

NO SECOND PRIZE

Written by

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EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

TITLE: Croatia. Fall of Yugoslavia. 1993.

Thunder and lightning race across the sky.

A bus bumping along the broken road. In the distance a mountain range. Behind it, intermixed with the storm, are the flashes and explosions of artillery.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

The bus is cramped and stinking hot, PEOPLE of all ages sit in the aisles and on each other's laps, sweating and coughing.

KALINA BOLIC, 17, small for her age, with bright blonde hair tied into a ponytail, is squashed up against the window. Like a doll, she hugs to her chest an adult sized TENNIS RACQUET.

Sharing the seat is a WOMAN in a BURKA, nursing a BABY, and trying to control THREE YOUNG CHILDREN.

Kalina sees a SIGN indicating they are crossing the border into Hungary.

The explosions and gunfire are getting closer.

The Woman nudges Kalina, pointing to her TODDLER, and indicating to Kalina's lap.

Kalina shakes her head vigorously. She turns to the window and closes her eyes.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

The bus crosses the border.

FADE TO:

EXT. KOORYONG TRAIN STATION - DAY

Kalina gets off an arriving train, squinting in the bright sunlight.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS - CONTINUOUS

She approaches the beautiful Kooyong stadium and tennis courts.

TITLE ON SCREEN: Melbourne, Australia, 1994.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS CARPARK - CONTINUOUS

Kalina walks through the carpark, dodging expensive cars. TEENAGE GIRLS with their PARENTS, heading inside. Many of the families know and greet one another.

INT. KOORYONG LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

It is packed with PLAYERS queuing at the front desk. Memorabilia, photos and trophies are displayed.

Waiting in the queue, Kalina notices a poster of the dark haired, attractive 17 year old girl, FREJA MILIC. The title on the poster reads '1993 Junior Australian Open Finalist.'

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - LATER

It is packed with girls waiting to go out on court, all wearing stylish tennis gear, except Kalina, who hasn't changed out of her cheap clothes.

MARGARET
Kalina Bolic.

Kalina turns to the club secretary MARGARET, 60's, tough and good natured.

Kalina follows her out.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - DAY

The beautiful lawn courts filled with spectators watching, players on court.

Kalina follows Margaret through the throng of people.

MARGARET
Now luv, don't do anything silly,
like trying to win. If they find
out I've subbed the cleaner in with
our great Yugoslav hope, I could
get into a lot of trouble you know.

Margaret taps Kalina on the shoulder.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
Good luck. And remember...

Kalina makes a face as Margaret leaves.

Approaching the court entrance gate, Kalina finds her waiting opponent, dark black hair and a head taller. She turns to Kalina, the girl from the POSTER, FREJA MILIC.

Freja looks Kalina up and down like this is a prank. She speaks with a Croatian accent.

FREJA
How old are you?

KALINA
17.

FREJA
If you say so. Freja.

She extends her hand, Kalina gives a tepid shake.

KALINA
Uh...Kalina.

FREJA
Where are you from?

KALINA
Yugo...Croatia.

FREJA
I'm a Croat too.

Kalina's face darkens. Freja looks around in mock outrage.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Eh Aussies! You convicts! I'm not playing a Serb!

Kalina is upset, Freja tries not to laugh.

FREJA (CONT'D)
I'm joking, goodbye to all that nonsense.

She pops a stick of gum, then offers one to Kalina. She refuses.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Good for stress. Uh that is okay.
We won't be out here long.

ANNOUNCER
Please welcome the 1993 Australian
Junior Open runner up, Freja Milic,
and her opponent, Kalina Bolic.

Freja strolls regally out onto court, a royal wave to her loyal fans. Kalina with hunched shoulders scurries out.

The girls take position on the baseline.

Kalina looks around to see a wall of SPECTATORS gathered round the fence. She readies herself.

The match begins, a JUNIOR FEMALE UMPIRE officiates.

Freja lets go an ace that whistles past Kalina. The people clap as Kalina tenses herself.

A second Freja ace rebounds off the fence.

FREJA

OK we are getting warmed up here.

The girls swap to the opposite service box, Freja playing to the crowd.

Kalina does some stretching, trying to steel herself. She assumes the ready position, blowing on her finger tips.

Freja blasts another ace. The applause of the crowd is starting to wreak of sympathy.

Kalina looks lost.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Ok, now is Serbia still down there?
Oh yes there she is.

She really takes her time, bouncing the ball, doing a couple of phony ball tosses.

UMPIRE

Time warning.

Freja blasts another ace. Kalina is humiliated.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Game Milic.

The crowd's applause is polite, without enthusiasm.

Freja salutes to her PARENTS.

Kalina notices Freja's FATHER is filming the match.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

First set Milic.

FADE TO:

EXT. CROAT TENNIS COURT - FLASHBACK

This court is run down, drab and colourless.

A mean looking CROWD holding Croat flags, gesturing menacingly to Kalina.

FREJA (V.O.)
Eh Serbia!

KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - REAL TIME

Scoreboard reads Freja is up 4-0 in the second set.

Kalina comes to her senses, looks around at the bored crowd, then back to Freja.

Freja is waving at Kalina. She gets into the ready position. Freja readying her serve.

FREJA
Should have had some gum yes?

Freja lets a serve go at half pace. Kalina smacks it down the line. The girls have a rally. Freja only gives half hearted returns, but she is still moving Kalina all round the court.

Kalina races across, takes a wild back hand swing down the line, Freja runs across but her return is way out the sidelines.

UMPIRE
Out. Point Milic.

Applause from the crowd.

KALINA
It was in!

The crowd hushes.

UMPIRE
I'm sorry it was out.

KALINA
I saw it. It was in!

UMPIRE
No I'm sorry it was out.

KALINA
I looked straight at the shot. I know it was in!

Murmurs from the crowd. Freja stands, hands on hips, unimpressed.

UMPIRE
Freja was it in?

FREJA
I didn't see it.

KALINA
I saw it!
(To Umpire)
Were you even looking?! This is
because I'm a Serb and you are
racist!

FREJA
(to herself)
Here we go.

Some genuine hostility from the Kooyong crowd.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CROAT TENNIS COURT - FLASHBACK

The CROAT CROWD waving their flags and pointing and yelling at the defiant Kalina, who has hands on hips, staring at a CROAT UMPIRE.

KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - REAL TIME

Kalina gestures at the Umpire.

KALINA
Of course all your people agree
with you! But I know it was in!

UMPIRE
Out.

KALINA
It was in!

UMPIRE
Out! Bolic you're close to a code
violation.

FREJA
Eh Serbia, you don't have match
point, come on!

The crowd is jeering Kalina. She regards them with contempt, then looks down at the court.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CROAT TENNIS COURT - FLASHBACK

Kalina in the ready position, her OPPONENT bounces the ball at the other end. Behind her at the fence, the CROAT CROWD is violently booing and gesturing at her.

KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - REAL TIME

Kalina looks up, the crowd is in soft focus, their booing is muted, but the court and net are still sharp. The sound of Freja's serve, the ball coming at Kalina. She hits it down the line for a point.

A more focused Freja lets go a blistering serve, which Kalina back hands down the line. Freja out of position, tries to lunge at it and nearly falls over. She is pissed.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CROAT TENNIS COURT - FLASHBACK

Kalina standing on court bouncing the ball, behind her the large crowd is jeering. The crowd goes blurry, but she can still hear their jeering.

She serves.

MONTAGE OF MATCH - KOORYONG

The match is a dogfight. Freja's serves have lost some of their power. Kalina's aggression gains her as many points as she loses.

The crowd are starting to get involved. The scoreboard ticking over.

Scoreboard reads 4-5 in the second, with Kalina at advantage.

UMPIRE
Advantage Bolic.

END MONTAGE

KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - REAL TIME

Kalina wins a point and fist pumps the crowd...then stops cold at what she sees.

They're cheering. For her.

Kalina readies her serve, but can't help notice they are all now clapping for her.

Kalina serves. Freja returns on a backhand, Kalina tries another risky shot down the line.

UMPIRE

Out.

Kalina looks hard at where the ball landed, then nods her head, making a decision.

KALINA

No, no. It wasn't out.

Murmurs from the crowd. The Umpire looks around helplessly.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Hey umpire. You got to reverse your decision.

UMPIRE

I'm sorry it was out.

The crowd is getting restless. The Umpire regains some composure.

Kalina notices Freja looks scared.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Kalina Bolic. My decision was out.

FREJA

It was in.

Gasps from the crowd. The Umpire turns to Freja.

FREJA (CONT'D)

I saw it. It was in.

UMPIRE

Decision reversed. Point Bolic.

Kalina serves, and hits the net.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Fault.

Kalina bounces the ball at the baseline. The crowd is blurred and muted.

And now she hears the VOICE in her head. A female, both authoritative and threatening.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
You always do this!

Kalina looks around for the source of the voice, but the crowd is silent.

UMPIRE
Time warning.

Kalina has the ball ready to serve. The crowd is cheering, the sound is SHARP. She looks up at Freja, who is breathing heavily.

She then looks around at the crowd, in SHARP FOCUS, cheering, calling her by name. She bounces the ball slowly.

Kalina loads up for another serve.

THE VOICE (VO)
What are you doing Kalina?!

She closes her eyes and breathes quickly, the crowd quietens down.

UMPIRE
Time warning.

She opens her eyes. The crowd staring at her, waiting, Freja in the ready position.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Kalina Bolic, you must serve.

Kalina readies her serve.

THE VOICE (VO)
Not like that! You are useless!

She serves.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - LATER

Kalina vomits, then wretches, tears streaming down her cheeks. She grits her teeth and wipes the tears away.

FREJA (O.S.)
Where the hell is she?!

Kalina stands quickly, wipes her mouth, then flushes the toilet.

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carrying her things, Kalina creeps out of the toilet, and past the lockers. O/S YOUNG FEMALE VOICES reply with a 'who?'

FREJA (O.S.)
The little blonde girl! Where is she!?

Kalina starts hurrying out. Until Freja appears in front of her. Kalina backs into the lockers.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You! Serbia! This is Chop Chop's work, no?!

Kalina is both confused than scared. Freja waves her finger in Kalina's face.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Don't play dumb Serbia. Chop Chop sent you to test me. You're one of her mind games. You can tell her from me, I am not scared of some Serb asshole who wouldn't even shake my hand.

Kalina slaps the hand away.

KALINA
Don't call me an asshole Croat!

Freja drops back a bit.

KALINA (CONT'D)
I don't know who...Chop Chop is. They asked me to fill in, so I did. And don't call me an asshole.

FREJA
You've never heard of Coach Chop Chop?

Kalina shakes her head.

FREJA (CONT'D)
So when you choked out there, you
just choked? She didn't send you to
teach me a lesson.

KALINA
No.

Freja considers, then extends her hand.

FREJA
You gonna shake it now!

KALINA
You won. What difference does it
make?!

FREJA
It is about respect!!! I won the
match fair and square!

Kalina timidly shakes her hand, but Freja grabs hers with
both.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You gonna shake like you mean it.

Freja takes her left away, and Kalina grips her hand.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Don't ever not shake an opponent's
hand. You're not in Croatia now.

By mutual agreement they release their grip. Kalina begins to
scurry out, then stops.

KALINA
Why did you say it was out?

FREJA
What?

KALINA
My point. Why did you tell the
umpire it was out.

FREJA
Because you said it was.

Kalina flees. Freja watches her go, then shakes her head.

FREJA (CONT'D)
They had to let the Serbs out of
Yugoslavia.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

It is 1 room, with a kitchen and bathroom, a mattress and fridge.

Kalina enters, drops her gear and slumps heavily on the mattress. She thumps it with impotent rage. She looks up at a POSTER on her wall.

It is of the 15 year old ALEXANDRA KOSTIC, her face red and covered with sweat, pony tail flying, delivering a drop shot. The poster reads '1992 Australian Open Winner.'

Kalina stands, fists clenched. She then stands, punches and kicks the wall.

KALINA

Why do you do this Kalina?! Why do
you always do this?!

Yelling from next door in another LANGUAGE. She stops immediately, then sits back down on the mattress, falls back onto it in exhaustion, and closes her eyes. She is still. She opens her eyes, then looks over at her racquet lying on the floor. She then looks back up at the poster. And The Voice comes directly from it, this time kinder and more relaxed.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

If you win, she will come back.

She looks sharply at her racquet, back to the poster, then closes her eyes.

KALINA

(whispering)

One day. One day for me.

INT. KOORYONG LOBBY - NIGHT

Kalina enters, wearing her cleaner's UNIFORM.

Margaret is busy at the reception desk. She looks up at Kalina and frowns.

MARGARET

What did I tell you to do?

KALINA

She won didn't she?

MARGARET

Freja Milic has just chewed out
Carmen Turner. Our head coach. As
in my boss.

KALINA

Wait, Carmen Turner is Coach Chop
Chop?

Margaret shushes her, like Carmen can hear them.

MARGARET

(whispering)

Look, Freja wants Carmen to grant
her a wildcard into the Australian
Open, which she's refusing to do.
So in protest she refuses to take
part in any club tournaments. And
now all the other scholarship
players are refusing to hit with
her.

Now Kalina's getting an idea.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Just go in there, stay out of
sight, and clean.

Kalina nods and begins heading off...

MARGARET (CONT'D)

And Kalina. Do not go near Carmen
Turner's office.

INT. KOORYONG OFFICE - DAY

Kalina pushes a cleaner's trolley through the empty office.
She can hear a TV playing from Carmen's office.

INT. CARMEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina peaks in, Carmen has her back to her, playing the
footage from her match with Freja.

INT. KOORYONG OFFICE - DAY

Kalina looks back to the walls of the office, a LIST of
national tennis tournaments.

INT. CARMEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina hovers in the doorway. Carmen watching the footage of Kalina disputing the SECOND line call.

CARMEN
She's cheating. That was obviously
out!

Kalina almost knocks on the door...

CARMEN (CONT'D)
What is it?

KALINA
Maybe I could be Freja's hitting
partner.

Carmen swivels round in her chair. CARMEN TURNER is a stern Australian Aboriginal, in her 50's. She looks at Kalina in surprise, then checks the footage, back and forth.

She stands slowly and hovers over Kalina, looking her uniform up and down. Kalina holds her gaze.

CARMEN
Margaret!

INT. KOORYONG LOBBY - NIGHT

Margaret looking down at her desk.

MARGARET
What is it coach?
(she looks up)
Oh bloody hell.

Because there is Carmen with Kalina hovering behind.

CARMEN
(to Margaret)
The cleaner? Really?

MARGARET
You said Freja has to play in this
tournament. Find me someone. I said
who? You said anyone. I said
anyone? You said anyone.

CARMEN
I don't want to see this person in
here, ever again.

She storms off. Margaret gives Kalina an 'I told you so,' look.

EXT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLATS - DAY

Kalina shuffles toward the tall, depressing looking building.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLATS HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Kalina walks along the hallway and finds her door AJAR. She slowly approaches and looks in.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

She enters and immediately sees the room has been tossed.

She opens the toilet cistern and retrieves a tightly sealed plastic bag. She opens it and counts the small amount of MONEY inside. She is relieved.

She looks around at the mess in frustration, then sees her racquet is MISSING.

EXT. SKIP BIN - LATER

She has climbed all the way in and is searching the dense rubbish. She climbs out and hits the bin.

EXT. DIAC MAIN OFFICES - DAY

A government office in the city, the sign outside reads, 'Department of Immigration and Citizenship.'

INT DIAC OFFICE - DAY

The nervous Kalina waits in a personal office.

In walks AMBER TESTA, 40's, with long red hair and a kind face. She places a file on the table, and sits down and draws a deep breath.

AMBER

There's no easy way to say this.
Your application for permanent
residency has been denied.

Kalina looks down.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Losing that job didn't help. The problem we have is without a family connection, there's no proof you want to become an Australian citizen. Now I am sorry, but this is very serious. You only have three more months left in this country. And then you must go back to Croatia.

Kalina just shuts her eyes.

AMBER (CONT'D)

If it was a war zone like Bosnia it would be different.

KALINA

Pity I am not from a war zone.

AMBER

We are getting a lot of people fleeing the Yugoslav war. You have any family back there?

Kalina shakes her head.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Your parents?

KALINA

My father left when I was a baby. My mother...died in the war.

AMBER

Where were you living?

KALINA

In an orphanage.

AMBER

I am sorry about this. What are you going to do with the three months you have left?

KALINA

What does it matter?

She gets up and is about to leave...when she stops.

KALINA (CONT'D)

The place I worked at. They give scholarships for tennis. If I got one, would that help?

AMBER

Maybe, if someone there could act as your sponsor. You know in this job I have met people who have the most amazing and terrible stories. But I've never met anyone who came here to be the next Alexandra Kostic.

Amber extends her hand, Kalina considers, but leaves.

EXT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLATS - DAY

Kalina walks up with a plastic shopping bag. A group of KIDS, of various ages and races are playing some games.

She then notices a group of BOYS are playing tennis. With her RACQUET. She charges straight up to the Bosnian boy, AMIR, and tries to grab her racquet from him.

KALINA

Give me my racquet back! It's mine!

He laughs and keeps it off her, yelling in Bosnian.

AMIR

(Bosnian)

Hey it's the Serb champion! Don't kill me Serb!

Kalina leaps on him and tries to wrest the racquet away. He pushes her over.

This gives everyone pause.

The furious Kalina stands and slaps him across the face. Amir responds by slapping her so hard she falls down.

Kalina lies there stunned. All the kids flee.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - LATER

Kalina looking at herself in the mirror. Her eye is BLACK.

She opens a JOURNAL, a LIST of dates and tennis tournaments identical to the list at Kooyong. On her mirror she writes out some dates and places with a marker.

She opens her plastic bag and counts out MONEY. She then rips from her journal a newspaper article, with the heading 'She went down fighting.' A photo of an 18 year old CARMEN, sitting on court, and a caption, '1965 Australian Open Runner Up.'

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

A major city train station. Kalina slides some of her money across and takes a ticket.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIN STATION - LATER

A train pulls in.

EXT. REGIONAL TENNIS COURTS - LATER

A sign 'Victorian Junior Club Championships.' Kalina stalking the courts, many junior players with families watching on. She spots Carmen, wearing dark sunglasses, watching a match.

FROM THE FENCE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina sidles up behind Carmen. She considers what to say.

CARMEN
Stubborn little so and so aren't we.

KALINA
How did you know I was behind you?

CARMEN
Blackfella magic.

KALINA
I need that job back.

Carmen doesn't turn around.

KALINA (CONT'D)
Look, I'm trying to get my visa. To stay I need that job back.

CARMEN
Get another one.

KALINA
I can't.

And no response from Carmen.

KALINA (CONT'D)
I came to this country to play tennis. And if I was working at Kooyong. I thought I could get a scholarship.

CARMEN
We don't give scholarships to cheats.

Now Kalinda comes round to Carmen's side.

KALINA
I am not a cheat.

CARMEN
Not what I saw on the video.

KALINA
Look, that match with Freja I just did what Margaret asked...

CARMEN
Freja thinks I used you to set her up. And now is not playing in this tournament. Which we're losing. Because you cheated.

KALINA
It's not my fault she's weak.

Carmen just sips some water.

KALINA (CONT'D)
She has to have the crowd cheering. And she called the second point in, even though she wasn't sure.

Now Carmen does look at her.

CARMEN
How do you know that?

KALINA
She told me. I know if we'd kept playing, she would have choked.

CARMEN
Except you choked.

KALINA
You could uh, help me with that.

Nervously she takes out the newspaper article and shows Carmen, who gives it a cold glance.

KALINA (CONT'D)
You took the first set against Margaret Court. And you were 4 nil up in the second. And after you lost you never played again.

Carmen points to her eye.

KALINA (CONT'D)
The bastard who stole my racquet.

CARMEN
Did you get it back?

KALINA
Not yet.

CARMEN
What is your name?

KALINA
Kalina.

CARMEN
I know you're the cleaner.

KALINA
My name is. Ka-li-na.

CARMEN
Oh, Kuleena.

Carmen turns back to the game.

KALINA
I could be Freja's hitting partner.

Carmen takes another drink of water.

CARMEN
Be at work tonight.

KALINA
Tonight?

CARMEN
That's what I said.

KALINA
Ok. Thanks.

She dashes off.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

Kalina sticks a calendar up on the wall. With black marker she draws an X on that day's date and an X three months later.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Carmen sits in darkness. She is watching the video tape of the Kalina and Freja match. She sees Kalina slapping herself every time she misses a shot.

The phone rings.

CARMEN

Hey Vesna...can you hear me
alright? Thanks for gettin back to
me. I was hoping you could look
someone up who used to play over
there. Her name is Kalina Bolich.
Ka-lin-a. Yeah thanks.

Carmen goes over to her wall. The lights from the city illuminate the photographs displayed. Coach Carmen posing with JUNIOR FEMALE PLAYERS, winning tournaments. She is the ONLY Aboriginal and she never smiles.

And above them an OLD TENNIS RACQUET on the wall.

She looks up at it, then to the TV, visibly scared.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLATS HALLWAY - DAY

Kalina climbs the stairs. She walks along the hallway, stopping at an apartment door. She listens first, and can hear MANY Bosnian voices.

She knocks. The voices cease. But no answer. She knocks louder. Footsteps. The door opens. IRMA, her face covered, timidly opens the door. She is in her 40's.

KALINA

I live in this building. Your son.
He stole my racquet. You know
racquet. For tennis.

She awkwardly demonstrates a tennis shot.

IRMA
(Bosnian)
Emela, Emela come here. Ask her
what she wants.

A 10 YEAR OLD GIRL appears at the door.

EMELA
What...do you want?

KALINA
I don't know his name. But he wears
a red hoodie. And he stole my
tennis racquet. You see this?
(she points to her face)
He did this.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Emela and Irma move back into the apartment. But the pissed
off Kalina follows them in.

EMELA
(Bosnian)
Amir stole her tennis racquet. And
she says he hit her.

IRMA
(Bosnian)
Make her go away.

Kalina sees behind them KIDS are gathering. Far too many
people for this small apartment.

EMELA
(Bosnian)
But Amir stole her racquet. It's in
his room.

KALINA
Alright look.

Kalina reaches deep into her pockets, counting her meagre
savings, she holds up a twenty dollar note.

KALINA (CONT'D)
Here. I'll pay for it. Just give it
back.

Irma snatches the note, and beckons to Emela.

She brings Kalina's racquet out.

Kalina quickly leaves.

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Kalina with trolley is cleaning out the bins. She finds some FOOD. She picks it up, hesitates, then draws it to her mouth.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - DAY

The courts are full with PLAYERS practicing.

EXT. COURT - DAY

Freja walks regally onto court...and cannot believe it when she sees Kalina standing next to Carmen.

FREJA

Serbia?

(to Carmen)

I knew it. This is a conspiracy.

CARMEN

She did almost beat you Freja. Now,
am I still your coach?

Freja sighs deeply.

FREJA

Yes, okay. For now.

CARMEN

Marvellous, because I think you
and...

KALINA

Ka-li-na.

CARMEN

I think you and Kuleena were made
for one another.

Kalina witnesses Carmen and Freja taking part in a bizarre exercise. Freja puts on a baseball cap which Carmen tapes headphones to, attached to a WALKMAN.

CUT TO:

Kalina and Freja at either end. Carmen at the net, a bucket full of balls next to her, her reflective sunglasses in place.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Now ladies, I want all shots in the
service boxes. Freja.

Freja presses PLAY on the walkman, holds her hand up for a ball to be tossed. Carmen throws the ball to Kalina.

Kalina looks at the opposite court, unsure. She delivers an amateurish serve.

Freja's returns are power with control, moving Kalina around the court like her puppet. Kalina puts more power into her returns, eventually she hits it too hard and it goes out. Freja throws her hands up at her, then gestures to both service boxes in an obvious manner.

Carmen throws Kalina another ball. A weak serve from Kalina is so slow, Freja has time to abandon the ready position.

FREJA

(yelling)

You serve like shit.

A good forehand return from Freja, this time though Kalina is matching power with accuracy, Freja is still the better player, her returns are fast and deep, with no chance of going over the lines, Kalina forced to constantly run for them, but her returns are also getting Freja moving.

Carmen throws Freja another ball.

CARMEN

Good, nice.

Kalina is looking very tired.

Another easy serve from Freja, and Kalina's chasing of Freja's top spin continues. She tries hitting it back harder, but Freja seems to have the ball on a string, making Kalina's returns even more rushed.

A good forehand return from Freja, Kalina forced to constantly run for them...until she collapses on court.

Kalina looks up, Freja and Carmen looking down.

FREJA

Serbia, you alive?

Carmen passes her some water. Slowly Kalina stands, gulping the water down.

FREJA (CONT'D)
(to Carmen)
I guess that's that.

KALINA
I'm fine.

CARMEN
You can continue?

Kalina nods. Freja looks worried.

FREJA
She just passed out!

CARMEN
And then she got back up Freja.
Chop chop.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Kalina runs through shadows and streetlights. She runs past houses, through a window sees a FAMILY sitting down to dinner.

EXT. WILLIAM BARAK BRIDGE - NIGHT

Kalina runs up the bridge, which crosses the Yarra river. She leans on the railing, breathing heavily. The bridge over looks Melbourne Park, a floodlight sign advertising next year's 1995 Australian Open.

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Freja walks into the locker room. Three GIRLS talking, they turn their noses up as she walks past.

She walks straight up to her locker.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina cleaning a filthy toilet. She can hear the girls voices in the background, and the sound of footsteps.

GIRLS (O.S.)
I heard Claire's parents
complained...Marcie's Mum said it
had turned into a refugee
camp...She never talks, cos she's
illegal..No way she's 17.

(MORE)

GIRLS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
They're all so poor over there they
don't grow properly.

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The girls walking out, Freja regards them with contempt.

She then sees Kalina pull her trolley into the row of lockers
to clean out the bins.

And Kalina cannot believe it, she pulls out a sealed bag with
a sandwich, fruit and water. She looks around suspiciously...

But Freja has hid behind her locker. She peaks back around...

Kalina opens it and finds SOMETHING hidden in the sandwich.
She drops it in disgust. Her face twists into rage. She
begins storming out of the locker room.

But finds Freja sitting, a salad roll next to her. Kalina
cannot disguise how hungry she is. Freja pretends to look at
the roll in surprise.

FREJA
This place is not for poor Slavs
like us eh?

Kalina sits and begins devouring it, but her face is set in
bitterness.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You have family here?

KALINA
No.

FREJA
Your parents?

Kalina pauses.

KALINA
They died.

FREJA
In the war?

Kalina nods.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Oh, sorry. So you came here, alone?

Kalina just nods again. But Freja wants to ask her more questions.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You on a visa?

KALINA
No.

FREJA
Then what are you illegal?

KALINA
Temporary visa. Good for three more months. Less now.

FREJA
Oh no. You don't want to go back to Yugoslavia for about 10 years.

KALINA
Have no choice. If I got a scholarship here, maybe I could stay.

FREJA
Maybe you could have mine.

They begin walking out.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - MOMENTS LATER

They walk to their court.

KALINA
What do you play on the headphones?

FREJA
Oh my God. Chop Chop's friggin mind games. Supposed to teach me not to quit in tight matches.

KALINA
But what is she making you listen to?

FREJA
What those bitches say about me.

KALINA
(to herself)
The voices?

Freja gestures at the three girls from earlier.

TAYLOR, ZAHRAH and MIA, three athletic 18 year old Aussie girls, are dressed in expensive tennis gear, gathered in a group, pointing straight at Kalina and Freja.

FREJA

The tall one is Taylor, the short one is Mia, the...other one is Zahrah. The witches of Kooyong. They pick the team's for tournament's based on your rank at the club. Always me and those three.

But Kalina is engrossed in thought.

KALINA

Because you need the cheering. She has you listen to booing while you train. Maybe I need something like that.

FREJA

You want to have Chop Chop go Chop Chop your brain? Okay let's ask her.

Kalina is not so sure.

ON THE COURT

Kalina follows Freja onto court. Carmen looking unimpressed.

CARMEN

Freja are you tryna set a world record for toilet breaks?

FREJA

Had some girl trouble.
(to Kalina)
Go on, ask her.

KALINA

How would you become my coach?

CARMEN

You would have a scholarship.

KALINA

How do I get a scholarship?

CARMEN

By winning tournaments.

KALINA

How do I get into tournaments if I
can't afford the entrance fee?

CARMEN

By getting a scholarship.

FREJA

Eh Chop Chop what the hell is your
problem?

CARMEN

Coaching won't fix her...
(to Kalina)
Coaching won't fix your problem.

KALINA

What problem?

CARMEN

I heard about you from back in
Yugoslavia. The Serbian Choker.
Sounds like some Euro porn film.

KALINA

You don't know anything about me!
My parents died in the war! I eat
bread and milk because it's all I
can afford and I came halfway round
the world to play tennis!

CARMEN

Try again kid.

KALINA

You choked in 65. And you never
played again. You're helping Freja
to be good enough to win the slam
you couldn't. Maybe I could be good
enough too.

Freja cannot believe what she just said.

CARMEN

Lateral thinking, I am impressed.
What's the dream?

KALINA

The dream?

CARMEN

Why do you need this so badly?

KALINA

I don't have a dream.

CARMEN

Kid you just told me what it was!

Freja is chewing gum, watching in bemusement at the battle before her.

KALINA

I only have three months left in this country.

CARMEN

Then why would you want any coaching?

KALINA

To play in tournaments.

CARMEN

Why?

Kalina rolls her eyes.

KALINA

So I can get a scholarship. And stay in the country.

CARMEN

Yes, why did you pick this country?

KALINA

Because there is no war here! Oh forget it!

Kalina and Freja assume position on court, and starts hitting. But Kalina is sulking.

FREJA

Eh Serbia, you like movies?

KALINA

Um...no.

FREJA

No? You like bike riding?

KALINA

No.

FREJA

Is this a Croat thing? Good you're leaving then.

Carmen shakes her head in exasperation.

CARMEN

(to Kalina)

What she was trying to ask was,
would you like to go bike riding
with her?

Kalina stops hitting and looks from Carmen to Freja in confusion.

FREJA

(to Kalina)

Well, yes.

KALINA

No.

CARMEN

Why not?

KALINA

I don't know how.

FREJA

I can teach you.

KALINA

(to Freja)

Oh. Alright.

A little smile escapes Carmen.

CARMEN

Well chop chop, now your social
calendar's been organized.

Kalina gives her a dark look, but serves.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - DAY

Kalina and Freja stand on top of the hill, A path winds its way down the valley. Behind them their bikes leaning against a tree. Freja points from the flat ground behind them to the path down the hill.

FREJA

OK, it's very easy. So you are going to pedal along here and I'll push you. Then when you roll down this hill, you just keep pedalling.

KALINA

Keep pedalling?

FREJA

Yes, it's all about the acceleration. Just remember to keep pedalling down the hill, you won't fall off.

Freja jogs back to where her bike is. Kalina trudges back.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Let's go Serbia!

Kalina getting on the bike.

KALINA

Is this how you learnt to ride?

FREJA

No my father taught me. Took ages. This will be much quicker.

Once Kalina is on the bike, Freja suddenly pushes hard.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Let's go!

She starts pushing. Alarmed, Kalina starts pedalling.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Faster faster faster!

Kalina pedals furiously across the flat ground, with Freja pushing. Reaching the edge, with the valley before her...Freja gives her a mighty shove.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Pedal pedal! The flat bit!

EXT. HILL - CONTINUOUS

Propulsion of her descent down the hill, and Kalina's sheer terror are denying her bid for 'the flat bit.'

EXT. PATH - CONTINUOUS

She hits the path at speed, and shoots straight into some bushes.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - CONTINUOUS

Freja grimaces, and shakes her head.

EXT. BUSHES - CONTINUOUS

Kalina bobs up from the bushes, which have captured her and the bike. She begins pulling herself out.

Freja, on her bike, launches herself down the hill, stopping just near Kalina.

FREJA

You see? Got to hit the flat bit.

KALINA

I always knew the Croats would kill me one day.

Freja cocks her ear to Kalina.

FREJA

What do I hear? The Serbs are complaining?

Kalina pulls the bike free and trudges up the hill. A bemused Freja follows her.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - DAY

Kalina gets on the bike, Freja holding from the rear.

FREJA

Remember Serbia...

KALINA

...the flat bit!

Freja pushes, Kalina pedaling hard.

EXT. HILL - CONTINUOUS

Kalina launches herself down the hill. She is scared, but staying in control.

EXT. PATH - DAY

She hits the path, wobbles, almost falls off, but remains steady. She yells in triumph and keeps going down the hill, fast.

EXT. TOP OF HILL - CONTINUOUS

Freja also cries out in joy, then realizes Kalina ain't stopping.

FREJA
Serbia wait for me!

She runs back for her bike.

EXT. PATH - CONTINUOUS

Kalina riding down the path, scared and exhilarated. Freja comes up fast behind her, catches up. Kalina wobbles and nearly comes off. Freja grabs her shoulder and they steady together. Slowly they both come to a stop. Both girls grin and laugh.

KALINA
Let's go again!

They get off and push their bikes back up the hill.

INT. CARMEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Carmen at her window, on the phone listening.

CARMEN
When did she go into the orphanage?
Six years old?! Alright Ves,
thanks.

She regards Kalina, practicing on court BY HERSELF.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
I need you like a hole in the
bloody head.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - NIGHT

Kalina at the baseline, practices a serve, a drop shot then a backhand.

She then jogs to the other side of court, collects some of the balls and readies herself to repeat the exercise.

She bounces a ball at the baseline.

Footsteps. A FIGURE walks behind her. Kalina accidentally bounces the ball off her foot.

She turns. Carmen picks the ball up and tosses it from hand to hand.

CARMEN
These our balls?

KALINA
No.

CARMEN
You can't use our balls.

KALINA
Do you want something?

CARMEN
We need to pick a team for a state tournament. I want to do a round robin. You in?

KALINA
Will you pick me for the team if I win?

CARMEN
Sure.

Kalina looks at her surprised.

KALINA
You will?

CARMEN
You won't make the team.

KALINA
How do you know?

CARMEN
It's elimination not tennis. You don't stand a chance against the scholarship girls.

Carmen tosses the ball back to her and leaves.

KALINA

We'll see.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Carmen stands before the assembled TWENTY FEMALE PLAYERS, including the witch squad, and Kalina, who is comically shorter than the rest.

CARMEN

Ladies, as you know the Victorian club championship's are coming up. Now, typically the team was picked from the top four ranked players. But because of a change in structure...

Groans from the girls, the name 'Freja' spat out.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

This year I'm going to pick the team with a round robin elimination.

Reactions of disbelief to excitement.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Whoever goes is whoever wins. Let's do it!

FROM THE FENCE - PLAYING MONTAGE

Carmen watching the matches on court, while keeping one eye on the ranking's board.

Kalina Bolic begins alphabetically first in the rankings. Her name SLIPS to fourth, ninth, thirteenth, seventeenth, and last.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS - LATER

The players heading toward the locker rooms, some satisfied, some dejected. Kalina is the last to leave. She steals a quick, sour look at Carmen.

EXT. MILIC TOWN HOUSE - NIGHT

The girls ride their bikes up to a house in a quiet neighbourhood.

INT. MILIC TOWN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina follows Freja inside.

FREJA

My parents are at work.

KALINA

On Sunday?

FREJA

They work so I could come here and play. I'm going to shower.

KALINA

Okay.

Kalina checks out the Milic family memorabilia and photos from the old country.

INT. FREJA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Walking past, Kalina cannot resist a peek in. What she sees amazes her and she enters.

The walls are a shrine to women's tennis, not just posters, but lists of tournaments, rankings and stats. At the head of the bed is a giant poster of Alexandra Kostic, IDENTICAL to Kalina's.

Kalina looks at the Oz open poster, closes her eyes and raises her fists in victory. A noise from the doorway awakens her. She turns to see Freja standing there, wearing a robe and a towel around her hair. Kalina freezes, but Freja is looking at her with respect. She enters the room and stands next to Kalina, they look at the Oz open poster.

FREJA

It was 1:13 in the afternoon when she won. When my father got home I said I don't want the scholarships in Germany or France. I want to go there. Because one of us did it.

She turns to Kalina and gives a mischievous smile.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Us, not you.

KALINA

In Zagreb, I used to train at the same park she did.

FREJA
Oh my God did you meet her?!

KALINA
Maybe I walked past her without
knowing.

Freja's fan girl moment is over.

FREJA
One day I will play her. It is
going to be so hard to beat my
hero. Do I finish her off quickly,
or let her win a few games?

KALINA
You're a spaz Freja.

FREJA
A spaz? What is a spaz? You're a
spaz.

KALINA
You're a spaz.

FREJA
That is a Kooyong word, stop using
Kooyong words.

Freja flops on the bed, Kalina sits on a chair, then realizes
something.

KALINA
Where are your trophies?

FREJA
In the attic. I don't need to look
at them.

KALINA
Why not?

Freja looks at the ceiling.

FREJA
I heard you got eliminated from the
elimination.

Kalina cold stares her.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Eh...the girls here are spoilt, but
they can play.

KALINA
I need real coaching.

FREJA
But no matter how good you are,
there's still this.

She taps her head.

KALINA
Listening to the walkman. Does it
help?

FREJA
Sort of. Chop Chop says, you can't
turn the voices off, like you can't
not be scared. You need to replace
them.

KALINA
With what?

FREJA
OK, don't ever tell her I told you
this. On court. Now when I'm
scared, I try to hear her voice.
(impression of Carmen)
Once you are at the baseline. You
will no longer hear or see the
crowd. All you can see is the net,
the other side of court and the
ball, you will not even see your
opponent.

KALINA
Does it work?

FREJA
Yeah, mostly.

KALINA
But you did choke in that junior
final?

FREJA
No, that was one of the few times I
wasn't scared. Cos I was hearing
Carmen's voice. Got beaten cos my
opponent was better.

KALINA
Do you ever hear other voices on
court?

FREJA

Others? What do you mean?

Kalina looks at the Kostic poster.

KALINA

When Kostic won. It was the first time I heard it.

FREJA

What did it say?

But Kalina doesn't look at her.

FREJA (CONT'D)

The voices? Are they from the war?

Kalina doesn't look at her.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Sorry. Sorry about your parents.

KALINA

If you win, maybe she will come back.

FREJA

What?

KALINA

On TV when I saw Kostic win. That's what I heard.

FREJA

You said your mother died in the Yugoslav war? Kostic won the Australian open before the war started.

Kalina stands and faces the poster.

KALINA

My mother is...missing. I'm not like you Freja. I saw that match in an orphanage. I am not right in the head. But if Carmen could help me, like she helped you.

Freja joins her.

FREJA

Kalina, I think we're both crazy.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - DAY

Kalina and Freja standing across from the bemused Carmen.

CARMEN

What exactly are you asking me to do? And I'm speaking to the person named Kalina here.

FREJA

To coach her! And pick her for the tournaments!

CARMEN

I'm too busy.

FREJA

Eh Chop...uh Coach. This girl came here all alone, her mother is still missing.

CARMEN

(to Kalina)
Missing is she?

FREJA

Okay, well something even you will appreciate. In all those elimination matches that she lost, she didn't lose by more than two points.

CARMEN

(to Kalina)
What's the dream?

Kalina hesitates.

FREJA

She wants to...

CARMEN

I want to hear it from her.

Kalina and Carmen lock eyes.

FREJA

Oh my God, look at you two.

CARMEN

(to Kalina)
In a tournament you'll choke all over again.

KALINA

Then coach me.

CARMEN

What do you hear when you choke?

KALINA

I don't hear anything.

CARMEN

If you won't let me in, I can't help you.

KALINA

If I play your game, will you pick me?

CARMEN

There's no other game like tennis. Two lonely people with no one to help them, playing a game where no one knows how long it will last. No place for chokers.

KALINA

I...won't...quit.

Freja shakes her head in wonderment.

FREJA

You two were made for one another.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - LATER

Kalina at the baseline serving. Placed on the court opposite are plastic water bottles. She serves and hits one. She then runs off court.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

She runs up some stairs to meet Carmen, who points to a different SPOT on court. She runs back down.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - CONTINUOUS

She runs out onto court, picks up the water bottle and places it where Carmen pointed.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

Kalina marking days on her calendar with an X.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - LATER

Carmen runs behind Kalina as she hits returns. Kalina's returns are moving her HITTING PARTNER (HP) all around the court. HP plays a bad drop shot, Kalina races in and nails the point.

LATER

Carmen stands to one side. Kalina hitting some excellent top spin.

CARMEN
What's the dream kid?

LATER

Carmen standing nearer Kalina. Kalina hitting MULTIPLE drop shots.

CARMEN
What do you hear when you choke?

LATER

Carmen standing right next to Kalina. Kalina hitting MULTIPLE serves.

CARMEN
When they cheer, that's what brings
you undone, right?

Kalina's serves are smashing into the fence. Carmen walks around Kalina, then claps loudly near her head. Kalina doesn't break her serves.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

A very tired Kalina writing more X's. She then falls face first onto the mattress.

EXT. BALCONY - LATER

An exhausted Kalina runs up the stairs to the waiting Carmen. Kalina bends over, hands on hips, gasping for air.

CARMEN
Whose voice is it?

Kalina stands straight, trying to catch her breath, but must lean against the railing.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Eh Serbia.

She looks up slowly.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Let's see how hard you are.

She points to a spot on court.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - MORNING

Kalina lying on her back. Her eyelids flutter open. She draws a deep breath and slowly sits up.

EXT KOOYONG PRACTICE COURTS - LATER

Kalina sits on court, breathing heavily, trying to sip water. Carmen squats down next to her and speaks into her ear.

CARMEN
What's the dream kid?

Kalina slowly raises her head.

KALINA
(whispering)
I. I...don't have one.

CARMEN
Let's do serves.

Kalina slowly stands and stumbles to the baseline.

Carmen tosses her a ball. She delivers a tired serve. Carmen throws her another and the next serve is worse again.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Kid you are aware tennis matches
don't end after 45 minutes.
(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

You could have done three hours on court and be serving for the match. Work out your technique piece by piece. Feet.

Kalina improves her stance.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Posture.

She stands more side on.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Ball toss.

Kalina mimics the ball toss.

Carmen tosses her a ball.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Without hitting it.

Kalina mimics a shot.

Carmen throws her another ball. She blasts a good serve. Another ball, she hits it out.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

First and second serve.

Kalina blasts a powerful serve with a big follow through. Her next is gentler, well within the lines. Carmen continues tossing her balls, Kalina's confidence growing with every cracking serve.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

What's the dream kid?

Another serve, she hits the net.

Carmen holds a ball out, as Kalina tries to take it, Carmen firmly grips her hand, Kalina can't pull away.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

You are the most stubborn bloody so and so I've ever met! If I let your hand go, no more coaching!

Kalina's grip slackens.

KALINA

It's stupid.

CARMEN
How many people have you told?

KALINA
No one.

CARMEN
Then how do you know?

Kalina looks away.

KALINA
To play in the Australian Open.

Carmen slowly takes her sunglasses off.

CARMEN
Did you, Kalina Bolc came halfway
round the world to win the
Australian Open?

Kalina almost pulls away.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
I promise the ground will not
swallow you up.

KALINA
Yes.

Carmen inclines her head.

CARMEN
What was that?

KALINA
I came halfway round the world to
win the bloody Australian Open!

She let's go of Kalina's hand, sunglasses back on.

CARMEN
Well chop chop. Tennis matches
don't win themselves.

Kalina shakes her head in annoyance, then let's go a big
serve...that hits the net.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Kalina eating a sandwich. Freja lying on a bench, sipping
water. And Carmen has the broom and is sweeping up.

FREJA
(to Kalina)
You're getting better.

Kalina shrugs.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Hey Coach. She's getting better,
no?

CARMEN
If you say so Freja.

FREJA
If I say so. Oh great. So I say so.
You give me that wildcard?

CARMEN
Will you play in the club
championship?

FREJA
You know I won't.

CARMEN
If you are still scared of your
teammates you can't play in a grand
slam. It's a waste.

FREJA
A waste? I won't ever be ready will
I?

CARMEN
You have to believe it.

KALINA
I do believe it. I am the best
junior in this whole country. Tell
me I'm not.

CARMEN
Someone who cannot put up with
girls talking shit, will never win
a slam.

Freja looks to Kalina for support.

FREJA
You are Aussie! You have no idea.

CARMEN
I heard the same shit in the locker
room you do.

(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

And I played scared and angry. And eventually I just ran out of juice. No one can play that way for very long.

KALINA

But you made a slam?

FREJA

I could play in a slam if you gave me a wildcard!

CARMEN

Not unless you play...

KALINA

I will...I'll play with anyone.

And Carmen is considering this. Freja looks from one to another in disbelief.

FREJA

She's not a scholarship player, but she's gonna play in tournaments now?

(to Kalina)

Eh Serbia, you gonna take my wildcard eh?

(to Carmen)

Ok, right now are you gonna give me a wildcard?

CARMEN

No.

KALINA

Freja...let's play a match.

FREJA

What?! Why?!

KALINA

You and me. Play a match. Elimination. You play with the headphones on. And if you win,
(to Carmen)
you know she's ready.

FREJA

It's too late to play a match.

CARMEN

And I decide when you're ready.

KALINA
You want to be a coach? Or coach a
winner?

Carmen looks meaningfully at Freja.

CARMEN
Can you beat her?

FREJA
For the wildcard?

Carmen nods.

Freja grabs her racquet like she's unsheathing Excalibur and storms out.

EXT. KOORYONG PRACTICE COURTS - NIGHT

Kalina and Freja facing off on either side of the court.
Freja wearing the protector, cap and headphones.

Carmen watching from the fence.

BACK ON THE COURT

Freja presses play on the walkman, the sound of the girls taunts audible from her headphones.

She loads up and blasts an ace. Kalina doesn't move. She blasts another.

Kalina tries to compose herself while swapping service boxes.

FREJA
Ok, we are getting warmed up now.

And she blasts another one.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Is Serbia still down there? Oh
there she is.

And let's another one go.

Kalina looking very unsure.

Kalina ready to serve. Her technique is better, but nowhere near Freja...but it does slow the game down.

The girls locked into a rally.

FROM THE FENCE

Carmen following the ball from one side to another.

BACK ON THE COURT

Freja nails Kalina with a drop shot.

FREJA

Like that Serbia. Called a drop
shot you know.

Kalina serves...another rally. Freja's shots are moving
Kalina all round the court, but she won't quit.

The sounds of the girls voices from Freja's headphones...and
her return hits the net.

Kalina points to her own head.

KALINA

Is that tape still playing?

Freja looks at her darkly.

KALINA (CONT'D)

They have a lot to say about you
don't they?

FREJA

5 to 1 Serbia. First to 12.

KALINA

I think they left that tampon in
the sandwich for me because of you.
You are the one who upsets
everyone.

Kalina serves. Freja returns...and hits the net.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Hey Freja, I came here with no one.
Because I'm not scared like you
are.

Kalina serves, Freja a hard return to Kalina's backhand.

KALINA (CONT'D)

If you're shot lands near the line,
I'm gonna call it. Better land it
right.

Freja moves deeper into court, but Kalina delivers a great backhand passing shot for the point.

Freja delivers a good serve, but Kalina's double backhand is its equal. A rally, Freja keeping Kalina in one part of the court, but can't put her away.

Freja delivers a forehand which is a little lose, and Kalina back hands it cross court. Freja races for it, but can't get to it.

Now she is pissed. And Kalina points to her own head again.

FROM THE FENCE

CARMEN
(yelling)
Don't let her in your head Freja.

BACK ON THE COURT

Freja gathers strength, loads up, and serves an ace. She fist pumps Carmen.

But Kalina is standing there, hands on hips. Freja stops the walkman.

FREJA
Hey, it was in.

Kalina shakes her head. Freja turns to the Carmen.

FREJA (CONT'D)
It was in!

KALINA
Out!

FREJA
You know it was in!
(to Carmen)
It was in. It was obviously in.

Freja hurls her racquet.

FREJA (CONT'D)
This is bullshit. None of this
would be allowed in a real match.

CARMEN

If you or any of the scholarship girls came up against someone like her. On a level playing field. You would all lose.

FREJA

She is cheating.

KALINA

Freja, you lose you go back with your parents to your nice house. You don't want to see where I go back to.

FREJA

(to Kalina)

Why are you doing this?

KALINA

To win.

CARMEN

Freja the cleaner wins any way she can. Last year you lost because your opponent wanted it more.

Freja rips the headphones off, and storms out.

Kalina watches Freja leaving, stunned. She looks across at Carmen, who has a look of resignation.

She scurries after Freja.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS CARPARK - MOMENTS LATER

Freja and her parents getting in their car.

KALINA

Freja wait!

Freja ignores her.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Freja, I wasn't trying to make you leave. I wasn't.

Freja stops and turns to her.

KALINA (CONT'D)

What I said about going back to your house and parents. I mean...

FREJA

You are right. You're tougher than me. Maybe tough enough for Carmen to pick you. Goodbye Kalina.

Kalina watches Freja and her parents drive off.

She scurries back to Kooyong.

EXT. PRACTICE COURTS - NIGHT

Kalina finds Carmen standing next to the ball machine. She walks out onto court.

KALINA

I didn't mean for Freja to leave.

CARMEN

Yes you did.

KALINA

No. I thought I could beat her, and she would stay.

CARMEN

But if she left, you would take her place? That was what you wanted.

And this hits a nerve for Kalina.

KALINA

Do you want to win or not?

CARMEN

She was your friend and you used that against her. When I was your age, I didn't have anyone.

KALINA

Are you joking? Who do I have? You want to win, you need me on the team.

Carmen holds out a cricket CHEST PROTECTOR.

CARMEN

Do you trust me?

Kalina hesitates.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
I can't coach you if you don't
trust me. And you can't play if you
don't trust yourself.

Warily she puts it on. Then stands at the base line and
readies herself.

Carmen cranks the machine, then lets one go.

The ball rockets past Kalina and crashes into the fence
behind her. Kalina's eyes go wide as furry green missiles
come at her. She dodges, parries some with the racquet, but
mostly she just gets hit.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
When did you start playing?

KALINA
I was about 15.

CARMEN
Gee you started late. Who did you
first play with?

KALINA
I went outside with my racquet and
someone threw me a ball.

CARMEN
And who threw you the ball?

KALINA
One of the nuns at the orphanage!

CARMEN
Who gave you your first racquet?

KALINA
My mother.

CARMEN
But you never played with her?

KALINA
No.

Carmen slows the machine. Kalina now gives listless returns.

CARMEN
Is it your mother's voice you hear?

KALINA
No.

CARMEN

You're not meant to be at the mercy
of your past. You know that right?

Kalina stops, the balls bounce around her.

KALINA

You got to the final of a grand
slam, someone must have given you a
chance. I need a chance.

Carmen stops the machine, and walks to the net.

CARMEN

In that Australian Open final. I
looked up at the crowd, and I
thought I can win this. And that
was the moment I started losing.
Heard those voices in my head. I
never played again. When you find
out the thing you wanted, the thing
you thought would make your life
better. You can never have. Kid you
think you're in pain now.

KALINA

I have no memories. All I have is
my stupid dream. And now, I can
play. And maybe I can win. And if I
win, I know life can get better.

EXT. KOORYONG TENNIS COURTS - DAY

PLAYING MONTAGE

Carmen watches Kalina dismantle multiple OPPONENTS while
barely breaking a sweat.

On the leader board while the other names CHANGE position,
Kalina remains at the top spot. Then Taylor, Mia and Zarah.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A chartered bus whooshes past.

I/E. BUS - DAY

Carmen sits at the front doing paperwork. Taylor, Zahrah and
Mia, talk amongst themselves. Kalina at the back. They all
wear team tracksuits.

CARMEN

Ladies, congratulations on being selected to play for Kooyong in this year's tournament.

The three girls give themselves a little clap.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

I don't need to remind you that we hold the record with 16 trophies, and I know we will be bringing back number 17 tomorrow night.

The girls clap and cheer.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Now here is tomorrow's draw, of course I've left the final blank.

She hands out copies to each of them, which they grab hungrily. Kalina takes hers more hesitantly.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

You've all been at the club for awhile. Kalina, down there hiding...

Kalina looks like she could die, the girls barely acknowledge her.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

...Is new, please make her feel welcome if you haven't done so already. Now ladies. Curfew is 11:00. As soon as we arrive. Get some sleep.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Kalina lying on her bed. She looks at the team selection sheets, the player for the final is left blank, and her name is not on it at all.

She pulls her racquet out and lies back down, holding it on her chest. A knock at the door.

She automatically opens it...and there are her three teammates.

KALINA

Where's the coach?

MIA
Can we come in?

KALINA
Why?

MIA
We just...

ZARAH
We need a chat before tomorrow.

She lets them all enter. Zarah closes the door.

Kalina sits at the head of the bed, Mia at the foot, Zarah leans against the wall, Taylor against the door.

TAYLOR
(pointing to the racquet)
Do you sleep with that thing?

MIA
Taylor.
(to Kalina)
Did you really start when you were
already 15?

KALINA
Yeah.

And the girls look at each other, confronted and impressed.

ZARAH
(to Kalina)
You don't take any shit huh?

TAYLOR
You gonna tell her or what?

MIA
Tomorrow. It's up to you.

KALINA
Me? My name is not even on the
sheet.

ZARAH
You're playing in the final.

KALINA
Why didn't she write that down?

MIA
She's superstitious.

ZARAH

Chop Chop doesn't think a tournament's in the bag until about 6 months after you've won.

KALINA

How do you know she'll just pick me?

TAYLOR

You're the best player. Obviously.

MIA

We can get us into the final, but then it's up to you.

ZARAH

Have you ever heard of Rebecca Fuller?

KALINA

She beat Freja in the final last year.

MIA

Most likely she'll be your opponent.

KALINA

Fine, I'll do my best.

TAYLOR

You need to do better than that.

Kalina snickers.

KALINA

I think if you all don't win this, you girls will still be okay.

MIA

Not for us. For the Coach.

TAYLOR

Coaching's all she's got. Understand?

KALINA

Not really.

MIA

You heard how she never played again after 65. Because of what she must have gone through.

KALINA
Through what?

ZARAH
In the 60's. Every time she walked
out on court. You black this, you
black that.

TAYLOR
All alone.

KALINA
Yeah okay. Anything else?

They look at each other, unsure.

MIA
We're sorry how we treated you.

KALINA
You mean now?

TAYLOR
Look you and Freja. You're
frightening.

KALINA
We are frightening?

TAYLOR
You're so much better than we are.
It's not fair.

KALINA
Alright I will try to win, for
Carmen.

MIA
With honour.

KALINA
Honour?

TAYLOR
None of that John McEnroe bullshit.

KALINA
I will try and win with honour.

Mia and Zara both shake Kalina's hand, then leave. Taylor
hovers in the doorway.

TAYLOR

Sometimes I sleep with mine.
Thought it was just me.

She leaves.

INT. INDOOR COURTS - DAY

12 clubs playing on 6 courts, GIRLS playing on each one.

The Kooyong team watching from the sidelines. Kalina to the side.

The scoreboard shows Taylor is one set down, 4-2 behind in the second, up against 18 year old REBECCA FULLER. The overall scoreboard shows Kooyong is equal second.

The team politely claps for Taylor when she loses another game. Carmen looks down at the current draw, she has scribbled notes all over it.

CARMEN

They will have Fuller in the final ladies.

Mia and Zara look at each other darkly, then over to Kalina.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Game set match Hawthorn.

Taylor and Rebecca shake hands. Taylor trudges back to her team. Some applause and good natured pats on the back.

Carmen writes something in the draw.

CARMEN

Alright kid.

She looks up. All the girls look at her intently, then down at Kalina.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Kalina!

Kalina looks up. All eyes on her.

Carmen nods at her. Kalina heads out to court. The girls applaud.

ON THE COURT - PLAYING MONTAGE

...Kalina on court, a thunderous serve, Fuller gives a weak forehand. Kalina hits it cross court for an easy point.

...Kalina serves an ace.

...They swap service boxes. Kalina serves, Fuller a weak backhand, setting herself up for a brutal Kalina passing shot.

ON THE COURT - END MONTAGE

Kalina casually changing ends, fingering her racquet strings. But when she looks up, she sees her teammates cheering and clapping for her.

But in her head she hears the Voice, this time it is frantic, screaming, a person out of their mind.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

*He left me! Because of what you
did!*

At the baseline, she sways in the ready position unsteadily. She blinks, shakes her head to get her focus back.

Fuller serves, not great but Kalina unleashes a full blooded forehand...that hits the net.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

*This is all we have to live on! No
man wants me! Because of you!
Because of what you did!*

Another Fuller serve, Kalina's return again hits the net.

Kalina readies herself, gritting her teeth. The court goes blurry, the crowd noise is muted, but...

The girls are clapping in unison, chanting 'Kalina.'

Kalina looks over and at them in SHARP FOCUS. Carmen sits, looking defeated.

THE VOICE (V.O.)

*Say something Kalina. Tell me you
love me. Tell me it will be
alright.*

Fuller serves an ace. Kalina watches the ball bounce back across court.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
You are hopeless Kalina!

The crowd is clapping and cheering, the noise is stifling Kalina.

Kalina serves. A rally.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
Take her now! Move in!

She hits the ball out. She lets out an exasperated scream which continues into...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Carmen enters, searching, eventually finding Kalina sitting on a bench, head in her hands.

CARMEN
Come on kid, your team mates are waiting. Let's go get a pizza.

KALINA
I would have won. If they weren't cheering.

Carmen sits beside her.

CARMEN
They were cheering. Because they respect you.

KALINA
In tournaments. If I played the way I used to, I'll win. I'll win now.

Kalina begins packing her bag.

CARMEN
Kid, come back on the bus with us.

KALINA
Carmen I wanted to win for you. I did. I'm sorry.

Carmen blocks her path.

KALINA (CONT'D)
You want to help?

Carmen nods, though unsure.

KALINA (CONT'D)
How do I get into the Australian
Open?

CARMEN
What happened to a scholarship?

KALINA
I want to play in the Australian
Open.

CARMEN
Wait? You mean you want to try and
qualify before you're deported?!

Kalina nods her head gravely.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Kid, ya nuts.

KALINA
I already know that.

CARMEN
Let's say that. That you did this,
which is completely impossible.
What then?

KALINA
I go back to Yugoslavia.

CARMEN
And why would you want to go back
to a war zone?

Kalina stands and looks around the room, frustrated.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Kid when I had my contact from the
Balkans check up on you. They found
the orphanage you were living in.
You went in there when you were
only six years old.

Kalina runs her hands through her hair in exasperation.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
If you want my help, you need to
let me in. Why do you need this so
badly?

Kalina turns away, struggles not to cry, then looks up.

KALINA

If I'm good at tennis maybe she
will come back! Okay, you happy!

CARMEN

How old were you, when you left the
orphanage?

KALINA

16.

CARMEN

Let's say you...you won the
Australian open. Do you think
someone who hasn't spoken to their
child in 10 years, is worth your
time now?

KALINA

I don't know. You tell me. What
happens when you win. How many good
memories have you got?

She gathers up her things.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Are you gonna help me win?

CARMEN

I wanna help you more than I ever
wanted to win.

KALINA

Not to help. To win. So I have
something. Something real. In my
hand! For me!

Carmen falters. Kalina leaves.

CARMEN

(to herself)

Please don't leave kid.

EXT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

The neighbourhood is asleep. A taxi rolls up outside.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina stumbles in, drops her bag and racquet, then flops on
the mattress. She takes out her scrapbook, begins leafing
through the pages.

She turns them more violently, then begins ripping out one page after another, starting to throw them all over the apartment.

She lays back on the mattress, staring at the ceiling. She sits up. She picks up the torn page of Kostic winning the open, and grits her teeth.

KALINA

One day. One day for me.

FADE TO:

COLLAGE MONTAGE

A collage of Kalina's many tournament victories all over Australia.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

The Yugoslavian Kalina Bolic, who arrived in this country only recently, has risen through tennis ranks with guts and determination. She has also been accused of everything from unsportsmanlike behaviour to outright cheating. Now at this year's Kooyong Classic, incredibly she is just one semi-final away from qualifying for the Australian Open. Her first round opponent will be tough, last year's junior Australian open runner up Freja Milic. And both players only need to win this match, to qualify for the big one.

A PHOTO of Kalina on court arguing with an UMPIRE and OFFICIALS, she is waving her finger at them. A PHOTO of Kalina on court sitting on her chair, flipping the bird to the CROWD behind her. A PHOTO of the unsmiling Kalina posing with a trophy. The HEADLINE calls her a "Tennis Assassin."

HEADLINES include 'Go Home! A Talent We Don't Want!' 'Tennis Brat Keeps on Winning!' 'Slav Girl Wins Ugly.'

A PHOTO of Freja in full flight on court, a PHOTO of Freja accepting a trophy, smiling.

HEADLINES for Freja include, 'Slav Princess,' 'Future Croat Champion Downunder,' and 'Immigrant dream comes true in the land of Oz.'

EXT. KOORYONG STADIUM - DAY

A taxi arrives. As Kalina gets out, she is inundated with questions from the awaiting MEDIA.

MEDIA

Kalina do you have mental health problems? Do you endorse Serbian war atrocities!? Kalina are you a cheat!?

She shoves her way through.

PLAYERS WALK - CONTINUOUS

Kalina, carrying her tennis gear, makes her way down the corridor. Reaching the end, she finds Freja popping some chewing gum, waiting.

She offers a stick to Kalina, who ignores her.

FREJA

You're not going to talk to me?

ANNOUNCER

Please welcome to the Kooyong Classic, from Australia, Freja Milic.

Freja almost steps forward, then turns to Kalina.

FREJA

Really? Really?!

KALINA

I have to beat you.

FREJA

I have to beat you too. We are what? Milosevic and Tujman?

Kalina ignores her.

FREJA (CONT'D)

See you out there then. Try not to piss anyone else off Kalina.

She heads out onto court to thunderous cheers.

Kalina waits, starting to look ill.

ANNOUNCER

Please welcome. From Yugoslavia,
Kalina Bolic.

Before she can even move, she hears the crowd booing.

IN THE STANDS - CONTINUOUS

The sunglasses clad Carmen watches Kalina walk out. She is seething at the crowd reaction.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina assumes her position on court. The crowd are still booing and cheering with equal measure.

UMPIRE

Quiet please. Quiet please!

Kalina readies herself to serve. An unbeatable ace. The crowd booing. Kalina readies herself, then serves another thunderous ace.

The dejected Freja moves to the opposite service box, trying to pump herself up.

The crowd booing even louder. Kalina stands there, alone and unsure. Freja gestures for her to take position in the opposite service box.

Kalina readies herself. Another blistering ace.

COURT SIDE - LATER

Kalina sits heavily in her chair. The crowd is still hostile. She has taken the first set 6-0.

She looks across at Freja, who is breathing deeply, trying to settle herself.

IN THE STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Carmen breaks into applause.

CARMEN

Come on Freja!

COURT SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina looks up and spots her instantly.

The Voice in her head, it is the SAME woman but it comes through clearer, sounding like the person is standing BEHIND HER. In the background the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
*If I stay, you are all I will ever
have. Don't you think I deserve
more than you?*

Kalina looks down, then puts a towel over her head.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - FLASHBACK

The early, light snow of winter. CHILDREN playing. Behind them, empty TENNIS COURTS. The sound of a tennis ball bouncing on the ground.

SIX YEAR OLD KALINA, walks toward a park bench. Behind her a FIGURE looms over her.

The children now a blur, her eyes only on the bench. She reaches it, picking HER RACQUET. She looks over to the tennis courts, and almost smiles, pleased with herself. She turns around.

The figure is GONE. She looks around in alarm.

ON THE COURT

Kalina stands at the baseline, looking around at the jeering crowd.

Freja ready to serve. And it hits the net. Freja loads up. And this serve also hits the net.

Kalina is 30-0.

THE VOICE (V.O.)
You always do this!

Kalina looks straight up at Carmen in realization.

They move to their opposite service boxes. Freja loads up...and serves another fault.

Kalina looks around at the booing crowd, considering. And now the voice appears, but MELTS into HERS.

THE VOICE/KALINA (V.O.)
Not like that! You are useless!

Kalina locks eyes with Freja. Freja serves, Kalina returns, but Freja's return hits the net.

Groans from the crowd. Kalina looks up at Carmen.

KALINA (V.O.)
What are you doing Kalina?!

Kalina serves, Freja's return is deep, Kalina sprints to get to it. Freja's passing shot paints the line.

UMPIRE
In. Point Milic.

Kalina returns to where the ball hit. Some of the crowd yelling that it was 'out.'

Kalina looks straight at Freja. Freja is unsure.

KALINA (V.O.)
What are you doing Kalina?!

Kalina looks up at Carmen, and makes a decision.

She walks over to court side, grabs her bag and LEAVES court.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - LATER

Kalina wretches over the toilet. She grits her teeth and wipes the tears away.

FREJA (O.S.)
Where is she?!

Kalina stands quickly.

INT. KOORYONG LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kalina creeps out of the toilet, and past the lockers. Young female voices reply with a 'who?'

FREJA
Kalina Bolic! Where is she!?

Kalina starts hurrying out. Until Freja appears in front of her. Kalina backs into the lockers.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Kalina go back out there now!

KALINA
I forfeited. You won.

FREJA
I don't want to win like that.

KALINA
What difference does it make?

FREJA
Why do you have to play like such
an asshole?

KALINA
So I can be an asshole who wins.

FREJA
Then why didn't you keep doing it?

CARMEN
Because she is not...an asshole.

They turn to Carmen.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
Freja your parents are outside
waiting. But before you go. You
need to shake hands.

Freja extends her hand. Freja nervously extends her hand.
Kalina timidly takes it. By mutual agreement they break off.

FREJA
The shot was out. I would have told
the Umpire.

She leaves. And Kalina can't look at Carmen.

KALINA
I needed your help before.

CARMEN
Do you want me to leave?

KALINA
Yes. Go away!

Carmen turns to leave, but hesitates.

CARMEN
I don't want to leave. I want to
help you Kalina.

INT. HOUSING COMMISSION FLAT - NIGHT

Kalina let's Carmen in, then warily closes the door. The cheap fridge makes a constant HUM.

A LITTLE LATER

They sit on the mattress and sip mugs of tea. Carmen puts her mug down, sits with her hands in her lap, and looks around with a wistful expression.

CARMEN

I grew up in a shithole like this.
No electricity though. Just a shack
out in the bush.

Kalina doesn't look at her.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Why did you forfeit?

KALINA

What does it matter?

CARMEN

We may never meet again. So why not
tell me?

KALINA

The crowd was booing. I was gonna
beat Freja. Then the voice. It was
mine.

CARMEN

It's always been yours. You know
that kid.

Kalina stares at the floor.

KALINA

That day when Kostic won. It was
snowing outside. And that's when I
heard it. If you win, she will come
back. I thought it was outside. But
it came from my racquet. I thought
I was going insane.

CARMEN

My father bought me my first
racquet. I was an only child, so
that was why. I stood in the front
of our outhouse. I was this little
girl with a racquet for adults.

(MORE)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

I could hit every throw off the middle. That was a good day.

KALINA

Where are they now?

CARMEN

Died a long time ago.

Carmen gives a quick look to Kalina.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Your turn.

KALINA

After I was born, she couldn't have any more children. So one day he left. I guess it was my fault...She wouldn't speak to me...I was too scared to go outside...she gave me a racquet...I was too scared to speak or go outside...

CARMEN

Then what?

KALINA

I went outside. And I got it. I got the racquet, but she was gone. I did what she asked, why did she leave?

CARMEN

You know why. Cos she wasn't no bloody good.

Kalina hurls her mug across the room. Carmen stands, grabs some paper towel from the bench and begins to wipe it up.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Can't stand to see a mess. When I was on court and I missed shots, I'd slap myself like you do. As time went on I'd hear a voice screaming at me when I made a mistake. I realized that was my parents voice. Yelling at me for dropping a bloody spoon eh?

KALINA

Freja told me, on court she would hear your voice, and she wasn't scared.

CARMEN

It's not my voice, it's hers. Cos she's learning to not be afraid. And the only way to be afraid is to just go out there and play.

KALINA

When you were out there? Did you ever hear your own voice?

CARMEN

No kid, I had no one. Why do you think it changed for you?

KALINA

I was gonna beat Freja. In my head I was screeching at her, like my mother screamed at me. Freja is...my friend.

CARMEN

What was your mother's name? Her original name?

KALINA

Bura Mlakar.

CARMEN

Would you ever want to live with Bura Mlakar again?

KALINA

I don't know. I just want one good day. I want a memory.

Carmen sits back on the floor, considering.

INT. MELBOURNE PARK BOARDROOM - DAY

A room with a large table, DOUG, 60's, an officious Tennis Australia official, ADMINISTRATORS and COACHES, both male and female, sit around it. Doug is at one end of the table.

Some of the coaches are at a whiteboard, they have magnets with names written on them, and are placing them under columns headed 'Wildcards.'

COACH 01

Rebecca Fuller could play Federation Cup.

ADMINISTRATOR 01

Already?

COACH 01
She is that good.

ADMINISTRATOR 02
Looking ahead, way ahead, the 2000
Sydney Olympics.

COACH 01
Rebecca will be there.

DOUG
You guarantee?

COACH 02
What about Freja Milic?

Collective groans.

ADMINISTRATOR 01
She's qualified for the Oz Open she
doesn't need us anymore.

DOUG
What is this rubbish, she's playing
under the Croat, Yugoslav flag or
whatever?

CARMEN
Her parents talked her out of that.

And somehow Carmen has materialized into the room.

DOUG
Carmen how exactly do you do that?

CARMEN
Blackfella magic.

COACH 01
Hey Carmen, the Olympics were just
brought up. And the Freja factor.

CARMEN
Too early to know what she'll do by
then. I have another name for a
wildcard.

They all look at each other, confused.

DOUG
Carmen aren't your scholarship
players a couple of years off?

Carmen walks over to the whiteboard, takes a magnet down and writes a name on it.

CARMEN

You all know me. You know I'm not very good at asking.

She sticks the name 'Kalina Bolic' on the whiteboard.

ADMINISTRATOR 01

Doesn't she have to go back to Yugoslavia?

ADMINISTRATOR 02

This isn't something we should be getting involved in.

ADMINISTRATOR 03

You're not serious Carmen?! This will overshadow the whole tournament.

DOUG

Alright stop! Carmen has served Australian tennis for 25 years. Let's hear her out.

They pause, waiting. Carmen clears her throat.

CARMEN

All the rumours you've heard about me. They're true. But that's in the past. I wish it would stay there. The kid just wants a chance. She could flame out, just like I did. But she's much tougher than me. Some crazy kid, gets abandoned, becomes an orphan, has this wild idea that makes no sense, flees a war, comes halfway round the world. Yet here she is. So I think we could all do the right thing and help the kid out.

EXT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Her small apartment building is right across from Melbourne Park.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Kalina and Carmen on the couch. Australian Open Draw announcements on TV.

ANNOUNCER
Kalina Bolic vs...

They both tense.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
Alexandra Kostic.

CARMEN
Oh shit!

She checks herself immediately but looking at Kalina she sees the damage is done. She turns the TV off, stands in front of her, helpless.

Kalina is still looking at the TV.

KALINA
Do you think I can beat the world
number 1?

CARMEN
You are the one who has to believe
it.

Kalina stands, looks around, then walks over to Carmen's photos, and takes a long look at them.

She looks back to Carmen, whose not moving nor looking at her. Kalina stands in front of her.

KALINA
That is the racquet he gave you?

Carmen nods.

KALINA (CONT'D)
Carmen, tell me I can win.

But Carmen can't meet her eyes.

KALINA (CONT'D)
Tell me I should play.

CARMEN
You should play.

KALINA

Why? Why Carmen? Tell me the truth.
If you had won that slam. Would you
have all these photos here? Not
even your own people.

CARMEN

You don't have to win.

Kalina bangs her own head.

KALINA

I can't ever win, ever! And I end
up like you. Waiting, for someone
to do what I couldn't. To undo what
cannot ever be undone!

She flees to the bedroom and slams the door. Carmen stands at
the door, and almost knocks.

CARMEN

(softly)
You have us.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

Kalina lying in bed, her racquet drawn to her.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She wanders into the empty room. She takes a really good look
at Carmen's photos.

KALINA (V.O.)

Kalina.

She turns to the balcony sliding door, left open with a
breeze catching the curtains.

KALINA (V.O.)

It's time.

EXT. BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Kalina steps out onto Carmen's balcony, standing at the
railing. She looks from the view of Melbourne Park and the
Yarra river, to the street below, then at the railing.

Kalina stands up on the railing, the wind whips her face and
hair. She leans forward, then closes her eyes. For just a
moment her face settles in peace.

Then in her MIND the SAME sound of CHILDREN PLAYING, as at the KOORYONG CLASSIC.

EXT. PARK PLAYGROUND - FLASHBACK

At NIGHT, the snow is falling hard. The SIX YEAR OLD Kalina, still sitting alone on the SAME bench. She hugs the RACQUET.

KALINA (V.O.)
If I stay, you are all I will ever
have. Don't you think I deserve
more than you?

EXT. BALCONY - REAL TIME

A harsh knock at the door.

Kalina falls, the sound of a thud and a crash. She has fallen back onto the balcony floor. The RACQUET next to her.

Urgent banging on the door.

FREJA
Kalina!!!

Sustained door knocking from Freja.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Kalina!

Kalina stumbles to her feet.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

She opens the door. Freja looking unimpressed. She sweeps in, then notices Kalina's dishevelled appearance.

FREJA
What the hell happened to you?

KALINA
I was...asleep.

FREJA
Asleep? OK, I have something to
show you, does Chop Chop have
coffee? I make coffee.

KALINA
Freja!

FREJA
Close the door eh.

Reluctantly she closes it, watching in frustration as Freja goes through Carmen's cupboards.

Freja finds instant coffee, looking at it like it's kryptonite.

FREJA (CONT'D)
They let the convicts off the ships.

KALINA
What do you want Freja?

She considers what to say.

FREJA
Chop chop says you are not going to play.

KALINA
It's none of your business.

FREJA
Why would you not be playing?

Kalina dramatically rolls her eyes.

KALINA
Oh I don't know...I don't want to lose!

FREJA
Of course you're going to lose, if I drew the world number one I would lose too!

KALINA
And before they send me back I get to be humiliated too!

FREJA
Are you mad, you are in the Australian Open?!

KALINA
Yes I am.

She flings the door open.

KALINA (CONT'D)
And now you can leave!

Freja is incredibly hurt. Looking around, she notices Carmen's photos. Ignoring Kalina she wanders over and gets a good, long look at them.

FREJA
You need to grow up Kalina.

KALINA
Get out Freja! You Croat bitch get out!

Freja looks up. Slowly she approaches Kalina and stands toe to toe with her.

FREJA
You see these photos? You need to play for her. You have us. She had no one. Now, I came here to show you something.

KALINA
I don't want you to show me anything, I want you to leave!

FREJA
If you go back to Yugoslavia. I will never see you again.

Kalina grips the door firmly.

KALINA
I don't want to see you ever again.

Freja storms out, and slams the door behind her.

Kalina is shell shocked, looking at the open glass door.

Freja turning the front door knob, then banging again. Kalina rolls her eyes in frustration, then opens the door.

Freja walks in slowly and draws some deep, calming breaths.

FREJA
Kalina, let's say you lived here with Bura.

KALINA
No!

FREJA
One day she told you. I left my daughter in a park and I never saw her again. What would you call her?

Kalina shakes her head.

FREJA (CONT'D)
What would you call her Kalina?

KALINA
Asshole. I would call her an
asshole.

FREJA
That's right, an asshole. They're
just everywhere you go.

She steps out into the hallway. Kalina hesitates.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Come on! This is the greatest thing
you've ever seen. Greatest thing
I've ever seen too.

Kalina follows her out and closes the door behind her.

INT. ROD LAVER ARENA - LATER

The stadium in darkness.

Freja enters, Kalina following. They walk onto court to the
baseline.

FREJA
What we dreamed of in Croatia, this
is what it looks like.

She holds her hand up. Lights come on, illuminating the
stadium in individual pools. Fully lit, Kalina sees her
dreams before her.

Freja walks out to the net, she invites Kalina to join her,
but she hesitates.

FREJA (CONT'D)
We didn't come here to be scared
anymore Kalina.

KALINA
Wherever I go I am scared.

FREJA
But here we can play.

Kalina walks out, taking in the whole stadium, turning around several times as she walks, making herself dizzy, until she bumps into Freja, who holds her. Freja points to the player's entrance onto court.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You come out from the Champions
Walk. When I played here in the
junior open final, I sat down over
here.

She walks over to where she sat, remembering.

FREJA (CONT'D)
For just a moment. I didn't mind if
I won or lost. It was a glorious
feeling.

For the first time Kalina's face registers a glimmer of hope. Freja gives her a mischievous smile.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Of course when you play Kostic.
These stands will be filled with
15,000 people.

KALINA
Thanks Freja.

FREJA
Once you've conquered the fear of
failure, you must embrace the
possibility of success.

Kalina regards her ruefully.

FREJA (CONT'D)
I can't say it like she can.

Kalina wanders around to the other side of the court. Freja leans against the net.

Kalina looks straight ahead, readies herself, then practices a serve, a volley, then a backhand.

FREJA (CONT'D)
You have to play Kalina. If it's
over in an hour. So be it. If it
goes for three hours, you play
until the end. Gotta do it for
Carmen. And me. And you.

Kalina takes a long look at the stands, turning right around. She closes her eyes.

KALINA
One day...one day.

FREJA
Hey Kalina.

She turns round to Freja.

FREJA (CONT'D)
Who knows, maybe you'll win.

Kalina hits her with a sour look.

KALINA
You're a spaz Freja.

Freja smiles back.

They walk off court, Kalina holds her hand out, and Freja takes it, they leave hand in hand.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Carmen enters the apartment. She sees writing in black marker on the wall. Each round of the Oz open, with the words 'Bolic Vs' written underneath. In Round 1 she has written 'Bolic Vs Kostic.'

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

She joins Kalina. Then notices Kalina's racquet still lying on the floor.

CARMEN
You gonna play?

KALINA
You gonna watch?

CARMEN
Yep.

She picks the racquet up.

CARMEN (CONT'D)
You really need a new racquet.

INT. CARMEN'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Kalina walks back in, Carmen follows. She goes up to the racquet on the wall, Carmen nods her head and Kalina takes it down.

She tests the strings.

KALINA

It's got some games left. Not done yet.

Carmen and Kalina SWAP racquets.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Your turn Coach.

CARMEN

When my parents were children. The government came and took them away from their families. Never saw them again. I think that was the only thing they had in common. They both had their problems. Got married, they got worse. And then gave em to me....You know I've never told any of this, to anyone.

They nervously hug. And hold it.

KALINA

Are we done?

They break apart.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Thanks for helping me Carmen.

Kalina retreats to the bedroom.

Carmen shakes her head, clears her throat and quickly rubs her eyes.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

She walks back out, leans on the railing, looks down at the street, then up to Melbourne Park.

She hurls Kalina's OLD racquet into the Yarra river.

CARMEN

Wish she hadn't written on my bloody wall though.

EXT. KOORYONG STADIUM - DAY

Kalina sitting courtside, wearing the baseball cap, the headphones taped to the cap. She hits play. The Kooyong girls and the crowd CHEERING.

KOORYONG GIRLS

Oh my God!...she's got no
one!...I'd never have the guts to
do that!...never won a
tournament...how do you play on
milk and bread...nearly beat Freja
twice...everyone booing her...!

She forces her racquet into her right hand. Carmen's coaching voice enters her head.

CARMEN (V.O.)

The umpire calls time. You're gonna
calmly stand, and make your way to
your position.

Kalina stands at the baseline.

CARMEN (V.O.)

Now once you are at the baseline.
You will no longer hear or see the
crowd.

For Kalina the stands go into soft focus.

CARMEN (V.O.)

All you can see is the net, the
other side of court and the ball,
you will not even see your
opponent.

Kalina's vision puts everything out of focus, except the net, and at the opposite end, FREJA, ready to serve. AND the girls voices become muted.

CARMEN (V.O.)

And then you're gonna turn me off
as well.

Freja serves.

EXT. MELBOURNE STREETS - LATER

Kalina and Freja running along the Yarra river side.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - TRAINING MONTAGE

...Kalina sending down ace after ace.

...Freja sending down ace after ace.

EXT. MELBOURNE STREETS BATMAN AVE - LATER

Kalina and Freja run past Melbourne Park.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS are getting it ready for the Australian Open.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS TRIBUNAL COURT - LATER

With the official Australian government logo on the wall, and a panoramic city view, three ADMINISTRATORS, ageing, stern and dressed in suits, are listening while Amber gives testimony.

Behind her Kalina, Carmen and Freja, sit. Kalina and Freja chew gum. Freja offers some to Carmen. She takes it and joins in the power chewing.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - TRAINING MONTAGE

Kalina and Freja having epic rallies, forcing each other to run the breadth of the court.

EXT. MELBOURNE PARK ROD LAVER ARENA - LATER

Freja serves, her OPPONENT a good backhand, Freja a hurried backhand, Opponent a drop shot backhand, Freja races in for the backhand, Opponent backhand cross court.

No way Freja can get to it.

EXT. TENNIS COURTS - TRAINING MONTAGE

To chase a return, Kalina races so fast across court she falls over. Freja checks she's okay. She holds up her hand and gets up immediately.

EXT. WILLIAM BARAK BRIDGE - LATER

Kalina and Freja run up the bridge.

EXT. MELBOURNE PARK ROD LAVER ARENA - LATER

Freja serves...

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Kalina and Carmen's eyes go from one shot to another.

EXT. MELBOURNE PARK ROD LAVER ARENA - CONTINUOUS

Opponent forehand, Freja comes to the net and backhands it cross court, but Opponent races across and intercepts, backhand lobbed high, Freja takes it on the full and smashes it cross court, but Opponent races to her right, jumps and takes it on the half volley, a passing shot for a point.

The crowd erupts. Opponent raises her fist in triumph.

The dejected Freja shakes the Opponent's hand.

FROM THE STANDS - CONTINUOUS

Freja's parents, Kalina and Carmen applaud politely.

EXT. WILLIAM BARAK BRIDGE - LATER

Kalina and Freja stand on the bridge, looking over Melbourne Park in full Grand Slam glory. Kalina looks down at the railing and considers.

They climb up on the railing, balancing. The wind whips their faces. Kalina looks down at the drop below, then up to the sky.

INT. MELBOURNE PARK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kalina walks briskly through the hallway, spots Freja retreating to the locker room.

KALINA

Hey Freja!

Freja puts her hand up for her to wait.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

Freja closes the door and sits on the toilet. She freezes, then can't help herself. She puts her hand to her mouth and cries.

I/E. COURTESY CAR - NIGHT

Kalina and Carmen ride in the back seat. They drive past a huge billboard advertising the Australian Open, then another of Alexandra Kostic.

Kalina looks straight ahead, Carmen gives her a quick, worried look.

EXT. MELBOURNE PARK ENTRANCE GATE - LATER

Driving along Batman Avenue, they arrive to a throng of cars and PEOPLE outside the gate.

INT MELBOURNE PARK PLAYERS LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

They enter and quickly find a seat. Kalina looks around and sees wall to wall TOP SEED PLAYERS. Carmen notices the nervous expression on her face. She puts her hand gently on her back.

CARMEN

I reckon, I'm gonna see you do something on court tonight, I've never seen before.

KALINA

Winning?

CARMEN

Smiling.

She frowns in disbelief.

FEMALE OFFICIAL

Kalina.

Kalina turns to see a FEMALE OFFICIAL beckoning her.

FEMALE OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

It's time.

Kalina grabs her gear and follows her.

INT. MELBOURNE PARK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kalina follows the official at a distance. She opens a door and beckons to SOMEONE. Emerging is the six foot and strong Alexandra Kostic, wearing a big pair of headphones.

Kalina follows her.

INT. CHAMPIONS WALK - CONTINUOUS

Kalina follows Kostic down the long corridor. They pass the imposing pictures of past winners on the walls.

INT. ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina stands behind Kostic, waiting at the entrance. Kostic takes her headphones off.

ANNOUNCER

Please welcome to Rod Laver arena,
from Croatia. Alexandra Kostic.

Massive cheers from the crowd outside.

Kostic hesitates, then turns back to Kalina. She offers her some gum.

Kalina can't believe it, then raises her eyes and cold stares Alex.

Kostic gives her a quick nod of her head, then walks briskly onto court. Kalina takes her place at the entrance.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Please welcome from Yugoslavia.
Kalina Bolic.

EXT. ROD LAVER ARENA - ON THE COURT

She walks out to be confronted with centre court and a packed crowd, a mixture of cheers, applause, jeers and boos.

CAMERA'S trained on her, photo flashes. Briefly she gets lost, a COURT ATTENDANT waves her over to her chair.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Carmen, and Freja clap and cheer for Kalina, then sit, with expectation.

Freja begins power chewing her gum. She offers some to Carmen, who looks at it like Kryptonite.

FREJA

You see that? She got lost. Oh not good, not good.

CARMEN

She's playing tennis not going bloody orienteering.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina unpacks her racquet, then fidgets with her gear. She walks slowly to her end. A BALL BOY tosses her some balls. She stands at the baseline, ready to serve. Suddenly she freezes. The crowd is silent. She bounces the ball, hears footsteps on court, they are in sync with her bounces. She stops the bouncing, hears the footsteps continue.

KALINA'S IMAGINATION

A FIGURE walks behind her. She looks up. Carmen standing on court.

CARMEN

Well chop chop. Tennis matches don't win themselves.

BACK ON THE COURT

Kalina looks back to Kostic.

KALINA

(to herself)

Kid, you're not gonna get any crazier.

She serves. Kostic returns on the forehand, forcing Kalina to run hard to her right, Kalina hits down the line, Kostic after it, but her limp back hand is out.

Kalina serves, Kostic's forehand, Kalina tries a drop shot, but Kostic is able to get to it, returns with a drop shot of her own, Kalina is stuck back on the baseline and can't get to it.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

They groan.

CARMEN

You gotta follow them up kid.
Position position!

BACK ON THE COURT

Kalina serves, Kostic's forehand to Kalina's forehand, which sends Kostic to her left, she nails Kalina with a wonderful return drop shot. Kalina doesn't even try to run for it.

PRIVATE BOX

CARMEN

Don't drop your eyes kid, the next one's yours.

BACK ON THE COURT

Kostic serves, Kalina delivers a strong backhand to the baseline, Kostic's backhand return is weak, Kalina comes to the net and her double backhand puts it away easily.

Kostic serves. Kalina's forehand forces Kostic to move to her right, she is wide open and Kalina blasts it down the line.

PRIVATE BOX

The scoreboard reads 2 games apiece.

And Freja swallows her gum.

FREJA

2 games apiece. Oh my God Coach
she's level with Alexandra Kostic!

CARMEN

Yeah but look at the crowd.

The crowd are starting to get behind Kalina.

COURTSIDE

The players are sitting and taking water. Kalina gives the crowd a brief look.

BACK ON THE COURT

Kostic serves, Kalina forehand, Kostic's drop shot brings Kalina to the net. Her return is weak, Kostic rockets the ball straight back at Kalina, but somehow she returns with a drop shot and wins the point.

She does a small fist pump and the crowd goes nuts.

Kostic serves. With casual ferocity, Kalina double back hands a return for the point. She fingers racquet strings like it was no thing.

Kalina serves, a sharp return with top spin from Kostic brings Kalina to the net, but such is Kalina's confidence she's there to meet it almost as soon as the ball leaves Kostic's racquet. Almost nonchalantly, she smashes a double back hand and takes the point.

The crowd erupts...

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Freja and Carmen look at each other in amazement. Freja offers some gum to Carmen, and she takes it.

FREJA

My last stick. I didn't think I
should bring a whole pack.

They begin power chewing.

COURTSIDE

Kalina in her chair, breathing heavily. She looks up into the stands, over the whole crowd. A sea of Australian flags, everyone cheering for her.

She looks down, sees her water bottle in her right hand is shaking. She looks at the court surface, she can hear the crowd yelling her name, and 'do it for Australia.' With a towel she wipes her brow, then closes her eyes, trying to control her breathing. She puts the towel over her head.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Freja and Carmen look downcast.

CARMEN

It's alright kid. Just finish the match. Finish and walk off with honour.

But Freja is thinking 'screw that plan.'

FREJA

Do it for your coach!

COURTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina takes the towel off, turns around and looks up at the crowd behind her, scanning. Then her eyes settle on the gum chewing Freja and Carmen.

Freja gestures for her to get back out there.

She turns around and looks ahead. She begins mouthing the same WORDS over and over.

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)

Once you've conquered the fear of failure, you must embrace the possibility of success.

Kalina puts her water bottle back in her bag and forces her racquet into her right hand. She stands. But Bura's voice enters her head.

KALINA/BURA (V.O.)

He left me! Because of what you did!

She begins crossing over to her end.

KALINA/BURA (V.O.)

This is all we have to live on! No man wants me! Because of you! Because of what you did!

As she passes Kostic, she tries to catch her eye, but Kalina looks straight ahead.

KALINA/BURA (V.O.)

Say something Kalina. Tell me you love me. Tell me it will be alright.

She stands at the baseline, the cheering crowd goes silent. She looks straight ahead, summoning all her focus.

KALINA
(to herself)
She's stronger than you...

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON Carmen.

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)
She's faster than you...

STANDS - CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON Freja.

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)
She's better than you...

BACK ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

The crowd silent. Kostic bouncing the ball.

KALINA/BURA (V.O.)
Don't you understand?! How can I
live like this? Why did this happen
to me?! Why did I have to have had
you?!

Kostic ready to serve.

Kalina's vision puts everything out of focus but Kostic and the net. Kostic ready to serve.

KALINA
(through gritted teeth)
But she must take it from me.

KALINA POINTS MONTAGE

...Kostic serves. Kalina's forehand moves Kostic cross court to her left, her backhand allows the perfectly positioned Kalina to hit a double back hand across court. Kostic barely tries to get across.

...Kostic serves, Kalina's powerful backhand, a weak backhand return from Kostic lobs in the air, Kalina runs in and smashes it.

Scoreboard reads 4 games to 0.

END MONTAGE

ON THE COURT

Kostic serves, Kalina's return hits the net. She swears at herself.

Kostic serves a fault. She serves again, Kalina lunges across, steps on the side of her foot and rolls her left ankle badly, falling to the ground.

MEDICAL STAFF come running over. The medics help her up, then over to her seat, she is limping badly.

On the big screen a slow motion replay of the injury, the crowd 'ooh's' in pain.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Carmen and Freja stand, trying to see Kalina below.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

The Physio takes Kalina's shoe and sock off. There is obvious swelling and bruising.

PHYSIO

Did you hear it pop?

Kalina shakes her head. The Physio manipulates the joint, Kalina grimaces in real pain. An OFFICIAL comes over.

OFFICIAL

How we doing?

PHYSIO

Kalina. I can give you something for the pain. But playing on this ankle is really dangerous.

OFFICIAL

Do you want to continue?

KALINA

Give me the painkiller.

PHYSIO

It's your choice. But not feeling pain means you won't know how much damage you're actually doing to yourself.

OFFICIAL

She's got a minute and a half to
decide. Sorry Kalina.

PHYSIO

I'm gonna tape this up now. Think
about it.

Kalina looks up to the crowd, who are cheering for her, then
to Carmen, who is trying to look encouraging. She looks down
at the medic taping her ankle, then to her right hand, which
is shaking. She grits her teeth and picks up her racquet.

KALINA

I'm good.

PHYSIO

You want painkillers?

KALINA

I played with worse pain than this.

Kalina stands slowly, puts weight on the ankle, grimaces in
pain, then limps back out onto court, the crowd cheers.

Kostic serves, but hits the net. Kalina veers to her right to
meet it, she winces in pain and hops around.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

CARMEN

She can't move laterally. Bloody
hell.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kostic serves, Kalina races to her right and returns on her
forehand, Freja's backhand forces Kalina to run to her left,
she screams out in pain and her return hits the net. She must
limp back to position. As she does she mouths the words 'come
on, come on.'

Kostic ready to serve. Kalina stands at the baseline, looks
directly at Carmen and Freja, gathering energy.

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)

You need to force her to make a
mistake.

Kostic about to serve.

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)
Let's see how confident she really
is.

Kostic tosses the ball up to serve, Kalina begins coming to the net, Kostic serves, Kalina stretching, hits the ball on the full for a point. She limps back to the baseline in pain.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Carmen and Freja impressed.

ON THE COURT

Kostic serves, backhand Kostic, backhand from Kalina brings Kostic to the net, a drop shot brings Kalina racing to the net, she taps it cross court, sliding to her knees as she does, watching the ball, land just in the lines. She limps back to position.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Scoreboard reads 30-40.

Freja is shaking Carmen.

FREJA
30-40. One more point to take the
first set!

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina serves, immediately comes to the net, Kostic's backhand to Kalina's injured side, Kalina lunges but can't get across. She pulls up hopping.

UMPIRE
Deuce.

Kalina readies her serve, loads up, and fires an ace. The crowd is ecstatic.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Advantage Bolic.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

FREJA

So here we are again. She just
needs one more point.

CARMEN

Yep. This sport is completely
absurd.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

KALINA/CARMEN (V.O.)

Next point is mine. Here we go.

Kostic serves, forcing Kalina to lunge to her backhand,
Kostic's slice forces Kalina to race across, her backhand
cross court, close to the line but in. Her momentum takes her
to the ground. On her knees she raises her clenched fists,
the crowd goes nuts.

UMPIRE

First set Bolic.

Kostic fingers her racquet, regarding her cynically.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Carmen puts her hand to her chest, and takes deep breaths.
Freja checking if she's okay.

COURTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The players take their seats, immediately going for water.

Kalina rubs her injured ankle. The crowd cheers for her.

KOSTIC

Hey Kalina.

Kalina momentarily surprised Kostic even knows her name.

KALINA

What?

KOSTIC

There's two more sets you know.

Kalina pushes the racquet into her hand and slowly gets up.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

FREJA

Alexandra Kostic trying to get into
Kalina's head. Who the hell does
she think she is?

Carmen can't help but smile.

ON THE COURT

Kalina serves, Kostic returns a powerful forehand cross
court, Kalina barely returns it, Kostic down the line for an
easy point. Kalina only half runs to it and immediately gets
a small limp.

...Kalina serves, Kostic plays a great passing backhand,
which Kalina must stretch across to, her backhand is a
comical high lob, which Kostic ruthlessly comes in and
smashes.

FADE TO:

PRIVATE BOX - LATER

Scoreboard reads Kostic up 5 games to 0, with the score
currently at 40-15.

Carmen and Freja clapping mechanically.

CARMEN

5 games to none. We're goin into a
third set.

ON THE COURT

Kalina serves, Kostic forehand, Kalina comes to the net, her
backhand is cross court, but Kostic runs hard and delivers a
beautiful forehand cross court, Kalina lunges at it and stops
as her ankle hurts her, she falls over.

The crowd claps in sympathy.

Kostic walks to her seat, totally ignoring Kalina, who is
still trying to stand.

UMPIRE

Second set Kostic.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

FREJA

Kalina won't quit if her leg was broken.

CARMEN

I know.

COURTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Kalina in her chair, panting, rubbing at her ankle. Kostic is lounging back, sipping water.

KOSTIC

Hey Kalina, how you doing over there?

KALINA

I'm good.

KOSTIC

How's the ankle?

KALINA

It's good too.

KOSTIC

Don't worry, this will soon be over.

Kalina looks up at the crowd, they wave Australian flags, clap politely. She lowers her head.

FREJA (O.S.)

Don't let her into your head
Kalina! You can take her!

Kalina looks up and around. Freja is getting warned by SECURITY while Carmen tries to make peace.

Despite herself Kalina smiles.

KALINA

(whispering)

She's faster than you. She's stronger than you. She's better than you. But she must take it from you.

She pushes her racquet into her right hand and stands slowly, grimacing in pain. She forces herself to put more weight on the ankle, her limp gradually lessens.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina serves, then immediately comes forward, Kostic a beautiful forehand, Kalina suddenly dives to her right and in mid air, delivers a drop shot. Kostic who is still in position at the baseline, races forward, but can't get to it.

She picks the ball up, then looks incredulously at Kalina sprawled over the court.

Kalina slowly gets up, with a big grin on her face. She limps back to position.

Kalina serves, Kostic delivers a forehand, Kalina a rushed backhand brings Kostic to the net, Kostic smashes a return on Kalina's left side, again Kalina is able to leap forward and return it on the backhand cross court for a point.

Her momentum sends her into a BALL GIRL, crouching at the side of the net. Kalina checks she's okay, then pats her on the shoulder. The crowd cheers, Kalina limps back to her position.

Kostic regards her with respect and frustration, while fingering her racquet strings.

The crowd still geed up.

UMPIRE

Quiet please.

Kostic serves, again to Kalina's left, Kalina comes forward for a backhand, Kostic intercepts, takes it on the full with a backhand cross court. Kalina runs hard to her left, delivers an incredible backhand passing shot across court, her momentum slams her into the wall.

Kostic puts her hands on her head in shock at Kalina's point.

Kalina at the wall, holds her hands up to show she's okay, then limps back to position.

The crowd are on their feet, going nuts.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Carmen and Freja stand up, fist pumps and cheer.

ON THE COURT - LATER

Kostic is breathing heavily. The players swap sides, she tries to make eye contact with Kalina, who gives her a quick look.

KALINA (V.O.)

She's thinking about not losing. OK
Kalina. You got nothing left, you
got nothing to lose.

Kalina serves and hits the net. She serves again, a great down the line forehand from Kostic who then begins moving to her left, Kalina moves back, swinging her racquet over her head, she backhands it down the line for the point. With her momentum, she somersaults backwards in the process, over onto her on her knees. Kalina is laughing crazy, the crowd cheering, Kostic looks at her in disbelief.

Kalina can barely stand back up, but she's still grinning.

ON THE COURT - LATER

The crowd is going insane.

...Kalina in tremendous pain, almost in tears. Kostic is tired, but has full resolve and is without sympathy.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Scoreboard reads Kostic up 5 games to 4.

Freja is gripping Carmen's arm, tight...but still chewing that gum.

CARMEN

Oh, bugger this.

She stands and claps.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

That's my girl! You bloody legend!

UMPIRE

Quiet please.

Carmen sits and gets the first grin on her face in her entire life. Freja looks at her ruefully, but Carmen's grin doesn't slip.

ON THE COURT

Kalina in the ready position, face bright red, swaying.

Kostic serves, hard and deep, Kalina a rushed backhand, Kostic comes forward and delivers a backhand that forces Kalina across to her left. Kalina a last ditch two handed backhand down the line, which is in.

...Kalina delivers a weak serve, tries to come to the net, Kostic has lots of time to ready her forehand and let her come, then smashes a passing shot, for the point.

...Kostic serves an ace.

UMPIRE
Advantage Kostic.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

The crowd, clapping, cheering and even groaning.

A single tear down Carmen's cheek.

CARMEN
Just one more point. And you did it
kid.

Freja hugs her.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kalina serves and comes to the net, with cold precision, Kostic lobs her forehand high, Kalina must run back after it, her ankle gives way, she falls and lies sprawled on the court, watching the ball bounce in front of her.

UMPIRE
Game set match Kostic.

The crowd erupts. Medics run out with a stretcher.

PRIVATE BOX - CONTINUOUS

Freja bursts into tears.

FREJA
She...I didn't...I thought she
was...

Carmen hugs her.

CARMEN

You are a good friend Freja. Now we
need to help her off.

Carmen begins walking down to court. Freja following.

FREJA

Wait coach, they're not gonna let
us onto court.

The great Coach looks back at her meaningfully.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Okay, I know.

ON THE COURT - CONTINUOUS

Kostic is celebrating to the crowd.

The medics are with Kalina, but she is refusing to get on the
stretcher.

KALINA

I don't need to play again. I just
have to walk off.

Carmen and Freja come up to her. Carmen touches the medics to
let them know it's alright. She and Freja both help her up,
together they leave court.

But Kostic is standing there, with Kalina's racquet. She
holds it out. Kalina shakes her head.

Kostic extends her hand and Kalina shakes it. She also shakes
Carmen's hand, and extends to Freja, whose awestruck.

KALINA (CONT'D)

Freja, I need to lie down.

The starstruck Freja shakes her hand.

CARMEN

Good luck for the rest of the
tournament Alex.

They help Kalina off while the crowd applauds.

KALINA

She had to take it from me Freja.
She had to take it from me.

Freja realizes she still has tears on her cheeks.

FREJA

Yeah, she let you win a few games.

Kalina and Carmen laugh.

KALINA AND CARMEN

You're a spaz Freja.

CARMEN

Let's go home.

The echo of the crowd as they leave the stadium. Carmen's old racquet lies on court.

EXT. FORECOURT - DAY

TITLE: 1 YEAR LATER

A beautiful summer's day, the Australian flag flying, an ABORIGINAL MAN playing a didgeridoo. A couple of HUNDRED PEOPLE seated in the forecourt, with a lectern in front of them.

A FIGURE, wearing sunglasses and designer clothes scurries through the rows, looking for her SEAT.

Freja sits next to Kalina and Carmen.

CARMEN

(whispering)

Glad you could make it Freja.

FREJA

(whispering)

It's a 12 hour flight.

Some shooshes from the crowd.

FREJA (CONT'D)

Hey, I heard you guys opened your own tennis academy.

Kalina politely nods.

FREJA (CONT'D)

What's it called? The Chop Chop shop? House of Chop Chop?

Kalina gives a quick look at Carmen warily.

KALINA

Down the line tennis coaching.

Freja makes a face.

CARMEN
Not my idea.

FREJA
That is no good.

Kalina looks between them in annoyance.

An OFFICIATOR stands at the lectern. Kalina and the other NEW CITIZENS stand.

They repeat the pledge of allegiance.

CITIZENS
From this time forward under God, I
pledge my loyalty to Australia and
its people, whose democratic
beliefs I share, rights and
liberties I respect, and whose laws
I will uphold and obey.

They sit and everyone else applauds.

CUT TO:

The new citizens each are given framed certificates of their naturalization, then pose for a photo, with their FAMILIES.

Kalina poses with Carmen, whose smile matches hers for pure awkwardness.

The PHOTOGRAPHER grimaces. Freja just shakes her head.

Freja joins them in the photo, she and Carmen either side of Kalina, while she holds her certificate up.

FREJA
Got to smile Chop Chop. She is
Australian now.

They all look at the camera. And Kalina can't help herself.

KALINA
Like a native.

They all can't help but grin.

THE END