

BAD A\$\$E\$ - "This Ain't Powder Puff!!!"

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OPENING MONTAGE:

VIDEO FOOTAGE OF YOUNG BOYS GROWING UP PLAYING FOOTBALL IN VARIOUS VENUES.

* LEAGUES.

* SAND LOTS.

* HIGH SCHOOL.

* COLLEGE.

* PROFESSIONAL.

LITTLE GIRLS WHO GROW UP CHEERING THOSE YOUNG BOYS ON FROM THE SIDELINES.

END MONTAGE:

NICOLE (V.O.) - It's virtually impossible to grow up in 'The Great State of Texas' and not be a product of its rich--borderline fanatic Football-Culture. A community whose intense religious doctrine of gridiron-justice inundates every aspect of life from Birth to Blitz.

OPENING MONTAGE (CONT):

* NEWBORNS ADORNED IN FOOTBALL ATTIRE.

* FUNERAL IN WHICH THE COFFIN IS COVERED WITH BANNER FROM A LOCAL FOOTBALL TEAM.

END MONTAGE:

INT. HOUSE 1997 - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

A family seated for supper around an oval wooden table-- Father, 3 boys of various ages-- athletes all but 1, and a daughter. Also, there is a beautiful woman-- her smile warm and motherly as she delivers full plates to her family.

NICOLE (V.O.) - My father, once a highly touted running back at Morris High, still gets this glazed look in his eyes whenever he talks about his glory days as the only player ever to score 4 touchdowns in a single game. "I started, both offense and Defense," he would brag. Now I know what you're thinking... Big

Freakin' Whoop right? I'd totally agree, but for that my father grew up in an era where it wasn't strange to see kids play both sides of the ball and special teams all in one game.

FOCUS ON TODD OLSTEIN SR., Early 40's Blue-collar man's man type, the proud father of an impressive stock. He waves a piece of fried chicken around while regaling his children with his heroic exploits.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - So, there I am, 123 yards rushing, 14 tackles... an 86-yard kickoff-return, and a 17-yard fumble returned for another touchdown... We're up by 24 points with 32 seconds to go... my night is over, right?

PATRICIA OLSTEIN (32) brings him a full-plate, setting it down in front of him-- with a small kiss.

NICOLE (V.O.) - That's T.J. Short for Todd Junior my disgustingly immature oldest brother... Bad mouth, bad temper and of course bad hygiene for the hat-trick.

Her brother, T.J. OLSTEIN, 10-year-old Chubby-childhood-bully build with a buzz-cut sits across the table. Thumbing through a MAD Comic-book-- and hardly paying attention to the story he's heard over a thousand times. He receives a hefty plate of food, and a head rub.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D) - The cuttie by the phone is Roddy, but I call him, Prince... he hates it. I can't help it, the more he tries to look tough, the Prettier he gets.

Across the table sits, RODNEY 'RODD' OLSTEIN, 9-year-old ruggedly handsome looks, flips through trading-cards-- a natural born salesman down to the shifty eyes. He is delivered a plate, with a cheek pinch. Then there's ALBERT OLSTEIN, 6-year-old wimpy prodigal-son type-- he is far too occupied by his Game-Boy to give the story much notice. Albert's plate is accompanied by a shoulder squeeze.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D) - That's my youngest brother Albert. After Todd and Rodd, Momma'd finally put her foot down-- She declared he should be named after someone notable, and Albert Olstein was close enough to Albert Einstein to satisfy her... good thing too, or he might have been named Dodd.

Lastly, FOCUS ON NICOLE OLSTEIN, 7-year-old, obvious tomboy with down-played natural cuteness. She stares fixedly at Todd, as he embellishes-- excited to hear the dramatic saga of victory once--more. Nicole receives her plate, and a quick tickle.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D) - That's me... Daddy's little princess-- cute as a bug-in-a-rug, and just as innocent. That is, until the whistle blows.

FLASH FORWARD: 6 years

EXT. CEDAR BROOK JR. HIGH SCHOOL STADIUM - EVENING

The scoreboard reads Cedar Brook 21 Visitor 24. Cheering parents roar from the stands. Boosters man concessions as on the field children battle one another viciously.

FOLLOW: Nicole, now (13), as she steps to the line of scrimmage-- the 'Cedar Brook Fighting Armadillos' star Quarterback. She drops back to pass surveying the field-- no one open. She takes off racing around through and between male would be tacklers on her way towards the goal. She crosses with ease as the defending team stares in awe and angst.

NICOLE (V.O.) - Truthfully, the field is the only place I've ever really felt free.

Nicole removes her helmet revealing long flowing girly-locks and the boy's angry expressions turn to that of disbelief.

DEFENDER BOY 1 - Aww man, I can't believe you let a girl score on you!

DEFENDER BOY 2 - Shut up man, she beat you too!

Nicole smiles widely as she is swarmed by her teammates.

NICOLE (V.O.) - As the youngest girl in a house full of testosterone; I guess my offbeat nature is understandable. It's not Daddies fault; he didn't know how to raise a girl... how could he?

PATRICIA OLSTEIN, Mid 40's a former stroke victim, weary beyond her years and void of emotion-- sits statue still on the couch wearing her 94' Cowboys Championship-- Troy Aikman jersey and staring blankly into the television set.

Nicole, cuddled beside her in a matching jersey. Her face shows a gloomy longing.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D) - Sure, Momma was around... but the strokes, yes plural strokes, 4 of 'em. They called it a medical-anomaly, and the first two weren't so bad either. Just slowed her down a little, made her talk kinda funny, but all-and-all, she was the same snuggly care-bear. She had got real health-- conscious, her Pressures came way-down, Sugars were normal, everything was good. Then out of nowhere, the Big-one hit. Like a Texas-sized Tornado, destroying everything in its path. Committed her to that damned chair, staring vacantly at our old TV. In the end, she went as quietly as she'd lived those last years.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

On a miserably rain-soaked day Nicole's mother is finally laid to rest. Loved ones gather around the grave brandishing umbrellas as dark as their clothing.

They sob uncontrollably-- all except for the immediate family who seem to have internalized their grief-- the Olstein way.

Nicole, now a 16-year-old budding beauty, stares down at the coffin somberly but does not shed a tear-- unwilling to show weakness.

NICOLE (V.O.) - I wish I could have been normal... cried, showed the pain I was feeling. But that just wasn't what, Olstein's did. Instead, I consumed myself in the only thing that brought me comfort.

EXT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The J.V. Team participates in tackling drills smashing into each other savagely at the sound of a whistle toot.

COACH MAX WHEELER, Early 50's intimidatingly brutish Head Coach and former soldier. Coach Wheeler tosses footballs to one of the competing student athletes and they charge towards one another, colliding viciously. Nicole, the school's first ever, Female Junior Varsity player, steps to the line.

COACH WHEELER - Olstein, just what do you think you're doing?

NICOLE - I'm practicing coach.

COACH WHEELER - You don't participate in tackling drills, take a knee.

Her eyes fix on MARK BRUNELL, 16-year-old cocky and disrespectful jerk type, staggered in front of her.

MARK - Yeah, I bet you're used to that position, Ohh-stein.

Some laugh and Nicole notices. Her brow skews maliciously.

NICOLE - Coach you can't stop me from hitting just because I'm a girl... it's not fair!

COACH WHEELER - Olstein, I don't care if you're a conjoined-Siamese-midget... my starting Quarterback, don't hit!

Mark's lips curl deviously to a sneer.

MARK - Aww come on Coach, let Fem-tits hit... she just needs her cherry popped.

COACH WHEELER - Zip your shit-smacker and get on the line Brunell!

NICOLE - Come on Coach... I can do it.

Coach Wheeler deliberates for a moment glancing towards his ASSISTANT COACH RON TIDLO, Mid 30's former Ivy League Athlete guy. Ron shrugs back at him.

COACH WHEELER - Alright, Olstein... to the line.

The athletes begin to yelp and cheer. Mark steps to the line across from Nicole. He is pitched the ball. Nicole fires out of her stance and launches herself, crushing the boy with a venomous hit. She stands over his plastered frame.

NICOLE - How's that cherry taste ass-face?

Mark spits out a bloody mouthpiece.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - EQUIPMENT ROOM - DAY

The coaches have added a single locker area in the equipment room so that their star Co-ed athlete can dress in relative ease. Nicole removes her pads and protective knee/breast pads. She sits in reflection in front of her locker and smashes her fist into her forehead trying to shake the traumatic visions now plaguing her.

Suddenly, a knock at the door and she quickly recovers herself.

NICOLE - What?

TIM CHASE, 16-year-old unassumingly average looking Ballboy, peaks his head in. He makes sure not to look towards her out of respect-- possibly more.

TIM - Hey Nick, Coach wants to see you.

NICOLE - Yeah, fine.

Tim quickly disappears.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - LOCKER ROOM - COACHES OFFICE - DAY

In a cluttered chamber of football artifacts, Coach Wheeler thumbs through one of his play books. A knock.

COACH WHEELER - Come in.

Nicole enters cautiously.

NICOLE - You wanted to see me, Coach?

COACH WHEELER - Olstein, yeah have a seat.

She obeys taking a seat in one of two chairs facing his desk surveying the impressive collection of historical memorabilia.

COACH WHEELER (CONT'D) - So, Miss Olstein... how're you holding up?

NICOLE - I dunno, pretty solid, I guess.

Coach Wheeler looks sympathetically at her.

COACH WHEELER (sympathy filled eyes) - You know, I'm not just a coach, kid. No, I'm a Husband, a Father to three Teens... two of em, ' highspirited, strong, and feisty young ladies. And I'm the Son of a stroke victim.

Nicole, drifting glance, concentrates.

COACH WHEELER - Yup, lost my mother at a young age too. (his eyes pause in memory) I just want you to know that it gets easier with time.

NICOLE - I'm fine. (shrugs it off) Was that all?

COACH WHEELER - No, actually there's something else. (sighs pensively) With tomorrow being the last game of the season and all, we've reached sort of a crossroads. As you know, since you'll be a Senior next year, we can't keep you on the J.V. squad.

NICOLE - Don't worry coach, I've been working really hard... I'm totally ready for next year.

COACH WHEELER - About that, unfortunately it looks like we're not going to be able to move you up to Varsity either.

Nicole's face drops.

NICOLE - What do you mean, why not?

COACH WHEELER - J.V. was fine, but there's just too much liability if you get hurt out there.

Nicole's face shows her shock and dismay.

NICOLE - Fine, I'll sign a release form, take a physical... whatever they need to feel safe.

COACH WHEELER - I'm afraid it's not that simple kiddo. Girls are forbidden to participate past a certain age in the state of TX, no matter how willing they are. The rules are just, well the rules.

NICOLE - But Coach that's bull; I've got the best arm on the team!

COACH WHEELER (sympathy police mode) - Hey, of course you do, I know that.

NICOLE - Then, what's wrong... what did I do, so bad I can't play?

COACH WHEELER - Trust me Nickie, you didn't do anything wrong... don't ever think that. This is my fault, not yours. I should have warned you about this a long time ago. Blame me kid, I messed up, and I'm sorry Nick, It's just...

Nicole stares at him squarely awaiting a reasonable explanation, but he has none.

COACH WHEELER - Well don't make me say it...

NICOLE - No, I want you to say it. Tell me, that I'm not good enough... because I'm a girl. Just say it!

COACH WHEELER - Look, you can't take this personal... you had a great run.

The Coach's stare confirms her theory. She stands and walks towards the door.

NICOLE (CONT'D) - Sexism is alive and well, in The Great State of Texas... you tell me how not to take that personal?

Nicole exits. Coach Wheeler, caught between a rock and a rule book, watches soberly.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Nicole storms out, passed Tim and out of the locker room. He follows.

EXT. FIELD HOUSE - DAY

Nicole emerges from the fieldhouse and finds T.J.'s primer colored 80's model sedan, waiting for her. She gets in and the car pulls away just as Tim exits. He watches her hasty retreat with mournful eyes.

INT. CAR - DAY

T.J. drives while blasting country music. Albert sits in the back seat playing his hand-held game system. They drive through the sparse old boom town-- small mom and pop shops reminiscent of a simpler time, line the streets. The place moves at a snail's pace and, so do its residents.

T.J. sings along with the bluegrass tunes blaring through the speakers of his fixer upper. Staring out the window into the void of her surroundings Nicole becomes even more annoyed-- especially with her brother's hick music. She reaches over and ejects the cassette-- the radio takes over playing something more, hip.

T.J. glares at the tiny woman in obvious irritation and pushes the cassette back in. Nicole defiant as they come, ejects it again. The battle of wills commences for a few moments catching Albert's attention. Finally, T.J. slams on the brakes bringing the car to an abrupt stop.

T.J. OLSTEIN - Now, just what in the hell is your malfunction girl?

Nicole looks out of her window. T.J. inserts the tape once more and glaring at Nicole declares:

T.J. OLSTEIN (CONT'D) - Touch it one more time, I'll make sure you can't ever throw a football again!

FOLLOW the car as it pulls off and we hear the tape being ejected again, and it is fired out of the passenger side window.

The car stops again.

T.J. (CONT'D) - SON OF A--!

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

Rodney, making a sandwich in the kitchen notices his siblings arriving home. The mood seems contentious, as T.J. lumbers towards the house. He enters the house mid-gripe.

T.J. - ... I don't give a good God-damn if you are PMS'n... YOU DON'T THROW OUT KENNY CHESNEY!

Rodney makes his way towards the entrance while munching on his meal in time to see T.J. storming in towards his room.

Nicole enters and heads up the stairs to her room. Albert is the last to enter and is stopped by Rodney.

RODNEY - What happened?

Albert wagers a confused shrug.

ALBERT - Ionno.

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicole lies in bed staring at the assortment of football memorabilia lining the walls of her tiny, cluttered room-- more sad than angry. There is a knock at the closed door.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (V.O.) - Nicole... Kiddo, you awake? Supper's ready.

NICOLE - Go away, I don't care!

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

From the hallway her father lobbies with a plate full of food and a glass of milk in his hands.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - But it's chicken fried steak, baby... your favorite. (silence) Baby girl?

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door finally opens and Todd enters the room. Nicole slowly retreats back to her bed.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (CONT'D) - Hey Darlin, something wrong?

NICOLE - It's fine... don't expect you to understand.

Todd sits the food down on her nightstand.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Well, I dunno, I've got a little experience with taking care of people, I think. Why doncha try me... what is it sweetie, cramps-- boys-- player haters?

NICOLE (rolls eyes at the joke) - Coach says this is my last game... says girls can't play varsity.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Well, did he tell ya why?

NICOLE - Kept saying some crap about school-liability. Shoot, I've been playing with these same boys since pop warner and ain't never been hurt... not once!

Todd appears reflective.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Did you ever think, it might be time to try something new?

Nicole shoots a glare at him.

NICOLE - You're siding with him!?

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Of course not, baby... all I'm saying is. Well, it's not like you're trying to get a football scholarship or nuthin'. Why not try some of the other stuff school has to offer.

Nicole shakes her head.

NICOLE - I don't wanna do nuthin' else.

Todd's face sympathizes with his baby girl.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Look honey, I'll admit when your Momma got sick, I was lost. I never had no sisters... didn't know how to raise a little girl, so I just kinda forgot you was a girl. It's my fault you're this way. But you know what I see when I look at you... I see a smart, talented, beautiful young lady-- just like

your mother. She would have been so proud to see how you turned out. I think you owe it to yourself to let yourself be just that, an amazing lady. Whatta ya say?

He brushes the hair out of her face. Nicole relents with a somber nod.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (CONT'D) - That's my girl, oops Lady.

Todd kisses her head and starts towards the door. He stops just short of the door and looks back.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (CONT'D) - It's all gonna be okay... I promise.

Todd exits.

INT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Nicole sits alone at a small lunch table-- distracted by thought. She is in the process of drawing a rather impressive Nike Swoosh on her hand like the one on the gloves she wears for better ball handling. Tim arrives, standing over her.

TIM - Self-branding huh... new endorsement deal?

NICOLE - Yeah, I wish...

TIM - Who knows... maybe someday?

Nicole dismisses the comment. Tim stares at the girl lovingly. She looks back up catching his gleam.

FOCUS ON a group of cheerleaders sitting nearby- no uniforms aside from their cheer jackets. WENDY CLUTCH, (16) Ginger-snap, mean girl cheerleader type, takes special notice and isn't pleased.

TIM - So... big game tomorrow huh?

NICOLE - Nope, the big games are on Fridays. This don't mean nothin'.

TIM - Well yeah you COULD look at it like that... or you could see it for its potential... the chance to prove to a whole stadium of people what you can do... maybe even change some minds in the process.

Nicole reflects on the comment.

Suddenly, Wendy appears beside Tim-- intimately close.

WENDY - Hey Timmy, how you been, boy?

TIM - Wendy... hey.

There is obvious history between them-- an awkward history. Tim looks to Nicole.

TIM (CONT'D) - Umm, Wendy this is Nicole...

Wendy glances dismissively at the tomboy.

WENDY (to Tim) - Yeah, I know who she is... everybody knows who, she is. So hey, my parents are going on a fishing trip this weekend so I'll have the place all to myself. I was thinking you might want to come over and hang out;

Nicole stands up and walks away.

TIM - Hey Sling-shot... Sling-shot... Nicole!

Wendy's plot is evident as she watches Nicole depart, especially to Tim.

TIM (to Wendy) - What's wrong with you? You know, I would really appreciate it, if you didn't speak to me anymore. Excuse me.

He walks off in a huff.

INT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - BATH ROOM - DAY

Nicole sits in a stall, staring at a picture of her mother in better times. She caresses her mother's once gorgeous physical features. A single tear is allowed to escape her face but she quickly retrieves it.

Suddenly, a crash of sound floods the room as outside her stall a group of abrasively loud students enters-- the cheerleaders. Their high-pitched voices irritate Nicole's skin like nails on a chalk board.

CHEERLEADER 1 (MACY FONTAINE) - OMG, did you see her face... that was so bad!

CHEERLEADER 2 (DEBBY MCCAY) - Yeah, she looked like she wanted to kill herself, right there.

WENDY - Shit, she should have... freakin' Lumber Jack.

They snicker in agreement as they primp in the mirrors.

CHEERLEADER 2 (DEBBY MCCAY) - And so what, she's his charity case now?

Not a question that deserves an answer.

CHEERLEADER 1 (MACY FONTAINE) - What's the deal with you and Tim anyways... I thought that was old-blog?

WENDY - It is mostly I guess, but that's not for him to decide either way... once mine always mine!

CHEERLEADER 4 (LAURIE DUNLAN) - Hey, didn't her mother die a few years back?

WENDY - Pssh, who cares... she should have, join her damned Hillbilly Mother, do us all a favor.

CHEERLEADER 3 (VENNESSA SHAW) - Damn girl, you're a Super Bitch!

CHEERLEADER 2 (DEBBY MCCAY) - Bitch-tastic.

WENDY - Shoot girl, I'm Bitch-stroidinary.

They laugh.

WENDY - Whatever, what kind of lame ass would I be if I let some back water Back-woods Mud-duck take what's mine? (she applies mascara) To hell with her and her Trailer-Trash mother.

CLOSE ON Nicole's face in response to the comment-- it goes cold.

EXT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - BATH ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

FOCUS ON the bathroom door from outside. Screams and sounds of a violent struggle erupt inside. Three of the cheerleaders run out screaming and just before the door closes, we see Nicole tossing Wendy around the room.

INT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - BATH ROOM - DAY

Cheerleader 4 (LAURIE DUNLAN) cowers in the corner with her hands raised. Wendy lies bloodied and bruised on the floor with Nicole standing over her beaten body.

INT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Nicole sits in a bustling office. Office Staff and Student Aids scurry around the pod busy with administrative duties. Nicole sits, visibly defiant and confident in her stance of justified anger. Sitting in a seat across the office is a brutalized Wendy, fresh off receiving dem paws. She sits holding an icepack against her knotted forehead-with matching swollen lips and nose. She smiles at her enemy's condition waving dubiously at the injured girl.

Wendy rolls her eyes choosing to focus on mending her battered face. The squeal-pitched voice of KAROLYN CLUTCH (47-year-old) Texas Socialite with the overly snatched yet weathered face, can be heard railing on about the school's responsibility to protect her daughter. Once in a while, the Principal interjects an opinion only to be quickly thwarted by the overzealous Mother. Suddenly, Karolyn emerges from the room in a huff. She stands over her damaged daughter, looking down-- pitifully.

KAROLYN CLUTCH - Come Gwendoline, we're done here... Get your things. (looks at Nicole, disgusted) Clearly, this place is

befitting the more, Common-Folk. I'll have your father, "The Counselman!!!" to remove you, immediately.

Wendy rises and pulls her bag, painfully over her shoulder. They strut arrogantly out of the office.

Nicole drops her head in remorse-- not for the fight, but for not taking better advantage of time with her mother. Something steps before her leaving a towering shadow. She looks up to find the face of Todd, looking down on her shamefully.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Well, let's get outta here.

Nicole grabs her things and follows him out.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Nicole sits in relative secrecy as she is driven home. Todd drives in silent detachment, as if he has succumbed to the realization of his failure. Nicole notices his bewildered state.

NICOLE - It's not my fault; I wouldn't have even hit her if...

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - If, there's always this mysterious, "IF," with you kid. You're really startin' to sound like a broken record... So, what's it this time? IF, she had'na looked at you funny, stepped on your sneakers, cut you off? What was it this time
NICOLE, PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY YOU GOT SUSPENDED THIS TIME, HUH!

NICOLE - She said I should kill myself, like Momma.

Tears pour from Nicole's eyes, as she suddenly relives the loss. Todd sighs, absorbing the sobering news of his baby-girl's turmoil.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Nickie... Nickie baby, look at me. What happened to your Mom, to you. It wasn't fair... I'm never gonna try to tell you she's gone for some greater purpose, to teach you some lesson, or build you stronger somehow. It's shit! It was a shit Diagnosis, and a shit outcome, and nobody deserved it. Especially not you, Nick. (pauses to reflect) Look, all I know is you're a good kid, but acting out isn't going to let anyone see that. This thing already took an amazing person. You can't let it take you too.

Nicole stares out the window, face soaked.

NICOLE - I didn't hit her for wishing me dead. I hit her for making fun of what I want, most.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (sighs again, soberly) - I know, baby.

They arrive in front of her home. Nicole opens the door.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (CONT'D) - Look, you promise me something, alright kiddo? We fight this thing, okay? WE DON'T GIVE UP... WE FIGHT, TOGETHER!

Nicole nods sternly in affirmation.

INT. FIELD HOUSE - LOCKER ROOM - COACHES OFFICE - DAY

Coach Wheeler, stern eyes... stares ahead in obvious disappointment.

COACH WHEELER - Well you know I have to bench you now, right. You leave me no choice... my hands are tied.

Nicole absorbs the sting with a cold, unemotional glare.

NICOLE - That all?

Coach is silenced, surprised... but, quickly recovers with a look of submission.

COACH WHEELER - Yeah, I guess it is.

Nicole stands and walks defiantly out of the room. She closes the door and walks towards the exit.

TIM - Hey Sling-shot!

She turns and is quickly met by Tim... concern invading his face.

NICOLE (humbled) - Don't call me that, it's a stupid Tag.

TIM - Oh, right... So, what's the damage?

NICOLE - Minimal I guess, benched next week.

TIM - The Finale, that's crazy... you're the QB.

NICOLE - Wrong, I'm a lady and it's time I start actin' like it.

Tim is stifled for a comeback.

TIM - Mmm K, my mistake.

NICOLE - I gotta go.

Nicole walks off toward the exit, leaving a confused shell of a boy in her wake. He stares; a face filled with longing.

INT. WEST ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

NICOLE (V.O.) - I walked the halls without anywhere to be. Tried to keep a stiff upper lip or whatever it's called, anything to fool myself into nonchalance. Truthfully, my stomach was a pit, empty and hollowed by the loss. A void I hadn't felt since... well. All I could think of, was what Tim said to me, bout that

being my chance to prove I was good enough. The pain was almost unbearable and holding it in made it that much worse.

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nicole enters her room and walks to her bed dropping her things on the way. She flops on her bed and buries her face in the pillow.

NICOLE (V.O.) - I couldn't help but imagine what the last years of my mother's life were like... not being able to laugh or scream... or smile. I promised myself then and there that, if I got another chance there ain't anything that would stop me from being exactly who I choose.

FAST FORWARD 10 YEARS.

INT. DINER - DAY

Nicole, now 26 years old, works at a local Diner by day and as a Physical Trainer at night.

MONTAGE:

* NICOLE SKIRTS, EFFORTLESSLY AROUND THE DINER, TAKING ORDERS, DELIVERING MEALS, AND ENGAGING PATRONS.

* ONE SUCH CLIENT, A PREP-SCHOOL CHAD TYPE, PATS HER BUTT AS HE PAYS.

* SHE PAUSES, OBVIOUSLY DISTURBED, BUT TAKING A CONSOLING BREATH DECIDES TO IGNORE THE SOCIAL FAUX-PAS.

* SHE COLLECTS HER SUB-PAR TIPS, FACE SCREWING... THEN EASING IN ACCEPTANCE OF HER MEAGER POSITION.

* SHE BREATHES A SIGH OF DISILLUSION WHILE WAITING AT THE COUNTER FOR HER NEXT ORDER TO BE PRESENTED.

END MONTAGE:

INT. GYM - EVENING

MONTAGE:

* NICOLE AT A LOCAL GYM ASSISTING CUSTOMERS, MANY OF WHICH ARE OBNOXIOUS.

* HER FACE DAYDREAMS AS AN ODDLY DRESSED LITTLE MAN STRUGGLES TO LIFT THE BAR AND SHE MUST QUICKLY INTERVENE.

* THEY ALL FLIRT AND SHE SMILES, CLEARLY UNINTERESTED.

* THEY PASS HER THEIR BUSINESS CARDS EACH TAPPING HER BUTT, AS SHE ATTEMPTS TO AVOID IT.

* A KIND OLDER MAN, DISGUISES HIS ATTEMPT, SQUEEZING... CATCHING HER UNPREPARED SHE GRITS HER TEETH AND BARES THE RUDE GESTURE.

END MONTAGE:

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Nicole in her childhood bedroom studying Sports Medicine. She thumbs through large books while writing reports.

INT. DINER - DAY

NICOLE (V.O.) - Needless to say, with my 25th Birthday right around the corner, helplessly trapped in that town-- in that house-- in that bedroom, my faith in some life changing-miracle ain't worth much. That's when he walked back into my life.

ENTER: Tim, now a much more rugged, more mature version of handsome. She recognizes him immediately as he takes a seat.

Nicole approaches to find Tim staring at the menu.

NICOLE - Lemme guess... grilled cheese, right?

Tim's face warms at the sound of a familiar voice. He looks up to find the one that got away.

TIM - Well, would you look at that. Nicole Olstein... my God you're a vision. How long has it been?

NICOLE - Hmm, let's see you moved away for college... so, about 9 years now. What brings you back to the sticks, Big-City-Boy?

TIM - Oh, just out for the Holidays, visiting my folks. Needed a little break from the hustle.

RODGER BRINK, Mid 50's sweaty slave driver boss type, notices Nicole's interaction, and the plates on the counter waiting to be delivered.

RODGER - Nicole, you taking a break... we got plates up!?

Nicole snaps back to reality rolling her eyes.

NICOLE - So... cheese toast?

TIM - Sure... and a coffee please.

Nicole jots it down on her order pad, and scurries away.

INT. DINER - COUNTER - DAY

At the counter, she is met by ADRIAN MANTEL, Late 40's self-proclaimed cougar, another waitress. She stares at Tim with lust in her eyes.

ADRIAN - Oow, who's the doll?

NICOLE - Who him... just an old-friend.

ADRIAN - Hmm, I wonder if he needs a NEW-friend. Momma'll give em' something, turn em' to a man.

Nicole can barely control her gag reflex at the thought.

NICOLE - Eww, stop it... put your cooter away you big ol' hooch.

Adrian looks down and adjusts herself.

ADRIAN - Oow, is that what that is... thought I felt a breeze.

Nicole grabs the plates from the counter.

NICOLE - God, you're gross.

She walks off leaving Adrian to ogle.

ADRIAN (to herself) - Mmm, I'd powder and diaper his little ass.

CUT TO LATER:

INT. DINER - COUNTER - DAY

Tim arrives to settle the check, handing Nicole his Card. She swipes it handing it back to him, with his receipt.

NICOLE - Alright, here you go.

TIM - Yeah thanks. (grabs receipt) Hey, I'm only in town for like a week, but I was hoping we could maybe grab a drink, catch up a little?

NICOLE - Drinks?

TIM - Sure, that is unless you're like, busy.

NICOLE - Umm yeah, I guess I can find a minute.

He pulls out his phone to show her.

TIM - Great-- Well, I've got this phone now so, I can call you or whatever.

She grabs it and stares oddly at the screen.

NICOLE - Property of the San Antonio Slash... like, the football Slash?

TIM - Yeah, it's a company phone, but whatever.

NICOLE - Wow, look at you.

Nicole types her number into his phone, and hands it back to him.

NICOLE (CONT'D) - Okay, well that's me.

TIM - Alright, I'll call you.

Tim puts the phone in his pocket and attempts an awkward half-hug half handshake. He leaves embarrassed. Nicole watches him with a smile on her face- her face hasn't smiled in a while.

ADRIAN - Well shits and tits hun, is that a smile I see?

Nicole quickly fixes her face.

NICOLE - What, No.

ADRIAN - Hey, it's okay to feel good about something, especially something like that... Lord knows you deserve it, momma.

She pats Nicole on the shoulder and walks off.

INT. JEDSON'S PUB - NIGHT

Nicole arrives to a local pub a few days later. She is casually-- sexy in jeans cowboy boots, and a form fitting top. Tim stands near a row of pool tables, testing the weight of the pool sticks. His excitement upon seeing her is visible.

TIM - Hey... you made it.

NICOLE - Sorry, I don't really have wutcha might call, date clothes.

TIM - So, this is a date?

He smiles gleefully. Nicole, coyly side-eyes him.

NICOLE - We'll see.

TIM - Alright let's break this up... (hands her a stick) Here this one's light.

Nicole looks at the stick strangely. She looks over at the bar, were JEDSON STURBER, Late 40's Owner stands flipping through channels on the medium-sized television set above the bar.

NICOLE - Jedson hun, get me the Boss?

Jedson reaches below a nearby counter, grabbing something.

CUT TO:

Nicole screws together an impressive looking, professional pool stick. Tim watches in shock, glancing at his mediocre stick.

TIM - Something tells me, I'm going to regret this.

Nicole smiles, coyly. She breaks, and several balls find pockets. Tim watches in awe as she wipes the floor with him displaying a plethora of seemingly impossible shots.

Customers watch and cheer her pool prowess. She and Tim click their beer mugs together, as she passes.

CUT TO:

Later, the couple sits at a booth catching up on old times.

It's obvious, Tim is still taken by the woman.

TIM - So, after college... I just kinda wandered from job-to-job looking for my 'Ahh ha' moment. (takes a sip of beer) So, I'm at this Accounting Firm, and I'm hating every minute of every day... and it hits me, the only thing that gives me peace is this Fantasy-Football league I'm in... I mean I'm killing it, every season cuz nobody knows stats like me. And, it just clicks.

NICOLE - Ahh ha?

Tim smiles.

TIM - So, what about you, "Sling-shot?"

Nicole is surprised by the reference-- she had almost forgotten it.

NICOLE - Oh my God... Slingshot, I haven't heard that in.

TIM - Too long?

NICOLE - That was another life.

TIM - Doesn't have to be.

Nicole looks at him strangely.

NICOLE - What are you talking about, Timothy?

TIM (CONT'D) - Okay, I have sort of a confession... I'm not just here, to visit the folks... I've got an opportunity, one I think might interest you.

FOCUS ON Nicole's skeptical face.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Nicole arrives home that night to find her father dozed off in a comfortable chair, in front of the television set. He has been watching a sports network. Todd, now in his early 60's, is retired and more of the slowed, 'Grizzley Addams,' type.

Nicole moves quietly past him and turns off the T.V. The old hound, perked by sudden silence, awakes.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - HUH WHATHA HELL! Oh, hey sweet heart... back already? How was your date?

Nicole sits on the couch. She appears apprehensive.

NICOLE - Date... more like a set up.

Todd's face skews with fatherly concern.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - What's his name, I'll kill 'em!

Nicole laughs off the comment.

NICOLE - Daaaaaad!

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Well, what happened?

NICOLE - I'm still not sure, he tells me the date was just his way to get me alone.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - SON OF A... HE'S A DEAD MAN!

Nicole, stares at him oddly.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Oh, my fault... continue?

NICOLE (impatience in her eyes) - Then he's all you're wasting your talent here, and offers me a tryout with the Slash.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - MOTHER FU!... WHAT THE... WHO?

Nicole's facial expression changes to excitement, as she continues.

NICOLE - The "Slash," Daddy. The Female Pro Football Team, out of San Antonio... CAN YOU BELIEVE IT!?

Todd's confusion is evident.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Wait a minute, what now... who is this guy?

NICOLE - Daddy, it's Tim from High School. He works for the San Antonio Slash, and the owners are recruiting... says he can get me a tryout.

Todd's face shows a new sort of concern about the possible departure of his only daughter.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Oh wow... San Antonio, huh? (beat) Well, that's great, Darlin. When?

NICOLE - Tryouts start next week... I have to get down there this weekend, to register. (notices his frazzled condition) Are you okay here, by yourself?

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - (apprehensive) Who me... sure, I'll be fine. Hey, don't worry about me... you just get out there, show 'em how special my little girl is.

Nicole's face warms.

NICOLE - Thanks Daddy. I'm gonna go pack!

She kisses his forehead, then runs up to her room.

EXT. OLSTEIN HOUSE - MORNING

The day after, Tim arrives at Nicole's house in his truck. He approaches the door, and knocks oblivious to Todd, sitting in a chair on the porch.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Timothy Allen Chase, 1452 Morning Side Terrace, Odessa 79764. Only son of Donald Lewis Chase (57), and Barbera Melony Chase (54).

TIM - Umm, hello sir.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Donald Chase, Senior Financial Associate, Odessa Trust and Savings, 1911 Midway Road, Odessa. Barbera Chase, Nurse Practitioner, Odessa Regional Hospital, 520 East 6th St, Odessa.

Tim, waits patiently, for the strange monologue to end.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - So... you must be this Tim fella, my daughter's been talking so much about... says you went to school together?

Todd lights his old pipe.

TIM - Hello sir, pleasure to meet you... seems you know me, more or less.

Tim presents his hand to Todd. Todd squeezes it, and does not let go.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Tim... I am a Life-long Fiscal Conservative, a Southern Pentecostal Deacon, and a card-carrying member of the NRA... only one of those facts should really worry you right now. My daughter trusts you. In my book, that gives you some leeway. (pause for effect) Very little leeway, you betray that trust... I will hunt you; I will find you, and I...

Just then, the door opens and Nicole steps out, her luggage in hand-- a suitcase, and her old sports bag. Todd stands quickly switching his demeanor.

NICOLE - Hey... you ready?

TIM - Whenever you are.

Nicole turns to her father.

NICOLE - Okay Daddy, I'm headed out. I'll call you when I get settled in.

She hugs him and kisses his cheek.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - You give em' hell Baby girl.

INT. TIM'S TRUCK - MORNING

They get into Tim's pickup truck and drive off. Todd watches, suspiciously from the porch.

NICOLE - So, what were you boys talkin' about?

TIM (sarcasm) - Oh, it's a good thing you came out when you did, I think your Dad was trying to convert me... scary stuff.

Nicole laughs.

NICOLE - Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry. I keep telling him not everybody on the planet is a closet Bible thumper.

TIM - No, I think he wanted to make me a, Conservative...

Nicole's face drops.

NICOLE - Whoa... that IS scary. They share a laugh.

MONTAGE:

* FOLLOW THE COUPLE ON THEIR ROAD TRIP TO SAN ANTONIO TX.

* THEY BOTH DRIVE.

* THEY JOKE AND TALK.

* SHE TOYS WITH HIM WHILE HE SLEEPS.

* HE TOYS WITH HER ALSO.

* A MISHAP AT A GAS STATION REST ROOM.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. S.A. STEERS PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY

Tim and Nicole arrive and exit the truck in the parking lot outside of the Steers practice arena. A massive complex dedicated to the Juggernaut: San Antonio Steers Football Team, and its sister organization the Year-Old: San Antonio Slash of the Women's Football Association.

TIM - Welp, there she is.

Nicole stares in awe, at the massive facility. Tim grabs her things, and starts towards the entrance.

TIM (CONT'D) - Clock's tickin' Olstein.

Nicole follows. They make their way passed security check points, where Tim has to flash his credentials.

EXT. S.A. STEERS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

They come to a stop at a large door with a plaque displaying the S.A. Steers team logo above it.

TIM - Alright, hurry up... get dressed, and meet me out on the field.

Nicole nods in understanding. Tim hands her a jersey, and disappears down the tunnel-- leading to the practice field.

INT. S.A. STEERS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Nicole enters the seemingly empty locker room, full of grid iron equipment. She walks around slowly, surveying the area.

ENTER SHAYLA "SHAKE" UNDERWOOD, Mid 20's gorgeous, and toned mahogany former track star. She stands for a moment, curiously watching Nicole. Nicole approaches the locker of Kyle Mosley, the Steers pretty boy star Quarterback.

SHAYLA - Pretty sweet right?

Nicole is surprised by the intrusion into her star struck moment.

NICOLE - Oh, umm yeah... I've never seen anything like this.

SHAYLA - You think this is nice, wait until you see the field. it's like freakin' Atlantis or something.

Shayla approaches Nicole. They shake hands.

SHAYLA (CONT'D) - Shayla Underwood... Half back.

NICOLE - Hi, Nicole Olstein... Umm Quarterback, I guess.

Shayla looks at her strangely.

SHAYLA - You guess? Well, you better decide who you are pretty quick, Doll face... ain't many spots left. See you out there.

INT. S.A. STEERS - INDOOR PRACTICE FIELD - TUNNEL - DAY

Shayla exits towards the hallway. As she traverses the tunnel:

NICOLE (V.O.) - HEY HOLD ON!

Shayla turns to find the spirited young athlete, jogging to catch-up. She joins and they jog down the tunnel.

INT. S.A. STEERS - INDOOR PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The field is peppered with groups of women participating in drills of all sorts. Many of them are physically attractive former athletes from other sports backgrounds.

Nicole and Shayla emerge together from the tunnel and walk onto the field. At the bottom of the tunnel, they reach a dry erase board. The practice schedule is scrawled on it in sharpie over an official Slash logo. They scan the post which reads as follows:

8:00 - WARM UP STRETCHES (Def. Coach Carr)

8:30 - INDIVIDUAL POSITION DRILLS (All Coaches)

10:15 - 7-on-7 SKELLY (COACH DARIAN LIN & COACH THOMAS FLOWERS)

11:30 - FULL SQUAD SCRIMMAGE (Offensive Coordinator Crow)

1:00 - MEETING: (All Coaches)

NICOLE (V.O.) - Just looking at it, my stomach's already doing flip-flops. I haven't felt so much like a rookie in years.

EXT. S.A. STEERS OUTDOOR PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Some women are already running routes, others cracking jokes or popping earbuds in. The energy is electric-- equal parts hope and desperation. Nicole and Shayla jog onto the turf. A booming whistle brings the whole crowd to attention.

EXT. ON FIELD - DAY

DEFENSIVE COACH DANIEL CARR (45), a powerhouse in his fifties with biceps that demand respect, plants himself front and center, permanent scowl pasted over his skull.

DEF. COACH CARR - Ladies! Let's get after it. Rookies to the right- returners to the left. Don't be late, don't be lazy, don't embarrass yourselves on this field. (beat) Now move!

Shayla grins, nudges Nicole.

SHAYLA - Guess this is where we part ways, Rook. Make me proud, chick.

Nicole swallows, then squares her shoulders.

NICOLE - Hope I see you later.

Shayla laughs, and the two hustle off in opposite directions. Nicole arrives at the rookie line and bravely takes her place.

MONTAGE:

* NICOLE STRUGGLES AT FIRST WITH TIMING ON NEW PLAYS BUT SHAKES IT OFF AND IMPROVES.

* SHAYLA IN A DIFFERENT DRILL, BURNS THROUGH A TEAM OF WOULD-BE TACKLERS, HER HANDS SOFT, HER FEET SWIFT.

* COACHES SHOUT INSTRUCTIONS-- NICOLE ABSORBS, ADAPTS, THROWS TIGHT SPIRALS.

* ONE MASSIVE LINEBACKER-- ROBERTA-- TRIES TO INTIMIDATE NICOLE IN THE HUDDLE.

* NICOLE DOESN'T FLINCH.

* DRILLS GET MORE COMPETITIVE.

* NICOLE GETS SACKED HARD, BOUNCES BACK UP GRINNING, EARNING A NOD FROM OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR DAVID CROW.

* SHAYLA SLIPS A VICIOUS TACKLE ATTEMPT BUT IS CRUSHED BY ANOTHER DEFENDER.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. ON THE SIDELINES - DAY

Nicole bends over, sucking wind, sweat streaking her face. Tim leans over the railing-- watching, quietly rooting for her.

DEF. OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR DAVID CROW - Olstein! Underwood! You're up. Twenty-yard out, on two. Let's see what you got.

The women are finally placed in the same huddle.

The play is called and Shayla lines up wide, Nicole at shotgun. The ball snaps. Pressure comes-- Nicole steps up, fires a bullet. Shayla catches in stride, toe-taps the sideline inbounds.

The coaches exchange an impressed glance.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR DAVID CROW (CONT'D) - That'll work, ladies. Good play. Alright, next group!

Nicole and Shayla jog off the field, breathless but beaming. A mutually respectful handshake is shared.

SHAYLA (low) - Solid throw, Rook. You're looking hungry.

NICOLE (grinning) - Starving.

The day's not over, but something feels very different-- like the world just got bigger.

A WHISTLE BLOWS:

The coaches call for long-ball drills.

FOCUS ON CHARLENE "CHARLIE" BUNDY - late 20's, brown gazelle, short jazzy-girl fade under her helmet calls for the ball, at the line she receives the hike, squares her shoulders, and almost bored, flings a pass nearly fifty yards downfield to a sprinting receiver. The crowd gasps at the distance, and accuracy of the pro-like pass.

Players and coaches along the sideline turn and stare.

SHAYLA (grinning sidelong at Nicole) Hope you can do better than that, girlie.

NICOLE (stunned, under her breath) Wow, who is that?

SHAYLA - That's Charlie "The Bomber" Bundy from Dallas. She was an alternate on the women's Olympic softball team. Got it all-- strong, fast, accurate, bitchie... You know, the perfect, "Field-Commander." And if you want that position, you're gonna have to get passed her to get it.

Nicole frowns, confused.

NICOLE - So, if she's so good, why am I here?

Shayla laughs, gestures at the sideline.

SHAYLA - Like you don't know... Your little boyfriend's been talking you up to the coaches since he got the job.

Nicole follows Shayla's line of sight-- to Tim, diligently chatting up one of the coaches.

NICOLE (defensive, quiet) - Who, Tim? He is NOT my boyfriend. We just went to the same school is all.

SHAYLA - Well, if you say so. All I know is the coaches were set on only using collegiate players, but when our backup pulled a hammi, old Timmy-boy got to lobbying for you like he owed you something.

Tim glances over at the ladies and smiles, sheepish.

SHAYLA (CONT'D) - Shoot, I thought you had saved his ass in Iraq or something.

Suddenly, from across the field-- A VOICE: "HEADS UP!" A ball rockets in-- coming straight for Nicole's face. Instinct takes

over, and she snatches it from the air a split-second before impact.

Stunned silence for a beat. Nicole tracks the throw's source to-- Charlie Bundy grinning smugly from across the field, arms folded. Other players look between them, shocked by Nicole's reflexes-- Charlie included.

Shayla grins, slaps Nicole on the shoulder.

SHAYLA (CONT'D) - Welcome to the bigs, newbie.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING FACILITY CAFETERIA - EVENING

Stainless trays clatter across the serving line. Players scoop up strict portions-- grilled chicken, broccoli, brown rice, nothing fun.

Server, LESLIE BULA (50's), an imposingly-large Line-cook, with a wild mane of graying hair, glares at anyone asking for seconds. She might be the most intimidating person in the room.

Clusters of women fill the tables, old teammates with old stories. Nicole stands alone, food tray in hand, scanning for eye contact. Shayla appears at her side.

SHAYLA - High-school all over again, huh?

NICOLE (relieved) - Oh, hey.

SHAYLA - Hey, come sit with the Backs-- you really should get to know them.

She walks off.

NICOLE - What... why's that?

SHAYLA - Simple. If you don't look good, we don't look good.

Nicole follows Shayla to a loud table of running backs and receivers. The women look her up and down-- sizing up the newcomer.

SHAYLA (to the table) - Ladies... this is Nicki, Tim's-- uhh, friend.

The women stare in silence, then TANIA HARDING-- early 20's wideout, stunning and sharp- leans in, uncomfortably close.

TANIA - So you're this, 'Sling Shot' chick we been hearing so much about, huh? Gotta say, you ain't what I expected... A lot whiter.

NICOLE (plays along, smiling) - Yeah, umm-- lot of shade where I'm from.

Tania scoffs.

TANIA - Shid, yo ass must live in the bat-cave, girl.

Laughter rolls across the table. Nicole relaxes. Nicole too smiles at the light-heart hazing attempt.

TANIA (holding out a hand) Tania Harding... Wide-out, eight-six.

NICOLE (grinning, playing-dumb) Tania Harding, you're kidding?

TANIA - What?

NICOLE - Nuthin'... Nicole, you can call me Nikki.

Shayla picks up the intros.

SHAYLA - Alright Nik, these are the backs. That's Meeks... DT... T-Gaines... Low-low... Neechie... the twins Lenzie and McKenzie Hunt a.k.a. Things 1 and 2... Bullsye... and Thumper... The women nod, grin, fist-bump to their names.

SHAYLA (presents Tania) - ... And of course, The Ice Princess.

TANIA - Stop calling me that, I don't even know what that means!

FOCUS ON JENNIFER "THUMPER" DREW (23), shifty running-back, fiercely fit with a wild, adrenaline-junkie grin, and unbelievable leg-power.

JENNIFER (tiny voice) - So, recruiter-boy says you got a cannon for an arm. What's your longest?

NICOLE - I dunno, it's been a while... Threw a forty-yarder in a game once.

The table lets out an unimpressed huff.

JENNIFER - You betta do a lot better than that, if you wanna beat out, "The Bomber."

TANIA - Charlie's amazing, but she's a terrible teammate... Always calling audibles at the line, got us running decoys half the game.

SHAYLA - Mmm hmm, and she never pitches on RPO's. Sometimes she'll run in the opposite direction.

TANIA - All our plays end up, broken-- QB options and she's the only option.

The group confirm with a chorus of groans.

NICOLE - The coaches just let her go off script, like that?

SHAYLA - Coaches got no say. Miss Thang isn't just bombing on the field; she's also bombing the Owner. Only way to get rid of her is out play her.

JENNIFER - Before you can do that, you gotta break up her goon squad.

TANIA - Yeah, those O-line gorillas got major chick-wood for her 'cause she pads their stats. Gotta get those Amazons on your side so you don't wind up like Sweet-Pea.

NICOLE - Sweet-Pea?

SHAYLA - Carry Musgrave, the last girl who tried to take Charlie's spot. O-line let her get blindsided in a scrimmage... (air quotes)

JENNIFER (scowling) - Media called her a, "Casualty of the Grid-iron." Said maybe full-contact ain't for women, if we can't take a hit.

TANIA - Pssh, whatever. All I know is the doctors said she's never gonna play again... that's why you're here.

Nicole glimpses Charlie eyeing her from across the cafeteria, surrounded by her loyal line-women.

SHAYLA (reassuring) - Don't worry. We got your back.

Nicole glances around the sterile, high school-style lunchroom. Male chaperones, "guards," stand at the exit doors-- watchful.

NICOLE - So, what's with the criminal lockdown sitch... in this place?

SHAYLA - Security precaution... Used to be more chill, til' two chicks popped up preggers.

TANIA - Yeah, no rehab for that.

SHAYLA - It's medieval, but-- what's the alternative... Don't play?

NICOLE (dryly) - You're serious?

SHAYLA - As a heart-attack.

The women dig in. Nicole joins them, finally feeling halfway like she belongs.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - NIGHT

The hall is lit flickering fluorescent and lined with doors that slam, creak, or leak Motown music.

ASSISTANT COACH FRANK SUMMERS (mid-30s, still dresses like his glory days as a pro-receiver weren't a decade ago) walks Nicole down the corridor, his hands clutching a clip board-- his voice, as cocky as his old trading-card photo.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - The housing system's basically like a college dorm. The team lives, eats, practices, showers, everything together... (he catches Nicole's face, coughs) Anyway-

- there's a curfew, strict visitation rules: No booze, no drugs, no fraternizing... They really kill the orgy-vibes around here.

Summers wrinkles his nose, detecting cigarette smoke.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (CONT'D) - Wait, you smell that...

He follows his nose to a cracked-open door.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - CHARLIE SUITE - NIGHT

Inside is something between a goth-club, and a Halloween Superstore: velvet drapes, blacklights, a mirror ball, and Charlie Bundy, sprawled on a leather bed, blowing smoke to some cryptic EDM.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (CONT'D) - Charlie! No cigarettes during the season, you know that!

CHARLIE (rolls eyes) - Season doesn't start til' Monday, Coach Bummers.

She puts her cig out in her palm, flicks the butt straight into a Caldron waste baset mug. Her face is deadpan, cryptic Queen of the Damned vibes, eye make-up-perfect.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - That is disgusting, and you're gonna pick up a disease doing that. You want a cyst?

He shakes his head and shuffles Nicole farther down the hall, eyes darting at any hints of debauchery.

They round a corner; now the hall is silent, the "fun" nowhere in sight. Old pipes creak. Summers, stops at a battered door, gives Nicole a wink like he's passing the torch.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (studies the chart) - Alright, here we are-- You're rooming with... uh... Adrojentervor Solinostenivich. I call her Andy. Don't worry, she's a sweetheart. Kinda quiet, loves me though.

He knocks. Nothing. Knocks again. The door swings open. Andy stands there, all six foot seven and change of her, unapologetically Russian. Her face carved from a Siberian iceberg. She says nothing-- just cradles a massive Iguana in her arms.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (CONT'D) - Oh, Sh-- that's a dragon. (stage whisper to Nicole) If anyone asks, it's a service-dog, cool?

Andy shoves open the door to the cryptically dark-room, black-lit, overgrown with creepy plants and of course Andy, her glare enough to wilt a head of lettuce. Milo the iguana flicks his tongue.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (CONT'D) - You ladies... play nice. (to Nicole, as Andy recedes) You might wanna sleep with your eyes open.

He books it down the hall. Nicole steels herself, and enters.

The room is dim except for a tank that glows swamp green. Walls-- covered with posters of bugs, Komodo dragons, an exquisite 1996 Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders' calendar, and-- bizarrely-- three different "Garfield" posters.

Andy sits on her camo-blanketed bed, stroking the lizard like an evil genius in a Bond movie, eyeing on Nicole.

Nicole sits on the opposite bed, trying to act chill. She eyes Andy's jersey thrown on a chair emblazoned with the name, "SOLINOSTENIVICH 91".

NICOLE - Solinostenivich? Pretty... that Russian?

Andy doesn't answer. Just stares, menacingly.

NICOLE (CONT'D) - So... reptiles, huh? True story, when I was little, my brothers and me would catch frogs and keep em' in a bucket under the bed. Now, I can't sleep without my swamp sounds CD. (smiles, hopeful)

Andy studies Nicole like some exotic species. (beat) Then, she turns away, cuddling Milo closer. Silence.

Nicole dejected unpacks, acting nonchalant. She glances around and notices a stack of battered mystery novels and... is that a wedding dress hanging in the closet?

Before she can process it all, Andy suddenly mumbles in heavy Russian accent:

ANDY (Russian accent) - No frogs in buckets here.

Nicole grins, unsure if that's a threat, a joke, or both.

She settles in, the weird tension thick, and the scene ends as the glow of the lizard tank throws their shadows up into strange monsters-- hinting at the secret chaos ready to erupt in this new chapter.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM OFFICE - EVENING

HEAD COACH GREGORY PORTER Late 40's Commander and Chief type, sits at a desk that takes up far too much space in his small office. NCAA Football memorabilia, like what one might expect a seasoned Division 1 Coach to have, clutters the space.

Asst. Coach Summers, Defensive Coach Daniel Carr, and Offensive Coordinator David Crow Early 50's, grumpy old man type are having a private-meeting.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW - ... I mean hell, with the back field we got, and the Defensive packages we're gonna be facing we gotta go West Coast, right?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Yeah, I can see Drew and Harding easily exploiting holes in those zone schemes... and if they adjust, we just let Underwood and the Huns run it down their throats.

Coach Crow finds the comment amusing.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW - Huns is right, you ought to see the way those girls just massacred those sleds... reminds me of my second divorce.

COACH PORTER - Alright, then we're all in agreement?

The coaches nod in confirmation.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW - Way I see it there's only one problem. How we gonna get Bundy to stay in the pocket long enough to let the play develop?

The room goes awkwardly silent as the coaches search their brains for answers. Their faces show bewilderment.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Coach is right, I can barely keep her back there long enough to hand the ball off let alone throw a pass.

COACH DUNCAN - What if we just limit her options?

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW - What's it matter? She's just gonna check-out at the line, run whatever she wants anyway. That damn Weston's really sticking it in, and snappin' it off with this owner/player relationship stuff. (beat) There's gotta be some kinda conflict of interest rule for stuff like this.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (grinning, to Coach Porter) - I dunno Coach, Weston seems to like you... maybe you can convince him to stop screwin' your team-captain.

COACH PORTER - Shoot, who are you kiddin'... that little twerp doesn't give two-shits about what I think...

As he speaks Coach stares out of his office window overlooking the practice field. Nicole is there alone throwing accurate yet unorthodox passes through tires. The Coach can't help but notice her talent.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Well, that's nothing new, Coach.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - ... Up until last year he thought this was a ladies Soccer league.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (sarcasm) - We're not?

No response from Coach Porter who is now preoccupied watching his team's newest addition. The coaches stare at one another strangely.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (CONT'D) - So, what's the plan... Umm Coach?
Coach Porter turns to them with a look of revelation on his face.
COACH PORTER - I think I might have an idea...

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (confused) - Brilliant plan Coach... I'll get right on that.

Coach Porter quickly exits the office. The coaches take a look out the window.

INT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - EVENING

Nicole mimics a drop back passing scenario. She grunts and winces as she throws. Coach Porter, undetected, watches from nearby. After throwing she shakes her arm out.

COACH PORTER - You're doing it wrong... (Nicole looks at him curiously)... keep that up, you're gonna blow out your arm before Mid-season.

Coach Porter approaches her.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - Throwing technique is a product of conscious repetition... bad habits lead to bad passing, and bad passing makes bad seasons. You mind?

He offers his hand, and Nicole gives him the ball.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - Take it in steps. Catch... Grip... Drop... Check... Release. Get in your Shotgun stance.

Nicole obeys positioning herself to receive the pitch.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - Hike!

The coach pitches her the ball and she drops back into her stance.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - Stop! Look at your grip... what do you see?

Nicole looks down and is shocked to notice how different her Shotgun grip is-- from the grip she uses during a normal center exchange.

NICOLE - It's different...

COACH PORTER - That's your natural grip and that's where you need to start your progression whether its shotgun or under center.

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

The other coaches watch from the office as Coach Porter walks Nicole through her throwing progression. She drops back and throws a perfectly accurate spiral through a distant tire.

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW - What do you think he's doing?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Hell if I know, but with Coach... I'd expect the unexpected.

They continue to stare. Nicole drops back again and delivers another precise pass.

MONTAGE:

- * COACH PORTER BEGINS TO MENTOR NICOLE.
- * SHE QUICKLY IMPROVES.
- * CHARLIE NOTICES THE CHANGE.
- * CHARLIE MAINTAINS HER LEADERSHIP ROLE.
- * THE COMPETITION BETWEEN THEM INTENSIFIES.

END MONTAGE:

INT. S.A. STEERS TRAINING CAMP DORM - ROOM - MORNING

OPEN ON: Nicole sleeping peacefully in her small bed. She slowly opens her eyes to meet the new day. Suddenly Nicole is startled to find Milo sitting on her pillow staring her directly in the face. She screams and falls off the bed.

CONT. MONTAGE:

- * THE WOMEN CONTINUE TO TRAIN VERY SIMILARLY TO MEN.
- * FEMININE AND MATERNAL ISSUES ARE PRESENT.
- * THEY BOND OVER MISSING THEIR FAMILIES & HELP EACH OTHER.
- * THEY STUDY PLAY BOOKS IN GROUPS.

END MONTAGE:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM TUNNEL - S.A. SLASH VS. HOUSTON ENERGY - GAME 3 SEASON - DAY

The ladies wait in the tunnel to be introduced. FOCUS ON a visibly nervous Nicole stuffed between her teammates. Shayla notices her anxiety.

SHAYLA - Just breathe, Rookie.

Nicole takes the advice and the deep breath.

The ladies start a roar which swells to a fever pitch as they are released onto the field. As they explode from the tunnel onto the field Nicole quickly notices the lack of attendance-- mostly families of the players. Nothing like what she had seen in High school.

CUT TO:

EXT. S.A. SLASH VS. HOUSTON ENERGY - 4TH QUARTER

It's the fourth quarter of a game in which The Slash are up by 14 points with 7 minutes left on the clock. Charlie receives the snap and drops back to pass. Although Tania breaks open, she doesn't throw it. The coaches watch intently from the side-line.

COACH PORTER - She's open... THROW IT!

Finally, the line is compromised and Charlie fakes the pass before taking off in one of her patented scrambles.

COACH PORTER - SON OF A...!

Coach Porter throws his clipboard down in frustration. Charlie runs for 15 yards before she can be brought down at the Slash 33-yard line. The coach calls a time out. He looks back to the bench where NICOLE has been waiting patiently for her opportunity.

COACH PORTER - Olstein... get your hat on.

Nicole pulls on her helmet and meets Coach Porter on the sideline as the offense arrives. Charlie snatches off her helmet with a scowl on her mug.

CARLIE - What the hell is this, Coach!?

COACH PORTER - Take a seat Bundy, your day's over.

CHARLIE - ARE YOU, KIDDING!?

COACH PORTER - No, as a matter of fact I am the Coach of this team!

Charlie grins devilishly.

CHARLIE - We'll see how long that lasts.

She puckers her lips for a foe kiss then walks off triumphantly flashing a glance of acknowledgement to her O-line. Coach Porter brushes off the remark.

COACH PORTER - Alright everybody, bring it in. We're gonna be running a hurry up offense, so straight back to the line when you

hear the whistle. Alright let's get out there and show 'em what we can do. Ready... Slash on three, okay?

TEAM - 1... 2... 3... Slash!

The team breaks and all run on the field except Nicole. Coach Porter keeps her close for some last-minute instructions.

COACH PORTER - Okay, right now, I need you to forget about the thousands of fans... the referees... the other team, all of it. It's just you and me and some tires on the practice field running the progression. Catch... Grip... Drop... Check... Release. Okay, get out there.

Nicole smiles at the 'Thousands of Fans' comment. He pats Nicole on her helmet, and she takes the field, entering the huddle. The O-line members shoot glances towards one-another.

NICOLE - Alright ladies were going Gun Trips FIB, 94 Blackout X-Post, Max-- on one... ready? BREAK!

The team advances to the line of scrimmage.

NICOLE - DOWN... BLUE 13... BLUE 13 SET, HUT HUT!!

The ball is snapped and Nicole drops back. She is immediately crushed by several Defenders. Nicole sits up to see her O-line looking back at her.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - What the hell was that? (to Coach Crow) Is this what you're teaching them?

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR COACH CROW (to Asst. Coach Summers) - Get bent Titto! (to Coach Porter) Coach, I think we got a mutiny on our hands.

COACH PORTER - She's gonna have to gain her respect sooner or later, Frank.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Yeah, hopefully before her funeral.

Shayla helps her up.

SHAYLA - Tolja girl, the Amazons are all, Team Charlie.

Nicole makes her way back to the line.

NICOLE - DOWN... BLUE 23 CHECK WITH ME... BLUE 23 CHECK WITH ME... SET HUT HUT!

The ball is hiked. Nicole takes two steps back and is sandwiched from both sides.

Shayla arrives again to assist.

SHAYLA - I don't think this is working.

She picks up Nicole again.

NICOLE - Alright fine... Same play. LET'S GO!

They take the line.

NICOLE - DOWN... BLUE 80... BLUE 80... (makes hand gestures to the backs and receivers) SET HUT HUT!

The ball is hiked. Nicole fakes the hand off and makes her drop. The defenders are let go and Nicole drifts towards the sideline keeping her gaze down field. She stops near the sideline and throws a perfect spiral to Shayla who waits behind the line of scrimmage.

Shayla takes off down the field easily maneuvering past many of the remaining secondary tacklers until she is finally pushed out of bounds near the 15-yard-line.

The coaches continue to watch from the sideline. Coach Porter signals for Nicole to call a timeout, so that the team can huddle up at the sideline. Nicole waives the command off.

NICOLE - Okay look, I know you don't really know me, and I get that you don't owe me anything. But I'm not going to stop... so, either you can play or you're going to have to let them kill me.

The O-line ladies, smirk at the comment willing to take that challenge.

SHAYLA - Naw, to hell with that... check it out ladies. How would you like the coaches to know where you bitches hide your snacks?

A collective gasp washes over the group.

SHAYLA - Yep that's right, all of your twinkies... honey-buns... pop tarts... kool-aid... Have you heffa's munchin' on kale-pops, and lettuce burgers, til your stomachs touch your backs!

They straighten up and look to Nicole to lead them.

NICOLE - Okaaaay, were going, Gun Doubles, 71 Play-Action Phantom Post, Seven-Man, on two on two, ready?

TEAM - BREAK!

The ladies once again approach the line.

NICOLE - DOWN SET HUT!

The ball is snapped to Nicole on an option. A line-woman breaks free, and charges at her-- but, just before the monster of a woman hits her, LUCY "CRUMB-SNATCHER" WANG (32) Right Guard flies in, unloading on the woman. Nicole fakes the pitch then drops back and throws a beam to Tania in the back of the end-zone.

The crowd cheers along with the coaches, and the rest of the team-- all but Charlie of course.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team reconvenes in the Locker room after the game.

COACH PORTER - Alright everybody, Alright. You girls played a heck-of-- a game out there, some really good football. Now we got some things we need to clean up, but I'm sure that's just Game-day jitters, right? Alright on the bus in 20 and we're outta here.

Coach Porter starts to leave but stops short.

COACH PORTER - Oh, and one more thing... I'm proud of you Ladies. Real good work.

The team roars with celebratory cheers.

TIME CUT TO LATER:

INT. S.A. SLASH CHARTER BUS - EVENING

On her way to the back seats, Nicole is flagged down by Coach Porter.

COACH PORTER - Nicole, hold on a sec.

NICOLE - Hey coach...

COACH PORTER - So how did it feel being back between the posts?

NICOLE - Took a second to get the feel of things, but I think it's all coming back.

COACH PORTER - ... and your teammates?

NICOLE (sarcastically) - Can't you tell, we're new BFF's... just waiting for our lady-cycles to sync up?

COACH PORTER - So, do you have anything terribly important planned for the next 10 weeks?

Nicole looks at the man in cautious excitement.

NICOLE - Umm, I'm sure I can find time...

FOCUS ON: The smile forming on Nicole's face.

SMASH CUT TO:

Charlie, who is watching the scene from her place on the bus. She is none too pleased.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - NIGHT

Later that night, under the dim lights of the hallway, several figures emerge from their rooms. Though we can make-out little more than the sequins on their outfits, they scoot covertly down the hall, disappearing from view.

EXT. RUSTIC TEXAS DANCE CLUB - THE SAN ANTONIO SPUR - NIGHT

A battered neon sign flickers above the entrance: "THE SPUR." Country music leaks onto the gravel parking lot. A fleet of battered pickups parked outside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE S.A. SPUR - CONTINUOUS

A wall of heat and twang hits as Nicole, Shayla, Tania, Jennifer, and a few other teammates push inside-- even Andy, her wedding dress dramatically altered for the occasion. The place is packed-- locals in pearl snaps, Stetsons, and boots two-stepping to a live band. A mechanical bull sits menacingly in the corner.

JENNIFER (eyes wide) - Is this a joke? Where's the DJ?

TANIA - Y'all, we ain't in Jersey no more.

SHAYLA - Shoot, we ain't in the 20K's no more, chick.

T-GAINES - At least the guys are cute, behind all the buckles... Maybe we should give it a chance.

JENNIFER - Too late...

The twins are swept away by a couple rugged hombres, smiling and waving as they pass.

A COWBOY-- tall, sunburned, a little too confident-- tips his hat at Shayla.

COWBOY - You ladies lookin' to dance, or just watch?

SHAYLA (grins) - Sorry, not really my song.

COWBOY - Doncha worry about a thang, darlin'. We'll show you how it's done.

He takes her hand and leads her toward the dancefloor, with several other, "Good Ol' Boys," following suite. The girls, at first stiff and awkward, are whisked away by a mix of cowboys and cowgirls. The team is out of their element-- tripping over boots and each other, laughing as the locals show them the steps.

Andy stands, dejected and disheartened, holding a small bouquet of flowers. Her face drops, sullen.

UNKNOWN MALE (V.O.) - Umm, would you care to dance, Miss?

Andy suddenly turns to find, STANLEY MESSEK (36) Gentleman scholar in a suit standing there, hand out welcomingly. This (air-quotes) "Well-Dressed," Conservative Science-Guy smiles through newly straightened-teeth, custom Bifocals, and an obvious hair-piece.

Andy stares down at the much shorter man.

STANLEY MESSEK - Umm, with me?

Andy smiles, nodding yes-- and grabs his arm. The two make their way to the floor.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON NICOLE, who disappears to the bar for, a hit of liquid courage. Quickly tossing back two shots, she settles herself and begins to explore the area. She notices the others around the bar, all engaging men flirtatiously. One of them, a tall blonde, tosses her hair back over her shoulder, giggling playfully. The men flock.

Nicole, ever the competitor mimics the move clumsy, but adorable unknowingly catching the eye of Tim.

Nicole, not receiving the same immediate reaction as Blondie, she turns to retreat towards the restroom, and is suddenly face to face with Tim.

TIM - Nicole Olstein. In a honky-tonk? Well, I never thought I'd see the day.

NICOLE (smirks) - You stalking me, or is this your natural habitat?

TIM - A little of both, If I'm being honest. Care to...?
(motions)

Tim grabs her hand, and the two of them drift toward the crowded dancefloor, into their own orbit.

MONTAGE:

* THE TEAM LOOSENS UP, LETTING THE LOCALS LEAD THEM.

* TAN-LINE ARMS, CHEAP BEER, NEON LIGHTS.

* SHAYLA RIDES THE MECHANICAL BULL, LASTING SEVEN SECONDS BEFORE FLYING OFF.

* JENNIFER, RED-FACED, GETS DIPPED BY A COWBOY WITH A HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE.

* THE WOMEN SWEEP AROUND THE FLOOR WITH THE CLUBGOERS IN A COORDINATED LINE-DANCE. (MUSIC: LL COOL J - HEAD-SPRUNG)

* NICOLE AND TIM DANCE SLOW, PRESSED CLOSE, LAUGHTER MELTING INTO SOMETHING SOFTER.

END MONTAGE:

BACK TO:

Nicole and Tim, swaying offbeat. They talk-- catching up on old friend stuff, football, what they miss most about home. The air between them thickens.

TIM (soft) - I missed you, you know.

NICOLE (whisper) - Me too.

They stop moving. Tim tilts her chin up, they kiss-- gentle, then hungry, the kind of kiss that says old wounds aren't so old.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE S.A. SPUR - LATE NIGHT

The team stumbles out, loose and wild, singing off-key. Nicole's lipstick is smudged, her hair a mess, but she's glowing. The team piles back into twin cabs, rowdy and exhausted.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - MORNING

Nicole jolts awake, clutching her head. She rushes to the bathroom-- retching. Shayla, equally rough, stumbles in behind her.

SHAYLA - Umm, you okay?

NICOLE (groans) - Define okay.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - MORNING

The team drags through drills, tired, sluggish. Coach Porter, grim-faced, blows his whistle.

COACH PORTER - Let me guess-- y'all took the scenic route home last night?

Coach paces the line. The girls wobble, sweat, and wince.

COACH PORTER (CONT'D) - You think you're gonna win games with hangovers and half-assed effort? This ain't a sorority, ladies! Anyone pukes on my field; you're running laps 'til Christmas!

He stops in front of Nicole, who's pale and shaky.

COACH PORTER (quiet, pointed) - And you... I did not expect this from you. From what Tim told me, you had your head on straight. I thought you wanted to be a leader, more than anything? Guess, I'm just an old fool, who trusted a silly little-girl.

Nicole's face flushes with shame. The rest of the girls stare at their shoes. For a long beat, nobody says a word. Coach Porter shakes his head and storms off, whistle clenched in his fist.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - LATER THAT DAY

The girls gather in the common area, silent and sullen. It's LEAH MEEKS (21) Latina Tight-End who finally speaks up, voice trembling but firm.

MEEKS - I don't care what Coach thinks. I know we're better than this.

T-GAINES - He's right, though. We looked like trash out there.

NICOLE - So what? We let one night define us? That's not who I am. Not who we are!

A long pause. Then, Andy, stone-faced, stands.

ANDY - No frogs in bucket. Only work.

The girls laugh, tension breaking. The resolve in the room thickens. One by one, they nod.

MONTAGE:

* THE TEAM ON THE FIELD AT DAWN, RUNNING ROUTES AND SPRINTS UNTIL THE SUN RISES.

* NICOLE AND SHAYLA PUSHING EACH OTHER IN DRILLS, SWEAT SLICK ON THEIR BROWS, NEITHER BACKING DOWN.

* THE TWINS, FACES RED, REFUSING TO QUIT.

* MEEKS AND DT WORKING HAND-IN-HAND, LEARNING NEW PLAYS, CORRECTING EACH OTHER'S MISTAKES.

* COACH PORTER WATCHING FROM THE SHADOWS, JAW CLENCHED, HIDING A SMALL, PROUD SMILE.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - EVENING

The team, unified now, crushes drills with a fire Coach Porter hasn't seen all season. He watches, pride warring with worry in his eyes.

Coach Porter (V.O.) - They think we're dead weight. They think we're just here to fill seats. Well, let 'em think it!

Nicole, winded, meets his gaze. She nods, fierce and unbroken.

Coach Porter (V.O.) - We'll prove them all wrong!

The ladies gather together, and break-- ending practice, Charlie conveniently set-apart.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - CHARLIE'S ROOM - EVENING

Charlie, barely draped in a silk sheet, exhales a plume of cigarette smoke. PATRICK WESTON, Mid-40s, billionaire-tech-bro-- jackass, pants halfway up, shoes on the wrong feet. He buttons his shirt so wrong it looks like avant-garde fashion.

PATRICK - You keep at it like that; the Bengals'll be calling with an NFL contract.

CHARLIE - Or you could just move your wife into the guest house and end this charade.

PATRICK - Baby, we've talked about this-- appearances! You know you're my--

Charlie, bored, stands naked and fetches her robe.

CHARLIE - Save it, Pat. Just keep your end of the deal. This new girl-- Nicole-- either she goes, or something else does. And you won't like what it is.

Cue anxiety. Patrick's pupils shrink two sizes.

PATRICK - The coaches say you need a backup. You know, "for insurance."

Charlie slinks over. Patrick doubles over with a groan as her hand gets personal.

CHARLIE - Just keep her off my damn field!

PATRICK (high-pitched) - Yes, yes, of course!

Charlie releases, Patrick nearly topples.

PATRICK - As always. A pleasure doing business.

He tries to salute. Charlie deadpan-- smokes him out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A cluster of ladies lurk outside Charlie's suite, giggling at the thuds and yelps emanating from inside. Patrick emerges, shirt half tucked, tie all wrong, looking like he just lost a UFC fight-- and his dignity.

PATRICK - Ladies... Enjoy the rest of your evening.

He scurries. The women burst into laughter, several mimicking his walk.

DT (to the twins) - Damn, does that man shoot blanks or blanks?

Thing 2 holds up a phone-- she's filmed the whole thing. Whispering,

THING 2 - I'm putting this on Tik-Tok with the Curb Your Enthusiasm theme.

The group snickers into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - EVENING

Coach Porter trundles in, sweat-stained and pre-occupied. He finds Patrick sitting lazily in his chair, feet up, scrolling his phone.

PATRICK - Ahh, Gregory. May I call you Gregory? (doesn't wait) Splendid! Say, about player distribution. I'd hate for team leadership to become... diluted.

COACH PORTER (sighs) - We're evaluating talent. If Charlie's the best fit-- she'll lead.

Patrick's smile drops, almost reptilian.

PATRICK - Well. I will expect to see a more... loyal approach to retaining certain franchise faces. (Beat) Great chat, Gregory.

He stands, winks, and is gone.

Coach eyes the office window-- wondering, not for the first time, why he ever left the S.E.C.

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - EVENING

Practice continues to show NICOLE's improvement, along with Charlie's defiance. Once again practice ends with the team huddled around Coach Porter, now less commanding-- more thoughtful in his remarks.

COACH PORTER - Okay ladies, good hustle out there... we're really startin' to move some things around-- so don't lose that. This week we got Atlanta. Now that's a big team, tough players. So, we have to be smart and quick-- no unforced mistakes, okay? Charlie, you got the keys, make good decisions-- use your teammates. That's what they're here for. I just want to thank you all for your continued effort. You make it easy on us coaches. I'm proud of you, ladies. (pauses) ALRIGHT ON YOUR FEET!

The ladies rise, and press-in-- hands raised high.

COACH PORTER - 1... 2... 3...?

TEAM - SLASH!

The team breaks, ladies heading toward the locker-room-- Coaches toward the field to straighten equipment. Nicole walking in a group of players, looks back over her shoulder, contemplative.

CUT TO:

Coach Porter stands, back by a set of stacked cones, and a bag of balls, mind noticeably bemused.

NICOLE (V.O.) - HEY COACH!

He turns, surprised to see her.

COACH PORTER - Oh, Nicole... what can I do for you?

NICOLE - You know what my Poppa used to tell me, when I was stuck in my head or confused about my next step?

She leans in.

NICOLE - He said, "Do not fear, for I am with you." He said it was from God, but it reminded me of my Momma-- always lookin' down over me like she promised.

Coach Porter, absorbs the gesture, genuinely.

COACH PORTER - Well, thanks Olstein-- I'll keep that in mind.

NICOLE - Yeah, it's just-- as someone who knows a little somthin' about having everybody count on you, I know how lonely a place it can be. The important thing is, to make the most of your time with those truly on your squad. "Gotta cherish, good times, with good People." Cause, before you know it, their gone.

COACH PORTER (points at her) - Good point.

NICOLE - Feel better?

COACH PORTER - Yeah-- (turmoil) NO. I mean, coaching in NCAA was supposed to be this big launchpad into the Pros. Then, it was interviews for low-level staff, which I couldn't land. Then,

Quality Control, Assistant, Volunteer, Assistant-Volunteer, High-school-Coordinator-Volunteer.

NICOLE - Oh my Gosh, what did you do?

COACH PORTER (humiliated) - Weekend-Fantasy-Football-Analyst... Alternate.

NICOLE - That's a pretty steep fall. But hey, just think-- if not for all that, us girls wouldn't get to call you, Coach.

COACH PORTER - So, it all worked out.

NICOLE (points at him) - Good point, Coach. Feel better?

COACH PORTER - Perfect, thanks again, Olstein. Go get some rest.

NICOLE - Yessir.

Nicole jobs off towards the Dorm, while the coach continues to straighten the equipment.

FADE OUT:

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Coach Porter sits behind his desk, the weight of the franchise heavy on his shoulders. The door creaks open-- Charlie saunters in, all swagger, arms folded.

COACH PORTER (measured, swallowing pride) - Have a seat, Charlie.

CHARLIE (smirking, doesn't sit) - I'll stand, Coach. What's this about?

COACH PORTER (hard sigh) - You and I both know this team's teetering. You're the captain-- on paper. But leadership's more than stats and attitude. I need you to align with the vision here. The team needs you, not just your talent, but your buy-in. Physically. Mentally. I need you to take ownership-- step up and lead.

Charlie rolls her eyes, arms crossing tighter.

CHARLIE (arrogant) - You want me to fall in line, Coach? Here's the deal. I'm not some pawn for your plans. I want guarantees-- my voice, my role. And if you think you can sideline me, or push me out, think again. You play your game, I play mine... but we play by my rules, and if you try to get "Creative," I'll make sure your time here is very uncomfortable. Got me?

A tense beat-- Porter's jaw clenches.

COACH PORTER (quiet, steely) - You done?

Charlie flashes a toothy, menacing grin, turns, and leaves.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - COMMON ROOM - MORNING

The TV hums in the background, muted. Nicole sits on the arm of a battered sofa, Shayla stretched out beside her, fidgeting with a sweatband. Tania paces, agitated. Meeks, LAURA "LOW-LOW" WOODS (23), BERNICE "NEECIE" MILLER (26), BULINDA "BULLSY" NORTH (27), and Jennifer cluster in-- everyone restless, voices low.

SHAYLA (breaking the silence) - Damn. DT, the Twins, T-Gaines... gone. Just like that.

TANIA - Coach didn't even look 'em in the eye. After all that grind, too.

JENNIFER - Y'all act like you didn't see it coming. League don't care about your story; just your stats.

LOW-LOW - Stats? Man, half those girls outplayed the starters last week. This is some politics, not football.

NICOLE - It's not just the game. Think about what they're going back to. DT's gotta work at that warehouse, graveyard shift, just to make rent.

NEECIE (quiet, bitter) - And the Twins? Last I heard, they're splitting a basement room, babysitting their cousin's kids for gas money.

MEEKS (shrugs) - Some of 'em were barely hanging on before the league. Now what? Back to bills and bosses who don't give a damn if you can run a slant.

BULLSY (scoffs) - Yeah, but let's not sugarcoat it-- life in the league ain't no fairy tale. T-Gaines said she'd rather mop floors than take another helmet to the ribs for free.

JENNIFER - Maybe she's got a point. Out there, you get a steady check. In here? One bad snap and you're yesterday's news.

SHAYLA - But that's the whole point, ain't it? We busted our asses to get away from "out there." I ain't tryna go back to folding T-shirts for eight bucks an hour.

LOW-LOW - You think the real-world cares if you played semi-pro football? Try putting "slot receiver" on a job app. See how far that gets you.

MEEKS (firm) - I dunno. Some people'd kill for a normal life. No ice baths, no drama, just regular.

NICOLE - Except we're not regular. None of us. We chose this because we wanted more. Even if it's just for a minute.

A hush falls. Everyone considers it.

TANIA (soft) - I just hope they find something good. Or at least, something that don't chew 'em up.

SHAYLA (raising her voice a bit) - We ain't gone yet. Let's play like every game's our last-- 'cause for some of us, it might be.

NICOLE (unrelenting) - Naw ladies, we can do better than that. From now on, we play to get our teammates back from their regular lives. They are... We all are Players!

The group nods, resolve growing. Someone switches off the TV. The girls sit together in the quiet, every one of them thinking about what waits beyond the walls if the call comes for them next.

CUT TO:

S.A. STEERS STADIUM - S.A. SLASH AT ATLANTA RAGE - GAME 4 - PRE-GAME - STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Charlie, helmet in hand, ignores the coaches, scribbling her own plays. Nicole, suited up, sits on the bench-- waiting. The coaches glance her way, silent, frustrated. Players whisper: "Why isn't Nicole in?"

ON FIELD: 2nd Quarter (00:10)

INT. BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

BROADCASTER 1 (bewildered) - Well, those certainly were... football plays, Partner. What'd you take away from the Slash attack plan?

BROADCASTER 2 - Umm that's right, David, and if you can believe it... with that last drive Charlie, I mean The Slash have managed to tie things up. Question for next half is what to do about this Rage offense?

BROADCASTER 1 - The only numbers that matter are wins and losses-- unless you play fantasy, then let's face it... it's pure mayhem.

The offense sputters-- Charlie calling her own audibles, ignoring signals from the sidelines. Quick checks from called plays, receivers run confused. The crowd is restless; the coaches fume.

INT. S.A. SLASH SIDELINE - THIRD QUARTER

Asst. Coach Summers leans to Porter.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (hushed) - Umm, Coach... What's wrong with 10?

Porter shakes his head-- eyes locked on the field.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. SLASH SIDELINE - FOURTH QUARTER

Finally, the defense, led by Andy, takes matters into their own hands. Andy strips the ball-- returns it for a touchdown. Next series, a pick-six. The Slash sideline erupts. Momentum shifts, and Slash surges.

FINAL SCOREBOARD: SLASH 24, RAGE 21

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - POSTGAME

The team is quiet, unsure if this counts as victory. Charlie sits apart, fuming. Nicole, still suited up but unused, stares at her cleats. Porter enters, eyes scanning the room.

COACH PORTER (voice rough) - We got the win. But this... this isn't football. Not the way I know it.

He looks to Charlie, then to the rest. Unspoken: the next move will define them all. He walks away disappointed.

FADE OUT:

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The sun beats down as the team gathers, stretching and whispering about new arrivals. Four FRESH FACES-- JORDAN DART (20), BRIANNA WAY (23), LEXUS TANNER (21), and YVONNE KERN (24)-- jog onto the field. They're athletic, composed, but their eyes give away something missing.

COACH PORTER (clapping hands) - Alright, meet your new teammates. Jordan, Bri, Lex, Yvonne. They've got the skills-- see if you can keep up.

The girls nod, sizing each other up. Nicole jogs over, extending a hand.

NICOLE - Welcome to the circus.

JORDAN (shrugs) - Just here for the shot, I guess.

LEX (quiet, honest) - Yeah, it's a paycheck. Not much more for me.

Bri and Yvonne echo the sentiment with tight, polite smiles. The old heads exchange glances-- something's off.

MEEKS (to Nicole) - They can play, but... none of 'em's got any love for it.

Nicole watches them run drills-- precise, efficient, but empty.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - NIGHT

Nicole sits alone, staring at her phone. A gentle knock-- Shayla pokes her head in.

SHAYLA - Hey. You ever been to church?

NICOLE (teasing) - You inviting me to get saved?

SHAYLA (grins) - Maybe. Or maybe just to see what you're made of.

Nicole hesitates, then shrugs.

NICOLE - Guess it couldn't hurt.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. PAUL'S BAPTIST CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING

Nicole sits awkwardly next to Shayla in a pew near the back. The air buzzes with hymns and murmured greetings. The stained glass glows. Pastor Underwood (56), a sturdy, warm-eyed man, steps to the pulpit.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD - Brothers and sisters, I know some of us come in here today carrying burdens nobody else can see. Some of us have lost folks we love'd so much, it feels like there's a hole inside us that nothing on this earth could ever fill. That pain-- Lord knows it's real-- but hear me now: if you let it, God can use that pain to soften your heart, not harden it. Loss can teach you the true meaning of mercy. It can show you how much this world needs gentleness, and how deeply we're called to walk in grace.

Nicole's body tenses. Her eyes sting, memories of her mother flashing through her mind.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD - When tragedy strikes, when grief seems too heavy to carry, we are called to respond not with bitterness, but with peace. Not with anger, but with forgiveness. Every day is a new chance to share the grace and mercy God has shown you. You can't go back and change what's happened, but you can choose today to lighten someone else's load, to sow seeds of kindness even in rocky or thorny ground. Scripture tells us-- the good soil, the heart open to God, will produce a harvest far greater than what was sown. The more you walk in your God-given purpose, the more He entrusts to you.

Shayla squeezes Nicole's hand. Nicole blinks hard, swallowing the lump in her throat.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER

Shayla leads Nicole to a bustling room filled with the GIRLS' YOUTH TEAM. The girls mob Shayla with hugs. Nicole, shy, is surprised when a tiny receiver thrusts a football at her.

DARRYANA (cute smirk) - You're the Slingshot, right? I've seen you on my TikTok... you're a pretty solid, QB? Almost as Nyce as me.

NICOLE (smiling, soft) - Well... thank you, umm?

DARRYANA (extends hand) - Darryana... Darryana Roberts-- people call me "Yana," though. Pleasure to meet you.

The two shake, smiling respectfully.

The other girls, pepper her with questions and giggles. Nicole feels something shift-- a warmth, a sense of belonging.

Suddenly, the Pastor enters, warmth in his grin, and Shayla at his side.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD (O.S.) - You must be Nicole.

She turns. Pastor Underwood approaches, kind eyes twinkling.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD - Shayla told me about you. Glad you came.

Nicole, still raw, nods.

NICOLE - Thanks. I-- I think I needed it, been keeping a lot, pinned up. Needed the release.

He claps her gently on the shoulder.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD - That's what we're here for. Just know, the World gives us a lot to handle... yet The Lord, never intended for us to do it alone. It's hard but all we need to do, is allow ourselves to receive His mercy.

NICOLE (reflective eyes) - Thank you Pastor, that's comforting.

PASTOR UNDERWOOD - Anytime Sling-shot, you ever need anything, you come find us, alright?

NICOLE (lifts hand in salute) - Hand to God.

The Pastor hugs Shayla and departs. Nicole looks around at the kids, the community, Shayla's proud smile. For the first time in a long while, she breathes easy. She's found a hint of her purpose-- and maybe, just maybe, a place to belong.

FADE OUT:

EXT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - DAY

Coach Porter, suit pressed and scowl returned, walks the concrete halls of the empty stadium. He enters a luxury box, where SENATOR BUCKEY MARSTON, white-stetsoned and all Texas bravado, waits with a wide grin. The walls are lined with memorabilia and photos of Marston Holdings Inc. breaking ground.

SENATOR MARSTON - Gregory! Come in, sit. You want a drink? (beat) I hear you got the girls in shape.

COACH PORTER - Work in progress, Senator. That's why I'm here. We need--

The door swings open. In strides Patrick, and the air in the room instantly becomes tense.

PATRICK - Hope I'm not interrupting, gentlemen.

SENATOR MARSTON - Not at all, Patrick. We were just talking Slash business.

Patrick fixes Porter with a look that could chill beer.

PATRICK - Splendid, let's cut to it. Charlie Bundy-- she's the face of this franchise, and I don't want her standing on the sidelines while you play favorites with your rookie.

Porter sits straighter, not backing down.

COACH PORTER - I'm doing what's best for the team.

PATRICK - And I'm telling you what's best for business. Charlie leads, or you'll be looking for a job in high-school ball, understand?

A heavy silence. Then the Senator, rubbing his chin, chimes in-- voice slick.

SENATOR MARSTON - Patrick and I've been talking. Maybe it's time we freshen up the roster. Bring in some younger, more marketable talent. Get rid of the dead weight-- Nicole, Meeks, those twins, DT, T-Gaines. The league wants stars, not... oddities.

Porter's jaw tightens.

COACH PORTER - Sorry to correct you, Senator. But that dead weight is the heart of my team.

PATRICK - Heart doesn't sell tickets. Looks do. Wins do. You want to keep your seat; you'll make the changes we ask. Starting with Charlie.

He stands, straightening his jacket.

PATRICK - Think it over, Coach. You've got a week.

Patrick strides out. The Senator gives Porter a condescending pat on the knee.

SENATOR MARSTON - It's just business, Greg. Don't take it personal.

Porter sits alone, seething-- his team's future and his own hanging by a thread.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The room is thick with nervous anticipation-- faces and eyes stoic. The team is gathered, in wait.

FOCUS ON: Jennifer, lips moving rapidly as she scrolls her mental play-rolodex. Shayla, shifting ball back and forth under her arms. And Andy, face painted... and stone-cold. Coach Porter arrives, hiding the frustration in his eyes.

COACH PORTER - Alright everybody, we've got a real tough opponent waiting out there today-- intent upon testing our meddle, dedicated to draining our energy, Hell-bent on provoking our doubts. They want us to forget who we are, where we've come from, and what we had to do to get here.

Cut to Meeks, unsure eyes.

COACH PORTER - But that's not happening. Not today. Because we know exactly who we are. We're the team that outworked every excuse, outlasted every setback, and showed up when it mattered most. Every rep, every early morning, every sacrifice-- you earned this moment.

Cot to Tania's settled glare.

COACH PORTER - They can test us. They can push us. They can try to wear us down. But they don't get to define us. We do. We play fast, we play physical, and we play for each other. When it gets hard-- and it will-- we lean in, not back.

Cut to Nicole, unflapping... resiliency personified.

COACH PORTER - So when you step out there, bring your hustle, bring your heart, and bring your belief. Trust your training. Trust the teammate next to you. Leave nothing in the tank, because this field belongs to the team that wants it more. Now let's bring it in...

The team crowds in, hum growing... hands raised.

COACH PORTER - FIGHT ON THREE, 1... 2... 3...!

TEAM - FIGHT!!!

Team irrupts in sinister howls, as they crowd out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. S.A. SLASH VS. BIRMINGHAM IRON - NIGHT

On the opening kick-off, Tania receives the kick, and swiftly cuts through the Defense, passed mid-field finally stumbling-down at the Slash 42-yard-line.

As usual, Charlie takes the field leading them to the 10, where they end the drive with a short field-Goal.

The Defense kicks into gear, halting the Iron drive in 3 to reclaim possession. The punt is blocked and recovered at the 22-yard-line. They retreat to the side-line, lost in exhilaration. Again, their offensive potency is suppressed by a fast-pursuing Defense.

CUT TO:

S.A. SLASH 9 VS. BIRMINGHAM IRON 3

EXT. S.A. STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - HALF-TIME - DAY

The team files in, somber-- followed by the coaches. Coach Porter again addresses them. These sheep stare up at their Shepherd for words of hope in the midst of their disarray.

COACH PORTER - Alright, lock in. Sit down and listen. We're up 9-3, and that's the only good news in this room right now. Because that first half? That wasn't us. That was playing not to lose. That was waiting for something to happen instead of making it happen. We left points out there. We let them hang around. And teams like this will make you pay for that. Now hear me clearly: We are still in a great position to win this game. We're the better team. We're deeper, we're stronger, and when we play our brand of football, they cannot stay with us. But potential doesn't win games-- commitment does.

Tania grabs at Nicole, sure that she will be called on to mount a come-back. Nicole, smiles... confidently, mentally preparing herself for this challenge.

COACH PORTER - This second half is about selling out. Every route, at full speed. Every block, finished. Every tackle, with bad intentions! No more coasting, no more hoping the scoreboard takes care of it for us! We take control, or we hand them belief-- and I refuse to do that!

Coach looks, apologetically toward his star-player.

COACH PORTER - Offense, you're still the engine. The first unit is leading this team the rest of the way. And Charlie-- this is your moment. You're our quarterback for a reason. Step up. Command the huddle. Trust what you see, trust your arm, and lead your team. We don't need perfect-- we need decisive, fearless football.

Tania's expression twists incredulously. She pats her friend's shoulder, encouraging.

COACH PORTER - Defense, keep doing your job and give us a chance. Special teams, Win the hidden yards. Everyone-- every single one of you-- decide right now how this game is going to be remembered. We can walk out of here relieved... or we can walk out of here proud. Let's go take the second half the way it's meant to be taken!

Nicole watches her nemesis in perceptive disbelief.

EXT. S.A. SLASH SIDE LINE - 3RD QUARTER (4:21)

Nicole sits alone, defeated as her team is pushed, impotently across the field. As the crowd groans harshly, she drops her head, helpless and abandoned-- as the little girl standing over her Mother's casket.

CUT TO:

EXT. S.A. SLASH SIDE LINE - 4TH QUARTER (0:00)

S.A. SLASH 9 VS. BIRMINGHAM IRON 13

The Iron celebrate on field, as Slash players revert towards the tunnel. Nicole doesn't budge from the bench-- eyes fixed on the ground-- as her teammates disappear into the dense cave of failure. Suddenly, Shayla steps into view beside her.

SHAYLA - This ain't your fault, Rook... got the stink of politics all over it.

NICOLE - I know...

SHAYLA (looks oddly) - So, what you thinkin' about?

NICOLE - Purpose.

SHAYLA - Okaaaay?

NICOLE - How it's often defined by tragedy.

SHAYLA - Aww hell, don't tell me, you been over here gettin' philosophical? Look this is not a tragedy, it's not even a conference game.

NICOLE - No, just something your father said...

SHAYLA - Oh, now I know I don't wanna hear it. You ready?

NICOLE - I guess.

SHAYLA (bows, offering hand) - Then... Maddam?

The teammates retreat into the tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team takes a seat, glum faces all.

COACH PORTER - Alright. Bring it in. That one hurts-- and it should. We just lost to a team that wanted it more, and that's on us. Not scheme! Not talent! Effort! Purpose!

Nicole and Shayla arrive into the team club-house, to find the team mid-speech. They navigate through teammates, and take seats.

COACH PORTER - So, here's what I need-- from every single one of you, starting right now:

Scan the room, as the ladies settle in for a challenge.

COACH PORTER - It's a simple ask-- search yourselves, each and every one of you. Be honest. Ask why you're playing this game. Is it for your stats? Your spotlight? Your name? Or is it for the one standing next to you in this room?

The girls look at one-another, smiling or nodding in confirmation.

COACH PORTER - Because if you're playing for yourself, you're not helping this team. And sooner or later, that shows up on the field-- just like it did tonight. This program was built on something simple: we play for each other. We sacrifice for each other. When one guy falls short, another picks him up. That's what makes a team dangerous.

Charlie's face shows descension, even to the question.

COACH PORTER - From this moment forward, I want you playing for the person beside you-- blocking for them, covering for them, fighting for them. If you're not willing to do that, then you need to ask yourself whether you deserve to be called a Slasher. That's not anger talking. That's honesty. And what we do with it will define who we are going forward.

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The team is called to huddle mid-field.

COACH PORTER - Alright girls, settle-down listen up--

He removes a piece of paper from his pocket, connecting it to his clipboard.

COACH PORTER - "You are cordially invited to attend the San Antonio Football Family Banquet, honoring the inaugural season of the S.A. Slash-- hosted by Patrick Weston, Owner, San Antonio Steers, and Senator Buckey Marston. Join us in celebrating your outstanding achievement and professional excellence. Dinner, awards, and press-- Friday, six o'clock, San Antonio Hilton."

He sets the letter down. His face-- a mix of pride and suspicion.

The team sits with stunned, puzzled faces.

COACH PORTER - They wanna "honor" us for our inaugural season?

JENNIFER - Wait, so then like... it's free, right?

SHAYLA - Yeah, as long as you smile for a hundred cheesy-pics, pretending we even know any of the Steers... let alone, hang out together with 'em.

LOW-LOW - Is there cash involved? Or just the chance to sit through more lame-o speeches from the, "Testosterone-Tribe"?

The girls chatter amongst themselves.

NEECIE - I mean, recognition's cool, but they never cared about us before. Why now?

BULLSY (snorts) - Or maybe they want us to parade around, so they look "progressive."

JORDAN DART (rookie, earnest) - But... it's kinda huge, right? Being invited? I mean, my mom's gonna freak if she sees me on TV, or somethin'.

TANIA (skeptical) - It's all for PR. They want to say, "Look at us, supporting women's football!" and then go right back to ignoring us.

LEXUS TANNER - I dunno. Maybe we should go. Even if it's fake, it's a chance to show people we're not just some sideshow.

YVONNE KERN (rookie, practical) - ... and if we party all-night, we'll be dragging-ass at practice.

Nicole leans back on her hands.

NICOLE - Face it girls-- it's a circus, and we're the main act. All I know is if we don't show up, they'll say we're Ungrateful or "Divas."

JENNIFER - Unappreciative.

NICOLE - Least if we go, maybe we win some folks over. Maybe some little girl sees us and thinks, "Hey, I could do that."

Shayla leans forward, eyes sharp.

SHAYLA - Or maybe... we go, eat their food, steal their spotlight-- then come back here, and win anyway.

TANIA - I just want them to remember our names for the right reasons, not 'cause of a party.

Coach Porter watches them.

COACH PORTER - Ladies, no one's making you do anything. But this is your squad, your moment. You wanna go-- go proud, go as a team, together. You wanna skip it, I've got your back. Just remember what you're playing for.

A beat, as the girls look at each other-- some grinning, some biting their lips, all weighing the moment.

NEECIE - If we go, we go as, "The Slash." I'm talkin' loud, united, and impossible to ignore.

The team nods, resolved. They don't have all the answers, but they have each other.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. DOWNTOWN HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

The Slash, scrubbed and squeezed into cocktail dresses, step into a brightly lit ballroom overflowing with San Antonio's well-heeled elite. Waiters glide by with champagne. Banners scream "SUPPORT WOMEN'S SPORTS!" in fonts as hollow as the promises.

Nicole trails behind her teammates, feeling like a kid at a grown-ups' wedding. A few show up with spouses or kids-- awkwardly herding little ones in suits and bows.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) - And now-- your San Antonio Slash!

A spotlight sweeps the room. Cameras flash. The players are shepherded onstage, blinking and stiff, as the crowd claps politely.

ON STAGE:

The team stands in a line, paraded like show ponies. A local news anchor hands out plaques: The awards are heavy, the speeches lighter than air.

SPORTS ANCHOR - And the, "Pioneer Award" goes to Jennifer "Thumper" Drew!

The line scoots forward, as Jennifer takes the stage to accept her gaudy statuette. They lower the mic to her height.

JENNIFER - Umm, hey everybody... I wanna thank the association for this tremendous award. (sits the trophy down) Wow, tremendously-heavy too. Thank you-- wow. I honestly didn't expect this. When they called my name, my first thought was, "Are you sure you mean me, a pioneer-- never been called that before, that's for sure?"

MOMENTS LATER:

Jennifer returns to the line of teammates.

SPORTS ANCHOR (grinning) - Alright, let's keep it moving people, next the Award for the, 'Most Inspirational Teammate' goes to... #81 TORI "T-GAINES" STROUSE!

Odd expressions mask the girls. Several of the teammates whisper, awkward to one-another.

Coach Porter takes the stage grabbing the mic.

COACH PORTER - Thanks everybody, uhh some recent-- team-changes have been made, but we will make sure, Tori gets this. The Slash appreciates you.

JENNIFER (quietly, to Nicole) - Is this spray-paint?

She sniffs the award. Nicole, stands beside her... three awards in hand.

FADE OUT:

INT. DOWNTOWN HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

Several of the players are interviewed.

NEWS REPORTER - How does it feel to be role models for girls everywhere?

SHAYLA (dead-eyed smile) - We just give 110%, take it one game at a time, and, uh, hope the weather holds.

Meanwhile, Charlie is cornered by a booster's wife.

BOOSTER'S WIFE - You girls are so brave. Do you ever get scared, you know, playing with all those... big athletes?

CHARLIE (tight smile) - Lady, we ARE the big athletes.

Charlie walks away, ditching her empty flute at the table. She scoots through, uncomfortable. Stops, noticing her teammates-- all seemingly out of place, even those with family appear to wish they were on the field.

AT THE TABLES: Waiters serve steak dinners on fine china, but the plates are half cold. Jennifer stares at her "award," then at the \$500-a-plate meal.

JENNIFER (leans towards Nicole) - Guess we're good enough to eat with them, just not afford the food they serve.

Nicole sighs, picking at her food, when a shadow falls over her. She looks up to find JAKE SLAZENGER (24, square-jawed, oozing confidence), the Steers' star QB, leans on her chair.

JAKE - Olstein, right? Jake Slazenger, Quarterback.

NICOLE (non-plussed) - Okay, I believe you.

JAKE (studies her curiously, thirstily) - Wow, didn't know star QB's came in fun-sized.

Nicole forces a grin.

NICOLE - Oh, nice to know Ego's still come-- as big as Texas.

She presents her hand. Jake laughs, uncomfortably.

JAKE - I like your style, Olstein. You should come with me to a game sometime-- see how real football gets played. I can get you access to the club-box.

Nicole stares, caught off guard by his arrogance, but not wanting a scene.

NICOLE - Sure, Quarterback Jake. Why not.

They shake and he grins, triumphant, then saunters off.

BACK WITH THE TEAM:

The event drags on. More interviews. More empty praise. The players trade looks-- annoyed, restless, boxed in. The room feels smaller by the second.

Nicole glances at her teammates, their smiles frozen, their eyes tired.

NICOLE (V.O.) - Let 'em clap. Let 'em talk. Saturday, we'll remind everyone what respect looks like.

She squeezes the cheap plaque in her hand, jaw set. As the team files out together, you can feel the slow burn of something dangerous, ready to explode.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Dimmed room, folding chairs, suspicious aroma of microwaved popcorn and maybe athlete's foot. Players and coaches gather for film study. At the front, Coach Porter, laser pointer in one hand, a never-say-die scowl in the other.

COACH PORTER - Alright, before we get to the new Split Offense plays-- shut it, Crow-- it's a conference game. No better chance to show what we're made of. Nicole, you're running first half offense.

The news lands like a paternity test at a family BBQ. Charlie's face could curdle milk. Nicole, takes a deep breath, face resolute.

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

The team, fueled by humiliation and resolve, sprints drills in the early morning light. The only applause now is the thud of cleats and the crack of determination. The team gathers in a huddle at the end of practice, Coach at the helm-- all hands raised.

COACH PORTER - Alright team, bring it in. I just want to say how proud I am of the work you put in today-- every day. The effort, the focus, the grind at practice doesn't go unnoticed. You're earning everything that's coming your way, so be confident in the work you've put in.

Nicole looks on in reverence.

COACH PORTER - This week we take on the, "Jacksonville Dixie Blues." So, as always, respect the opponent, but Fear No One. You belong in this moment and you've worked your tail off for it.

Back to Coach.

COACH PORTER - Quick reminder on logistics: bus will be here, tomorrow afternoon for our 2:00PM to, Missouri. Be ready. I need everyone locked in, and on that bus by 11:30 AM-- no exceptions.

Charlie watches-- a knowing, yet subtle smirk on her lips.

COACH PORTER - I'm proud of this team. Proud of your toughness, your commitment, and the way you show up for each other. Now I expect you to take advantage of this opportunity. Go out there, show the world who you are, trust your training, and leave it all on the field. (nods) Okay ladies, let's go Family on three. 1... 2... 3...

TEAM - FAMILY!!!

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Nicole sits at her locker, staring-- a stunned mix of excitement and internal-stress, plaguing her face (insecurities weighing heavy).

SHAYLA (grabs Nicole) - Told you it was only a matter of time, Newbie.

NICOLE (slaps at her playfully) - Oh, Jeez girl-- you just almost gave me an episode.

SHAYLA - Dang, girl-- do I need to start calling you the Stress-Induced-Sling? Take it easy, this ain't Elm Street.

NICOLE - I know-- my bad Shay, just got alot on my mind is all.

SHAYLA - Hey, no worries-- you should be noid, it's all on you now, chica. But if you ever flex again... (cocks her fists jokingly). Alright, well congrats, Mama-- you deserve this.

Shayla disappears, Nicole goes back to staring, curiously in her locker.

Charlie approaches-- eyes dragging over Nicole like a bad read, that sucks all the air from the area.

CHARLIE - So-- you finally did it, huh, Barbie? (lets out a soft laugh) Stole a star's shine.

Nicole stops, squares herself, yet says nothing.

CHARLIE - Pretty slick too, I gotta admit. Strolled in with nothing but a JV-caliber arm, and a little Maybelline confidence. Funny how things work now, (leans in just enough for it to sting) Guess D.E.I. IS ruining this country.

She straightens, smile widening into something colder.

CHARLIE - But hey-- congrats, seriously. Best of luck out there. (Charlie claps, slow) Hope you can carry the weight, Rookie.

She turns to leave, tossing the final line over her shoulder like a gift wrapped in barbed wire.

CHARLIE - Don't worry. I'll be right here when you drop it.

Charlie saunters out with all of the arrogance and swagger you might expect from a cultural-icon.

Nicole sits, half shocked half amazed by her own restraint.

Looking back in the small closet, she kisses her fingers and taps the wall before exiting. As she leaves, we notice the phrase, "My power is made perfect in weakness, 2 Corinthians 12:9." taped to the wall-- the only thing guiding her.

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

COACH PORTER scrambles to gather film and a mug with, "World's #1 Dad" written in dry-erase marker. Asst. Coach Summers barrels in, wild-eyed.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - We've got a problem, Coach.

COACH PORTER - You're supposed to be on the bus, Frank?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Charlie's gone!

COACH PORTER - Gone? Like "take her talents to South Beach," gone? Or "ignore curfew," gone?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Gone... gone. Not in her room, not at campus yoga, not even at the vapetorium.

Coach Porter sighs, grabs his clipboard, and hauls-it out the door. He corrals the team as they load the bus.

COACH PORTER (pulls Nicole aside) - Olstein, how do you feel about playing a full-game?

NICOLE - What about Charlie?

COACH PORTER - She's out, you're in. Can you handle it?

Before Nicole can respond.

COACH PORTER - Never mind-- you got this.

He continues wrangling the squad, leaving Nicole pale and amped.

INT. SAN ANTONIO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (SAT) - SAN ANTONIO TX - DAY

The team waits at a fairly busy gate in the airport hub. They surround the flight gate with their carry-on bags in hand. Nicole stands looking, thoughtfully out of the window. Jennifer approaches from behind.

JENNIFER - Nervous?

NICOLE - No, not exactly. To tell you the truth I don't know how to feel. It's just different.

JENNIFER - Of course it is. You're used to being Super-girl; swooping in to save us from a disastrous first-half. Now, it's all on you.

NICOLE - Exactly, Win... Lose... or Draw.

JENNIFER - Hey, you've been here before-- do what you do...

Jennifer, pats her on the back and walks away.

NICOLE - Yeah, but that was in Junior-Varsity.

Nicole continues to stare out of the window, face troubled.

EXT. RAINES STADIUM - S.A. SLASH AT JACKSONVILLE DIXIE BLUES -
GAME 6 DAY

A rowdy Florida crowd hurls boos at the Slash players as they take the field. Drums pound from the stands. Nicole paces the sideline, helmet in hand, adrenaline pulsing.

FIRST HALF MONTAGE:

* NICOLE LEADS THE SLASH, HER EXACTING PLAY-- THOUGH SLOW, SHOWS STEADY PROGRESS.

* SHE RUNS, SHE HANDS OFF, SHE PITCHES, SUDDENLY SHE THROWS A PASS- THE RECEIVER CATCHING, AND PITCHING THE BALL BACK TO HER AS SHE RUNS PAST.

* BROADCAST BOOTH ERUPTS AT THE TRICK PLAY.

* THERE ARE SOME RUNS BY THE BACKS, AND A FEW SHORT PASSES HERE AND THERE TO KEEP THE DEFENSE GUESSING.

* THE O-LINE GIRLS GRUMBLE, BUT WATCH, IMPRESSED.

* ON A FAKE-PASS TO SHAYLA THE GOAL LINE SCORES.

END MONTAGE:

S.A. SLASH 14 VS. JACKSONVILLE DIXIE BLUES 28 - HALFTIME

INT. RAINES STADIUM - VISITORS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team enters and takes seats with Coach Porter following closely. They begin to receive the proper medical attention needed to prepare for what is sure to be just as grueling a second-half of football as the first. Coach walks the room studying their faces. He sees frustration, doubt, even fear. At the front of the room, he stops-- unable to absorb any more of the defeat in the air without objecting, or at least rebuking it outright.

COACH PORTER - Listen up. That first half, it wasn't terrible. But it wasn't, "Slash Football." And mediocre is the most dangerous place to live-- because it tempts you to think you're close enough. You're not here to be close. You're here to "TAKE" something. Right now, forget the scoreboard. Forget the noise outside this room. The only thing that matters is the next snap, the next step, the next decision. Do your job-- "ONE PLAY AT A TIME"-- with violence, discipline, and purpose.

The coach stares out over his team.

COACH PORTER - Play fast, but play smart. Trust your preparation! Trust the woman next to you! When one of you flies to the ball, we all fly to the ball! When one of you gets hit, we "ALL" get back up! This game will not be won by talent alone. It'll be won by effort, by focus, by heart. By who wants it more when your legs are tired and your lungs are burning.

He looks at Nicole, who drops her eyes.

COACH PORTER - You are the San Antonio Slash. You hunt! You attack! You finish! You don't fade! Now walk back out there like you "BELONG!" Play for your name! Play for each other! And leave nothing in this locker room but your doubt! Let's take the second half!

Coach Porter takes a step forward, claps his hands once, sharp and commanding. Looks at the Huns.

COACH PORTER - O-line-- eyes up. This all starts with you. Pad level low. First step "FORWARD," not sideways, not hesitant. Hands inside, finish your blocks. Don't look for the highlight-- look for control. Give us a clean pocket. Give us lanes. Dominate the man in front of you for three seconds, every snap.

Looks to Shayla.

COACH PORTER - Backs-- trust the read. Stop dancing. One cut and go. Hit the hole angry. Protect the football like it's your heartbeat. In pass pro, step up and "OWN" your assignment. You make this offense physical-- run like you expect contact.

Looks to Tania.

COACH PORTER - Receivers-- "Detail and Urgency." Routes sharp. No drifting. Come back to the ball, every time. Win at the line, win at the top, and finish through the catch. Block on the edge like your sister's running behind you-- because she is.

Looks to the Defensive-Line.

COACH PORTER - Defense-- you next, Line-- control the trenches. Get off the ball. Hands violent. Win first contact. Collapse the pocket, set the edge, and don't give them a place to breathe. Make them feel you on every snap.

To the Line-Backers.

COACH PORTER - Backers-- eyes and discipline. Read, react, "ATTACK." Don't overrun plays. Fill your gaps and hit with purpose. When you tackle, you end the play. Communicate. You're the heartbeat of this Defense.

COACH PORTER - Secondary-- where are yah? Trust your technique. Eyes on your keys. No panic. Play the ball in the air and the hands at the catch point. Talk pre-snap. Pass routes off clean. Be patient, then be ruthless.

Coach pauses, scanning the room. He looks to Meeks.

COACH PORTER - Do the simple things-- "RELENTLESSLY," every-time.
Looks over to Jennifer.

COACH PORTER - Execute with confidence.

(to Solinostenivich)

COACH PORTER - Play fast, play together, play like this half
belongs to us-- and it will.

To the entire bunch, who all share a look of pride.

COACH PORTER - Now let's go finish this thing!

The women rise, all fire and brim-stone as they charge from the
room followed by the staff-- all but Coach and his Star QB, who
lags. Something weighing on her. She approaches, standing in his
way.

NICOLE - Coach... I don't know if I'm ready for this.
Everything's so fast. The hits, the reads-- I feel a step behind
out there. Maybe you were right to bench me. Maybe, I'm not good
enough for this.

COACH PORTER - Hey. Look at me. Breathe. What you're feeling?
That's not fear-- it's intensity meeting preparation. And you've
met harder things than this, I know it.

NICOLE - It doesn't feel that way. They're bigger. Louder.
Faster. I can't keep up.

COACH PORTER - They always are. That's the story they tell girls
like you-- too small, too soft, you're insignificant, just a
girl. But here's what they can't say, what they don't know. They
don't know about the long days you spent under that Texas sun
when everyone else quit early.

He rests his hand on her shoulder-pad.

COACH PORTER - About the nights you stayed up until your eyes
burned, studying that playbook until it lived in your bones.

Their eyes meet.

COACH PORTER - The battles you've already had to win-- in the
gym, on the practice field, between the hash-marks, when no-one
was watching. Speed? Intensity? That's just noise. You've lived
in noise your whole life.

NICOLE - What if I mess this up? What if I let them down?

COACH PORTER - You won't. Because your game has never been just
about your talent. It's your heart. You pick up the ones who
fall. You hold the ones who hurt. You defend the ones who are

pushed aside. That's who you are. They don't know that devotion, that love. They don't know you.

NICOLE (swallows hard) - So, what do I show them?

COACH PORTER - You show them the truth. You're not "just some girl." You're the Sling-shot. Small enough, so they underestimate you. Strong enough, to change the fight. And right now-- this team doesn't need perfection. They need YOU. Now Go Lead Them.

Nicole nods resolute, she has something to prove-- not only to the world, but to herself. She jogs out of the tunnel beside coach.

MONTAGE:

* NICOLE PEPPERS THE DEFENSE: QUICK SLANTS, SHOVEL PASSES, DECOY OPTIONS.

* SHAYLA JUKES A DEFENDER SO HARD HIS ACL-FILES A MISSING PERSONS REPORT.

* THE SLASH SCORES TWICE. NICOLE'S AUDIBLES EARN QUESTIONABLE GLARES FROM THE O-LINE.

* THE SLASH MOVES DOWN THE FIELD AFTER ANOTHER IMPRESSIVE DEFENSIVE STOP.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. RAINES STADIUM - FIELD: OFFENSE 34-YARD-LINE - END 3rd QUARTER - DAY

Nicole trots to the huddle, spirits high-- after a successful pass play.

NICOLE - Alright, awesome play ladies... nice hands, Leah.

Meeks nods in acceptance, clapping aggressively.

Around the huddle, all faces show unfettered belief.

NICOLE - Alright girls, whatta yah say... we take 7?

CRUMB-SNATCHER - Hell yeah, let's get 'em.

NICOLE - Alright were going Vegas Left, 26 Power Goliath, kill kill-- on two... ready, break.

Nicole trots to the line and looks-over the Defense.

NICOLE - DOWN... BLUE 17 CHECK WITH ME... BLUE 17 CHECK WITH ME... SET HUT HUT!

The backs charge into their routes criss-crossing the field. Nicole secretly pitches the ball to new Back Lexus. She turns up the field in a staggered jog to block for the timid runner, now hiding behind her like a riot shield. Nicole takes out a Line-Backer, leaving the girl to sprint for safety. Just before she reaches the side-line, Lex is hit by a nearby Cornerback, spilling the ball helplessly on to the field.

There is a subsequent, mad-scramble.

INT. RAINES STADIUM - BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

BROADCASTER 1 (V.O) - OH THAT'S A HIT, AND A FUMBLE!!! It's on the ground folks, and it's gonna be recovered by the Dixie Blue's Defense-- for a turn-over on downs at the 14!

BACK ON FIELD:

Nicole stays on the turf with teammates starting to huddle around her. Shayla signals for medical-intervention.

INT. RAINES STADIUM - BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

BROADCASTER 1 (V.O.) - Uh oh folks, it looks like number 10 Nicole Olstein is down on the field after a vicious blind-side hit from, DB BECKY "THE BULL-DOZER" SOTO, and it does not look good for the rookie.

Nicole is helped up, and off the field by Team-Trainers.

The defense takes the field, Andy towering over the offensive line. They get set for the play, and wait for the snap. Behind the line, she barks orders to her teammates.

SOLINOSTENIVICH - 14 UNCOVER, SINGLE-SET SINGLE-SET!

The ball is hiked, and several plyers break through the offensive line. Suddenly, the huge Russian sees something suspicious.

SOLINOSTENIVICH - SCREEN SCREEN SCREEN!!!

She rushes through the blockers absorbing the runner as she receives the pass. A loss of 2 yards.

The next play is another pass, this one for a short gain placing them 3rd, and goal at the 6.

The offense lines up again, working through their pre-play motion. The snap, and the QB pumps before stuffing it in the stomach of a waiting runner.

SOLINOSTENIVICH - SWITCH SWITCH!

The bulky Jacksonville FB runs up the gut meeting Andy at the 1-yard line. Time seems to slow to a snail's pace, as their Back struggles against the Russian fixture-- finally falling forward into the End-Zone. An emotionally dismantled, Soviet DT rises to her knees-- hands gripping her helmet in dismay.

They exit the field, Andy arriving to the side line, her head dipped between her shoulders. She is met by Coach.

SOLINOSTENIVICH - I SORRY... I FAIL.

The coach pulls her head to his shoulder.

COACH PORTER - Don't worry, Andy-- you'll get 'em next time... Alright?

A PAT is kicked bringing the score to a 35-28 Jacksonville lead, with a minute left in the game.

VISITORS SIDE LINE - 4th-Quarter:

ON THE BENCH, Nicole works to loosen her shoulder-- which reacts as if it's welded. Shayla joins her, hair wild, eye black smudged.

SHAYLA - You good, Nikki?

NICOLE (resolute) - Does it matter? We need 7... that's all that matters.

SHAYLA (smirks) - So, we twist 'em-- let's run 34 Zone Viper. You just throw it-- I'll do the rest.

NICOLE (shocked) - You sure about that?

Shayla smiles, with a wink of affirmation.

MOMENTS LATER:

The team takes the field, Nicole last. She is stopped by Coach.

COACH PORTER - Hey, you alright-- how's your arm?

NICOLE - All-good Coach.

COACH PORTER - Wait, you sure you're okay?

NICOLE - Coach, I got this-- don't worry.

Nicole jogs onto the field, and enters the huddle-- surrounded by a group of hopeful, yet fierce teammates.

NICOLE - Well, howdy girls-- D'ya feel like winning a football game?

Her teammates are all grins and bravado.

NICOLE - Alright, we're goin' Trips Open, RPO 34 Zone Viper, read the nickel-- on two... ready, break.

The team moves to the line.

NICOLE - DOWN... GREEN 11... GREEN 11... SET HUT HUT!

Shayla runs past Nicole at the line, and once through darts up field on a corner-route. Nicole holds the ball at her hip selling the run-fake. After a count, the ball is raised to her chest-- causing the LB's to scramble. She breathes deep, then thrusts the ball into the atmosphere. It flies through the air like something made by Nerf, finally landing in the clutched-grip of Shayla, who drifts out of bounds inside the 7-yard-line.

CUT TO:

INT. RAINES STADIUM - BROADCAST BOOTH - DAY

BROADCASTER 2 - Whoa, that is a statement throw, message being, "I AM HERE!" The Slash are storming back and, Nicole Olstein, if this is your floor; somebody get this girl a ceiling.

CLOCK-STOPPED:

They step to the line again. At the hike, Shyla crashes into the defense stalling at the 2-- just in time for the Defense, to watch Nicole waltzing untouched into the End-Zone... TOUCHDOWN!!!

The side-line erupts in cheer, as time expires-- and The Slash steal a 35-28 non-conference road win.

ON FIELD:

The team mobs Nicole, laughter and shouts echoing under the stadium lights. Coach Porter claps once, proud but reserved.

COACH PORTER - Now that's the way you answer back!

SMASH CUT TO SIDELINE:

Nicole, celebrating with her new teammates-- fist bumps, tackles, water bottle showers. Shayla shoves a Gatorade towel into Nicole's face.

SHAYLA - Don't say I never made you look good, Rook.

Nicole laughs, wobbling on sore legs-- as she sways beneath the stadium lights.

NICOLE (V.O.) - Turns out, you don't need all the answers... just enough guts to keep getting up-- one wild play at a time.

Nicole, beaming, meets Shayla's eyes. A silent promise: they're just getting started.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS HOTEL & SUITES JACKSONVILLE - SOUTH BY IHG - EVENING

The team charter bus, arrives to the hotel and the girls begin to disembark. As they emerge from the bus:

JAKE - WHOOO, ENCORE LADIES ENCORE!!! GO SLASH, THAT WAS MAGIC... THE FANS WANT MORE!!!

The girls side-eye his childish antics as they dismount the bus, understanding all too well the plays of an experienced Male-misogynist, at work.

NICOLE - Correct me if I'm wrong but, it's not Tuesday is it.

JAKE - Whaddoo you want from me, I couldn't wait. Didn't wanna take a chance of you finding some St. Charles Roofer, gimme a break. You'll see, from now on my name is Patience.

NICOLE - So, now it's Patient, not Jake Slazenger, Quarterback?

The sly charmer, raises his hand in oath.

NICOLE - So, what were you thinking tonight, Sir Patience?

JAKE - Oh, nothing much... just dinner-- maybe drinks, at the hottest Japanese-Sushi spot in all of, The Sun Belt State... Kaiseki 904. My guy, Nico Vale hooked me up with first-class Accom's, so...

He grins triumphantly at his assumed social-stature.

NICOLE - So, raw-fish?

He smirks sarcastically.

JAKE - Yeah, for lack of a better word, I guess. Do you wanna go or make fun of me?

NICOLE - Well I do have these jokes on me-- but naw, that sounds great... just gimme a sec to change.

Nicole grabs her things from under the bus, and scoots her way into the hotel.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS HOTEL & SUITES JACKSONVILLE - SOUTH BY IHG - PARKING LOT - EVENING

As Nicole retreats inside to get ready Jake, waits in his pretentious drop-top sports car. He makes sure to check his

appearance in the rearview mirror as he waits. Coach approaches, fatherly concern in his tone.

COACH PORTER - Hey there Jake, I just saw you-- how you been, son?

JAKE - Greg, hey I'm good, buddy. How's the family?

The comment strikes Coach as odd.

COACH PORTER (face twists strangely) - Uhh, yeah... fine just fine, son. I gotta tell you, I saw you from the bus, and all I could think was, 'What in the Devil would bring Jake Slazenger to Missouri of all places, especially-- you know it being so early in the year?

JAKE - Well Greg, I'm what they call in the NFL-- Oh, that's the National Football League if you didn't know. Well, you see-- I'm what they call a rising-star.

Coach, accepts the barb with the grace of a security tactician.

JAKE - Well, you see-- a guy like me is always on the hunt for the next, Mrs. Rising-star. Now, what kind of guy would I be if I didn't open up the selection process to the sturdy, tight, and athletically trained (smug look) ladies of the WFA?

He laughs, with a suggestive hand gesture towards the coach/father-figure... cocky with superiority. Coach holds both his tongue, and his temper-- smiling inconspicuously.

COACH PORTER - Jake, that's good to know-- I wish you the best, except I wonder who in their right mind is gonna want to play ball with you, when the Med-Team let's it slip that you have three severely infectious types of Herpes? Yeah, I'm pretty close with those guys-- one of the benefits of being just a WFA Coach with dirt on half the league, NFL coaches and Owners alike. Oh, well-- you be sure to have a swell evening, "Super-star."

A disturbed look of consequence, invades Jake's otherwise smug cheshire-cat mug. Coach Porter calmly enters the hotel, engaging Nicole as he passes her.

INT. KAISEKI 904 - NIGHT

As they enter Jake is met by friend and owner Nico who greets he and Nicole, immediately calling for his staff to seat and tend to them. At the restaurant, Jake is clearly frustrated-- and takes care not to overstep his bounds with the attractive young woman. He goes out of his way to keep the conversation and tone of his actions very aloof and guarded. Even when dancing he is strictly, hands-off.

INT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS HOTEL & SUITES JACKSONVILLE - SOUTH BY IHG - NIGHT

He drops her off afterwards, and doesn't even bother to walk her in. Nicole enters the Hotel-lobby much earlier than expected, a look of rejection and confusion playing on her cheeks. There in the lobby she runs into Coach Porter, who is calmly reading through next week's game-plan-- and yes secretly awaiting her return.

NICOLE - Coach-- what are you still doing up?

COACH PORTER (looks at his watch) - At 10:30? How old do you think I am?

Her face is even surprised at the time.

COACH PORTER - So, how was your night-- Did ya have fun?

NICOLE - Umm, I'm not really sure-- what just happened.

Coach, eyes empathy laced.

COACH PORTER - I'll tell you like I told my Derby, guys these days, are likely all carbon-copies of one-another. Every-one-of-'em, testosterone-filled, over-caffeinated, under-educated, and raised on Fortnite chat-rooms and G.O.T. reruns.

NICOLE (implicit agreement) - Well, of course?

COACH PORTER - Point is, on this field of love you're gonna meet a lot of fellas that call themselves men. Most of 'em will be loud, insecure, and eager to take your heart without earning your trust. Your play, is not to mistake attention for respect or intensity for love. A good man is calm, consistent, and accountable. He's not threatened by your beauty, or your brains. He won't rush you to intimacy, or treat you like another ball to toss around. He's not in need of objects, therapy, or trophies. He listens, keeps his word, and handles frustration without cruelty or disappearance.

Nicole's eyes drop as she remembers past loves.

COACH PORTER - You gotta promise me this... walk away from any man who disrespects boundaries, speaks poorly of women, or feels entitled to your body-- your time, your sanity. You've gotta decide, that you are not here to fix anyone. Choose the man who brings peace, not chaos; substance, not performance. (looks with humble eyes) And remember-- being alone, is always better than being with someone who can't love you how you deserve.

A moment of silent reflection sits between them.

NICOLE - Wow, you sound like my father. (smiles genuinely) Cept' for the accent, that is. Thanks Coach.

COACH PORTER - Anytime, kid.

The two stand and depart the lobby-- a new intimacy between them.

INT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicole enters her room to find suite-mate Shayla thumbing through the pages of a thick textbook in her rarely seen reading glasses-- books, spirals and otherwise, surrounding her.

Shocked at her early return Shayla quickly consults the clock.

SHAYLA - Damn girl, where'd he take you; the gas-station?

NICOLE - Shud, just where I needed-- not into another 2 years of therapy.

SHAYLA - That good huh? Well, look at it this way-- at least you found out now, before you got invested. Wish, Clayton's Daddy, could've done that. But he did give me my honey-bear, though.

Shayla grabs the framed photo of her son, CLAYTON UNDERWOOD (8) from the nightstand, kissing it.

NICOLE - Ya see, that's what I want right there.

SHAYLA (sarcasm) - A black-child? Well, I don't know of any like BOGO deals, but I'll see what I can do.

NICOLE - Ha ha, no I want a family-- to be a Mom. Just, hug 'em, and love 'em, and teach 'em.

SHAYLA - Sounds like, you want a puppy...

NICOLE, in her own little world-- continues to imagine.

NICOLE - And talk to 'em-- tell 'em that they're Good, and special, just the way they are. And promise I'll never leave 'em-- like my Momma promised me.

Nicole's eyes begin to well as the somber truth confronts her. Shayla, finally gets it.

SHAYLA - You miss her, huh?

NICOLE (eyes begin to leak) - More than I thought was possible.

SHAYLA - I can't say anything that's gonna fix your hurt Nick. But you can bet that she knows how you feel and she's watching-- "Proud as a promise kept," and every day you get to give her a new story for the Angels. Yah, hear me? I love you, Sis.

NICOLE (nodding thankfully) - Thanks Clutch. I love you too.

NICOLE rolls, facing away. Watch closely, her eased expression.

SHAYLA (sarcasm)(V.O.) - Wheeew girl, I thought I was gonna have to call HHS, or somebody, on you...

They giggle-- a much-needed moment of levity breaking the tension.

FADE OUT:

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Again, the sun shines, relentlessly down upon the manicured practice field at the S.A. Steers Complex, as the Slash teammates navigate their training exercises.

COACH PORTER - Bring it in team.

The team gathers around Coach Porter for a word.

COACH PORTER - Alright ladies, looks like we got another message from our grateful Owner Mr. Weston, congratulating us on our team success and extending Mid-Season bonus checks of \$300.00 a piece for Active Roster Players and Coaches for our Triumphant Inaugural Season and Playoff birth. The ladies faces light up with glee, until one by one, they realize that some of them have paid upwards of \$1,500.00 for the honor of competing just this year alone, between fees, field costs, travel, uniforms, and insurance.

NICOLE - Umm, so now they're giving us a refund of... Shay?

SHAYLA - TWENTY!

NICOLE - Twenty percent of what we've each individually spent, and they're sending it to us in three-hundred-dollar checks?

LOW-LOW - They do understand we can make more from a weekend-shift at the Booty-Bar right?

JENNIFER - Pssh, try way more!

The teammates hoot and chatter in agreement.

COACH PORTER (raises hands) - Hey, just the messenger.

NICOLE - So, 25 girls all together that's essentially... Shay?

SHAYLA - Bout 75--

NICOLE - Seventy-five-hundred dollars for the team, to be used however we decide?

COACH PORTER - Yeah, that's pretty much it.

Nicole's eye's shift-- already deep in thought.

NICOLE - Perfect--

FADE OUT:

CUT TO:

S.A. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DT'S HOME APT. 324 - DAY

DT's daughter 9-year-old little-spit-fire Genie answers-- bold, defiant, and hair-half-braided, finding: Nicole, Shayla, Jennifer, Meeks, Low-low, Neechie, and Bullsly, standing there-- festive smiles.

GENIE - Yeah...?

SHAYLA - Hey Little Genie, is your Mommy home?

GENIE - My name ain't little nuthin'.

SHAYLA - Girl, go get your Momma!

MOMENTS LATER: DT arrives at the door, in her over-sized T-shirt, hair-bonnet. They all greet her-- toothy grins, and eyes flashing. They are allowed to enter and swarm into her apartment.

DT sits on a reclining chair-- Genie atop a pillow, rested on the floor between her knees. DT snatches and pulls the child's hair into braids, greasing it richly.

NICOLE - Hey Momma, how you been?

DT - Chile bored, irritated, and over-weight.

The child's eyes grow big, staring knowingly.

LOW-LOW - Well, we been missing the heck out of you at camp.

They all agree-- smiling suspiciously.

JENNIFER - So, Genie-- are you super-excited to have your Mommy around the house more, now-a-days?

Silence, her eyes bugging awkwardly.

DEWAYNE (V.O.) - WELL, I LOVE IT!

Suddenly, DEWAYNE DWIGHT WILLINGHAM-- DT's live-in Boo-thang appears from the kitchen apron and dew-rag wrapped snug.

DEWAYNE WILLINGHAM - Hey Ladies, how goes it? Good to see you.

Dewayne fork-feeds DT something, kissing her forehead.

The ladies acknowledge echoing different forms of:

TEAM - Hello Dwayne, How are you Dwayne, and Hey D.

DEWAYNE WILLINGHAM - Slash, what's good... here to steal my baby from me?

NICOLE - Honestly, if you could spare her a couple weeks-- we'd love to have her, back.

DT - What, play for that chicken-hearted chump, Patty-cakes? Chile please!?

DEWAYNE WILLINGHAM - Well, hold on babe, let's not get ahead of ourselves now. These are your homegirls-- you might wanna hear 'em out.

The team nods in agreement, along with her daughter.

DT - Okay girls, you've got my attention... go ahead, Speak.

NICOLE - To tell you the truth Daria, the team is on a recent push towards the playoffs.

SHAYLA - They gave us bonus pay-outs for good-play.

JENNIFER - Look, point is we told 'em we can't do this thing without you.

MEEKS - MORE LIKE, WE'RE NOT DOING THIS WITHOUT OUR REAL TEAM!

LOW-LOW - And we'll pay for your competition-fee, field costs, travel, uniforms, and insurance, everything.

NEECIE - Yeah, what do you say Darrri, we need your help. Will you play with us?

BULLSY - We need you girl, please?

DEWAYNE WILLINGHAM - What do you think baby, they sound pretty sincere to me. Genie?

GENIE - Yeah Mommy, do it-- play ball.

DT (reluctant) - But babe, they just threw me away.

DEWAYNE WILLINGHAM - I know baby, sounds like some big-wig made a screwed-up call, but these girls? This is your family-- they wouldn't abandon you like that. Look at 'em; they love you sweet-heart.

MEEKS - He's right.

SHAYLA - We miss you, D.

NICOLE - You're our Sister.

The others chime in with lobbying cries of affection. DT rises to her feet folding into her teammates lovingly.

DT - Aww, my Sisters.

They all hug.

INT. SHOPPING CENTER - DICK'S SPORTING GOODS - EVENING

The Twins, Lenzie and McKenzie are hard at work, manning the salesfloor in a busy sports equipment store. Their former teammates surge through the front doors set to shop.

SHAYLA - Ride hard.

TEAM - SLASH HARDER!

BULLSY - No mercy.

TEAM - ONLY SLASH!

NICOLE - Slash the doubt.

TEAM - STRIKE TOGETHER!

MUSIC: 7 RINGS - ARIANA GRANDE.

INT. DICK'S SPORTING GOODS - LADIES ACTIVE WEAR - EVENING

They swarm the Ladies Active Wear-- trying on and modeling the gear. The twins scoot back, and forth procuring outfits for their friends. They purchase a cast of matching outfits-- disappearing from the store, bags in hand.

MONTAGE:

* NICOLE IS SWIFT, STRONG, AND ACCURATE IN PASSING DRILLS TO TIRES, NETS AND RECEIVERS.

* BACKS ARE QUICK, AGILE, PROFICIENT THROUGH THE ROPE RUNNER'S TROUGHS.

* LINEWOMEN PUSH THE SLEDS UP AND DOWN THE FIELDS.

* TEAM DRILLS ARE FILLED WITH HEART-STOPPING OFFENSIVE PLAYS, AND THE DEFENSE MAKES EQUALLY VIGILANT STANDS.

END MONTAGE:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team slouches inside, sweat-soaked and silent. Nicole rubs her shoulder, face set in a determined scowl. Shayla leans close, voice low.

SHAYLA - You gonna make it, Rook?

NICOLE - Don't know-- arms been giving me trouble, think I may have pulled something.

SHAYLA - A pull is one thing, but a strain-- in this kind of season is a game-changer, chica. You better head to the lab.

Nicole's head plummets. Shayla notices the pain of disappointment.

SHAYLA - Then again, it could just be a pull or sumthin'. Look, the Slash's got a phenomenal therapy staff, I'm talkin' best in the WFA. Whatever it is, those Medigeeks can get you right back where you need to be, trust me. Come on, I'll take you.

Nicole gingerly rises, and they leave.

SHAYLA - Shood, you probably just need one of those Heavy-duty Newbie Ice-baths or somthin' like that-- don't even worry about it-- you'll be good as new.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TEAM INFIRMARY - DAY

Nicole sits on the paper-crinkled exam table, shoulder swaddled in a makeshift ice sling. The room's lined with faded sports posters and a motivational sign: "Pain Is Temporary, Victory Is Forever"-- crudely amended with black marker: "or until you need a hip replacement."

TRAINER SOLOMON AGAFFE (Late 40's), brilliant young Physician, examines Nicole's arm, eyebrows raised.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Are you quite sure, you're not made of rubber, Ms. Olstein?

NICOLE (deadpan) - Elastic. Strong, bendy... and occasionally, snapped in half.

Solomon gives a half-smile, shakes their head.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Alright, let's check your range of motion. Let me know when you feel any discomfort.

He gently turns, extends, and bends Nicole's arm. She does her best but the damage is obvious as she winces and groans through the stretches.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Well, good news-- it doesn't appear to be a tare, however to stave off such an event... It's necessary to curtail any strenuous-activity-- Essentially, keep it Neutral. Until, we can relieve swelling and strengthen that Tendon.

NICOLE - Meaning?

TRAINER SOLOMON - Meaning-- rest, compression, elevation, avoid lifting, pulling, or throwing until further notice. Not total immobilization, but limit aggravating movements and allow it a chance to heal.

NICOLE - Or else?

TRAINER SOLOMON - Or else, surgery, vacation, or at it's worse-- possible early-retirement. In the end, this is your decision, and ultimately your fight.

NICOLE - So, will I be able to play again-- like this season?

TRAINER SOLOMON - That will be up to you. Truthfully, I've seen crazier things. We can't expect a Super-serum to fix this. Ice, rest, and no heroics for once.

Just then, Tim sticks his head through the door, a crooked grin already in place.

TIM - Hey, superstar... word is you made quite a splash out there.

Nicole tries to shrug, fails, winces.

NICOLE - Yeah, well, it was only the one quarter-- I basically spent the night impersonating a crash test dummy.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Well I must check on these scans; I will give you two the room.

Solomon exits, closing the door behind him.

Tim scoots in on a rolling stool, his optimism undimmed.

TIM - You know, I still remember a girl who told anyone who'd listen that she'd get out the game when the ambulance sedated her.

NICOLE (soft, looking away) - Yeah, well, that little girl had the hopes of a whole Highschool class on her shoulders, these people don't need me.

TIM - That's just it, they don't know what they need yet-- that's what you gotta show 'em. It's up to you to make 'em believe, in their team... in their city.

Nicole can't meet his eyes. Tim gives her a gentle nudge, woefully unaware of the news she's just received.

TIM - Sure, this isn't Highschool, and your right... they might not exactly know Nicole Olstein. But, perhaps this Sling-shot I've heard so much about?

NICOLE - Or maybe the Sling-shot is just some, dumb kid myth? Maybe the people that still believe it; need to stop waiting on me to save them, and finally just grow the hell up!

He stands, hesitates.

TIM - Maybe, you're right.

He leaves, the door clicking softly behind him.

NICOLE (V.O.) - I mean-- who was he kidding, Odessa was a different place, a different time. And, dammit I'm a different girl; my own.

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Coach Porter sits there, Head Trainer before him. He appears confused and bewildered. Coaches Summers, and Crow are also present.

COACH PORTER - Let me get this straight. So, you're telling me it's not a strain.

TRAINER SOLOMON - No, sir.

COACH PORTER - But you want me to treat it like a strain?

TRAINER SOLOMON - If I may explain, Coach Porter. Sir, this is not a Bicep-strain-- not yet. And given the proper treatment, I see no reason it has to become one. To prevent further damage to the Tendon however, will require a great deal of Therapeutic intervention and rest.

COACH PORTER - Bottom-line, this thing for me Doc, how long am I gonna be without my Starting QB?

TRAINER SOLOMON - With Medical-treatment, and no further stress, I'd say two-weeks, best-case.

COACH PORTER - Two-weeks? With the playoffs right around the corner? And that's all you got!?

He looks at the faces of the other Doctors, heads hung.

COACH PORTER - And you studied where!?

The comment strikes Asst. Coach Summers, as odd.

TRAINER SOLOMON - I immigrated to the United States from Senegal as a teenager, where I attended FCS Innovation Academy (STEM Magnet) in Alpharetta graduating Valedictorian and was awarded the National Merit Scholarship and Gates Scholarships. Then, it was on to Harvard for my Bachelor of Science in Human Developmental and Regenerative Biology. I then completed a Master of Science in Biomedical Engineering at Stanford University. My Doctorate of Medicine (MD) from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, followed by residency training in Orthopedic Surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery affiliated with Weill Cornell Medicine. Now, my PhD in Musculoskeletal Sciences, that's an interesting story...

COACH PORTER - Alright, alright, I get it... you're smart. Well, tell me this Professor, how am I supposed to push through the playoffs with an lame-QB?

TRAINER SOLOMON - I apologize, I did not study American Football, but quite frankly, sir. If you allow me to assist-- you shouldn't have to.

Asst. Coach Summers can't help but smirk at the exchange.

Solomon leaves.

COACH PORTER - Alright Frank, I'm gonna need you to get out ahead of this.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Already on it, Coach... I'll set up backup interviews for Wednesday?

COACH PORTER - You're a smart man, Frank.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - When you get a chance we should look into developing a more aggressive press system...

COACH PORTER - Sure thing, Bud.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (curiously) - You can call me Coach.

Coach Porter looks at him, strange.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS (stern) - I'm a Coach, Greg-- same as you.

COACH PORTER - There a problem?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Depends-- you sure you trust me, without seeing my Coaching credentials?

Gregory stares curious. Asst. Coach Summers exits. Coach suddenly gets it, shame touching him.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TEAM INFIRMARY - EVENING

A very thoughtful Coach Porter, enters tentatively to find Trainer 1, speaking to another player. Trainer 1, politely excuses the player.

COACH PORTER - Solomon, I needed to speak to you-- about earlier.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Yes Coach, how may I help you?

COACH PORTER - Solomon, I-- I wanted to apologize to you, for the way I spoke.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Ahh, Coach I assure you, I don't need...

COACH PORTER - Well now, Doctor-- I need to do this. I spoke to you from a place of frustration, and-- well frankly, insecurity. I know you're a terrific physician, and you deserve my respect. You gotta understand, this all just sort of hit me...

TRAINER SOLOMON - Certainly, Coach...

COACH PORTER - But that's no excuse-- I can't be that guy, as a Leader I won't be that guy... and as a man, I refuse to.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Thank you, Coach. I know how difficult Humility, Empathy, and Civility are to navigate. What is most important, is our conscious effort to do the work.

COACH PORTER - That my friend, is impressive. Where'd you get that from?

TRAINER SOLOMON (smiles humbly) - King James.

Coach Porter nods in recognition. They smile and shake hands.

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Asst. Coach Summers enters, his I-pad in hand.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Got news on Charlie, Coach. You're not gonna like it.

He hands the device to the coach. Coach Porter watches a social media ESPN press conference featuring Charlie. In it she is at the signing of a contract with the Cali War.

LIVE PRESS DESK - WFA GAMETIME REPORT is digitally imposed across the paused video-screen. Coach plays it to find Charlie sitting behind a conference table, between several stuffy business types-- Owners LISA GIBBONS KING & JEFF KING at the helm, along with competitive-rival HEAD-COACH JASON GRANT.

INT. WFA NETWORK STUDIO - "WFA GAMETIME REPORT" - DAY

Camera lights snap on. INTRO SOUNDTRACK: The echo of cleats on concrete, mixed with a powerful hip-hop music track and violent on field collision sounds, and GAMETIME REPORT logo flashing. The studio reports desk illuminates to highlight, show hosts MICHAEL "HANDS" CRUZ former DB, and America's Champ, DANE "THE-WRANGER" POLK, old-school Super Bowl Champion QB greet their fanatic audience welcoming them back, before welcoming their guests. Charlie "The Bomber" Bundy sits, brim-pulled-low and jacket slung over one shoulder.

The Cali War logo fills the backdrop. A low buzz of anticipation circling. Head Coach Jason Grant sits behind the microphone, calm- deliberate. Beside him the King's, money, fame, and opulence personified.

COACH GRANT - Good afternoon. We don't make a habit of chasing headlines here-- but sometimes, talent makes the noise for you. Today is one of those days. So, it is with tremendous pride and anticipation that I introduce all my WFA loyalists to the new

starting quarterback of your Cali War-- Charlie "The Bomber" Bundy!!!

Applause breaks out. Charlie gives a short nod, no wave.

COACH GRANT - We brought Charlie in because she sees the field the way winners do-- early, honestly, and without fear. She's not here to be managed. She's here to be unleashed. And our locker room is ready for that.

He raises hands in presentation.

CHARLIE BUNDY (leans into the mic, casual but sharp) - Appreciate that, Coach.

She looks out over the reporters, then back at the Cali War logo.

CHARLIE BUNDY - Let me clear something up before the blogs do it...

The ripple of cheer, is quickly silenced.

CHARLIE BUNDY - I didn't leave San Antonio because I couldn't win there. I left because, winning wasn't the same priority for everyone.

Pens freeze. Cameras zoom.

REPORTER 1 - Can you explain that, for context please, Bomber?

CHARLIE BUNDY - Sure, I'll be explicit for ya'll, cause what I won't do. I won't apologize for my preparation. I won't negotiate my competitiveness. And I won't pretend that structural differences-- I'm talkin' how decisions get made, who gets heard, and when, and the team's mission-- don't matter.

REPORTER 2 - Structural differences, Charlie?

CHARLIE BUNDY (tilts her head) - Some teams build systems to protect position, to comfort mediocrity. Others build systems to chase championships. (she taps the table) I choose the latter.

COACH GRANT (interjecting smoothly) - And that mindset fits Cali just perfect. We don't confuse harmony with progress.

REPORTER 3 - Was that the problem at San Antonio?

CHARLIE BUNDY - Look-- the Slash organization, has talent. Real talent. But purpose counts. Direction matters. And when feedback feels like friction and accountability feels like a threat-- Growth stalls.

REPORTER 4 - Are you suggesting there's internal conflict in the Slash Coaching System?

CHARLIE BUNDY (smiles, measured) - I'm suggesting that Progress is either encouraged-- or it isn't. And when it isn't, the league exposes it.

The comment hits hard, pins scattering across the pages of notebooks.

REPORTER 5 - Some former teammates have suggested, you were "Too Intense." Any comments?

CHARLIE BUNDY - Correct me if I'm wrong, but doesn't Intensity win games? (to Coach) Cali hired me to win, right? Discomfort just reveals who's ready, and of course who's not.

COACH GRANT - We don't suppress that intensity, here in California. We coach it.

CHARLIE BUNDY - And that's why I'm here. The Cali War listened. Cali War asked football questions. They talked about "January," not excuses in July.

REPORTER 6 - Any regrets about leaving San Antonio?

CHARLIE BUNDY - Oh, I'm sur they regret a lot of things. Me? None. But I do look forward to seeing them again. (pause) Under conditions where preparation speaks louder than politics.

The room hums. Phones are already buzzing.

COACH GRANT - Charlie is our quarterback. Our leader. And our responsibility. The rest of the league can speculate all they want. We've already gauged her worth and decided-- she's worth it.

CHARLIE BUNDY (leans forward one last time) - Speculate. Write. Tweet. Just make sure you're watching when we line up, because I didn't come here to talk. I'M HERE TO WIN!!!

She picks up her helmet, the Cali War logo catching the lights.

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - CONT.

Coach Porter sits the device down with a frustrated grimace.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Told ya-- you wasn't gonna like it. What do you want me to do?

He massages his forehead, deep in thought.

COACH PORTER - Well Coach, looks like it's time to get ahead of the game.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - I'm with yah Coach, let's get Proactive.

COACH PORTER - Agreed.

CUT TO:

INT. COACH PORTER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Coach Porter sits behind his desk, calm and resolute-- Slash logo sharp against his polo. Asst. Coach Summers suddenly enters alerting him.

COACH PORTER (squeezes head) - They're here?

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - Yup.

COACH PORTER - Send 'em in, Coach.

ASST. COACH SUMMERS - On it, Coach.

MOMENTS LATER:

As the ladies file in for their interviews, Coach pays special attention to their demeanor, in an attempt to find more of an all-around leader, than just a player.

Up first is, Kayla "Rocket" Jensen (26) - Kayla walks in with the posture of someone who's been timed, measured, and evaluated her whole adult life. Medium height, compact athletic build-- thick through the hips and thighs like a sprinter, shoulders strong but not bulky. Her curly black-hair is pulled back in a ponytail, no loose strands, no fuss. She's wearing a fitted team-neutral polo tucked into dark slacks, athletic shoes that are clean but clearly worn for function, not fashion.

She smiles easily-- polite, practiced, not flirtatious. The smile reaches her eyes, but there's a rehearsed quality to it, like she's answered these same questions in three cities already. Hands folded on the table, posture forward. She looks like someone who respects the process, even if she's tired of it.

COACH PORTER'S NOTES (V.O.) - [P00Solid young woman, raised right, competitive but not loud about it.

Next enters Monique "Money" Alvarez (31) - Monique is taller than she first appears when seated-- long torso, long arms, rangy build. She moves with deliberation, like she doesn't waste steps. Dark hair worn straight and down, tucked behind one ear. Minimal makeup. Gold cross necklace visible above a plain gray blouse- Coach notices that.

She's dressed conservatively: blazer, pressed slacks, flats. No nonsense. Her eyes are steady, her voice calm. She looks like someone who's been in meetings, not just locker rooms. There's maturity in her face-- fine lines at the corners of her eyes that suggest leadership and responsibility. She doesn't oversell herself. She doesn't need to.

COACH PORTER'S NOTES (V.O.) - Dependable, but maybe already set in her ways.

Then there's Brittany "Blitz" Cole (24) - Brittany looks young-- no way around it. Lean, wiry, all elbows and knees, with the restless energy of someone still proving she belongs in adult spaces. Hair pulled into a tight bun, jaw clenched even when she's not talking. She's wearing athletic leggings, team-issued hoodie, and sneakers-- like she came straight from a workout.

She sits forward, shoulders tense, hands gripping her knees. Her eyes burn. There's hunger there, and a little fear. Coach recognizes it instantly: raw competitor, still learning how to breathe. As a father, he hopes she finds patience before the game beats it out of her. As a coach, he sees fuel.

Moving along, there is Tasha "Trigger" Bell (29) - Tasha enters like she owns the room. Tall, broad-- shouldered, powerful frame-- built like a thrower, not a runner. Hair styled carefully, makeup noticeable but controlled. She's dressed sharp: tailored jacket over a sleeveless top, dark jeans, boots with a slight heel.

She leans back in her chair, one arm draped casually, chin slightly raised. Confidence radiates off her-- but so does edge. Coach clocks it immediately: leadership or ego, depending on the circumstances. As a father, he notes she's not inappropriate-- but she's daring someone to challenge her. As a coach, he wonders who's in charge when things go wrong.

Next, we meet Lauren "Laces" Whitmore (34) - Lauren has the look of someone who's lived a lot of football. Shorter, sturdy build, shoulders slightly rounded from years under pads. Her hair is streaked with early gray, worn in a loose braid. She's dressed simply: cardigan over a collared shirt, comfortable slacks, sensible shoes.

She carries herself gently but with quiet authority. When she smiles, it's warm, almost maternal. She listens more than she talks. Coach sees a teacher, maybe even a future coordinator. As a father, he respects her grace. As a coach, he knows she's forgotten more football than some people ever learn.

There's Erica "Ice" Thompson (27) - Erica's nickname fits. Medium height, balanced athletic build, nothing flashy. Her hair is cut short, neat. Face unreadable-- calm, distant, professional. She wears a plain black polo and slacks, no jewelry, no distractions.

She sits perfectly still, hands folded, voice level. No nerves, no warmth either. Coach notes the discipline, the control. As a father, he wonders what walls she's built. As a coach, he appreciates a quarterback who doesn't panic-- but makes a note to see if there's fire under the ice.

We meet, Denise "Diesel" Freeman (32) - Denise looks like she's been through something-- and come back. Thick through the chest and legs, powerful frame. No makeup. She's wearing a team hoodie over jeans; athletic shoes scuffed from use.

Her posture is solid, grounded. She doesn't fidget. Her eyes meet Coach's and don't move. There's humility there, but also resolve. As a father, he respects her resilience. As a coach, he trusts her honesty.

Suddenly, Alyssa "Quickstep" Nguyen (23) pops in-- Alyssa is the youngest-looking of the group. Petite, light on her feet even when seated. Narrow shoulders, quick hands. Hair in a low ponytail, wisps falling loose. She's dressed neatly-- simple blouse, slacks-- but fidgets with the cuff of her sleeve.

Her eyes drop when spoken to, then snap back up, eager. Coach sees youth, coachability, and nerves. As a father, he wants to protect her confidence. As a coach, he wants to see if she can command grown women in a huddle.

Now there's Renee "Cannon" Matthews (28) - Renee has presence. Broad frame, strong arms, posture loose but coiled. Hair pulled back messily. She's wearing a leather jacket over a T-shirt and jeans- borderline casual for an interview, but honest.

Her expression is open, almost defiant. When she speaks, there's conviction, not polish. Coach respects the truthfulness, even if it raises flags. As a father, he hopes she learns humility. As a coach, he knows players like her can change games-- or locker rooms.

Lastly, we are introduced to Jordan "Anchor" Reed (30) - Jordan doesn't rush in. She enters calmly, closes the door quietly, and takes her seat with intention. Medium height, sturdy build, nothing flashy. Hair pulled back neatly. She's dressed professionally-- pressed button-down, blazer, dark slacks, clean shoes.

Her face is composed, eyes steady, voice measured. She listens fully before responding. No wasted words. No bitterness. Coach notices how the room settles when she speaks. As a father, he'd be proud if his daughters carried themselves this way. As a coach, he knows leadership when he sees it.

COACH PORTER - Alright, I'm Gregory Porter, Coach of the San Antonio Slash, but you can feel free to call me Greg or Coach. This is a WFA professional women's team and today we're conducting preliminary interviews for the position of our Second-string Quarterback. Now, here at Team-Slash-- we value preparation, accountability, and a team-first attitude. I've read your football résumés thoroughly, and now I want to see if you're a fit for this organization. So, if you would-- kindly tell me a little about yourself.

Candidate One- Brittany "Blitz" Cole takes a seat, eager.

Well, Coach, I grew up in a small town, real small, like one stoplight. I was raised by my mom mostly, worked three jobs before I was twenty. I did pageants for a while, then real

estate, then I found football kind of accidentally. I'm really big on manifestation and--

Porter nods politely. Writes nothing.

Candidate Two-- Monique "Money" Alvarez clears her throat.

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - So I actually started out in dance. Competitive dance. Jazz, hip-hop, the whole thing. Tore my ACL at nineteen, reinvented myself, got really into CrossFit. I feel like adversity defines me, you know? I bring good vibes. I'm kind of the glue.

COACH PORTER - Uh-huh.

Candidate Three-- Renee "Cannon" Mathews, smiles nervously.

RENEE "CANNON" MATHEWS - I've had a lot of jobs-- bartending, marketing, personal training. Football's been kind of a side passion, but I'm very adaptable. I think life experience really matters more than stats. I'm just here to see where this takes me.

Porter closes her folder.

Candidate Four-- Jordan Reed, sits straight, hands clasped, calm but bright.

COACH PORTER - And, who might you be?

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - Jordan Reed-- But everybody calls me, "The Anchor." Well, first thank you for the opportunity, Coach. I'm 22 and I just graduated from Ohio State University, where I played outfield for the Lady-Buckeyes. I spent four years learning how to prepare every day like my spot depended on it-- because it did.

Coach Porter studies the woman, visibly intrigued.

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - I know I'm not the most experienced quarterback in this room. What I am-- is coachable, disciplined, and comfortable competing without ego. I've lived in film rooms. I understand timing, leadership, and what it means to be ready even when your name isn't called.

COACH PORTER (nodding) - Alright-- alright, well said. What I'm gonna do now, is take you all through some standard assessment questions, get a bit of back-ground information, so answer as freely as you can, okay? Alright then, let's start with your age?

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - Age: 26.

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - Age: 31.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - Age: 24.

TASHA "TRIGGER" BELL - Age: 29.

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - Age: 34.

COACH PORTER - What's your longest recorded pass?

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - 38 yards.

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - 46 yards.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - 48 yards.

DENISE "DIESEL" FREEMAN - 41 yards.

ALYSSA "QUICKSTEP" NGUYEN - 39 yards.

COACH PORTER (V.O.) - Your fastest 40-time?

RENEE "CANNON" MATTHEWS - 5.4

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - 5.3

TASHA "TRIGGER" BELL - 5.4

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - 5.6

ALYSSA "QUICKSTEP" NGUYEN - 4.9

COACH PORTER - Any Pro-teams you've formerly been affiliated with?

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE (lifts hands in surrender) - Rookie, here-- but I was kinda hoping, you'd take a chance. (crosses fingers)

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - Dallas Elite.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - The Energy.

ALYSSA "QUICKSTEP" NGUYEN - Seattle Majestics.

COACH PORTER - Okay, now to the best of your knowledge-- when were you released, and why?

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - End of last season. Truthfully, I was fulfilling more of a, (air quotes) Mentorship role.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - She again, surrenders-- cute as a none-- sexual button.

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - No shame, I lost a quarterback battle-- and I owned it.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - Umm, Roster depth... no shame.

COACH PORTER (V.O.) - Who would you say, you model your game after?

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - Ohh that's easy-- I'm from the "Sin City of the South", so it's gotta be my man, "JOE KOOL BURROW," off the rip.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - Come on Coach, that's gonna be Pat, with no strings attached. (catches herself, straightens) I mean Patrick Mahomes, uh sir.

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - Russell Wilson.

TASHA "TRIGGER" BELL - Aaron Rodgers.

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - I'll go with Drew Brees, but don't tell my Dad. (winks)

RENEE "CANNON" MATTHEWS - Brett Favre, without a doubt.

COACH PORTER - Do you have any specific feelings-- one way or the other, about being asked to play a Back-up role?

RENEE "CANNON" MATTHEWS - Truthfully? I hate it, but I'll do it for the team.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - Don't know, honestly that's never been an ask. Look I'm willing to do whatever the team needs, but she better have her boots strapped-- and know I'm coming for her.

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - Whatever helps the team, Coach.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - I'm not worried Coach, I'll earn my spot.

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - I think backup quarterback is a position, not a consolation prize. You're the hinge. If you fail, the door falls off. I'll do what's needed of me, always.

COACH PORTER (V.O.) - What are your personal-goals for your WFA career?

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - To win championships of course, Coach. That's why we're here isn't it? And anybody that says different, is fooling themselves-- and trying to fool you.

LAUREN "LACES" WHITMORE - Coach, I love this game, more than anything. I can honestly say it's given me more joy than I ever thought a team sport could. Shoot, I ain't got no family, no kids in my future. But Football has never failed me. It just keeps reinventing itself every year. Gave me teams, Players to root for. Astonishing feats of athleticism, that've dang near stopped my breath (tearing up). And then came the WFA, and she allowed me to live out my dreams. I owe her, for a life-time of joy. I just wanna give her somethin' back.

MONIQUE "MONEY" ALVAREZ - My goals? I'd say growth-- no leadership. Growth, and Leadership, final answer.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - Honestly, I just want to prove myself. That I'm more than just some small-town, hick, pageants princess. I've got grit, and heart, and enough nerve to take on a so-called Man's-sport-- and make it mine!

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - My goal? That Ring Coach, what else?

RENEE "CANNON" MATTHEWS - To start again, show 'em I ain't a has-
- been. That I can still play, with the best of 'em, and make a
difference. It ain't over for me, Coach. I got more, tons more.

COACH PORTER - What would the team benefit by your presence here?

DENISE "DIESEL" FREEMAN - My toughness.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - Point blank? Athleticism.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - Energy.

TASHA "TRIGGER" BELL - I'd say-- probably Arm talent.

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - All I know for sure, is that I'll prepare
like I'm starting, support whoever is, and be ready without
resentment.

COACH PORTER - What do you say is the-- Key, best on-field
attribute of yours?

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - My Poise.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - That's a tough one, Coach. I'm not the
biggest, not the fastest or the strongest-- but, I have just
enough of all of it, to do sumthin' special-- if given a fair
chance. I can only promise one thing, that's 100 percent of
Kayla, "The Rocket" Jensen, and hope that's sufficient.

ALYSSA "QUICKSTEP" NGUYEN - Hmm, I guess my best asset would be,
my speed.

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - Trust. I earn it, and I protect it at all
costs.

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - My Pocket presence, definitely.

COACH PORTER (V.O.) - What sort of functional availability can
you commit to?

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - Availability? Full, this is my priority.

ALYSSA "QUICKSTEP" NGUYEN - Well, let's see umm... No, just
kidding, Coach. Full, full.

ERICA "ICE" THOMPSON - Full.

BRITTANY "BLITZ" COLE - Anytime is a good time for me, Coach.

KAYLA "ROCKET" JENSEN - I'm all in, Coach.

She smiles like she's said this before. Porter checks a box.

Coach Porter closes her folder slowly.

Most of the answers sounded like echoes-- phrases learned,
repeated, safe. But one had weight. Some understood the job as
service, not status. Porter stands.

COACH PORTER - Alright, that's all for today-- we appreciate your honesty, and your time. Good day.

As the women file out, his eyes linger on Jordan-- still seated, hands folded, steady as if she's already holding the line.

COACH PORTER - Was there something else, Ms. Reed?

JORDAN "ANCHOR" REED - I just wanted to say that, I'm here because I want to earn trust, add value, and be dependable. If I'm starting, I'll be ready. If I'm backing up, I'll make the starter better. Either way, I'll do the work.

She smiles-- quick, confident, and she's gone.

Porter studies her for a moment longer than the others. Then he nods once.

COACH PORTER - Alright-- now that, was an introduction.

Coach Porter doesn't write anything down right away. Some things don't need ink.

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - LATE DAY

The sun is dipping low behind the practice field lights. Helmets rest at the players' feet. Sweat, dirt, and silence hang heavy as Coach Porter steps into the middle of the huddle, arms crossed, eyes steady.

COACH PORTER - Alright. Eyes up. Take a knee.

The team settles.

COACH PORTER - I know that was a hard practice. It was supposed to be. Because this season? It's not going to give us anything easy. I want to talk to you about something real-- something that matters more than reps, depth charts, or schemes. As of today, Nicole is moving to Injured Reserve.

The field goes quiet.

COACH PORTER - It's not a short-term thing. It's not just a "walk it off" scenario. It's the kind of injury that tests a player's patience, pride, and heart. Nicole doesn't just lose game time. She loses momentum. She loses routine. And for an athlete, that can mess with your head if you let it.

The ladies watch, grim faces all.

COACH PORTER - So, here's what I expect from this team. You don't leave your teammates behind. You check on 'em. Keep 'em involved. You remind 'em-- every single day-- that they're still part of this locker room, still part of our fight, still part of what we're building. Because this team doesn't disappear when someone goes down. We tighten up.

He straightens, voice firming.

COACH PORTER - Now listen carefully. Nicole being out does not mean we stop our pull. It means the weight just got heavier-- and it's time for someone else to carry it. This is where excuses show up... or leaders do. Every rep from here on out? You're playing for more than yourself. You're playing for the person next to you. For the one who can't be out here right now. Been waiting for your moment? Congratulations, it just arrived.

Coach Porter turns slightly, gesturing toward the sideline.

COACH PORTER - That brings me to the next part. Growth doesn't stop. We adapt. We reload. So, with that in mind I would like to introduce to you... four new additions to this team.

Suddenly, the women standing near him makes sense.

COACH PORTER - First up, we have-- Brittany "Blitz" Cole. She brings speed, pressure, and a mindset that doesn't wait for permission.

Scattered claps, nods as Brittany steps forward, waving.

COACH PORTER - Next, Tasha "Trigger" Bell. Trigger doesn't hesitate. She sees it, she fires, and she finishes.

Tasha salutes them.

COACH PORTER - Then, we have Jordan "Anchor" Reed. Anchor earned that name for a reason. She stabilizes, she absorbs pressure, and she holds the line when things get chaotic.

Jordan nods, lifting a hand.

COACH PORTER - And finally we have-- Lauren "Laces" Whitmore. Lauren is joining us through the, "Assistant Coach Pipeline Program." That means leadership, preparation, and accountability-- on and off the field. She's here to grow, and she's here to help you grow. Respect her experience. Learn from her. Elevate with her.

Coach Porter scans the huddle one last time.

COACH PORTER - This is what a season looks like. Not perfect. Not clean. But honest. Someone goes down. Someone steps up. Everyone stays connected. We don't fracture. We don't panic. We "Respond."

The faces stare back, a secret vow in their eyes.

COACH PORTER - Now get up. Bring it in.

The team rises.

COACH PORTER - We play for each other. And we don't waste a single opportunity we've been given. Team on three. 1... 2... 3...

TEAM - TEAM!

MONTAGE:

* WEEK 7 THE NEXT GAME IS A 23-21 HOME LOSS TO THE TAMPA BAY INFERNO. HEADS HANG LOW AFTER THE CLOSE DEFEAT. TIM HAS BEEN STRANGELY ABSENT LATELY.

* FOR THE NEXT TWO-WEEKS NICOLE, ARM IN A SLING GOES FROM TEAM-LEAD TO STANDING CAUTIOUS-OBSERVER ON THE SIDELINES OF DAILY PRACTICES AS WELL AS THE INFIRMARY.

* TO THE SIDELINES OF SCHEDULED GAMES, LENDING ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.

* WEEK 8 THE GAME CULMINATES IN A 30-10 AWAY VICTORY OVER THE PALM BEACH COYOTES. PLAYERS CELEBRATE AFTER THE SIZABLE DEFEAT.

END MONTAGE:

INT. SAN ANTONIO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (SAT) - TERMINAL - DAY

Todd, appearing hurried and perplexed attempts to navigate the bustling airport. He is able to locate the correct terminal, arriving just in time to watch his baby-girl emerge from the tunnel. He notices the brace immediately and his face switches to concern. He manages to still himself, in order to properly welcome her. As they depart the terminal:

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (points at the sling) - So, who do I need to fight?

NICOLE - No one, Daddy- I just strained my Bicep, nobody for you to fight.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Where's that Tim kid, I could put him in a quick head-lock.

NICOLE - Truthfully, I think I may have fumbled that one, Pop.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. (sarcastic grin) - Aww shux, I really liked him?

INT. TRUCK - DAY

As they near home, Todd notices Nicole's somber disposition. He lowers the dial on the Country-music station.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Alright, I give-- what's the issue?

Nicole, pulls her glance from the passing country-side.

NICOLE - Dad, did you and Momma ever get into any bad dust-ups before she got sick.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Oh, here and there I suppose. Nothing too serious though. One thing, I never let the day pass without letting her know she meant the world to me. Somethin,' your Grandpa taught me-- never be too stubborn to apologize, least for your part.

Nicole looks down.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Point being?

NICOLE - I dunno, I'm thinking I may not have been the best person lately.

TODD OLSTEIN SR. - Well, good thing for you, the rules don't sit the same for girls. No kiddin; your Momma apologized to me three times our entire marriage. June 93, December 2000, April 04. Yep, got 'em written in my billfold. Trust me when I tell you, a friend; specially a good one, ain't worth losin' over somethin' petty.

INT. HOUSE - NICOLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nicole lies in bed, consumed with thought. Suddenly, a look of resolution meets her. She sits up grabbing her cellphone off the bed, and dialing a number from memory. As it rings, she scoots back against the pillows.

TIM (V.O.) - "Hi this is Timothy Chase, with The San Antonio Slash. Sorry, I'm not available, right now. But leave a message, and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. As always, GO SLASH!"

Nicole's face, drops at the realization.

NICHOLE - Hey it's me-- uh, Nickie. Umm, call me when you get this, okay?

She reaches over to a nearby night-stand, depositing the silver-hand-held. Suddenly, she sees something and grabs it-- a book. She opens it, turning through.

NICHOLE - Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them." Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

She pauses- a look of wonder on her face.

NICHOLE - Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that whatever enters

the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts-- murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."

She sits the bible down, and grabs her nearby football. A look of understanding in her eyes.

INT. S.A. STEERS TRAINING CAMP DORM - HALL/DOOR - NIGHT

Nicole arrives back to the room to find only Milo awaiting her. She sits on her bed. Suddenly, a thought-- she pulls out her phone.

TIM (V.O.) - "Hi this is Timothy Chase, with The San Antonio Slash. Sorry, I'm..."

She hangs up a sad look of dejection plaguing her face.

INT. S.A. STEERS TRAINING CAMP DORM - ROOM/DOOR - MORNING

OPEN ON a feminine fist banging urgently on a door, until. Nicole, clearly disturbed snatches it open-- half-asleep fully-annoyed, and face-masked. In the hall waits Shayla and Jennifer, ready for business.

SHAYLA - Morning Sunshine, up and at 'em, Rook.

NICOLE (wiping her eyes) - You're playing with me right now?

SHAYLA - I am playing, and if you want to-- you betta wake your pasty tail up and act like it's important to you.

Nicole disappears back into her cave.

JENNIFER (to Shayla) - Girl, that's how she looks in the morning?

SHAYLA (shrugs, laughing) - Giiiiirrrlll.

Suddenly, Nicole emerges maskless, and sweat-suited-- passing them. Her teammates rush to catch-up.

TIME CUT:

MONTAGE - GRUELING PRACTICE WEEK

* NICOLE RUNS DRILLS SINGLE-MINDEDLY, SWEAT POURING, JAW CLENCHED.

* SHAYLA AND JENNIFER SHOUT ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ACROSS THE FIELD.

*COACH PORTER WATCHES, ARMS CROSSED, EXPRESSION STONY, BUT CONCERNED.

* NICOLE STRETCHES SHOULDER BETWEEN REPS, MASKING PAIN WITH BRAVADO.

* ICE PACKS. PHYSICAL THERAPY BANDS. NIGHTS STUDYING THE PLAYBOOK, ARM IN A SLING.

END MONTAGE:

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS TRAINING CAMP DORM - ROOM/DOOR - THURSDAY MORNING

Again, the girls wait, after having knocked. The door is snatched open by an irritated Andy. Her eye-cover is pulled down but Milo's is in place.

SHAYLA - Hey Solinostenivich, girl. Where's, Sleeping Beauty?

Silence, as the bruiser stairs at them through tired eyes.

SOLINOSTENIVICH (points down the hall) - Field.

CUT TO:

EXT. S.A. STEERS - PRACTICE FIELD - CONT.

The ladies reach the field to find Nicole hard at work, resolve, solid in her eyes. They approach with proud expressions.

SHAYLA - Well alright, that's what I 'm sayin' Rook!

INT. S.A. STEERS - TEAM INFIRMARY - DAY

Nicole, Solomon, Coach Porter, Shayla, and Asst. Coach Summers are gathered to watch as Nicole is examined. Solomon slowly and carefully assesses the injured QB's arm.

TRAINER SOLOMON - And how's that?

NICOLE - Couldn't be better, Doc.

TRAINER SOLOMON - You're sure?

NICOLE - It's perfect.

Shayla's face isn't sure.

COACH PORTER - You heard the girl, she's perfect. Excellent work Solomon.

They shake, and everyone surrounds in cautious glee.

MOMENTS LATER:

Once the others have gone, and only Shayla remains. She approaches.

SHAYLA (curious) - So, you're perfect huh? (shrugs) That's amazing, rook. I wasn't sure you had it in you.

Shayla stoops to open a mini-refrigerator. Nicole smiles, guarded.

NICOLE (nervous) - Yeah, I wasn't either.

Suddenly, an orange is lofted toward Nicole. She goes to grab it but her timing and strength are noticeably off. The fruit falls to the floor.

SHAYLA - Sure about that?

NICOLE -- Doesn't matter, we have to be better-- we need the Slingshot.

SHAYLA - Not if you're hurt. No game is worth your safety, Nickie. I gotta tell, Coach.

NICOLE (tearing up) - No, please! You can't take this from me... it's all I've got left. Look, I'll be careful-- I promise. Just, PLEASE LET ME HAVE THIS ONE.

Pity and concern, plague her friends face. She wraps her in a heart-filled embrace.

SHAYLA (points warning) - Okay, but... don't make me a fool.

They hug again. Just then, Tim pokes his head in.

TIM - Hey...

NICOLE - Hey back, stranger...

TIM - You busy?

Nicole and Shayla look at one another in mutual understanding.

SHAYLA - Of course not Timmy, my boy.

She attempts a fist bump as she leaves but Tim is woefully unprepared. She exits.

NICOLE - I'm glad you're here, I've been trying to find you.

TIM (he eases in cautious) - You didn't seem to need a high school buddy. I didn't wanna get in your way.

NICOLE - Yeah, I know-- I wanted to apologize to you, for the way I spoke. You didn't deserve that, you've been really good to me... and I was awful.

TIM (considers) - Uhh, well yeah sorta--

NICOLE - Look, I understand if you don't want to, cause I'm a literal car wreck. But, you think maybe, I can get a do over?

Tim considers, trying to hold his cool.

TIM - Well, yah see-- Slingshot. That's a tough one-- I know you need a friend right now, but--

Nicole's eyes drop mournfully.

TIM - ... I have no intensions of being your friend.

Tim kisses Nicole passionately, stealing her bravado.

TIM - You got that, Olstein?

Nicole, overwhelmed-- nods assuredly.

CUT TO:

S.A. STEERS STADIUM - S.A. SLASH V.S. CALI WAR - GAME 9 - NIGHT

After a kick-off fair-catch by Tania, the Slash start their opening-drive 1st & 10 at their own 25. Nicole opens under center. Bullsy shifts late into an I-formation, a look designed to force the defense into their base front. An Inside Zone to Shayla is the first play called.

The defensive tackles pinch hard-- women's pro defenses love early interior pressure-- but Shayla plants, bouncing off Bullsy's seal, and rips 7 yards before being dragged down. The team immediately lines up.

Then, on a 2nd & 3 No-huddle call. Nicole claps once. Quick Bubble play is run to-- (Slot-Receiver) Low-Low. The defense over-rotates. The corner knifes through and chops Low-Low down for a 2-yard loss. First punch thrown by the Defense.

The play after; starts at the 3rd & 5-- from a Trips right formation. With Neechie inside, Lex wide, and Yvonne tight to the line in a Mesh Concept. Nicole zips it to Neechie crossing underneath, and a linebacker plasters her immediately for a gain of 4. Just short.

Then, on a 4th & 1, at the 34yard-line, no hesitation. The Slash runs a Power Lead-- with Jennifer behind Bullsy. Bullsy detonates the hole allowing Jennifer to surge low, legs churning for a First down by inches. The sideline erupts.

Next, a 1st & 10, on the 36: A Play-action, Boot Left-- Nicole keeps. The edge Defender stays home. Nicole slides down for a yard, taking the safe option.

Now at play 6 - 2nd & 9, a Shotgun, empty backfield-- forces the Defense to declare coverage. The Stick-Option to Yvonne, is called. Yvonne sits perfectly in the soft zone, for an 8-yard gain. The chains creep forward.

Next play-- a 3rd & 1 at the 31, we turn to our Heavy package-- Two Tight-end formation featuring, Yvonne and Meeks. From that, we run a QB Sneak. The interior collapses and Nicole is swallowed for no gain-- defense standing tall.

Now, facing a 4th & 1, at our 45-- Coaches choose, not to send out the punt unit. Instead, running a Counter Toss to Shayla. Our Pulling-guard, crushes the edge. Shayla hits daylight, for 15 yards. Momentum fully seized.

So, we're 1st & 10, at the Opposition 40 a Trips left-- Deep Over to Bri is called. Nicole steps up... releases... the safety closes fast, but Bri catches it absorbing the hit. 12 yards gained.

On first-down at the 28, the script ends with a Fade to Tania. Perfect coverage on the pass results in it sailing just long, incomplete. With ten plays down; no points have been scored yet-- but the Defense is breathing heavy, already feeling the strain of our tempo and variety.

Set in the Red-Zone, we engage our Short-Yardage Package. On 1st & Goal, at the 8-- we run the Inside Zone with Jennifer. The Defensive-front submarines the blocks, loosing us 1 yard.

2nd & Goal at the 9, in a Play-Action Flat to Meeks-- Nicole fakes hard. Meeks slips free-- with the pass slipping through her hands. Incomplete.

3rd & Goal, still 9 to go, we line-up Trips right, isolation left. A slant-- to Jordan. The corner jumps it. The pass is broken up, and the crowd groans loudly. The offense, however-- stays on the field.

On 4th & Goal, Nicole changes the play at the line prescribing a Delayed Draw to Shayla. The defense bails into coverage on hike, and Shayla bursts through a crease, spins off a tackle, and dives forward, crash-landing for the Touchdown.

Helmets are thrust into the air as the Slash draw First-blood.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - S.A. SLASH V.S. CALI WAR - NIGHT

SKIP AHEAD TO THE 2ND QUARTER, 6:12 REMAINING.

Slash Offense back on the field rallies with a Slot Fade to Neechie resulting in a touchdown. Precision timing against the Quarters-Look, common in Women's Pro Defenses.

ON TO LATE 2ND QUARTER, 1:04 REMAINING.

On a Slash Two-minute drill, Nicole moves them with outs to Lex and seams to Yvonne. From the 12-- a Jet Sweep to Low-Low where the edge is sealed. One cut is made on a run for the Touchdown.

As time expires the Halftime Score stands at S.A. Slash 21, Cali War 10. The teams jog off, sweat-soaked and breathing hard, the message clear: This isn't novelty football. This is professional, physical, tactical-- and the first-half has only sharpened the hunger for what is to come.

FADE TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

While everyone is being bandaged, iced, and otherwise repaired for the 2nd Half, Coach meets with Nicole. He sits beside her as she stretches her arm.

COACH PORTER - How's the arm holding up, Nic? Be straight with me.

NICOLE - Feels fine, Coach. Strong enough to finish. (hesitates) But... maybe we auttah let Tasha close us out. Just in case.

COACH PORTER - I hear you-- but Tasha's still a bit shaky on the schemes. Tell you what, we'll keep it simple, lean on the run game, protect the ball. Look kid, you've played your heart out, but right now those girls need you. Question is, who do you choose to be?

NICOLE - I choose to be... who they need me to be-- a Team-leader.

The Coach heads toward the door. Nicole slows, catching Tasha's eye.

NICOLE - Stay ready. You might be up sooner than you think.

TASHA - I got it.

NICOLE (quiet resolve) - Let's finish this right.

They shake firmly.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - S.A. SLASH V.S. CALI WAR - NIGHT

The Second-half starts with a different kind of electricity-- the tight, dangerous hum of a rivalry that has already crossed the line. The Cali War receives the kickoff and Nichole marches her team down the field before their drive is stalled at the 19-yard line, forcing a successful Field-goal.

Nicole jogs onto the field-- unphased by the moment. She rolls her shoulder once, twice. Good enough. The Cali War Defenders creep toward the line, helmets low, eyes full of malice. They want this so-called Slingshot on the ground.

THIRD QUARTER OPENING DRIVE:

Nicole goes no-huddle immediately with an Inside Zone play to Shayla. Four yards. Nothing fancy. Just gritted-teeth, and shoulder pads.

Next, it's time for a Quick Out to Lexus for six more yards and a First down. The War linebackers bark calls, rotating late typical of their aggressive, style. Nicole, exploiting it.

A Stick-Seam Combo to Yvonne, is called freezing the linebacker. Yvonne slips behind her to grab thirteen yards.

The Slash crosses Mid-field. Bullsly thunders in on a Power-Lead, Jennifer following for a bruising five. The clock continues to move. The War defense, grows restless.

Inside the Red-zone, Nicole goes shotgun-- Trips right, with Tania isolated out to the left. The War shows blitz, and Nicole seeing it, slides left, firing a laser to Jordan on a shallow cross.

At the exact moment the ball leaves her hand, a War defender launches her helmet into Nicole's shoulder-- driving her into the turf. The whistle comes late. Too late. The ball, still perfect, hits Jordan in stride. "Touchdown!!!"

The crowd explodes and then, abruptly goes silent. Nicole's down-motionless.

MOMENTS LATER:

Nicole sits up slowly, face tight, clutching her arm. Slash medical-staff sprints out. The War defender-- standing nearby. The Coaches help Nicole to her feet as she tries to shake it off-- but can't. As she disappears into the tunnel, helmet under her other arm, the stadium buzzes with anger. Suddenly, a new name echoes from the sideline.

COACH PORTER - TRIGGER! TRIGGER! What're you waiting on, GET OUT THERE!

Tasha "Trigger" Bell, pulls her helmet on-- as if she's been waiting all night. She's not flashy, but precise. From the first snap she asserts control with a Quick Hitch play to Bri for seven yards. Calm, standard.

Her next play: a Split Zone run by Jennifer, pushes ahead for Five more. Trigger's eyes never stop moving as she manipulates Safeties with her gaze, slowing the tempo just enough to suffocate the War's aggression.

Now, standing-- third-and-long more manageable, she checks to Low-Low on a shallow option, letting the slot runner slip between zones-- for nine.

The War defense, starts an abusive campaign of Grabbing Jerseys, and trash-talk. Their obvious intent, to frustrate and insight Slash players as the clock runs down.

INT. FOURTH QUARTER BACKBREAKER - NIGHT

Up two scores, the Slash go heavy. Meeks and Yvonne tight; Bullsly offset. Duo play to Shayla gains three-yards. Again, and again. Trigger milks the play-clock, snapped with one second left, and hits Neechie on an option route that punishes a Linebacker for overcommitting.

On the goal line, they run a Play-Action Boot, and Trigger rolls right, squares her shoulders, and dumps it softly to Meeks in the flat for the Touchdown. No celebration, she surrenders just a nod to the sideline.

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - BROADCAST BOOTH - NIGHT

BROADCASTER 1 (V.O.) - And there is Sports Fans, your Slash dominating once again, as they Bulldoze their way into the play offs, defeating the Cali War-- to the tune of 38-17. Slash fans, your team has cemented their name into the history of the WFA. Here they are Slash Nation-- CLAWS OUT!!!

INT. S.A. STEERS TEAM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

In the locker room, Nicole watches from a stool, arm iced, eyes locked on the screen. When the Trigger takes a knee to end things, Nicole is able to truly exhale for the first time since the hit.

Final Score shows a dominating victory of San Antonio Slash 38 over the Cali War 17. A battle that won't be remembered just for

the score, but for resilience. For control. And for the night San Antonio proved they didn't need chaos to win; only trust in the woman next in line.

INT. S.A. STEERS - TEAM INFIRMARY - NEXT MORNING

Nicole sits on a gurney, while Solomon examines her arm. He looks over her recent scans, curious.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Hmm, and you say that the arm feels, strained?

NICOLE - Strained, Pulled-- I dunno, something's not right.

TRAINER SOLOMON (staring strangely) - Riiight. And how do you feel, otherwise? Your shoulder? Your back? Your neck?

NICOLE - All fine, it's just my Bicep.

Nicole grabs a part of her arm-- the wrong part. Solomon moves her hand over her Bicep.

TRAINER SOLOMON - You mean, here?

Nicole nods agreeingly adjusting her focus.

NICOLE - Umm yeah, right.

He stares conspicuously at the images on his clipboard.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Strange, the scans just don't seem to agree with you. So, how did the team fair without the Sling-shot?

NICOLE - Oh, they were total Badd-Asses-- played exactly how we trained. It was great.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Sounds, like it. So, whaddo you think about surgery? Would end your season, but for that kind of pain?

Nicole's face flushes with insecurity.

TRAINER SOLOMON (empathy) - Then again, resting the remainder of the season should certainly give it time to properly heal.

Notice how Nicole's face perks.

NICOLE - Yeah, I mean-- if you think that's best.

TRAINER SOLOMON - Yes, probably best to give it time. Also, it saves you a fairly harsh scar.

Solomon scribbles his suggestion on the forms, also on that clipboard. Solomon rests his hand supportively on her shoulder, meeting her smile.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS - TRAINING CAMP DORM - NIGHT

Nicole sits in bed, again searching her Bible-- arm stilled slung in a now, decorated sling. She gets up, moving to the aquarium and feeding Milo-- smiling, as he devours his crickets. Suddenly, a call. Nicole quickly retrieves her phone, answering it.

TIM - Hey, I hear you're gonna have some time on your hands.

NICOLE - Yeah, looks that way.

TIM - Hey, I want to show you something?

NICOLE - Show me what, exactly?

TIM - Just, a little something I've been working on. It's Rated "PG," I promise.

Nicole's face eases from suspicion to shy concession.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - DAY

Nicole arrives to the stadium in an uber. She's surprised to notice the activity, on a non-football-day. Tim waits for her near the gates.

TIM - So, normal date. Snacks, walking, definitely not a Grand-romantic-gesture.

NICOLE - Uh-huh. And I just happened to need my lucky jacket for a totally normal walk, through Steers Stadium?

TIM - Pure coincidence. I trip and fall into meaningful places sometimes.

They pass through the glass doors. Banners declare: "STEERS PRO FOOTBALL MUSEUM." A display gleams ahead.

NICOLE - Tim-- Why is my name that big?

TIM (smiles, suspicious) - Optical illusion? Stadium lighting? Science?

NICOLE (reads the display) - "The Nicole Olstein-- led S.A. Slash Inaugural WFL Season." (soft laugh) You're unbelievable.

TIM - Hey, I liked you before you were a museum exhibit.

NICOLE - Bold claim. You liked me when I threw spirals, with braces on my teeth?

TIM - Especially then.

She steps closer to a framed article.

NICOLE - ... No way. Is this?

TIM - High school paper. I may have... liberated it from my parents' attic.

NICOLE (reading) - "Nicole 'The Slingshot,' Olstein, raised for greatness-- displays uncommon vision, poise, and fearlessness." (her voice catches) They used this picture.

A childhood photo: Nicole in full uniform, small but fierce, standing between her family. Her mother's hand rests on her shoulder, smiling with unmistakable pride.

NICOLE (quiet) - I forgot how big that helmet was.

TIM - You still filled it.

Her eyes gloss. She inhales, steadying herself, refusing the tears. Then she turns and hugs him-- tight, grateful, warm.

NICOLE - You did this on purpose.

TIM - Maybe, I just wanted you to see how far you ran... before the world started counting yards.

NICOLE (murmurs) - You're dangerous when you're thoughtful.

TIM - Funny. I was going to say the same thing about you-- when you're smiling like that.

She pulls back, still holding his hands.

NICOLE - Thank you. For remembering me... before all this.

TIM - Always, Nic. Museum or not, you're still my favorite highlight reel.

She squeezes his hand, leaning into him as they kiss. They walk on hand-in-hand.

CUT TO TWO WEEKS LATER:

EXT. ST. PAUL'S BAPTIST CHURCH - REAR-FIELD - DAY

Nicole, hair pulled back, and eyes streaked with Grease-paint, squats-- hands on knees. She accepts the hike, and drops back-- studying the field. She throws a strike to Darryana on a slant, and watches as, "YANA," goes into joystick-mode, slashing through the Defense-- untouched, for the score.

Nicole, their new Team-Coach-- thrusts her hands to the sky, as she is reminded of her child--like love for this game.

Coach Olstein claps her hands once, sharp and familiar, and the noise of the field slowly settles- every eye finding her.

NICOLE - Bring it in.

They circle up, grass-stained and breathing hard.

NICOLE - Wow, I'm proud of you ladies-- not just for how you've been practicing-- but how you show up. For each other. For the work nobody sees.

A few players nod. Someone bumps a teammate's shoulder.

NICOLE - Give your all every rep. That's the standard. Not wins, not stats. It's about your effort, your accountability, your heart.

She pauses, letting that land.

NICOLE - And don't forget this-- These moments, these friendships, the way this game makes you feel. When you're exhausted and still smiling. You won't always have this field-- but you'll always have what it's given you.

She steps back, a small smile breaking through.

NICOLE - Now hustle up and get changed, ladies. We meet at the buses in fifteen. Remember, we've got that commitment.

NICOLE - Alright, hands up. Family on three. ONE, TWO, THREE.

TEAM - FAMILY!!!

They break the huddle in a rush of laughter and movement.

CUT TO:

INT. S.A. STEERS STADIUM - THE FRIDAY NIGHT SUITE - SOUTH DIVISION PLAYOFFS - NIGHT

(1) S.A. SLASH VS. (4) ATLANTA RAGE.

The team of young ladies gather in the Stadium Suite, with in the midst of a lavish catered Pizza, Pop, and Bar B Que spread. As they feast and fiesta, one eye on the game-- Nicole and Tim chaperon. Nicole-- Yana, by her side-- watches her Slash intently, as they drive relentlessly down field. On-field, with newly reinstated players, DT, the Twins, T-Gaines. Tasha runs in a QB-sneak for another Touch-down. Nicole and Yana toast, tapping their pizza slices together.

The End