE'S AT.

Faheema and Sula speak in ARABIC with ENGLISH SUBTITLES--

SULA
(craning her neck)
Whoa, hey, you're still in school??

FAHEEMA
Just one summer class through July.

SULA
Faheema! When do you sleep?!?

Faheema shrugs. Makes a face.

Sula laughs--

SULA (cont'd)
Always go, go, go. You need a break!

FAHEEMA
(twists her lip)
Yeah...

Sula sighs.

SULA
What's up? Something wrong?

Faheema exhales--

FAHEEMA

Dad's already rushing the decision.

Sula adjusts.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)

They think I can break through now but it's not guaranteed. To qualify for premier tournaments, I'd need to win a ton more ITF Titles...

SULA

Yeah... But I'm sure you *could*.

FAHEEMA

I know... It's just, this is my only chance to take a full ride. If I burn out as a Pro, I'm left with nothing--

SULA

And if you don't try, you'll never know. You really want that regret?

Faheema purses her lips--

FAHEEMA

I just wish I could do both...

Sula studies Faheema's pensive face.

SULA

(reassuring)

Remember, you have a gift Faheema... Something so few have. Hold on to it.

Faheema nods.

She notices the time -- 3:52PM.

FAHEEMA

Shit! Sorry, I gotta' go.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Faheema speeds onto the courts--

She slows, spotting Caroline violently packing up her bag.

Caroline doesn't look up, cold--

CAROLINE

Only ten minutes left. No point now.

FAHEEMA

Did you at least get some warm ups in with the others?

CAROLINE

Warm ups?? Chloe's serve is a chop and Ann couldn't lean into the ball if it was Joe Jonas fucking her.

Faheema looks over to CHLOE and ANN, drilling in earshot--

FAHEEMA

Um. I think they can hear you--

CAROLINE

CHLOE'S SERVE SUCKS!!

Caroline storms off.

Faheema is shell-shocked.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

A dorm hall, winding down--

Faheema trucks through holding a LAUNDRY BASKET--

She passes the MASTER SUITE DOOR.

Faheema hesitates...

She summons some courage. KNOCKS...

Caroline opens the door in a tank and sweatpants.

Faheema opens her mouth but no words come out. Caroline crosses her arms.

FAHEEMA

I -- uh. Well, I wanted to apologize. About hitting earlier and being late.

Caroline sizes Faheema up...

She shrugs. Widens her door--

CAROLINE

It's chill.

Faheema exhales.

INSIDE CAROLINE'S SUITE--

Nice furniture. A Queen bed. TENNIS POSTERS and TROPHIES.

Faheema steps in for a closer look--

FAHEEMA

Orange Bowl? I won that one too...
 (proud; nostalgic)
 My first ever title, back in 2019.
 One of my favorites... Took three
 sets but I finally wore her down.

Caroline throws on a pullover. Crawls into bed.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)

I remember being so hyped. Felt like
 a big turning point. Problem was, any
 girl that had warmed up to me before
 suddenly stopped wanting to hang out.
 (thoughtful)
 Changed everything overnight.

Caroline nods--

CAROLINE

To their face, behind their backs,
 they'll always resent the better
 players. If I keep to myself, I'm a
 bitch. If I'm nice, I'm manipulative.
 (the sad truth)
 They'll never get people like us.

FAHEEMA

...People like us?

CAROLINE

Players fighting to be somebody.

Faheema nods, contemplating this.

Caroline tosses Faheema a pillow for the futon--

CAROLINE (cont'd)

You should crash here tonight.
 Our Expo Day hideaway bunker.

Caroline flips on her back and TURNS OFF THE LAMP.

INT. MASTER SUITE - MORNING

Faheema stirs on the futon.

She sits up groggily--

CAROLINE IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

Faheema pulls out her phone -- 7:47AM.

Shit.

INT. DORMITORY - MORNING

Faheema stumbles into the hall. It's A MAD SCENE--

JUNIORS AND SENIORS move to and fro. Prepping. Jostling.

SENIOR

(elbowing over)

Faheema! Partner up after breakfast?

Faheema ignores the girl. Shoulders through the traffic.

A BRAZILIAN GIRL brushing her teeth approaches Faheema--

BRAZILIAN GIRL

Screw her. You'll hit with me right?

Faheema navigates around her.

EXT. MAIN COURTS - MORNING

Faheema stampedes ONTO THE COURTS!

It's a zoo, seniors hitting strokes and running drills--

They glance nervously to the awning under center court--

AN ARRAY OF COLLEGIATE REPS.

An attentive audience, they whisper and point, wearing their UNIVERSITY BRANDS like prizes to be won -- LSU, FSU, Auburn.

Faheema's gaze lingers there--

She makes eye contact with the COLUMBIA COACH but--

Caroline steps in front of Faheema, blocking her view--

CAROLINE

Bebe said to stick together today.

Faheema furrows her brow--

FAHEEMA

Why didn't you wake me up??

CAROLINE
 (cocks her head)
 You didn't have an alarm set?

Faheema's eyes dart.

Caroline smiles. Spins back to the courts.

Faheema frowns. Scans for the Columbia coach--

Instead, she spots her father entering the school...

Faheema's gaze narrows.

INT. BEBE'S OFFICE - DAY

Faheema enters Bebe's office--

FAHEEMA
 Hey Dad. Do you have a second?

Bebe turns from pouring a GLASS OF BOURBON.

Omar looks up from his phone--

OMAR
 Faheema? You should be with Caroline.

RICH (O.S.)
 Knock. Knock.

The Prince Representative, RICH (38), is at the door.

Fitted suit and a frat boy grin. Guilty of man spreading.

Bebe lights up--

BEBE
 RICHIE!

RICH
 There he is!

BEBE
 Get your ass in here--

RICH
 (stepping in)
 Still working that skin cancer tan?

BEBE
 Everyday baby. Here, this is Omar--

OMAR
 Faheema's father.

RICH
 Pleasure--

OMAR
Thanks for coming down short notice--

RICH
Of course, of course. And what a surprise! The star herself--

FAHEEMA
--Hello--

OMAR
Faheema was just on her way to warm up actually.

RICH
Oh. Bummer--

BEBE
You'll catch her soon.

FAHEEMA
I could sit in?

Bebe and Omar exchange looks.

RICH
Why the hell not?! Pull up a chair.

Bebe's face tightens.

Rich smiles, sitting on the couch--

RICH (cont'd)
Incredible win the other day.

Faheema nods, dragging over an armchair.

RICH (cont'd)
We didn't pursue Cici till after she won the Girls 18's Nationals but, by then, Wilson had already snatched her up. We learned our lesson. We want to catch Faheema before she goes big--

BEBE
Cut to it Rich. Ninety thousand?

Omar and Faheema share a glance.

RICH
(swirling his bourbon)
Bebe, you bulldog. I haven't even tried the Bookers yet.

BEBE

You didn't fly all the way here just to sample my whiskey collection--

RICH

No, the main attraction--
 (gestures to Faheema)
 We're serious about Faheema but we need to make sure she's serious too.

A pregnant pause.

Faheema swallows.

RICH (cont'd)

The Tour is a long term commitment. We have to see if she's got legs.

BEBE

Say no more! Faheema's the real deal. She's stoked to take the next step.

Faheema shifts.

OMAR

Yes but the um... the numbers--
 (leaning in)
 We'd need to clear a hundred thousand a year to cover the coaching expenses and travel. Possibly one-twenty five.

RICH

Omar, Omar. My man. We'll get into the weeds soon. Trust me, at Prince we don't just sponsor the player. We sponsor the story. An eleven year old immigrant leaving her family to pursue dreams in America... Well, that's one hell of a yarn. Besides--
 (downs his bourbon)
 Diversity is hot right now.

Faheema blinks.

Rich lifts a finger--

RICH (cont'd)

Plus, we need a player that has the figure to flatter our core promotion.

Rich pulls a sleek TENNIS DRESS from his bag. Lays it out.

Black and yellow. The Prince Logo imprinted. Fine material.

RICH (cont'd)
Hits the market in 2022. Isn't she a
beaut? She'll fly off the rack--

BEBE
Gorgeous.

OMAR
Very nice.

RICH
(to Faheema)
What do you think? You like it?

Faheema adjusts--

She stares down at the dress, afraid to make eye contact--

FAHEEMA
How many... um, sorry -- how often do
your players push past the ITF tour?
Or, I guess, make it to the Premiers?

Bebe chokes. Omar shifts.

Rich cocks his head--

RICH
Well. I don't have the exact numbers.
(purses his lips)
But we do pride ourselves on picking
athletes we think have the grit to
grind it out to the top of the tour.

There's a question buried in Rich's statement.

Faheema wears apprehension.

Bebe stands--

BEBE
Rich! Do you need the little boy's
room? You downed a whole glass there.
(points; encouraging)
Outside, down the hall. On the left.

Rich nods, rising to his feet--

Something is amiss.

AS SOON AS THE DOOR CLOSES BEHIND HIM--

Omar and Bebe bombard Faheema--

OMAR
What are you doing??

BEBE

Only five players in the top 200 ever played collegiate. It's a dead end.

FAHEEMA

(tears welling)

I was just asking--

BEBE

You pull the trigger this summer or you flush the past five years of junior dominance down the drain.

Faheema is struggling to hold her emotion back.

OMAR

What's wrong? This is what we've worked for? What we sacrificed for.

Faheema fully breaks, TEARS streaming down.

BEBE

Christ.

FOOTSTEPS outside the door--

Bebe hastily throws his SUNGLASSES over Faheema's red eyes.

Rich pauses in the door frame...

Faheema sits silent; the Oakleys hiding her puffy face...

BEBE (cont'd)

Rich! ...Faheema was **just** saying how she wanted to get down to the courts.

Faheema sits still. A statue.

RICH

Oh...fantastic. Why doesn't she give the dress a whirl? See how it feels.

OMAR

Great idea! We'll let her change...

Omar and Bebe join Rich at the door--

Bebe shoots Faheema a firm look as the men leave the room...

EXT. CENTRAL COURTS - DAY

Faheema slogs onto the courts wearing the PRINCE DRESS--

A branded commodity...

The seniors shoot jealous glances Faheema's way...

The scouts reorient, eager to watch...

But, upon seeing her wardrobe, they turn away--

Off the market.

Faheema digests this--

Her future solidifying with every passing second.

DENNIS

(spotting Faheema)

There she is. Center court, let's go!

Caroline waits on center, impatient.

Just off court, Omar, Bebe, and Rich settle in high-tops.

Faheema takes in all the judgment, annoyance, and pressure; a hundred eyes on her as she CROUCHES ON THE BASELINE--

CAROLINE

Love all.

Caroline ROCKETS A SERVE! Faheema flails for it. MISSES.

Her head's not in it.

Faheema sets again--

WHOOSH! She gets her racket there but her ball SAILS OUT...

Rich EXCHANGES GLANCES with Bebe.

An ace from Caroline! A ball in the net from Faheema!

Caroline lacks the technical prowess of Faheema's game--

But there's something else there. Something different--

A burning edge to impress.

Caroline hits a winner! 40-0. GAME.

Faheema closes her eyes...

When she reopens them it's ALMOST LIKE TIME SLOWS DOWN...

The collegiate scouts chat, facing the other direction...

Omar and Bebe negotiate with Rich as he states his case...

Faheema swallows--

Her options are thinning. She's trapped in a corner.

She needs to buy herself time. She needs to do **something**.

Caroline bumps into her--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Stop being a pushover and get with
the program. You look like shit.

Faheema's eyes narrow--

FAHEEMA
I'm not a pushover.

CAROLINE
Then prove it.

Caroline heads to her baseline.

Faheema GLARES AFTER HER, a target for her building rage...

She looks from Caroline to the men, an idea forming...

CUT TO--

Faheema CROUCHES INTO FRAME--

Her EYES ARE LOCKED on Caroline, sharp as daggers.

Faheema wallops the ball! SMACK!

Caroline retaliates with a cross court backhand!

Faheema, then Caroline, back to Faheema!

Caroline procures a SHARP OVERHEAD!

PICKED UP BY A LIGHTNING FAST FAHEEMA--

Caroline spins to get it!

Faheema rushes in JUST AS Caroline sends the ball back--

Right where Faheema is -- SHE ATTACKS! A VOLLEY WINNER!

Bebe's eyes widen.

Rich sits up straight.

Faheema senses her opportunity--

She plows toward the men--

Summoning courage. Words tumbling out--

FAHEEMA
What's the offer at?

Omar blinks. Bebe shifts.

Rich is caught off guard--

RICH
(looking to Bebe)
Well. Um... Prince is excited to sign
you on eighty a year for three years.

Faheema adjusts, her disappointment evident--

FAHEEMA
And if I had one more big win??
(off Rich; to Bebe)
Nationals is before the NCAA Signing
Day and is only nine weeks from now.

Bebe waves his hands in protest--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
Players who win the 18's Title get
way more attention and press--

BEBE
--No, no, the top seed at Nationals
takes the Wild Card for the US Open--

FAHEEMA
Exactly. An underdog in a Grand Slam.
Shouldn't we wait till at least then?

Silence...

Faheema shifts... Her Hail Mary seemingly a bust...

Rich sizes Faheema up... Then--

HE LAUGHS--

RICH
Like teacher, like student huh Bebe?
(slaps Bebe's back)
Not the business strategy we had in
mind, but I respect the bold play...

Faheema exhales.

BEBE
(blubbering)
But Rich?? Our current contract is so close. She could get sick. Injured--

RICH
If she doesn't want what's on the table, this is the only way to get the big wigs to commit more upfront.

Rich turns to Omar. Extends a hand--

RICH (cont'd)
Ninety-five signing and one-fifty a year *if* she lands the US Wild Card.

Faheema's eyes widen...

Omar is speechless.

BEBE
She's worth at least half that now. There's no need to wait that long--

RICH
September.

Omar hesitates, unsure.

Faheema steps in front of her dad. SHAKES RICH'S HAND--

FAHEEMA
September.

INT. BEBE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bebe throws a stress ball--

BEBE
The hell was that about??

Faheema stands in front of Bebe, getting chewed out.

BEBE (cont'd)
Low deals are par for the course when you're on the rise. Now you've gone and laid it all on the line!

FAHEEMA
Yeah. But. For the best contract--

BEBE

IF we follow through. Nationals is
the linchpin and we can't disappoint.

Bebe shoves A CALENDAR over to Faheema--

BEBE (cont'd)

You and Caroline's new schedule.

Faheema examines JULY and AUGUST, filled morning to night.

Her expression plummets. A twist of the knife.

FAHEEMA

But... this is *double* the court time?

BEBE

It's pedal to the metal. We need to
find a new coach who can get you two
over the finish line for Nationals.

Faheema's face twitches--

Her victory, backfiring. Her control, slipping away.

BEBE (cont'd)

(waving her off)

Go hit with Werber. Trust in Bebe.

INT. ROTUNDA - DUSK

Faheema descends the stairs, racket in-hand--

Her pace, sluggish. Her mood, sullen.

A grueling end to a grueling day...

The lobby, quiet... Everyone else, retired for the night...

Caroline stands at attention, waiting.

Faheema and Caroline take each other in--

A loaded beat...

Shoulder to shoulder, the girls turn toward the courts--

Not friends, but bound together by skill...

WE CUT TO BLACK--

AN ALARM CLOCK BLARES--

INT / EXT. ACADEMY - VARIOUS

MORNING ALREADY, Faheema groans in bed--

She PULLLLLLLS herself up AND WE ARE PULLLLLLLED up with her.

Faheema stays in the CENTER OF FRAME AS--

WE INTERCUT VARIOUS LOCATIONS--

IN FAHEEMA'S SHOWER

Water drips down Faheema's expressionless face.

KNOCK KNOCK--

CAROLINE (O.S.)
(impatient)
Hurry up Faheema. We're late!

IN THE CAFETERIA

Faheema sits stationary, her breakfast untouched.

Caroline sits down next to her--

CAROLINE
That much cereal will slow you down.

ON THE COURTS

A tennis ball soars past Faheema--

CAROLINE (O.S.)
Faheema!

WE WHIP AWAY FROM FAHEEMA--

TO CAROLINE, ANNOYED AT THE NET--

CAROLINE
Wake up and move your feet.

Faheema glowers--

She squats down for a return of serve--

WE MATCH CUT TO:

INT. DORM BATHROOM - DAY

Faheema squats on the toilet with her phone--

She scrolls down CAROLINE'S INSTAGRAM PAGE--
 Junior Tournaments. Tennis action shots.
 Faheema selects a photo of Caroline clenching her fist--
 A determined, uncompromising expression.
 Faheema narrows her eyes--
This bitch.

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Faheema steps out of the bathroom--
 Lindsey looks up from her bed--

LINDSEY
 I wouldn't scroll and shit. You'll
 get hemorrhoids sitting that long.

FAHEEMA
 (eyes darting)
 Oh. Thanks...

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR--

Caroline's MUFFLED VOICE coming through--

CAROLINE (O.S.)
 Meet on the courts in ten.

Faheema is triggered--

FAHEEMA
 (insulted)
 It's free time.

CAROLINE (O.S.)
And?

FAHEEMA
 We'll hit this afternoon.

Caroline sighs, exasperated--

Her footsteps retreat...

Faheema exhales. Rubs her head.

Lindsey crosses the 'No Man's Land' between their beds--

LINDSEY
 Hey. Remember the thong prank we
 pegged on the French girl last year?

FAHEEMA
 (adjusts)
 Uh... Kind of.

LINDSEY
 Beth and I have a few ideas for the
 new girl but need insider info on
 Joanne's office... You in?

Faheema inhales, considering...

INT. ROTUNDA - NIGHT

Lindsey, Beth, and Faheema crouch OUTSIDE JOANNE'S OFFICE--
A covert operation.

Lindsey bends a METAL CLOTHES HANGER into a HOOKED WIRE--
 She sticks it under the door. Catches the lock!
 A satisfying CLICK.

INT. JOANNE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A HELLO KITTY STATUETTE is lifted to reveal A KEY RING.
 Lindsey snatches it. Inserts the key in Bebe's door.
 CREAK! Devilish grins all around.
 Lindsey passes the key to Beth. Whispers--

LINDSEY
 Slide it under Caroline's door.

Lindsey hands Faheema A GARBAGE BAG--

LINDSEY (cont'd)
 After you...

Faheema surveys Bebe's office with brimming mischief...

EXT. TROUST ACADEMY - MORNING

ABOVE THE Academy--

A light fog lingers. The crack of dawn.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
All girls to Center Court now!

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Faheema blinks awake--

INTERCOM (V.O.)
All girls report to Center Court.

Faheema and Lindsey groggily sit up.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Bebe steps onto the court, solemn.

He slowly removes his sunglasses--

This is monumental.

As if the President in the Rose Garden.

Bebe lifts a DILDO into frame--

A big, veiny, floppy, dildo.

BEBE
Whoever did this come forward.

REVEAL the ENTIRE STUDENT BODY in the bleachers.

Waves of SNICKERS go around--

BEBE (cont'd)
WHO DID THIS!?

Bebe accentuates his anger by lifting his arm--

The dildo flops around, a free agent in the wind.

The girls can barely contain their BELLY BURSTING LAUGHTER.

BEBE (cont'd)
I built a tennis empire here for you
and what do I get? Cocks. Cocks in my
trophy display. My fucking fish tank!

Bebe pulls ANOTHER DILDO from a BOX AT HIS FEET--

He's trying to show the sheer magnitude of his bad morning but it's having the opposite effect--

CHUCKLES spread like wildfire.

Faheema leans forward--

Just able to see Caroline downloading this absurd scene.

BEBE (cont'd)
Tennis is a sport for gentlemen. It's
a sport for ladies. If I wanted
hooligans I'd go to the soccer pitch.
(the edge of sanity)
Someone is getting expelled for this!

A HUSH descends upon the crowd.

JOANNE (O.S.)
Mr. Troust!

Joanne stands on the edge of the court.

She realizes she spoke too soon. All eyes on her.

Joanne attempts to walk briskly to Bebe--

But in heels it takes a.... long.... time...

She reaches Bebe. Whispers in his ear--

BEBE
(head snapping up)
Caroline! With me.

Everyone turns to Caroline. Ooooooo.

INT. RECREATION ROOM - DAY

Faheema stares at the ceiling, guilt creeping up on her...

The door swings open! Joanne, irked--

JOANNE
Faheema.

Faheema stiffens.

INT. ROTUNDA - DAY

Faheema trails Joanne through the rotunda--

Her head hung... A dog with its tail between its legs...
 Joanne opens the door to her office and CAROLINE WALKS OUT--
 TIME SLOWS AS HER AND FAHEEMA PASS ONE ANOTHER--
 THEIR EYES LOCK--
 Caroline, smug and vengeful--
 Faheema, gulping and anxious--
 The door closes.

INT. JOANNE / BEBE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Joanne leads Faheema through her office to BEBE'S DOOR--
 But his doorknob has been REPLACED BY A DILDO.
 It's opened from the other side by an irate Bebe!

 BEBE
 (pulling Faheema in)
 Tell me this shit wasn't you?!

Faheema looks to her feet.

Bebe paces--

 BEBE (cont'd)
 Caroline heard **your** voice after
 someone slid *my* key under her door.

Faheema's lip twitches.

 BEBE (cont'd)
 How much have I done for you here
 Faheema?! I deserve an answer.

Faheema is boiling--

A rage building inside of her.

 BEBE (cont'd)
 (a martyr)
 I deserve some *respect*.

Faheema's on her last straw.

 BEBE (cont'd)
Well??

FAHEEMA
 (blurting)
 It's not working!!

Bebe blinks.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
 Ten hours a day, seven days a week.
 If this is how you treat your best
 player then fine, fucking expel me!

Bebe looks positively speechless.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
 I'm the only player here to ever win
 the Lowcountry Classic but the way
 you ride me into the ground, it's
 like I couldn't play to save my life!

Bebe is stunned.

Faheema exhales--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
 I can't take the Wild Card at
 Nationals if I'm burned out before I
 show up. I need my Fridays cleared.
 (folding her arms)
 Do it my way and I'll get us there...

Bebe narrows his eyes, sizing Faheema up...

Then, A SMILE CRACKS across his face--

This is his love language.

BEBE
 We may snag that Prince deal yet--
 (claps his hands)
 Alright, deal. Get out of here.

INT. ROTUNDA - DAY

Faheema paces out into the lobby, standing taller.

INT. GYM - DAY

Faheema struts past exercise machines--

Zeroing in on Caroline as she sprints on a treadmill.

Faheema saddles up to the machine directly across from her.

Caroline's eyes narrow--

Faheema returns her look with a challenging stare...

Activating her treadmill and TURNING UP THE SPEED--

A TECHNO CUE CARRIES US TO--

INT / EXT - ACADEMY VARIOUS

ON THE COURTS

- Faheema sails through the air to attack a shot.

- Caroline watches the winner fly by!

IN THE CAFETERIA

- Joanne brings Faheema a WRAPPED BAG from a restaurant.

IN THE SCHOOL

- Faheema takes notes as Mr. Burgess lectures.

IN THE WEIGHT ROOM

- Faheema and Caroline throw weighted balls at the wall.

IN THE CAFETERIA

- Faheema stands at a podium, practicing a debate speech.

IN THE GYM

- Faheema surpasses Caroline on the ladders.

ON THE COURTS

- Faheema slides for a backhand volley, hitting a WINNER.

INT. ROTUNDA - DAY

CLOSE ON A CATERED MEAL--

Poached Salmon on a bed of quinoa. A cranberry kale salad.

WE REVERSE ON FAHEEMA sitting in the sill of a HUGE WINDOW--

In plain clothes, she settles in with her food and a book.

Relaxed. Content.

Bebe ENTERS--

BEBE
Faheema, go change.

Faheema looks up, confused--

FAHEEMA
But our deal?? I get Fridays off.

BEBE
Not today. Your new coach is starting. Just as I promised--
(letting this land)
Vanessa Ciernik.

Faheema is completely blindsided--

FAHEEMA
Vanessa Ciernik? Like. The Wimbledon champion?

BEBE
Yes. That Vanessa. Omar came to see your first session. Get moving.

Faheema is at a loss.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Faheema makes her way onto the court--

She locks eyes with Omar, settling in the stands to watch.

Faheema diverts her gaze.

Caroline skips in front of her--

CAROLINE
(eager)
Vanessa Ciernik. Can you believe it?

Faheema is taken aback by Caroline's friendly disposition--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
She came for you. How cool is that?

Faheema nods--

She must admit. It is cool.

FAHEEMA
Yeah... Yeah, it's exciting.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH from off-court.

Caroline and Faheema spin to see VANESSA CIERNIK (28)--
Tall. Commanding. A bombshell import from Eastern Europe--
Gold earrings. Snake tattoo. Black and white dress.

VANESSA
Names?

The girls stare at Vanessa as if she's a mirage in a desert.

VANESSA (cont'd)
(gestures around)
Am I talking to somebody else?

CAROLINE
Caroline.

FAHEEMA
Faheema.

VANESSA
Fa-*what*?

FAHEEMA
(soft-spoken)
Um. Faheema.

VANESSA
I can't hear you.

FAHEEMA
Faheema.

Vanessa points at Faheema--

VANESSA
Desert Storm.
(points to Caroline)
Hitler Youth.

The girls blink.

VANESSA (cont'd)
Let me make one thing perfectly
clear. I took time out of my training
schedule because Bebe promised me
'something special'.
(MORE)

VANESSA (cont'd)
I am not under contract. I do not have to be here. If I don't like what I see, I will leave this sweat stain of a state and get back to my life. Understood?

Faheema and Caroline nod.

VANESSA (cont'd)
How many girls qualify for Nationals?

Faheema and Caroline are silent.

VANESSA (cont'd)
One hundred ninety-two. Of those, only one girl, every three years, has any luck at winning a Grand Slam.
(stepping closer)
The rest burn out.

Faheema and Caroline exchange looks.

VANESSA (cont'd)
Why? Because it's not the person across the net that you'll lose to--
(looking to Faheema)
It's the person in the mirror.

Faheema swallows.

Vanessa claps her hands--

VANESSA (cont'd)
Suicides, ladies! Give me ten!

Caroline and Faheema BOLT INTO ACTION--

Dipping. Touching. Running.

Vanessa watches on, a hawk--

VANESSA (cont'd)
Great players lose to themselves when they don't know what winning *means*. More than skill, success is a frame of mind. A lifestyle. A commitment to domination on and off the court. Your talent is just the toolbox. You need the right mindset to weaponize it.

Faheema struggles to keep up with Caroline--

She falters in her reach for a line.

VANESSA (cont'd)
 This all starts with expectations;
 the most important being that winning
 won't be fun. Glory isn't out there
 waiting for you. It's something you
fight for every single day. It means
 more work. More sacrifice. Living in
 hotel rooms and surviving off
 pennies. Bebe says winning is
 publicity and champagne bottles. No--
 (shakes her head)
 Winning is survival.

Vanessa pulls over a FOLDING CHAIR--

Takes a seat. Crosses her legs--

VANESSA (cont'd)
 Come here!

Faheema and Caroline jog over to Vanessa.

The girls struggle to remain standing, BREATHING IN BURSTS.

VANESSA (cont'd)
 Bebe trains you for your strokes but
 you're with me to win. If winning is
 survival, how do you survive a match?

Faheema's eyes dart. Caroline offers--

CAROLINE
 By finding our opponent's weaknesses.

Vanessa nods--

VANESSA
 Black girl with the cherry earrings?

CAROLINE
 Her second serve is shit.

VANESSA
 And the Brazilian?

CAROLINE
 Inconsistent backhand.

Faheema narrows her eyes.

VANESSA
 (turning to Faheema)
 Mousy, British girl?

CAROLINE
She has a--

VANESSA
(eyes on Faheema)
Desert Storm?

Faheema looks to the ground, uncomfortable.

FAHEEMA
(clears throat)
...She's too slow.

Vanessa unsheathes her racket--

VANESSA
Storm, to the opposite side. Hitler,
call out any weaknesses.

Caroline steps off court, standing just beside the net.

Faheema rushes to take position on the opposite side.

VANESSA (cont'd)
(to Caroline)
Whatever you see.

Vanessa serves a fireball! Faheema misses.

CAROLINE
Wasn't at the ball in time.

Faheema settles back on the baseline as Vanessa attacks!

Faheema returns but Vanessa CUTS A DIAGONAL STROKE!

Faheema flails!

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Not moving her legs.

Faheema looks to the sky, embarrassed.

VANESSA
She's only saying what you're already
thinking Storm. Focus. Look for mine!

CUT TO--

Faheema stumbles. Frames a ball.

CAROLINE
Poor reach.

CUT TO--

Faheema hits a backhand out of bounds.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Didn't see the ball.

CUT TO--

Faheema gives up on a shot, eyes watering.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Stamina isn't in good form--

FAHEEMA
SHUT. UP. Just shut up!

If she wasn't crying, Faheema's look could kill.

Caroline opens her mouth but Vanessa raises a hand--

VANESSA
(calm; collected)
Caroline saw what I saw. That's what
I took advantage of. That's tennis.

Faheema wipes her face, shaken--

She's never been called out like this before.

VANESSA (cont'd)
Ten minute break.

Faheema meets the disappointed gaze of her father.

INT. ROTUNDA - DAY

Faheema paces into the corner of the lobby--

She rips off her wristband! Throws it against the wall!

OMAR (O.S.)
Faheema?

Faheema turns to see her father approaching--

OMAR
What are you doing in here?

FAHEEMA
(hostile)
Can I get **five minutes** to myself??

Omar blinks, confused--

OMAR
What's gotten into you?

Faheema shoots him a glare.

Starts walking away--

OMAR (cont'd)
Hey. Don't turn away from me--

FAHEEMA
(not stopping)
You're free to leave, Dad. I'm not.

OMAR
Faheema--

Faheema keeps walking, the distance growing wider and wider.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Faheema storms back out onto the court--

Vanessa checks her watch.

Faheema snatches her racket, proceeding to court-side.

VANESSA
Where are you going?

Faheema pauses--

She looks to Caroline. To Vanessa.

FAHEEMA
Aren't we switching this up? It's
Caroline's turn.

VANESSA
It's Caroline's turn when I say so.

Faheema blinks.

FAHEEMA
(over this)
Yeah. Um, right.

Faheema starts to redirect course--

VANESSA
 No. Stay.
 (addressing Caroline)
 Main weakness?

CAROLINE
 What?

Vanessa gestures at Faheema.

Faheema frowns, confused.

Caroline looks to Faheema. Back to Vanessa--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 (eyes darting)
 I don't understand...

VANESSA
 Main. Weakness.

FAHEEMA
 But I'm not even playing--

VANESSA
 Oh, thanks for informing me--

CAROLINE
 What am I looking for??

VANESSA
Caroline.

CAROLINE
 I don't know--

FAHEEMA
 I didn't do anything--

VANESSA
CAROLINE!

CAROLINE
She doesn't care!

It lands like a bomb.

Vanessa nods.

Faheema stammers--

FAHEEMA
 No, that's...that's not true--

VANESSA
 Late. Contentious. Emotional.

FAHEEMA
I didn't--I mean, I don't--

VANESSA
Why should I show up if you don't?

Faheema's eyes water.

VANESSA (cont'd)
Pull it together or I will leave. And
with me, your only shot at Nationals.
(final)
Consider that your warning.

Faheema swallows.

Vanessa grabs her tennis bag--

VANESSA (cont'd)
We'll reconvene tomorrow.

CAROLINE
But we only just started--

VANESSA
Tomorrow.

Vanessa heads off the court.

Faheema meets Caroline's disappointed gaze.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - DAY

Faheema collapses on the toilet--

A sniffing wreck...

CREAK... The restroom door opens...

A pair of Nike sneakers approach Faheema's stall door--

Caroline.

Faheema buries her head into her knees...

OUTSIDE THE STALL--

Caroline fidgets--

CAROLINE
My parents only gave me a year...

Caroline looks to the ceiling.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
One more year to get ranked...
(voice strained)
Otherwise, they pull the money and I
have to choose between med or law.

INSIDE THE STALL--

Faheema listens, struck by the honesty...

OUTSIDE THE STALL--

Caroline exhales--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Look... I'll only get an opportunity
like Vanessa Ciernik through you. If
you drive her away, I won't make it.

Caroline swallows, apologetic--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
I know you're tired of being used but
that's the truth. You're owed that...

Silence from the stall.

Then--

A click on the latch.

The stall door swings open to a disheveled Faheema--

A puffy face. Red eyes. Matted ponytail.

Faheema stares past Caroline toward her own reflection--

A girl, dispirited.

Caroline steps toward her--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
You're great at this Faheema.

Faheema meets Caroline's gaze--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
You've got pride in that. You enjoy
being special. Don't let this shitty
lifestyle take that away.

Faheema blinks.

Caroline backs away... Pauses at the door--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 You don't have to like it...
 (supportive)
 You just have to own it.

Caroline exits.

Faheema ponders this...

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

A blinking cursor.

It sits at the end of an incomplete sentence...

REVERSE ON FAHEEMA--

She stares at the Columbia application on her laptop, torn--

The cursor, mocking her.

Faheema glances up to a CALENDAR--

A date X'd out for NATIONALS in late August -- a month away.

Peeking out behind it all, A PHOTO OF FAHEEMA AS A PRE-TEEN:

She beams with a tennis racket. Exuberant and silly.

Faheema exhales.

THWOP! THWOP!

Faheema turns to the window--

Caroline is on Center Court alone, practicing serves.

There's not a single other soul out there...

Faheema can't pry her gaze away--

A MAGNETIC PULL...

EXT. CENTER COURT - NIGHT

Faheema emerges in her tennis dress--

A steadfastness to her gait. A soldier embracing their duty.

Caroline looks up surprised.

Faheema sets down her bag. Pulls up her hair--

But Caroline moves over, motioning her to stop--

Faheema adjusts...

Caroline starts separating Faheema's hair into two long locks--

Over and over, deftly braiding Faheema's hair--

Reaching the bottom and securing her work with a hair tie.

Faheema is styled after Caroline's signature FRENCH BRAID--

She appears strikingly different.

Caroline holds up a pocket folding mirror--

Faheema appraises her reflection...

Caroline's style looks great on her.

DRUMS BUILD, CARRYING TO--

INT / EXT. ACADEMY VARIOUS

ON THE COURTS--

FAHEEMA'S FEET -- faster than ever --

FAHEEMA'S EYES -- focused and present --

FAHEEMA'S BRAID -- bouncing with her movement!

IN THE DORM--

Faheema watches OLD CLIPS OF VANESSA'S MATCHES--

Vanessa is SCREAMING at the Umpire!

ON THE COURTS--

WE'RE IN SLOW MOTION--

Vanessa screams in real life, spit flying!

Beads of sweat soar from Faheema's face--

Two loose strands of hair bounce off Caroline's forehead.

WE SPEED RAMP BACK TO NORMAL--

The ball is a bullet, shooting back and forth!

IN THE GYM--

Faheema does rapid jump ropes.

IN THE BATHROOM--

Faheema examines her feet, covered in BLOODY BLISTERS.

ON THE COURTS--

WE TIME-LAPSE THROUGH THE DAY--

Clouds roll in. People come and go. The light changes.

But there is one NONSTOP CONSTANT--

Morning to night, Faheema and Caroline are out on center.

Faheema hits a gorgeous volley winner!

A TRUE VICTOR'S SCREAM!

Charged. Passionate. Emotional.

A dormant energy, now awoken. Present and dangerous.

SMASH TO BLACK--

INT. DORM HALL - MORNING

Faheema ties her sneakers in the hall--

BEBE (O.S.)

Nassar! Keep your phone close!

Faheema looks up, caught off guard--

Bebe approaches. Slaps her shoulder--

BEBE

The WTA re-ranks today. Your win from Charleston will be calculated in!

(waddling off)

Serious business.

Faheema blinks.

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - DAY

Faheema taps her pencil, zoned out...

THE BELL RINGS!

CUT TO--

Faheema grabs her bag. Her books.

She pivots directly into--

MR. BURGESS
Did you read the team's notes?

Faheema is blank.

MR. BURGESS (cont'd)
(adjusts)
For the debate speech?

RINGGG! Faheema's CELL PHONE.

FAHEEMA
Sorry. One sec'.

Faheema fumbles in her bag; lifting her phone to her ear--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
Hello?

LOW MURMURING.

MURMURING intensifies--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
Yes. Thank you.

Faheema hangs up in disbelief--

She looks to Mr. Burgess--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
I'm 277th in the world...

Mr. Burgess inhales.

Faheema stares out into space.

INT. VAN - DAY

Faheema leans against the van window--

Lost in her musings...

Unsure how to process the news...

Faheema sits back. Shakes off her funk.

A hint of pride creeping into Faheema's face...

INT. DORM ROOM - DAY

Faheema, now in her tennis dress, pulls on some socks.

Caroline pops her head into the dorm--

CAROLINE
Pretty good rank for one future.

Faheema nods to Caroline. Smiles.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
(walking in)
Who's in front of you?

FAHEEMA
I got the list up on my desk--

Faheema points to her OPEN LAPTOP--

Caroline walks over. Taps the track pad.

The computer wakes up to the online COLUMBIA APPLICATION.

Caroline's eyes dart. Leans in--

But Faheema quickly elbows over, CLOSING THE WINDOW--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
Sorry, nevermind that.

Caroline's gaze lingers on the screen, confused.

Faheema grabs her bag, flustered--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
Let's go, we'll be late.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Vanessa and Caroline are in the midst of a point--

Caroline runs back and forth, red in the face--

She gets to the ball but TANKS HER RETURN in the net.

CAROLINE

Fuck.

VANESSA

If you don't fight the voice in your head now, how will you beat it later?

Caroline retreats, winded--

VANESSA (cont'd)

One unforced error becomes ten. One lost game becomes the match. Get it under control. Your mistakes can't be corrected by despair or punishment.

Vanessa walks off court, motioning Faheema out.

Faheema takes Vanessa's place.

Caroline wipes sweat from her face.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Caroline's serve. Focus on ending each point as quickly as you can. Attack, attack, attack. Let's go!

Caroline wastes no time. She tosses--

Connects for a BIG SERVE!

Faheema returns with a wicked down-the-line shot!

Caroline plows the ball cross court--

BUT IT GOES OUT.

Caroline stares at where her shot betrayed her...

VANESSA (cont'd)

You have to catch her wrong-footed Caroline! Read her body! See that!

Caroline mutters to herself--

She prepares for another service, when--

BEBE (O.S.)

277! Higher than I thought!

The girls turn to see Bebe approaching--

BEBE
That's some shit we can work with!
Troust's soon-to-be first Pro!

Faheema allows herself a smile.

Caroline straightens, annoyed--

CAROLINE
(a hungry predator)
We're in the middle of something.

Bebe waves, apologetic.

Caroline stalks the baseline.

Faheema spins her racket--

CUT TO--

Neck and neck, the two girls rally in the THROES OF A POINT.

Faheema hits a gorgeous forehand!

Caroline misses.

Angry, Caroline swings her racket into her shin.

Hard.

It leaves a nasty red splotch of self punishment.

CUT TO--

Faheema ACES Caroline--

A confidence in Faheema's game hardly seen before.

Caroline GROANS!

She swings another vicious penance at her leg! FIRE RED NOW.

Faheema stalls, her eyes lingering on Caroline's calf...

Caroline grits her teeth--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
(rabid)
Let's go!

Faheema shakes her head. Sets back up.

CUT TO--

WHOOSH! Faheema's ball rockets deep into the service box!

Caroline FLUBS IT!

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 (yells at the ground)
 FUCK!

CAROLINE HITS HER FACE WITH THE RACKET!

Blood streams from her eye!

VANESSA
 Caroline!

Caroline's temple is ripped open--

BLOOD POURS DOWN HER FACE.

But she still resets for the next point, SHOUTING--

CAROLINE
 Serve it out Faheema!

Faheema is frozen where she stands.

VANESSA
 You need to see the trainer--

CAROLINE
 I'M FINE!

VANESSA
 Caroline. **NOW!**

Caroline storms off the court, scowling--

Blood smeared across her nose and cheek.

Faheema is rocked by the sight.

Caroline seems dangerously deranged.

Vanessa hurries after, helping Caroline with the door.

Faheema stands alone on the court--

The sun beating down on her shoulders...

EXT. ACADEMY - VARIOUS

Street lights buzz to life...

Broken sprinklers spray on the sidewalk.

An egret struts across the parking lot.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Faheema lays awake in her bed.

Wide-eyed. Impacted.

LATER--

Faheema is asleep in bed.

The door bursts open, Lindsey falling in!!

LINDSEY

Wasssssssup--

Faheema covers her eyes at the light--

Lindsey stumbles over, grabbing for Faheema's cheeks--

LINDSEY (cont'd)

Oooo. Oooo. Ahh!

Faheema swats Lindsey's hands away--

Lindsey laughs, doubling down--

Faheema shoves her into the dresser! Jumps out of bed--

FAHEEMA

Fucking **loser**.

INT. DORM HALL - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK--

Faheema stands outside Caroline's door holding her pillow, travel bag, and a backpack.

Caroline groggily opens the door--

A BLACK AND BLUE BRUISE marring her temple...

Lindsey's drunken laughing can be heard down the hall.

Faheema makes an apologetic face.

Caroline nods and widens her door--

Faheema shuffles in.

INT. MASTER SUITE - DAY

The crack of dawn--

Caroline is still asleep in bed.

Faheema is up, quietly putting on jeans and a t-shirt.

She grabs her travel bag--

Throws her hair up. Wraps her head in a HIJAB--

Turns to grab her laptop but spots a TAB OPEN--

Her COLUMBIA APPLICATION.

Faheema's gaze lingers for a second...

She closes her laptop. LEAVES IT ON THE FUTON--

INT. OMAR'S CAR / FREEWAY - DAY

Omar and Faheema cruise down I-95--

He wears a suit, eyes on the road.

Faheema too, is lost in thought.

In this moment you can see the resemblance between them.

OMAR

Don't tell the others that you've
been eating. I'm sure they know but
no need to bring it up.

Faheema nods.

FAHEEMA

You saw the ranking?

OMAR

(nods)

We're close. Keep your eyes trained
on Nationals next week. This is it...

Faheema looks out the window--

Their van merges onto an EXIT RAMP.

An AMERICAN FLAG flaps in the wind above a Waffle House.

INT. OMAR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A cheap apartment--

A gathering of MIDDLE-EASTERN FAMILIES sit around a swath of decorated FOLDING TABLES. Baklava, paneer fritters, and dates are plated next to 'American' food -- potatoes, beans.

The end of Ramadan feast. Eid al-Fitr.

The families are on their last TAKBEER of the EID PRAYER--

ATTENDEES
La ilaha illa akba--

Faheema attempts to mutter along--

She can't quite remember the words.

CUT TO--

Later in the dinner.

Faheema is sandwiched between different conversations--

Across from her is NAJJI (17), growing patchy facial hair--

NAJJI
--And I'm number two on my Varsity
Team. Top server of all the seniors.

Faheema raises an eyebrow.

Najji speaks to Omar but his gaze keeps darting to Faheema--

NAJJI (cont'd)
Coach says if I keep it up I could
really be something. Dad thinks I
should extend my play. Maybe a top
Junior tournament--

Faheema snorts.

Najji's eyes dart.

NAJJI (cont'd)
(shifts)
Oh. Um. If you have any tips I'd--

Faheema sets down her silverware--

FAHEEMA

I've played every day of my life for the past six years. There are nearly three hundred players better than me.

(matter of fact)

It won't work out for you.

Najji adjusts, embarrassed.

Omar chews, appraising his daughter...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Faheema washes dishes.

BZZZZ! BZZZZ! Faheema's phone.

She dries her hands. Reaches into her pocket.

FAHEEMA

(answering)

Hello?

CALLER (O.S.)

Hi! Is this Faheema?

FAHEEMA

Yes?

CALLER (O.S.)

Great! So glad we got you! This is Rebecca Chau, the coach at Columbia University. Is now a good time?

Faheema's eyes dart--

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Faheema slides into the bathroom--

She glances nervously through the CRACKED DOOR--

FAHEEMA

(whispering)

Hi, I'm here--

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.)

Awesome! Faheema, I was notified by admissions that you submitted an application this morning?

Faheema mouths a silent curse--

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.) (cont'd)
 We were surprised but very excited to hear from you. Are you still thinking about Columbia as an option for 2022?
 (quick to clarify)
 No pressure of course! We just wanted to reach out to make you aware.

Faheema is paralyzed--

Her hands shake.

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.) (cont'd)
 Hello? Did I lose you?

FAHEEMA
 Sorry, right. Thank you.

A pregnant pause.

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.)
 Faheema, I'll be honest with you... We're a non-traditional choice for someone of your skill level. But, a different set of priorities demands a different path right? And our program strikes an incredible balance for sports education. One that will set you on a career path *after* tennis.

Faheema's eyes water.

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.) (cont'd)
 I'm sure you have a slew of offers that you're trying to sift through. Maybe think it over and call me back?

FAHEEMA
 OK, yeah--

COLUMBIA COACH (O.S.)
 Reach out whenever. Our door is open.

Faheema dares not speak lest her voice betray her.

She hangs up.

Faheema stares into empty space...

Her brow furrows, ANGER SETTING IN--

INT. TROUST ACADEMY / DORMITORY - DAY

Faheema power walks down the hall, pissed--

She reaches Caroline's master suite--

THROWS OPEN THE DOOR--

INT. MASTER SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Caroline is applying a new racket grip--

FAHEEMA

The hell is wrong with you??

CAROLINE

(taken aback)

Huh?

Faheema rips open HER LAPTOP on the futon--

Displays a SUBMITTED APPLICATION--

FAHEEMA

You fucking serious?? This wasn't your call. I hadn't decided yet!

Caroline shrugs.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)

If anyone finds out about this, I'm screwed! Prince would pull my deal--

CAROLINE

You mean the one you already delayed?

FAHEEMA

Excuse me??

Caroline gets up in Faheema's face--

CAROLINE

It's simple. Make up your goddamned mind or get the fuck out of the way.

FAHEEMA

You're a jealous, two-faced bitch--

CAROLINE

At least I know what I want.

CAROLINE PLOWS PAST Faheema. SLAMS the door.

Faheema furls her nose.

EXT. CENTER COURT - DAY

Faheema stomps onto center court.

Vanessa and Caroline halt a drill, surprised to see her.

FAHEEMA
I'm ready to play.

Faheema's posture radiates anger.

Vanessa studies Faheema--

VANESSA
Alright, over there--

CAROLINE
Faheema has class on Thursdays. This
is our private session.

FAHEEMA
I'm here now.

CAROLINE
--This is **my** time--

FAHEEMA
--I could beat you any day--

VANESSA
--Enough--

CAROLINE
--Let's try that again--

FAHEEMA
She should be hitting with **me**.

VANESSA
ENOUGH!

Vanessa points at Faheema--

VANESSA (cont'd)
You don't own my time Nassar--

FAHEEMA
But--

VANESSA
Twenty suicides at 2PM. Thank you.

FAHEEMA

Bullshit.

Faheema storms off.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Faheema barrels past CROWDED LUNCH TABLES--

She reaches the teacher's table where Bebe sits.

FAHEEMA

You need to talk to Vanessa.

All heads turn to watch the drama.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)

If you want to slap the words 'US
Open Qualifier' on your brochure,
you'll make Vanessa stop favoring
that brat!

The silence in the cafeteria is palpable.

Caroline enters--

Faheema rushes to the bathroom--

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Caroline is right behind Faheema--

CAROLINE

Faheema, stop--

Caroline puts out a hand to stop Faheema but it's
immediately thrown off--

Faheema's elbow propelled SQUARELY INTO CAROLINE'S NOSE!

Blood.

Caroline stumbles!

INT. BEBE'S OFFICE - DAY

Faheema sits across from a flustered Bebe.

In the background, Vanessa watches on.

Bebe lets out a deep sigh--

BEBE

Alright, hang tight. I'm going to go get Caroline's side of this.

Bebe exits.

Vanessa walks over and sits on Bebe's desk--

VANESSA

You're the most gifted player here.

Faheema meets Vanessa's gaze.

Vanessa mulls her words--

VANESSA (cont'd)

But. In this world, that's not all that matters. I think you know that.

There's a gentleness to Vanessa's tone--

A certain warmth not heard before.

VANESSA (cont'd)

A career is a marathon, not a sprint.

FAHEEMA

But my ranking is really good--

VANESSA

And how long will that last? After proving to Prince that you can earn top dollar, what will drive you then?

Faheema pinches her face.

VANESSA (cont'd)

Talent is only the entryway. You better be able to stand up to the Tour with something else. *Something* that won't burn off after a season of straight losses or an injury or months on the road. And it's not something you can learn...

(final)

It's something you choose.

Faheema's eyes dart.

VANESSA (cont'd)
 You have to look in the mirror and see only one thing -- someone who doesn't just want glory, but needs it. Is that you??

Faheema blinks.

VANESSA (cont'd)
 Faheema. Do you choose that?

Faheema is thrust out into open water--

A maelstrom of emotions.

Vanessa pats Faheema's leg--

VANESSA (cont'd)
 Take a break and figure it out.

Caroline and Bebe enter the room--

BEBE
 Since we can't seem to come to an agreement, you'll both get detention.

VANESSA
 But I'll be leaving Troust tomorrow.

Caroline looks up, confused.

Faheema struggles to hold back tears.

BEBE
 Sorry, what?

VANESSA
 I have to get back to training for the US Open. The girls will be on their own till Nationals next week.

Faheema rushes out the door, crying--

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Faheema is curled up in bed--

She watches OLD VIDEOS ON HER PHONE--

YOUNG FAHEEMA (11) hits tennis balls on a MAKESHIFT COURT; ground clay for a surface. Tape for lines. A volleyball net.

The backyard of their home.

YOUNG FAHEEMA (ON PHONE)
 (having fun)
 Do another, another! I got it!

Faheema clutches her phone, pushing out tears--

She turns to the window--

Down on the court, Caroline hits against a ball machine--

THWOP! THWOP! THWOP!

Faheema's jaw tightens--

She watches Caroline dig for each and every shot--

Faheema quivers, a rage building--

SMASH TO--

EXT. BARNE'S TENNIS CENTER - DAY

A BLUR of hair and limbs! Feet dart across a court!

Faheema comes INTO FOCUS and SLAMS A BALL on her opponent!

WE GO WIDE FOR THE CHEERS--

The court is in A PIT, buttressed by a MODERN CLUBHOUSE--

A wide veranda, full of invested onlookers. A posh affair.

**GIRL'S 18'S USTA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP
 POINT LOMA, CA
 SEMIFINAL ROUNDS**

Faheema, laden with sweat, shakes a victorious fist.

She shoots a charged glance to the clubhouse--

Caroline is prepping on the balcony.

Faheema catches her gaze--

I'm coming for you.

UMPIRE
 (into the microphone)
 Match point. Nassar.

Faheema lines back up. TOSSES!

HITS IT WITH ALL SHE'S GOT!

INT. CLUB HOUSE - DAY

Faheema sits with her foot in an ICE BATH.

A TV DISPLAYS A DIGITAL DRAW SHEET--

Four slots are left, two per each semifinal--

Faheema's name on one side. Caroline's on the other.

Faheema's name blinks, then reappears in the FINAL BRACKET--

Her last opponent, still an UNDECIDED BLANK SLOT.

Omar ENTERS and pats his daughter on the back--

His face tight from stress.

OMAR

Almost there. One more win and you
seal the deal. New York bound...

FAHEEMA

Caroline better win hers.

OMAR

In case she doesn't, we should review
the stats on Leah.

Faheema glares out the VERANDA WINDOW--

Suddenly a group of viewers stand, crowding the railing.

What's going on?

Faheema jumps to her feet--

SHE MOVES OUT THE VERANDA DOOR AND ONTO THE BALCONY--

Faheema squeezes between shoulders! Reaches the railing!

DOWN ON THE COURT--

Caroline HOBBLER, clutching her knee.

A trainer rushes out!

Faheema struggles to get a better view--

Caroline winces, hopping toward the bench.

The Umpire says a few words.

Caroline shares a tense exchange with the trainer...

She looks to the Umpire. Shakes her head.

UMPIRE
(into microphone)
Match. Leah Mazurkewitz.

Caroline collapses on the bench.

Faheema is frozen in shock--

Her opportunity for vengeance is gone.

Caroline's tears quickly turn INTO A BARRAGE--

A tidal wave of devastation.

The onlookers around Faheema begin to disperse--

But Faheema can't look anywhere else... Gripped by uncertainty. Shaken by the sight.

Caroline lays down on the bench and covers her face...

Omar places a hand on Faheema's shoulder--

OMAR
We need to prepare.

Faheema steals one last glance at Caroline...

PRE-LAP APPLAUSE--

EXT. BARNE'S TENNIS CENTER - DAY

Faheema stands on a CEREMONIAL DAIS--

The TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR at her side, holding the trophy--

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR
I give you, Ms. Nassar! Your National
champion! Your Wild Card winner!

Faheema's exhaustion morphs into pride--

At long last, a Nationals Champion.

CHEERING and APPLAUSE all around her...

TIME SLOWS DOWN as Faheema takes in all the faces--

She attempts to hoist the trophy, but her composure cracks--

Faheema can barely lift the award past her chest.

She smiles through a stream of silent tears.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE SOUNDS OF AN AIRPORT TERMINAL--

INT. TAMPA AIRPORT - MORNING

Faheema sits alone on a terminal bench--

Earbuds in, on A PHONE CALL--

BEBE (O.S.)

We've got them exactly where we want em'. Nike just put in their counter. If Prince can meet them at one-seventy a year, we'll sign at their headquarters after the tournament.

A GAGGLE OF TEEN GIRLS laugh as they pass by--

Faheema's gaze follows the carefree seniors...

BEBE (O.S.) (cont'd)

Moving and grooving Nassar! At long last, you got it done. We did it!

Faheema blinks, struck by the statement--

Mulling over those words--

FAHEEMA

(questioning)

We did it...

BEBE (O.S.)

Hurry up and get here. Your dad will have a car waiting. Bebe out!

Faheema ends the call--

She stares out into space, a lost expression settling in...

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

An airplane descends onto a tarmac, WHOOOOOSH!

In the distance, the Manhattan skyline.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Faheema descends an escalator into BAGGAGE CLAIM.

Her mother, AYALA (52), and her sister SULA (24) wait there.

They bounce in anticipation and scream when they see her.

Faheema's face transforms--

FAHEEMA

(into Sula's arms)

What are you doing here?!

SULA

Convinced Dad we needed to come!

Ayala hugs Faheema--

AYALA

Sula wanted to come to New York.

SULA

(conceding)

I wanted to come to New York.

Faheema laughs--

She takes them in, blown away.

INT. TAXI CAB / BROOKLYN BRIDGE - DAY

A TAXI PASSES OVER THE BRIDGE--

Inside, Sula gawks out at the city--

SULA

Tomorrow a few of these people just
might know who you are...

Sula squeezes Faheema's arm in excitement--

Faheema returns a meek smile.

She turns to stare out the window...

INT. THE HILTON - DAY

Faheema, Sula and Ayala enter a LAVISH HOTEL LOBBY--

Omar, Bebe, and Vanessa converse by the concierge--

OMAR

She beat Zhuo once already--

VANESSA

Yes, but on this stage, young players
can easily get overwhelmed.

Faheema walks up to the trio--

Omar, Bebe, and Vanessa turn to Faheema--

Three adults who, for better or for worse, have all pulled
Faheema's future in different directions.

FAHEEMA

Zhou Hong? She's my first match??

VANESSA

Then mine, if she beats you.

Vanessa wears the US OPEN LANYARD around her neck--

Teacher and student, now both in the same tournament.

Faheema and Vanessa share an unspoken moment...

OMAR

We have to get to the park to pick up
your credentials. I'll call a car--

INT. FLUSHING MEADOW PARK - DAY

A WIDE BALLROOM--

US OPEN REPS are in BLUE and the VOLUNTEERS, in YELLOW; all
hurrying to assist various players and coaches.

Faheema steps into THE REGISTRATION LINE--

She digests the view out the window--

THE USTA NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER.

They're HIGH ABOVE the park--

More courts than Faheema can count...

Oak trees line cobblestone trails that connect the complex, all of it peppered with tents, bars, and VIP Garden areas.

Dominating the view is ONE BEHEMOTH STADIUM -- Arthur Ashe.

Faheema's eyes are glued to it.

YELLOW SUIT
Faheema Nassar. Your badge.

Faheema turns to the registration table.

A young woman holds out a LANYARD--

A fat, official credential. Bar codes and a photo ID.

YELLOW SUIT (cont'd)
You're the Wild Card Qualifier? How old are you?

FAHEEMA
(taking the badge)
Seventeen.

The Yellow suit nods, impressed--

YELLOW SUIT
You hear that Allen? Seventeen.

Another VOLUNTEER, Allen (73), looks up.

He studies Faheema with a grandfatherly spirit--

ALLEN
You got a second?

INT. HALL OF CHAMPIONS - DAY

LIGHTS POP ON in quick succession--

A LONG METAL HALLWAY...

Faheema and Allen stand at the entrance--

ALLEN
We're not supposed to do this but I think you should see it.

Allen gestures ahead, encouraging.

Faheema steps forward--

PORTRAITS are angled out into the hall of all PAST WINNERS--

Floor to ceiling tall--

The champions captured in the throes of a point.

1978, 1979...

Faheema keeps walking--

2006, 2007...

She can see a BRIGHT LIGHT at the end of the hall...

2018, 2019...

Faheema exits and is ENGULFED IN SUNLIGHT!

She catches her breath--

ARTHUR ASHE STADIUM.

Faheema stands DOWN ON THE COURT ITSELF--

Rows upon rows of seats tower above her in intimidating scale, Faheema just a minnow at the bottom of a fish bowl.

Hallowed ground.

Faheema blinks--

The stadium is the quietest place she's been all day...

She steps out, hesitant--

Her eyes wide, imagining the potential of noise in here--

A stage where so many legends forged their place in history.

Faheema slowly spins...

Struck by the surreal nature of this moment--

She swallows--

A whirlwind of emotions hitting her all at once--

Faheema reaches out to the net for balance...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

It's late--

Sula and Ayala are conked out in their bed...

Faheema sits in an armchair, unable to sleep...

Girlish pajamas. Hair down.

In this moment, very much still a child...

Faheema looks to the window...

It's quiet.

EXT. USTA NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - DAWN

A light fog lingers...

WE'RE HIGH ABOVE THE PARK--

THE US OPEN GRAND SLAM

WEEK ONE

6:27AM

We move over the array of courts--

Floating past Arthur Ashe and Louis Armstrong stadiums--

TILTING DOWN, till we reach a THIRD STADIUM--

THE GRANDSTAND--

The court is covered in a protective GIANT GRAY TARP.

A hushed anticipation in the air...

One by one, a group of YELLOW SUITS emerge--

They line up along either side of the tarp and grab it.

In one fluid motion they run to the other side together--

REVEALING THE BRIGHT BLUE OF THE COURT UNDERNEATH--

WE MATCH CUT TO--

INT. HOTEL ROOM - VARIOUS

A SINGLE-PANE ELECTRONIC CURTAIN rises--

Faheema stands at the hotel window, silhouetted.

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS--

Faheema lays out her dress. Her uniform.

Faheema does rapid crunches. Her body.

Faheema tapes her racket grip. Her weapon.

A SERIES OF QUICK CLOSE UPS--

Water shoots from the shower head--

A sock is pulled up. A collar is straightened--

The US OPEN BADGE is donned.

WE SEE HER IN FULL--

Faheema is dressed to play.

At the mirror, she thoughtfully examines her reflection...

Faheema touches the ends of her hair--

How will she wear it?

She crosses it into a braid--

Caroline.

Faheema lets it fall.

She pulls it into a ponytail...

Her.

INT. THE HILTON - DAY

Omar taps his foot in the hallway, waiting.

Faheema emerges in full regalia--

Tennis bag on her back. US OPEN LANYARD over her chest.

Omar takes a beat...

He steps toward her, a smile spreading--

Omar's eyes start to water--

He lifts a hand to his face, silently shaking...

FAHEEMA

Baba?

Omar sinks to his knees, crying--
He tightly embraces Faheema--
Years of pent-up emotion, spilling over...
Faheema is frozen in shock.
She hugs him back.

INT. TAXI / FLUSHING MEADOW PARK - DAY

Faheema and Sula sit in the backseat of a taxi--
They pull INTO A CUL-DE-SAC, HORDES OF ATTENDEES all about--
Faheema's breathing quickens--
Her nerves catching up to her...
A US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE opens the door--

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE
Security is ready to escort you.

But Faheema doesn't budge--
She looks paralyzed.
Sula tentatively reaches out--

SULA
Faheema?

Faheema looks as though she's holding her breath...

FAHEEMA
(a whisper)
This is it isn't it?

SULA
What is?

Faheema faces her sister--

FAHEEMA
If I get out of this car... There's
no turning back...

Sula studies Faheema's conflicted face--
She gently takes Faheema's shoulders--

SULA

Faheema, this was always your dream.
You tended to it and you gave it room
to grow and it did; it grew and grew.

Faheema swallows.

SULA (cont'd)

And I get that that's strange. I get
that that's scary. Because, for the
rest of us, our dreams stay small no
matter how much we water them... But
you shouldn't be afraid. Be proud...

Faheema's eyes dart--

SULA (cont'd)

(kind; sincere)

Stand as tall as it's grown...

Faheema's eyes water.

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE

(beckoning)

Ma'm. This way please.

No more time to think. No more time to question.

Faheema reluctantly steps out into--

EXT. USTA NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A BUSTLING SCENE--

SECURITY DETAIL surrounds Faheema and leads her forward--

Her sister, ushered in the opposite direction.

Faheema turns back--

Her and Sula make eye contact for the briefest of moments--

Faheema is pulled away.

INT. THE GRANDSTAND - DAY

A CAVERNOUS STAGING ROOM--

Two concrete benches sit solitary in the room's middle.

Eerily empty. Almost sci-fi.

Surreal.

ZHUO HONG enters with her headphones on--

She is well put together. Color coordinated sneakers match her tight top, all coinciding with her sponsor, NIKE.

Faheema extends a hand--

FAHEEMA
I wanted to say good luck.

Zhuo brushes past her--

ZHUO HONG
Save it for after I beat you.

Faheema's face twists.

Another US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE enters--

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE
This way ladies.

Faheema falls in line behind Zhuo--

THEY WALK DOWN A HALLWAY.

Up ahead, sunlight becomes brighter--

CHEERING grows louder--

Faheema wipes her SWEATY HANDS.

They pause at the GATEWAY TO THE COURT--

Faheema's eyes adjust to the light--

A BALL GIRL (17) is on duty, guarding the entryway--

At attention. Rigid posture.

Faheema studies her. They're the same age.

In another world, maybe friends.

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE (cont'd)
(to Faheema)
After you.

Faheema steps out into--

EXT. THE GRANDSTAND - CONTINUOUS

A DEAFENING MADHOUSE, crammed full of PEOPLE.

Faheema tries to keep her eyes trained ahead...

Zhuo extends a perfunctory handshake to the Umpire.

Faheema follows suit, reaching up to the chair--

But her eyes look past him INTO THE CROWD--

Ayala, Omar, and Sula sit beside Bebe Troust.

Sula smiles. Omar remains serious.

Faheema's gaze roams the stadium and finds ANOTHER FACE--

CAROLINE.

Faheema blinks, paralyzed.

UMPIRE
To the service line ladies.

CUT TO THE BASELINE--

Faheema DRIBBLES the ball.

She blinks repeatedly, trying to focus--

It's strange when 4,000 people go deathly quiet.

Faheema tosses. SWINGS!

Into the net.

Faheema SETS UP AGAIN. Toss. Swing--

LINESMAN
OUT!

Double fault.

Faheema looks down embarrassed.

CUT TO--

Faheema RUSHES BACK AND FORTH! A violent rally--

A BEAUTIFUL SHOT from Zhuo--

SLO-MO ON FAHEEMA as she lets the ball soar by...

Hopeless.

SCOREBOARD: 2-0, Zhuo.

CUT TO--

Faheema plummets to the bench.

She THROWS A TOWEL over her face.

IN THE STANDS--

Omar frowns.

Caroline is impossible to read.

INTERCUT SEQUENCE--

-Members of the audience turn their heads as 'one'.

-A BALL BOY'S hand shoots up, offering a ball.

-Faheema drills a forehand!

AT THE BASELINE--

Faheema watches one of Zhuo's winners fly by--

UMPIRE

Set, Hong.

Faheema looks to the scoreboard--

Zhuo won the first set, 6-1.

A wipe-out.

Faheema assesses the sky, RAIN CLOUDS ABOVE THEM.

A shadow settling over the court...

CUT TO--

Faheema is being run all over--

She darts left. Then right--

Faheema attempts a junk shot but Zhuo reads it too well--

SHE SLAMS IT DOWN FAHEEMA'S THROAT! *Cruel.*

UMPIRE (cont'd)

Game, Hong. 3-0 in the second.

Faheema closes her eyes--

A WATER DROPLET lands on Faheema's face.

She blinks. Looks up--

The skies open! A deluge coming down--

A gift from above.

There's a mad dash across the stands as umbrellas pop open.

UMPIRE (cont'd)
Rain delay. Twenty minutes.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Faheema is led into A WIDE BOARD ROOM by a US OPEN REP.

Omar and Bebe pace inside.

OMAR
(looking up)
Finally!

US OPEN REP
The Umpire is conferring with the
officials about a four hour delay.
We'll have more information soon.

Faheema walks to the window--

SHEETS OF RAIN beat against it. A dreary scene...

WE STAY ON HER FOR THE REST OF THE SCENE AS THE MEN TALK--

BEBE (O.S.)
Faheema needs to stop letting Zhuo
dictate play. She's better than her--

OMAR (O.S.)
I know. She'll turn the match if she
can jump on Hong's second serve.

WE PUSH IN on Faheema, staring out at the storm...

BEBE (O.S.)
A fight is all we need to give Prince
some confidence... We can't afford
headlines right now about how she
isn't cut out for this stage...

WE FINISH IN A CLOSE UP on Faheema.

She watches the water pound the glass...

Faheema looks ready to scream.

EXT. USTA NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - DAY

Faheema is led to a TAXI under a SHIELD OF UMBRELLAS--

A US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE opens the door for her--

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE
Be back at 8PM.

But Faheema pauses outside the car--

Across the cul-de-sac is A TENT FOR RIDESHARE USERS.

Caroline waits there by herself.

Faheema straightens--

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE (cont'd)
Ms. Nassar?

Faheema walks out from under the umbrella cover--

US OPEN REPRESENTATIVE (cont'd)
(calling after)
Ms. Nassar?!

Faheema powers THROUGH THE DOWNPOUR--

The rain immediately drenches her. But she doesn't care--

Her eyes are trained on Caroline.

FAHEEMA
Why are you here?!?

Caroline looks up, startled.

Faheema's soaked hair drips--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
You could have watched on TV. You
could have gone to any match.

Caroline blinks--

Searching for the words--

CAROLINE
 I don't--I didn't--I hoped you
 wouldn't see me... I'm sorry--
 (struggling)
 I shouldn't have come--

FAHEEMA
So why did you??

Caroline stares at Faheema, vulnerable--
 She opens her mouth. Closes it.

CAROLINE
 (earnest)
 I wanted to be happy for you. I just
 didn't think it would hurt this much.

Faheema shifts.

Caroline is overcome with emotion--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 Forfeiting at Nationals was the end
 of the road for me. And...and I--
 (all out there)
 I didn't want to be left with
 nothing...

Faheema stares at Caroline--

The only girl who can understand her situation...

Caroline swallows--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
 I didn't want that to be goodbye.

Faheema steps forward and HUGS CAROLINE.

Caroline is stiff at first--

But then melts into her.

Faheema tightens her embrace--

FAHEEMA
 It's good to see you.

INT. HILTON - DAY

Faheema, Ayala, Sula, and Caroline enter the HOTEL ROOM--

Umbrellas are shaken and stowed.

Faheema sits on the bed, ripping off her shoes and socks.

SULA
Mom and I will get some tea.

Ayala and Sula exit.

Caroline spots Sula's HOME-MADE CHEER POSTER; a collage of photos documenting the origins of Faheema playing tennis.

CAROLINE
From back home?

FAHEEMA
Yeah... Baba made a court in the
backyard out of fishing net.

Faheema points to a photo of her jumping on Sula's back--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
That one was taken right before I
left for Troust. Six years ago...

Caroline ponders that.

CAROLINE
You've come a long way.

Faheema blinks--

A chord struck.

Tears begin to gather in her eyes.

She tries to fight it but that only brings them on stronger.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
Hey. It's OK, you'll rally back.

Faheema looks to the floor...

Burying her head in her hands.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
(reassuring)
Faheema. You're a rising star. On the
world's biggest tennis stage...

Faheema's body shakes with sobs.

Caroline adjusts--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
What is it? Tell me.

Faheema wipes her eyes--

Taking a breath. Regaining control.

FAHEEMA
Sula says she's proud that I gave
this dream room to grow. But what
choice did I have? The more I won,
the bigger all of this became and the
smaller I got. Smaller and smaller
until I couldn't see myself anymore.
(quieter)
Until this was all there was and all
I could do and now it's taken up so
much space...

Faheema shakes her head...

Caroline slowly sits down beside Faheema--

CAROLINE
Look. The people who say to 'pursue
your dreams' -- they're full of shit.

Caroline searches for words--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
If they ever tried, they'd realize
that you can never have it all. You
always have to give something up...

Caroline recalls--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
You know my mom didn't want me to try
this... didn't want me to miss out on
normal high school or prom or any of
that crap. She said, 'You want this
glory now but be careful, someday you
might just want to be happy too...'

Faheema blinks.

That cut like a knife.

FAHEEMA
What did you say back?

CAROLINE
I called her a dumb bitch.

Faheema laughs.

Caroline smiles--

CAROLINE (cont'd)

I think I texted her 'sorry' later
but yeah. What I'm trying to say is,
when we go out on the court, we go
alone. I love that about tennis.
There's nobody else but **you**.

(emphasizing)

It has to be *your* rules...

Faheema meets Caroline's gaze--

CAROLINE (cont'd)

You have to decide for yourself if
the winning is worth the losing.

Faheema ponders this.

FAHEEMA

If I decide to go the other way, how
many people will never forgive me for
giving it all up for--for--

(uncertain)

Everyone will think it's so small...

CAROLINE

Oh absolutely. But you'd prove them
wrong in the end wouldn't you?

Faheema let's this wash over her--

She wipes her face--

FAHEEMA

(sad; realizing)

I'd miss it a lot...

CAROLINE

You and me both.

Faheema takes a deep breath... Exhales...

She walks to the window...

The USTA Tennis Park is spread out like a map below...

Caroline stands and joins Faheema at the window--

The girls look out toward the Grandstand together--

A buttress on the horizon.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
How are you going to do it?

FAHEEMA
...I'm not sure.

CAROLINE
Well you can't do it hiding here.

Faheema turns--

Caroline looks over--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
You're going to have to face it.

FAHEEMA
Aren't I doing that now?

CAROLINE
No, right now you're crying.

Faheema laughs.

CAROLINE (cont'd)
You can't set your terms or end this
from a place of surrender.

FAHEEMA
I'm down one set and two games--

CAROLINE
You've had worse odds--

FAHEEMA
I'm not going to play if I can't win.

CAROLINE
And you'll never be at peace walking
away if you don't kick her ass first.

Fahemma stares at Caroline disbelieving.

Caroline is dead serious--

CAROLINE (cont'd)
If you want any shred of closure,
this is how. Whatever happens next,
either way you decide to go, you need
to be as big as this moment. That's
the only way to meet it. As a winner.

Faheema nods--

FAHEEMA
(whispers)
Either way...

CAROLINE
Your rules.

Faheema narrows her eyes--

Resolve spreads across her face.

EXT. THE GRANDSTAND - NIGHT

A COURT LIGHT turns on! PA-PUNK! Another! PA-PUNK!

WE SEE THE WHOLE STADIUM FROM ABOVE--

Packed. Floating in the night.

DOWN ON THE COURT--

Faheema moves to her bench--

The crowd continues to CHEER!

UMPIRE
Quiet please.

Faheema takes a swig of water--

She meets Zhuo's CHILLING GAZE through the Umpire's chair.

But Faheema doesn't turn away--

She stares right back, challenging--

It's on.

CUT TO--

Faheema sends a biting winner down the line!

AN ERUPTION OF CHEERS!

Omar and Bebe sit up in their seats shocked--

Caroline leans forward.

Faheema stares down the line, admiring her shot's loyalty.

Zhuo scowls.

UMPIRE (cont'd)
 Game, Nassar.
 (gestures to score)
 Four, One.

INTERCUT SEQUENCE--

- Faheema rallies against Zhuo, outpacing her.
- A linesman calls Zhuo's ball out.
- Faheema mouths a silent 'yes'.

AT THE BASELINE--

Faheema catches a ball from one of the ball girls--

UMPIRE (cont'd)
 Set point, Nassar.

Faheema takes a deep breath--

A chance for her comeback.

She bounces the ball. Up. Down. Up. Down.

IN THE STANDS--

Omar's face tightens.

Caroline leans forward--

CAROLINE
 (whispering)
 You have to go in Faheema. Go in.

AT THE BASELINE--

Faheema readies her serve. She swings!

And RUNS TO THE NET!

Zhuo returns a fast ball but Faheema volleys it!

Zhuo returns! Faheema lunges and SHANKS THE BALL--

Her shot dropping JUST OVER THE NET to win the point!

Faheema YELLS! CHEERS all around!

IN THE STANDS--

Caroline's face loosens.

Omar silently lifts his fist.

UMPIRE
Set, Nassar.

ON THE BENCH--

Faheema wipes sweat from her face--

Rinses her mouth. Tosses her towel.

She meets her father's gaze in the stands--

Omar nods, encouraged.

Faheema's face tightens--

Her family's expectations crashing back into her psyche.

UMPIRE (cont'd)
Third set. Resume play.

AT THE NET--

AN EMPTY OUT OF FOCUS SPACE. Then--

IN SLOW MOTION, a winded and sweaty Faheema ENTERS FRAME--

WE RAMP BACK TO NORMAL--

It's back and forth! Back and forth!

Cut left, hit right.

Zhuo digs for the ball--

Faheema tries for it but it's too good.

Bent over, she looks to the scoreboard--

Her lead of 40-0 changes to 40-15.

4-4 in the third.

IN THE STANDS--

Caroline's eyes wander from Faheema to Zhuo--

AT THE BASELINE--

Zhuo unleashes a WICKED SERVE! It looks like an ACE--

But Faheema goes for it! BIG MISTAKE
 Her right calf TWISTS unnaturally behind her!
 SHE DROPS OUT OF FRAME!
 GASPS from the crowd!
 Faheema holds her calf in agony. Then--
 Leaning heavily on her racket, she rises...

UMPIRE (cont'd)
 40-30, Nassar.

HESITANT APPLAUSE.

Faheema resets, wobbling into position--
 Zhuo is merciless! FIRES AWAY!
 Faheema manages a winning return--
 BUT SHE PUSHES OFF HER WEAK CALF IN THE PROCESS--
 Faheema crumbles! Her leg twisting below her!
 THE CROWD GOES SILENT.

IN THE STANDS--

Omar covers his mouth.
 Bebe's eyes widen.
 Caroline rises to her feet.

ON THE COURT--

Faheema clutches her lower leg.
 She twists onto her stomach, hands on the cement.
 Faheema looks like she might attempt to stand, but doesn't--
 The trainer begins to walk over.

IN THE STANDS--

CAROLINE
 Get up Faheema. Get. Up.

ON THE COURT--

Faheema...twitches. Then--

SLOWLY STANDS.

With the help of the trainer, Faheema limps to her bench.

ZHUO HONG
(approaching the Ump)
More than two minutes is a penalty.

The Umpire raises a hand, a warning.

ZHUO HONG (cont'd)
What? She did this to me last time--

UMPIRE
(to the trainer)
Is it an apparent injury?

The trainer studies Faheema's leg--

TRAINER
Hard to say.

UMPIRE
OK, Ms. Nassar. Wrap it here or go to
the medic and accept penalty.

Faheema SQUIRMS--

Not much of a fucking choice.

FAHEEMA
Medic.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

A BUCKET OF ICE is slammed down on a bench.

Faheema sits against a locker, her leg held by a US OPEN DOCTOR; a concerned expression as he feels the leg.

Behind them, Bebe and Omar watch on worried--

BEBE
Give us your best guess.

US OPEN DOCTOR
I can't be certain without an X-Ray
but it looks like the start of a
tendon tear. Maybe the back ligament.

FAHEEMA
So pain killers and a splint?

Bebe and Omar exchange glances.

Faheem implores the doctor--

FAHEEMA (cont'd)
I only need to win one more game.
Just another **ten minutes**.

OMAR
No, no--

BEBE
Are you crazy??

FAHEEMA
I need to finish the match.

BEBE
You can't--

FAHEEMA
I have to--

BEBE
(to the Doctor)
Tell her she can't--

US OPEN DOCTOR
--It's not at a point where I can
forbid her to play--

OMAR
But you shouldn't--

FAHEEMA
Why not?

US OPEN DOCTOR
If the injury were to get any more
pronounced, you could be looking at
seven to eight months...

FAHEEMA
Yeah, **if**--

BEBE
Prince won't sign a new Pro that will
take a year to heal. It's too risky.

OMAR
Think of the big picture Faheema.

Faheema furls her nose.

Bebe pleads--

BEBE

It sucks to forfeit, but we're still coming out of this with a *win*. Let's get out now while we have this deal.

Faheema grows increasingly internal--

Lost to herself...

BEBE (cont'd)

Let it go. Prince is happy now.

Faheema looks up--

A sudden stroke of clarity--

Her fate in the balance. Her happiness in her hands...

...In her hands.

Faheema nods, the decision made--

FAHEEMA

Lace it up.

The doctor looks at her sideways.

Omar shifts.

FAHEEMA (cont'd)

Go on, lace it up.

US OPEN DOCTOR

Injuries sustained could knock you out of play for half of next year.

FAHEEMA

Maybe.

Bebe blubbers--

BEBE

No professional sponsor will be able to hold their offer for that long--

FAHEEMA

Then I'll take a different one.

This lands like a brick.

Bebe's eyes practically bug out--

BEBE

A different one? What is she talking about Omar? What does that mean??

Omar stares at his daughter perplexed.

The doctor reluctantly applies the bandage.

Faheema pats her wrapped foot--

STANDS.

OMAR

Faheema, what are you doing?

Faheema looks to Bebe. Then to Omar--

FAHEEMA

When will this be mine?

Omar's eyes dart.

Faheema pivots toward the hall.

BEBE

Omar, don't just stand there. Make her stop. Don't let her do this.

But Omar is frozen in place--

This moment washing over him...

Bebe circumvents Omar, chasing after Faheema--

BEBE (cont'd)

Faheema! You're making a mistake!

Faheema stops. Turns.

She looks past Bebe to a pensive Omar--

FAHEEMA

(in ARABIC)

Be happy for me Father.

Omar looks up--

Faheema leaves the men behind, walking toward the light--

EXT. THE GRANDSTAND - NIGHT

Faheema emerges back onto the court--

APPLAUSE ECHOES AROUND THE STADIUM!!

New energy injected into the crowd.

Zhuo storms up to the Umpire's chair--

ZHUO HONG

A full re-bandage?? That's another penalty--

Faheema sits down on her bench, calm--

In her own world.

ZHUO HONG (cont'd)

(fuming)

Did you hear me?! That's my game!

The Umpire turns to Faheema--

UMPIRE

Nassar has thirty seconds to resume match play or accept game penalty.

Faheema nods but STAYS SITTING--

For the first time, taking her time--

At her pace.

ALL AUDIO FADES TO A LOW SOUND FLOOR--

Faheema soaks in the moment--

The smiling, giddy crowd--

The ball boys, poised...

The rush of the game. The thrill of the fight.

Her home for the past six years...

Faheema smiles--

A bittersweet farewell.

THE SOUND COMES CRASHING BACK IN--

UMPIRE (cont'd)

Five seconds, Ms. Nassar--

Faheema rises to her feet, RECHARGED.

She walks to the service line as Zhuo screams--

ZHUO HONG
That's still a delay of match!

UMPIRE
Match has resumed--

ZHUO HONG
Bullshit! That's a violation of the
play clock.

UMPIRE
Penalty. Hong.
(changes the score)
30-Love. Nassar.

Zhuo seethes, retreating to her side of the court--

Faheema plants her foot. Ready.

Zhuo SERVES!

Faheema attacks with a BACKHAND SMACK DOWN!

A winner! CHEERS erupt!

UMPIRE (cont'd)
Match point, Nassar.

Faheema steadies herself--

This is it.

Her eyes roam the stands to find Caroline--

Supportive.

A deep understanding between the two of them.

Caroline nods approvingly--

Faheema reaches up and pulls out her ponytail--

Her hair falls to her shoulders, free--

ZHUO ROCKETS A NINETY MILE SERVE HER WAY!

Faheema SLICES her return!

Zhuo sprints toward the net! Hits cross-court!

Faheema lunges for the ball, POPPING it up HIGH--

A SAILING LOB!

WE ENTER SLO-MO--

As Faheema rolls to the ground from her dive.

The ball soars!

Zhuo turns to rush back for it--

But Faheema's out of the point, SPRAWLED ON THE GROUND--

She eyes the trajectory of her ball through the air, an observer like all the rest...

The crowd tracking the curvature of Faheema's lob--

Their heads moving as one--

It reaches the height of its arc--

IN THE SKY

And Faheema's gaze stays up there--

Beyond tonight.

Beyond all of this...

WE RAMP BACK TO REGULAR SPEED--

AS WE HEAR THE THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE--

IN THE STANDS--

Caroline breaks into a WIDE GRIN--

ON THE COURT--

Faheema's eyes well with tears--

A world of possibilities out there.

Faheema's smile is infectious as--

WE CUT TO BLACK--

THE END