

FADE IN:

INT. PEDIATRICIANS'S OFFICE WAITING ROOM - DAY

The waiting room is decorated in primary colors. A few children that aren't too sick play shyly with brightly colored toys in the center of the room.

Around the perimeter in connected chairs sit the mothers of those playing, occasionally glancing over their People Magazines to check on their offspring, and the kids that are too sick to play, sitting on their mother's laps or leaning heavily on their arms if they're too big.

In the far corner of the room, YVONNE TOWNSEND, a sixteen year old black girl, sits slouched in her chair, face buried in a recent issue of Teen People, her legs crossed at the ankles and shoved uncomfortably under her seat.

Her mother, MONIQUE, a stately, well-dressed woman, sits next to her daughter and watches the little ones playing, an open magazine resting on her lap.

An interior door next to the reception window opens and a nurse glances at her clipboard as she calls the next patient.

NURSE

Yvonne Townsend?

The nurse glances up, eyes searching the room.

Yvonne sighs, closes her magazine and sets it on the empty seat beside her. She unfolds her legs and slowly rises to her feet, eyes flicking around the room to see if anyone is watching her.

They all are.

Monique stands and smooths her skirt, then heads for the nurse, turning to hurry Yvonne along.

MONIQUE

Come on, Baby.

Yvonne lowers her chin, eyes darting once more, knowing how silly it must look for this woman so much smaller than she to be calling her "Baby".

The nurse, barely reaching shoulder height on the teen-aged girl, smiles as Yvonne passes through the doorway.

The other kids, even the sick ones, gawk, then turn to their mothers for comment and instruction.

The mothers shush each child in turn, explaining in varied ways that there's nothing wrong, the girl is just...tall.

INT. EXAMINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne sits on the examining table wearing nothing but her panties and a flowered cotton cover secured at the back of her neck with Velcro.

Monique sits in a molded plastic chair near the door.

MONIQUE

Yvonne, you better get some kind of a smile on that face when Dr. Baker gets in here. It's rude to be mopey.

Yvonne tsks and rolls her eyes.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

I mean it, now.

The door opens and DR. BAKER, looking pleasant and capable, temples just beginning to gray, breezes into the examining room.

He holds Yvonne's chart in clasped hands in front of him and stands before her smiling brightly.

DR. BAKER

So here YOU are. I saw your twin brother yesterday.

YVONNE

I know.

Monique shoots Yvonne a warning look.

Yvonne looks into Dr. Baker's face, then plants a big, if brief, toothy grin.

Dr. Baker refers to her chart.

DR. BAKER

How are your periods? Are they regular? Still so heavy?

Yvonne is mortified. She can't look at him. She delivers her answer to her own thighs.

YVONNE

They're fine.

Monique clears her throat, shaking her head just a little at her daughter's embarrassment.

MONIQUE

They're heavy, and she has pretty bad cramps. Enough to keep her home from school.

Yvonne sucks in her breath and looks at the graphs and illustrations on the wall. It will be over soon.

Dr. Baker makes a note on his chart.

DR.BAKER

It's probably time to schedule an appointment with a gynecologist.

Monique nods.

Dr. Baker turns to Yvonne again.

DR.BAKER (CONT'D)

I know your arms and legs must ache. This is quite a growing spurt you're having. Three inches in six months.

Yvonne swallows.

YVONNE

How tall am I?

Dr. Baker refers to his chart once more.

DR.BAKER

Six one and a half. I can do some blood work if you want to see if it's about over, or we can just wait and see. You've even got half an inch on your brother. Of course girls usually reach their mature height earlier than boys. He'll probably have another big spurt in a year or two.

Yvonne didn't hear anything after "six one and a half". She closes her eyes against the information, a tear leaking out from under her eyelid.

Dr. Baker looks over to Monique, silently asking if she knows what they should do.

Monique shakes her head meaning "nothing".

DR.BAKER (CONT'D)

Now honey, look how attractive your mother is and she's what, five-ten? That's tall. And how tall is your father?

Yvonne wipes at her tears.

YVONNE

Six-six, but I'll shoot myself if I get that big.

MONIQUE

That's not funny, not even to joke about. There's a lot worse things than being tall. You could be stupid. How would that be?

Yvonne takes in a shaky breath, done with all this.

YVONNE

Can I get dressed?

Dr. Baker speaks gently, feeling compassion for the awkward teen.

DR.BAKER

Yes, get dressed. I'll give your mom a prescription to see if we can help your achy bones. I want to see you again in four months, okay?

Yvonne slides off the examining table.

YVONNE

Okay.

She steps over to a sectioned off corner of the room and separates herself from the adults with a curtain.

INT. DRESSING AREA IN EXAMINATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne sits on the wooden bench jutting out from the wall and reaches for her pants, then sighs and leans against the wall a picture of abject misery.

She can hear her mother asking Dr. Baker about her mopiness, and his response, something to do with her diet.

YVONNE

(to herself)

Who cares what I eat? I'm a freak.

INT. YVONNE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Yvonne, dressed for school in crisp shorts and a white blouse, sits on the edge of her bed, a tennis shoe in one hand and a sandal in the other.

The walls of her bedroom are covered with posters with action shots of the NBA and WNBA and she's got one of those little nerf basketball sets over the trash can by her study desk.

Monique appears in the open doorway.

MONIQUE

Well at least you're ready. Ron and I can't neither one get Franky out of bed. If he's late for his first day of eighth grade it won't be my fault. I have a house to show this morning. I need you to deal with breakfast.

Yvonne shrugs, decides on the sandal, tosses it on the floor and shoves her foot into it.

Monique plants her hands on her hips.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Now what's the matter with you?

Monique turns from the doorway heading down the hall, her voice trailing behind her.

MONIQUE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

God, I remember when you kids couldn't wait for the first day of school. Now it's like pulling teeth - Ron! Get your brother out of that bed and I mean now.

Yvonne sighs and slips on her other sandal, then sits staring at her feet.

MONIQUE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Yvonne! I'm counting to three and you better have your mopey butt out here in this kitchen. One...Two...

Yvonne sighs again and gets to her feet.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Yvonne has the kitchen table set with three bowls, spoons, milk and an assortment of non-sugary cereal boxes in the center of the table.

She's easily carrying three drinking glasses in one hand and retrieves orange juice from the refrigerator with the other.

RON, her twin brother struggles into the kitchen holding their little brother FRANKY in a head lock.

Ron maneuvers his shorter but stockier brother over to the table and pushes in the back of his knees with his own forcing Franky to collapse into the chair.

Franky is genuinely pissed, arms flailing to reach up and smack his older brother if he can.

RON

Stop, now. You better stop or I'll keep this head lock on all day.

Franky stops flailing, shouting at Ron.

FRANKY

All right, I stopped. Let go! Get off me, God damn it!

Ron takes a step back so he can jump out of reach when he does let go.

RON

Okay, but if you turn on me you little rodent I'll have to beat you.

The boys freeze for a moment, Ron not sure whether to let go or not. When he finally does, he takes the jump back.

Franky turns in his chair and flips Ron a bird, but doesn't lash out.

Yvonne sets down the orange juice, places the drinking glasses and sits in her chair across from Franky, seemingly oblivious to the rough-housing.

Ron sits next to Yvonne and points a warning finger at Franky, his expression telling the young boy to keep still.

Monique enters with her purse, ready to go, just in time to hear Franky's next comment.

FRANKY

Fuck you, Ron. You're not my dad.

Monique stomps around the table to stare fiercely at her younger son.

MONIQUE

No, he's not, but if that's what you want I can have him here in about five minutes. Is that what I have to do? Because we both know he'll be here just that fast. Don't we?

Franky sulks at his cereal bowl.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

I said "don't we"?

FRANKY

Yessss.

Monique grabs her keys from the kitchen counter.

MONIQUE

And you better clean up that foul mouth of yours or do we need your father to take care of that, too?

FRANKY

No.

Monique stomps to the kitchen door leading outside, then turns back to face her children.

MONIQUE

Thank you all for a wonderful morning. It really gets me in the right frame of mind to drag a bunch of whining idiots around all day so they can bitch about every single rat hole of a roach infested slum I have the pleasure to show them.

She steps outside and slams the door. Hard.

The three kids look at each other, then Franky flips Ron another bird.

Ron and Yvonne both shake their heads, then the three eat their cereal in silence.

Without speaking or looking up, Ron hands Yvonne the milk for her cereal at just the right moment. Yvonne takes it, also without looking.

EXT. TOWNSEND NEIGHBORHOOD IN VISALIA - MORNING

Yvonne, Ron and Franky walk along the sidewalk of a middle-class neighborhood in Visalia, California, on their way to school.

At an intersection, Franky splits off heading for the Junior High School.

YVONNE
What time do you get out?

FRANKY
I don't know.

Yvonne and Ron share a glance.

RON
Well, if you're not home by three
thirty I'm coming looking for you.

Franky turns away as he delivers his smart-ass answer.

FRANKY
Thanks for the warning.

Yvonne and Ron continue on their way toward the high school.

RON
So we have chemistry together third
period. Is that all?

YVONNE
Do you have lunch fourth?

RON
Yeah.

Yvonne sighs, relieved.

RON (CONT'D)
Nervous?

Yvonne chews her lip, staring at her feet as she walks.

YVONNE
They're gonna stare at me.

Ron nods. There's no denying it.

RON
Come find me if you need me.

Yvonne shoots a grateful glance at her brother.

YVONNE
Thanks.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Yvonne and Ron approach the school, scores of students milling around on this, the first morning of the new school year. There are a handful of other black kids visible in the student body, but not many.

Ron checks his schedule and heads down one walkway, Yvonne taking another toward the main entrance.

EXT. SIERRA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Franky approaches a chain link fence surrounding the junior high school. He stares at the kids on the playground for several moments, then slings his backpack over one shoulder and heads off in another direction.

INT. GOLDEN WEST HS MAIN HALLWAY - MORNING

Yvonne heads down the hall looking neither to the right nor to the left.

Some of the students gape openly at her height, others are more surreptitious, but there's just no ignoring it.

Looking up, Yvonne stops in her tracks to avoid colliding with an interesting young girl planted in the hallway before her.

PJ, a masculine looking young lady of about 5'3" in height, spiked bleach-blonde hair with dark roots, a denim jacket covering a man's undershirt, khaki chino's and black boots, blocks Yvonne's way.

The two girls size each other up silently for a moment.

PJ
Come here.

PJ turns abruptly and walks down the hall, apparently assuming Yvonne will follow.

Yvonne watches PJ retreat for a moment, then shrugs and follows as she was told.

PJ stops at a bank of lockers. She points, directing Yvonne's gaze to the top.

PJ (CONT'D)
See if you can reach up there and
get my backpack.

Yvonne looks around, not sure she should just be following orders like this. Then she steps up to the lockers, reaches up to the top and feels around for anything to grab.

PJ (CONT'D)
Some ass biting little jock
perverts tossed it up there.

Yvonne snags something and hooks it with a finger. She pulls down the backpack and holds it out to PJ.

PJ takes the pack and holds her hand out for a sideways five.

She and Yvonne institute the side five and then tap knuckles.

PJ (CONT'D)
PJ. You a senior?

Yvonne shakes her head.

YVONNE
Junior. My name's Yvonne.

PJ's expression communicates her concern that as a junior, Yvonne may yet have more growing to do.

PJ
A junior. I'm a sophomore.
Well...you're tall. Thanks for
helping me out.

Yvonne smiles.

YVONNE
Thank you for just saying it. I
was sort of hoping no one would
notice.

PJ laughs a loud guffawing laugh and the two girls head down the hall together, both feeling just a little bit better.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - MORNING

The chemistry class has eight square lab tables, each with four chrome sinks and a Bunsen burner apparatus. Tall stools are situated at the tables, though most of the kids stand.

Mr. Bergen, a hawkish looking man with very large perspiration rings under his arms, is drawing unintelligible gibberish on the chalkboard.

Ron and Yvonne share a lab table with PHILIP, one of the other few black students at Golden West High School. Philip is just shy of six feet, but with the athletic bulk of the football player that he is.

At the fourth side of the lab table stands CAROL, a painfully shy, pale young girl with too-short bangs and wire-rim glasses.

Mr. Bergen asks a question from the front of the room.

MR. BERGEN

Who can name a sub-atomic particle
for me?

He checks his new roster, calling a name randomly then looking around to see who responds.

MR. BERGEN (CONT'D)

Carol?

Carol gulps. She may as well have been hauled before a firing squad. She looks down at her feet and whispers the word 'proton', though no one can possibly hear it.

Ron's heart aches for the girl. He speaks up for her.

RON

She said "proton".

Mr. Bergen, unaware of the pain he has just inflicted turns to write the word on the board.

MR. BERGEN

That's right. Anyone else?
Another one? Todd?

Carol exhales and lifts her gaze to meet Ron's for just a second. He smiles, so she does, too.

Yvonne's admiration for Ron's kindness shows on her face.

Philip only has eyes for Yvonne.

Chemistry is going to be interesting.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS QUAD - DAY

Ron and Yvonne sit at a molded aluminum table eating lunch. Yvonne spots PJ and motions her over, introducing her to Ron.

PJ straddles the seat and unwraps a corn dog purchased from the student store.

RON
(to Yvonne)
Are you going out for basketball?

PJ snorts, spitting bits of corndog on the table. She swipes at her mouth.

PJ
Sorry, but did you just say "are you going out for basketball"? That's like, should Thomas Jefferson take political science? Hello. Should Steven Spielberg take film studies? I think so. Should William Shakespeare take creative writing? May-be.

Yvonne is grinning at her goofy new friend.

Ron likes this game.

RON
Should Stephen Hawking take astronomy?

PJ
That's what I'm saying.

RON
Should Charles Schultz take sociology?

The girls stop, momentum broken, and turn questioning looks to Ron.

Ron shrugs.

RON (CONT'D)
Think about it.

The girls return their attention to their food.

YVONNE
Anyways, yes, I am. Are you?

Ron sighs.

RON
I don't really want to, but
Cantrell already cornered me. I
guess I will. I don't really have
a good enough reason not to.

PJ stares at Ron like he's from Mars.

PJ
(to Ron)
You already don't want to and you
need a reason? You and me? We are
not alike.

She polishes off her corndog and stands to go.

PJ (CONT'D)
I'm going to English.

Ron checks his schedule.

RON
So am I. I'll walk with you.

Yvonne checks her schedule.

YVONNE
Math. I guess I'll see you guys
later.

They head out as the class bell rings.

INT. GIRL'S GYM - AFTERNOON

Yvonne sits with the rest of the team on the bottom row of bleachers as COACH CANTRELL offers up a generalized speech about commitment to the team and how that relates to his practice schedule.

The nine other girls on the team tend to be blonde and about 5'6" to 5'8".

COACH CANTRELL

I know a lot of you played together last year, but let's just come on out here and move around a little bit, start to get a sense of each other in play.

The girls move out to the basketball court and the coach bounces a ball into play.

Yvonne is so much taller and her stride so much longer she seems to be everywhere.

Initially the other girls seem amazed and hopeful that Yvonne's remarkable height may benefit them, but that fairly quickly turns to resentment when nobody else can get their hands on the ball.

BROOKE, the leggiest blonde, and seemingly the leader of the pack, gets increasingly rough in her play until she and Yvonne end up in a tug of war with the ball, sweating, eyes locked in personal battle.

Coach Cantrell sounds his whistle.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)

Okay. I think that gives us an idea of what we're dealing with. Brooke? The ball?

Yvonne lets go of her grip on the ball, but not her locked glare with Brooke.

Brooke shoots the ball over to the coach, then reflexively flicks her eyes away from Yvonne to see if she sent it to the right place.

Yvonne, winning the stare-down, lets a smugness creep onto her face that doesn't set well with the rest of the girls.

Coach Cantrell misses nothing.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)

All right, that's it. We'll see you all here tomorrow.

He watches the tension between Yvonne and Brooke and sighs. Another school year...

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Yvonne and PJ wait for Ron out on the sidewalk.

YVONNE

THIS weekend I'm spending at my Dad's, but that's only half a mile away. I ride my bike. We take turns every weekend and then we all stay there together the fourth weekend.

PJ is impressed.

PJ

Wow. So, do you like movies or what? What do you do on weekends?

Yvonne shrugs.

YVONNE

Yeah, I like movies. Sometimes I get in a pick up game at the park.

PJ's expression registers alarm.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

That's basketball in case you didn't know. What do you like to do?

Ron approaches from behind.

PJ

Oh, I don't know. Listen to music. Shoot my mouth off.

RON

Hey, maybe you're gonna be a DJ when you grow up. PJ the DJ - like a female Howard Stern.

The girls gather their back packs and they head off for home.

EXT. MONIQUE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

There's a basketball hoop set up between two driveways. Ron and Yvonne have a game of one-on-one going in the street outside their house.

Monique pulls up in her 1992 Toyota Corona. It's clean and dent free.

She pulls up to the garage door, then gets out of the car and heads down the driveway to her children, a smile on her face.

MONIQUE

I sold one. I sold a rat hole.

Ron and Yvonne stop their playing and move to congratulate their mother.

RON

Mom that's -

YVONNE

- great! You know what we -

RON

- should do. Celebrate! Let's go -

YVONNE

- to the Mexicali!

Monique shivers.

MONIQUE

Stop that. It creeps me out when you guys finish each other's sentences. Where's your little brother?.

YVONNE

Watching TV.

MONIQUE

Well go get him and let's go. Call your father and see if he wants to meet us there.

They head into the house.

INT. MEXICALI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Monique and her three children sit in a circular booth with sodas in front of them.

FRANK, Monique's ex and the father of her three children, strides over to the table, a big grin on his face. He's a very tall guy and leaning a little toward portliness.

Yvonne slides closer to Monique so her dad can squeeze in.

As he sits, Frank reaches across the table and peels the backward baseball cap from Franky's head stuffing it in his own back pocket.

FRANKY

Hey!

Frank points a finger at him as Ron did earlier and Franky is immediately silenced.

A waitress steps up to the table.

WAITRESS

(to Frank)

Do you want something to drink?

Frank glances around at what the others are having.

FRANK

I'll have a Sprite.

He turns a smiling face to Monique.

FRANK (CONT'D)

So, I guess this dinner's on you.
Congratulations.

They all raise their glasses to toast Monique, Frank using Yvonne's water glass.

After the toast Frank sets Yvonne's glass gently on the table and looks around the table at his family with uncertainty, obviously intending to speak, but hesitating.

MONIQUE

Frank?

Frank looks at his ex-wife innocently.

FRANK

Yes?

The waitress brings his Sprite and Frank seems grateful for the interruption.

YVONNE

Daddy? Is something wrong?

Frank steels himself.

FRANK

It's just...I'm glad the whole family's here. I have some mighty important news myself.

Again, he seems anxious and agitated.

Glances dart around the table with the exception of Franky who keeps his attention focused on trapping soda in his straw with a finger, seemingly uninterested in his family.

MONIQUE

Frank, for heaven's sake, what is it?

FRANK

I think I'm going to ask someone, a woman, to marry me. That is, after you all meet her, of course. That is...if you want to. I mean...if you like her.

The others are stunned.

Monique recovers first.

MONIQUE

Frank that's wonderful. I'm so happy for you. And so happy it's a woman.

The adults' eyes meet and Frank can see her well wishes are heart felt.

He's relieved.

FRANK

Thank you, Monique.

The kids aren't quite so generous. Yvonne especially, seems upset.

YVONNE

Well, who is she? I've never seen you with a girl.

RON

How could you have time? You're always with us.

Frank looks sheepish.

FRANK

Only on weekends. There are four other days in the week. And she's hardly a girl. She's a forty-eight year old woman.

FRANKY

Can we order?

They all turn appalled faces to Franky.

FRANKY (CONT'D)

What?

INT. YVONNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yvonne is in bed, just leaning over to turn off her light. She pauses when she spots her mom in the doorway.

Monique comes in and perches on the edge of Yvonne's bed.

MONIQUE

I hope you're a little more supportive of your father when you go over to his house this weekend. Couldn't you tell he was scared to death to tell us?

YVONNE

It serves him right, he should have been scared. He never said one word about having a girlfriend.

Monique rests a hand on her daughter's hip, looking into her eyes to add weight to her comment.

MONIQUE

It's not really any of your business who your father is dating. But if he's going to marry someone, well, that is your business. I think he handled it just right.

YVONNE

Oh, you do.

Yvonne turns away from her mom, reaches over and flicks off her light.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I don't even feel like going over to his house this weekend.

Monique sighs and gets to her feet.

MONIQUE

It's not optional. I didn't think I'd ever have to remind you of that. I know you've heard me tell it to your brothers enough over the years.

Monique stands, waiting a moment in case Yvonne wants to say more.

Yvonne pulls up the covers.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
Okay, then. Good night, Baby.

After Monique has left the room Yvonne mumbles her response.

YVONNE
Good night.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE YVONNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Monique was waiting for it. She smiles to herself and heads into the boys' bedroom for more damage control.

INT. GIRL'S GYM - DAY

The girls are lined up on each end of the court practicing free throws. They move through rotation pretty fast, five girls at each basket.

It becomes apparent that Yvonne and Brooke have a private competition going. Neither girl has missed in three turns and Yvonne is up.

As she raises the ball to sight the basket, Brooke coughs, attempting to disrupt her concentration.

YVONNE
Get real.

Yvonne shoots. Swishhhhh.

Brooke moves into position.

Just as Brooke starts her throw, Yvonne waves her arms around wildly and slaps at her own arms.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
What was that, a mosquito?

Brooke's shot circles the rim, then drops into the basket. She turns a smug face to Yvonne.

BROOKE
Nice try.

Yvonne holds her hands up, looking innocent.

The other girls take their shots, hurrying out of the way. Even those at the other end of the room seem zeroed in on Yvonne and Brooke.

Yvonne moves into position.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Hey Kristy, who was that island girl we saw walking home with Yvonne after school?

KRISTY, one of the other blondes looks mystified.

KRISTY
Island girl?

BROOKE
You know, from the Island of Lesbos?

Yvonne shoots. Another swish. Then she turns to face Brooke.

YVONNE
You got something to say about someone you best just say it to their face.

Brooke takes a step closer to Yvonne.

BROOKE
Your sexual preference doesn't really interest me to tell you the truth.

YVONNE
You're the one who brought it up.

Coach Cantrell sounds his whistle.

COACH CANTRELL
Sanders, Townsend, as you were.

One of the other girls bounces the ball to Brooke. She moves into position for her shot, and swishes it.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - DUSK

Frank is outside hand watering his plants. His house is similar to Monique's in size and condition. There's a basketball hoop set up in his driveway.

Yvonne rides up on her bicycle followed by PJ on her skateboard.

The girls stow their transportation and move to stand beside Frank.

YVONNE

Dad, this is my friend PJ. We met at school.

Frank wipes his hand on his pants to make sure it's dry and offers it to PJ.

FRANK

Hello PJ. Mr. Townsend.

PJ raises an eyebrow, unaccustomed to addressing adults by their surname. She takes his hand in a firm grip.

PJ

Mr. Townsend, it's a pleasure.

FRANK

Will you join us for dinner? I'm going to barbecue some chicken.

PJ

Thank you. Yes. That sounds nice...I can't believe I'm being so polite.

Frank nods.

FRANK

I have that effect on people. Especially young people.

Yvonne grins and motions for PJ to follow her inside.

PJ

(to Yvonne)

Now I see why your brother is so nice.

Yvonne responds as she heads through the screen door.

YVONNE

Yeah, well you've only met one of them.

Frank winces, then turns back to his plant watering.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - NIGHT

Frank and Yvonne wave to PJ as she walks up to the front door of her own similar tract house carrying her skateboard.

Frank pulls away from the curb and slides a sideways glance at his daughter.

FRANK
She seems like a bright and energetic girl.

Yvonne nods.

YVONNE
She's funny.

She pauses, looking out the passenger window.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
One of the little bitches on my basketball team made a comment about her...about us...

Frank keeps his eyes on the road.

FRANK
If she's on your team I don't think it's a very good idea for you to be calling her a bitch. In fact it's never a good idea, I don't care what the circumstances.

Yvonne turns an exasperated face to her father.

YVONNE
Dad, she practically called me a dyke. She DID call PJ one. What am I supposed to think of her?

Frank signals and turns into his driveway.

FRANK
Think of her as she is, obviously intimidated and limited in tactical resources. And you might want to rethink that term "dyke" while you're at it.

Yvonne rolls her eyes and opens the car door.

YVONNE

Why don't you just give me a list
of all the unacceptable words.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank gets out of the car and follows his daughter up to the
front door.

FRANK

That's okay, I'll just tell 'em to
you as we go along. And don't
think any of this distraction will
keep you from having to talk to me
about my girlfriend.

Yvonne freezes with her hand on the front door knob. She
lowers her head. Busted.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Go on. I'll make us some popcorn
and hot chocolate. And then I'm
going to force you to tell me what
you're thinking.

Yvonne rolls her eyes and opens the door.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

The three kids sit eating cereal as before, the boys
listening to Yvonne.

YVONNE

She's a Mexican. Her name is Juana
Rosas. She works with Dad at the
county. In personnel.

FRANKY

Does she have any money?

Yvonne and Ron turn disgusted faces to their little brother.

YVONNE

How should I know? If she did
would she be working at the county?

RON

How -

Yvonne answers Ron before he has asked the question.

YVONNE
Three years!

FRANKY
Would you let him ask the freaking
question? All of us can't read
each others minds you know.

Yvonne hands Ron the orange juice.

RON
How could he keep it quiet for
three years? Mom had to know.

YVONNE
I know. Doesn't she even care?

Franky finishes his cereal and snaps headphones over his ears
having heard enough.

FRANKY
Yeah, like they were gonna get back
together any day now.

Yvonne takes a bite of cereal, thinking.

YVONNE
Well...they get along so well.

Ron shakes his head, mystified.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Yvonne walks out of the main entrance, done with school for
the day. She is surprised to see not only Ron, but Monique
waiting for her out by the street. They look upset.

Yvonne hurries out to them.

MONIQUE
I got a call from your brother's
school. Franky hasn't shown up.
Ever. It's the second week of
school and he hasn't been to one
class.

YVONNE
Where is he?

RON
We don't know. We're going to
split up and look for him.

(MORE)

RON (CONT'D)
I left a message for Dad. You got
any ideas?

Yvonne is wide eyed.

YVONNE
Not really.

PJ approaches the distraught family.

PJ
Hey.

PJ looks around at the anxious faces, unsure whether to ask
what's going on.

The others glance at each other and wordlessly decide to
tell. They can use the help.

YVONNE
We just found out my little brother
hasn't been going to school. We
don't know where he is.

PJ draws in a breath.

PJ
He goes to Sierra, right?

Monique nods.

PJ (CONT'D)
Mad Mason's.

EXT. SEEDY APARTMENT BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Ron and Yvonne are in the back seat of Monique's Toyota, PJ
in the front about to head into the apartment complex.

PJ
If he's in there I'll bring him
out.

MONIQUE
But even if he's not, you seem to
be saying there are other children
in there. I think this person
needs to be reported.

PJ hesitates, suddenly unsure what to do.

PJ

He's not a bad guy, really. He doesn't do anything - weird. He doesn't sell drugs or anything. He just...I don't know, he just lets kids hang out at his house. They play video games and stuff. He's got really great ones.

MONIQUE

How old is he?

PJ

I don't know, maybe eighteen. He lives with his mom but she works all the time.

Monique seems to relax a little.

MONIQUE

I thought he was an adult.

RON

Maybe I should go.

PJ

He won't answer the door. He doesn't know you. He's just, I don't know, lonesome I guess.

Monique stares at the steering wheel, lips pursed.

MONIQUE

Well, go see if he's in there. I'll decide what to do about Mad Mason later.

PJ nods and heads into the apartment complex.

Monique taps nervously on the steering wheel.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Oh, God. I should try your father again.

She pulls her cell phone out of her purse and speed dials Frank's cell phone, relating what has gone on so far.

She interrupts herself when she sees PJ come out of the complex followed by Franky along with a young white kid about Franky's age.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
 (continuing; into the cell
 phone)
 Here he comes. Okay. We'll be
 there in about ten minutes.

Ron gets out of the car, letting Franky drop into the seat
 between himself and Yvonne.

PJ leans down to speak to Monique through the passenger
 window.

PJ
 This is Mark. I'm just going to
 walk him home. I know his brother.
 I - uh - I told Mason he'd better
 cool it or he's going to have the
 cops called on him. He says he's
 sorry.

Monique closes her eyes, shaking her head.

MONIQUE
 Thank you PJ. I don't even know
 what else to say right now. Just,
 thank you.

PJ
 Yeah, well, I'll call you later
 Yvonne. Come on, Mark.

INT. MONIQUE'S TOYOTA - AFTERNOON

PJ stands and waves as Monique pulls away from the curb,
 eyeing her young son in the rearview mirror.

Franky tries to look tough, but there's fear in his eyes.

FRANKY
 Where're we going?

Monique has a firm grip on herself and the steering wheel.

MONIQUE
 Where do you think you're going?
 To your father's.

Franky glances at his siblings each in turn, looking for some
 moral support. Yvonne offers him nothing, just a look that
 tells him he's in for it.

Ron can't stand it. He puts an arm around his little brother and squeezes his shoulder.

Franky's face is stone-like, resigned to his fate.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY

The chemistry class is performing some kind of experiment. They're all sporting lab coats and protective eyewear.

Beakers of milky liquid boil on Bunson burners.

Philip turns to Yvonne.

PHILIP

What's supposed to be happening?

YVONNE

I don't know. Oh, look, Carol's is turning pink.

CAROL

Is it supposed to?

RON

I don't know. Oh, maybe it is. Mine's turning pink, too.

YVONNE

Well, mine isn't. Why isn't mine turning pink? Neither is Philip's.

PHILIP

Yvonne, I want to know if you like football or not.

Yvonne is caught off guard.

YVONNE

Well, I'm better at basketball. I haven't really played football all that much.

Ron can't keep a smirk off his face. He and Carol share a knowing glance.

PHILIP

No, I don't mean to play. I mean - I mean I have a game Friday and I want you to come watch.

(MORE)

PHILIP (CONT'D)
And then maybe we could go get
burgers or something. Or ice
cream. Or coffee or - I don't
know.

Yvonne stares blankly at Philip for several moments.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm sorry. Never mind.

YVONNE
No, no, not never mind. I just -
I'm not - are you asking me out on
a date or is this just a hanging
out thing?

She can hear Ron's voice in her head, though he says nothing.

RON (V.O.)
Don't kill it, Yvonne. Just smile
and say yes. Smile and say yes.

PHILIP
Well, I didn't -

YVONNE
Yes.

She smiles.

Philip nods, looking like he just ran the 300.

PHILIP
Okay. Okay. That's good.

YVONNE
Can PJ come? I don't want to sit
and watch the game by myself.

PHILIP
Sure. Yeah. That's good. Okay.

YVONNE
Okay.

Yvonne, Ron and Carol turn to their experiments, eyes
twinkling, Philip continuing to comment "that's good".

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS QUAD - DAY

Yvonne, Ron and PJ eat lunch at one of the aluminum tables as
before.

YVONNE

Will you go with me PJ? I don't want to sit there all by myself.

PJ

Well, I know you wouldn't think this to look at me, but sports really aren't my thing.

RON

It's okay Vonnie, I was planning to go.

PJ's lips become a line. She doesn't want to be left out.

PJ

But I don't really have anything else going on. I guess I could show up.

Ron finishes his lunch, balls his trash up and tosses it like a ball in the direction of the trash can. He misses.

RON

I'm outta' here you guys. See you after school.

The girls watch Ron retrieve his trash and deposit it in the garbage can as he leaves.

PJ

So, what happened with your little brother?

Yvonne takes a huge bite of her hamburger, talking with her mouth full.

YVONNE

Dad wanted to keep him full time but Mom wasn't having any. She went on about how he's her baby and all like that, but I know what she was doing.

PJ

What was she doing?

YVONNE

Oh, my dad's got this girlfriend thing going on. We all have to meet her on Sunday. I know Mom doesn't think he needs Franky under foot right now.

(MORE)

YVONNE (CONT'D)

So Dad's gonna pay more of our bills so Mom can work less and take Franky to school and pick him up every day.

PJ shakes her head in disbelief.

PJ

Your parents are so good. They're like - I don't know, role model parents or something. When I did what Franky did I got grounded for a week and they didn't even stick to that. Not that I'm complaining. It's just - I don't know...weird.

Yvonne nods as she takes another huge bite.

PJ (CONT'D)

Whoa, girl. You want to chew that thing before you send it down. I don't want to have to pull a Heimlich on your ass.

YVONNE

I know. This is bad. When I start eating like this it usually means I'm going to start growing again.

Having said it, Yvonne sets her hamburger down, then looks at her friend with dismay.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Yvonne, Ron and PJ head down the steep concrete stairs to find a place on the bleachers close to the field.

They scotch into the fourth row stepping over a group of people hugging the aisle.

Ron and PJ both turn their backs to the game before they sit checking out their surroundings and eyeing the people near them.

Yvonne sits, eyes on the game but seeming detached.

PJ plops down next to her friend.

Ron sits on the other side of PJ and turns his attention to the game.

PJ

Why are you sulking?

Yvonne sighs and looks out at the field.

YVONNE
I'm not sulking. I'm...dreading.

PJ can't help but roll her eyes.

PJ
Dreading what? Hamburgers?

Yvonne leans forward, elbows on knees.

YVONNE
You don't understand. I'm taller
than him.

PJ
I think he knows that, Yvonne.

PJ shakes her head, sympathetic with her friend but a little annoyed as well.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS FOOTBALL FIELD - SOME TIME LATER

Yvonne, Ron and PJ loiter outside the gym waiting for Philip.

Philip joins them dressed in civvies. He sidles up to Yvonne, stiff and nervous.

PHILIP
So, where do you want to go?

Ron and PJ sneak glances, wondering how they should make their exit.

YVONNE
I guess - are we walking? We could
go to Rusty's.

Philip looks shyly at his feet for a moment.

PHILIP
I got my mom's car.

PJ
Cool. Can you give me a ride home?

Philip is a little torn between wanting to be nice and wanting to just be with Yvonne.

PHILIP
Sure. Ron, you want a ride?

Ron thinks a moment, deciding one more little delay won't hurt the situation.

RON

Sure. It's kind of on the way.

INT. PHILIP'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Yvonne sits in the front passenger seat of the 1996 Thunderbird. Thankfully there's plenty of leg room - for her.

Ron and PJ are cramped in the back seat, Ron's knees nearly as high as his ears.

Philip fusses with the stereo as he drives, though he is still careful to follow all traffic laws to the letter.

At a stop light, Yvonne's glance drifts over to a group of kids hanging out in the side parking lot of a 7-11.

Yvonne sits up a little straighter.

YVONNE

Ron, is that Franky?

The light turns green and Philip hesitates, not knowing whether to proceed as they all strain their eyes in the darkness.

The car behind him gives a little toot on the horn.

Philip flicks his eyes up to the rearview mirror, hits his turn indicator and glides slowly into the 7-11 parking lot.

It is Franky.

Since he doesn't recognize the car he doesn't alter his behavior. He's smoking a cigarette and the group of boys pass around a bottle covered by a brown paper bag.

PHILIP

What do you want me to do?

Yvonne and Ron come to an immediate wordless decision.

RON

Give us a minute.

EXT. 7-11 PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Philip steps out and lets Ron out of his side of the two-door car, Yvonne quickly exiting the other side. They can hear the group of youngsters laughing.

Ron and Yvonne hurry around to the side of the building.

EXT. SIDE PARKING LOT AT 7-11 - NIGHT

Franky looks up, just taking a drag on his cigarette, hand outstretched to receive the paper bag, and registers that the two people rounding the corner are his older brother and sister.

FRANKY

Oh, shit.

Franky lowers the reaching hand and flicks his cigarette away with the other.

The other boys, sensing trouble, turn to glare at the older kids.

Yvonne spreads her stance and meets each glare head-on. She lifts her chin in an unspoken challenge, never doubting she could take on any one of these pubescent little boys.

Ron walks around Franky. Placing one hand on his shoulder he applies enough pressure to get the boy moving, steering him with his grip.

Franky attempts to turn his head to look at his friends and Ron gently pushes his face to a forward view, continuing to propel him toward the front of the building.

Yvonne, just to prove a point, makes a little lunge in the direction of one of the boys. He flinches reflexively and they all take a step backward.

Yvonne nods her supremacy, stuffs her hands into her jacket pockets and turns away. Just before she rounds the corner she shoots one more intimidating look at the boys.

They lean away, frightened of this giant, angry female.

INT. PHILIP'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Franky is wedged between Ron and PJ in the back seat, pissed and embarrassed.

FRANKY

You suck. You can't make me do anything.

PJ

Little dude, you are headed down the path to destruction.

Franky mutters his response, mean enough to say it, but not mean enough to say it loud.

FRANKY

Fuck you, dyke.

Ron reaches over and takes one of Franky's fingers bending it backward painfully.

Franky squirms in his seat trying to wrestle away from the grip.

RON

Say you're sorry.

FRANKY

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Ron lets go of his brother's finger.

Franky shakes it out.

FRANKY (CONT'D)

God damn, I'm sorry, okay?

PJ shrugs.

PJ

Like I've never heard THAT one before.

Yvonne stares at her feet as she speaks to Philip.

YVONNE

Maybe I should just go home.

Philip presses his lips into a line of resignation.

PHILIP

If you want to.

Yvonne, continuing to stare at her feet hears Ron's voice clearly in her head.

RON (V.O.)
Don't do it, Yvonne. Go to
Rusty's.

Yvonne whips around, horrified that her brother would say that out loud, but gauging the activity in the car, she realizes the others heard nothing.

Her gaze meets Ron's.

He raises his eyebrows waiting for her to speak.

Yvonne looks at the side of Philip's face.

YVONNE
On second thought, let's go to
Rusty's. Screw my little brother.

Philip smiles as Franky's "screw you, too" filters over from the back seat.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Monique clears the breakfast dishes calling to the kids as she loads the dishwasher.

MONIQUE
You all better get moving. I want
you to have your father's house
spic and span for that dinner
tomorrow.

INT. RON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Ron gathers his school books and a writing journal.

Unlike Yvonne's room, Ron's decor has nothing to do with basketball. He has a Miles Davis poster and an illustration of Mark Twain.

Yvonne appears in his doorway, checks over her shoulder to make sure Monique is occupied and slips into the room, whispering.

YVONNE
What happened with Franky?

Ron's glance also checks the hall.

RON
Nothing. Mom was asleep in front
of the TV.

Yvonne picks up one of Ron's books on creative writing,
studying the title.

YVONNE
Ron...last night in the car...I
thought you said something. When
you told me to say I wanted to go
to Rusty's, did you - talk?

Ron looks at his sister, unsure.

RON
I don't - what do you mean? I was
thinking you should go with Philip,
but then you said you wanted to
yourself.

Yvonne sets the book down, facing her brother.

YVONNE
No, I know. But I thought...I
HEARD you. Like I heard your voice
in my head.

Ron shrugs.

RON
I didn't say anything.

Yvonne sits on the edge of his bed.

YVONNE
Think something now. I mean, think
of something like telling me
something to do.

Ron gives it a little thought.

RON
Okay.

Ron closes his eyes and squinches up his face, thinking hard.

Yvonne watches him, then closes her own eyes trying to
concentrate.

Nothing.

YVONNE

Are you doing it?

RON

Yeah. I mean, I think so. I'm not sure what you want me to do.

Yvonne sighs, standing.

YVONNE

Never mind. You ready to go?

The two head into the hall, Yvonne turning to give a last look into Ron's room as if it could reveal something about the phenomenon from the night before.

INT. FRANK'S FAMILY/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank's dining room is technically the same room as the family room, separated only by a six inch rise in the floor.

JUANA, his girlfriend, sits at one end of the table smiling with her hands folded in her lap, food untouched.

Frank serves himself some pot roast and passes the platter to Ron, Yvonne handing potatoes to Franky. Frank's manner is jovial in an attempt to gloss over the awkwardness in the room.

FRANK

Juana has two grandchildren already. One in kindergarten.

Ron and Yvonne murmur some appropriate comments. Franky doesn't bother.

Juana smiles. She speaks with an Hispanic accent.

JUANA

Isabella and Raul. He's the baby. Only two.

More nodding and murmuring.

Ron makes a stab at normal conversation.

RON

I entered a competition at school.

Frank jumps on the topic with zeal.

FRANK

Really, Son. What competition is that?

Ron glances around the table, suddenly a bit self-conscious.

RON

Creative writing. It's for all the high schools in California and the winners get published in a statewide publication.

Franky rolls his eyes.

Juana turns her attention to Yvonne.

JUANA

And are you also a writer?

Yvonne finishes chewing her food and does not look at Juana when she responds.

YVONNE

No.

Frank takes in a sharp breath, leveling a warning look at his daughter but it's wasted. She doesn't look up from her plate.

JUANA

Your father tells me you are very good at the basketball.

Yvonne shrugs and takes another bite. This time her father does catch her eye. She swallows, then turns to face Juana.

YVONNE

Yeah, well I'm taller than everyone else.

JUANA

Oh, I'm sure that's not the only reason.

FRANKY

Can I be excused?

FRANK

No. You will sit here with the family until we're finished.

Franky sighs, staring at his plate.

Juana looks across the table at Frank, her expression communicating that it's all right. She understands the children's uneasiness.

Frank leans back in his chair, his gaze circling the table as he studies each of his children apparently completely absorbed in their dinner plates.

Ron looks up first, turning to Juana.

RON

Do you want to read one of my stories?

Juana smiles even bigger.

JUANA

Yes, thank you. I would love to.

Yvonne waits a moment until it seems no one is looking and then mouths the words "suck up" to her twin.

Franky giggles.

FRANK

Can I get anybody anything?

They all respond negatively and sink back into the awkward silence.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY

The kids have Petri dishes in front of them filled with a gelatinous substance and little beakers of liquid with eyedroppers in each one.

Yvonne and Philip watch as Carol and Ron carefully measure liquid in the eyedroppers and deposit it into the Petri dishes. Then they make notations in their notebooks.

Yvonne and Philip share a shrug and squeeze some of their own liquid into their Petri dishes, then Yvonne moves around the table to see what Ron has written in his notebook.

PHILIP

(to Yvonne)

You got a game after school?

Yvonne returns to her experiment.

YVONNE

Yeah. We don't have any night games for a couple more weeks.

PHILIP

Can I come watch?

YVONNE

If you want to. We're just playing Mt. Whitney. No big deal.

Ron and Carol compare notes on the experiment. Carol shows no trace of shyness with Ron, but is still retiring with anyone else.

PHILIP

Is your little brother okay?

Yvonne pokes at her Petri dish and looks over at Carol's for comparison.

YVONNE

He's fine. He was just - I don't know.

(to Ron)

You coming to the game?

Ron slips his protective eye gear into place.

So does Carol.

Yvonne and Philip glance at one another with some alarm, then put on their protective lenses, too.

RON

I have a meeting for that writing competition, but then I'll be by, yeah.

Carol pipes up.

CAROL

Are you submitting for the Steinbeck competition? So am I.

Yvonne studies Carol for a moment, then her brother. He's a magnet for disenfranchised females, and totally unaware that Carol is smitten with him.

Yvonne and Philip share a glance that says Philip can see it, too.

INT. GIRL'S GYM - DAY

The game is in full swing though attendance in the stands is sparse. There are a very few parents and mostly the friends and schoolmates of the players.

Philip and PJ sit in the front row of bleachers shouting their support for Yvonne.

Yvonne is kicking ass. She nabs the ball and strides down the length of the court before anyone can get close to her and sinks a layup with barely a hop.

As soon as the other team takes the ball out she snags the toss and fires another one in from where she stands.

Brook turns angrily to the coach signaling her frustration. Yvonne's not giving anyone else a chance. The other team has all but given up.

The electronic score reads 42 to 8.

The opposing team takes the ball out and once again Yvonne reaches out and snags the ball. She bounces it around to the other side of the court.

Yvonne raises the ball over her head. The girl guarding her jumps up trying to swipe the ball from her grip, but she can't come close. She doesn't even obstruct Yvonne's view.

A couple of loping steps and Yvonne is within shooting range. Her teammates call to her, arms outstretched to receive the ball should Yvonne send it in their direction - but she doesn't.

Brooke moves to stand right in front of Yvonne, close enough to just grab the ball.

BROOKE

Give up the ball, Townsend.

Yvonne takes the shot right over Brooke's head and makes it.

Coach Cantrell sounds the whistle.

COACH CANTRELL

Townsend.

Yvonne looks up, pointing to herself to make sure it's her he's calling.

The coach signals for her to join him at the sideline.

Every other girl on the court on both teams glares at Yvonne with a venomous combination of envy and resentment.

Yvonne strides up to the coach, not even breathing hard.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)
Take a seat Townsend.

The coach signals for one of the other girls to go in and blows his whistle again to resume play.

There's a sense of relief out on the court.

The coach stands a little in front of Yvonne, his back to her.

Yvonne seeks out PJ and Philip in the crowd, her gesture indicating she doesn't know what's going on.

Ron enters from the side door. He searches the stands for Philip and PJ and heads in their direction.

PJ moves her backpack to the floor in front of her to make room for Ron.

Yvonne puts her hands on her hips with indignation.

YVONNE
Coach.

Coach Cantrell keeps his eyes on the game, replying but not turning around.

COACH CANTRELL
We'll talk later, Townsend.

Now he turns around to look at her.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)
After the game. My office.

Yvonne lets her arms fall to her sides in disbelief. She flops onto the bench and looks up at the score.

48 to 14. There goes their lead.

INT. COACH CANTRELL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Coach Cantrell leans against his desk.

Yvonne stands facing him. She's a little taller than he is.

COACH CANTRELL
Sit, Townsend.

Yvonne stands where she is and crosses her arms.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)
Sit down, Yvonne.

Yvonne glares up at the ceiling, then does as she's told, arms still crossed defiantly.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)
Now what is it you think I have to say to you?

Yvonne lets out a sigh of impatience and looks her coach in the face. After a few moments her face droops and she leans back in her chair.

YVONNE
That I'm not playing like a team player.

COACH CANTRELL
And what do you think I'm going to do about that?

Yvonne uncrosses her arms.

YVONNE
You're probably going to pull me out of the game sooner next time.

The coach lifts his chin indicating there's more.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
And you're not going to talk to me about it again.

COACH CANTRELL
Very good.

Cantrell continues to lean on his desk and looks down at the girl with compassion, waiting for her to speak.

YVONNE
But Coach?

COACH CANTRELL
Yes, Townsend.

YVONNE

What am I supposed to do? Play bad? I can't help it if they can't catch me.

COACH CANTRELL

You have to give them a chance to play. They have friends watching them, too.

Yvonne purses her lips and stares at the announcements and schedules pinned on his walls.

YVONNE

Well how'm I supposed to get any better? This is my best subject.

Coach Cantrell takes in a slow breath on that one and shakes his head.

COACH CANTRELL

I know it doesn't seem fair Townsend, but I have to be fair to everyone.

YVONNE

Why is not being fair to me being fair to everyone?

The coach nods. She's definitely got a point.

COACH CANTRELL

Well, maybe if you give the other girls a chance they'll catch up to your level.

Yvonne snorts.

YVONNE

Yeah, right...Can I go?

Coach Cantrell motions to the door.

Yvonne leaves the room and the coach stares at the door where she left. This is a tough one.

INT. MONIQUE'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Yvonne comes dragging into the house, beat from her bad day.

Monique sits in a stuffed chair in the gathering darkness apparently waiting for her daughter.

MONIQUE

Yvonne? Come in here, girl. Right now.

Yvonne drops her backpack and stands behind her mother's chair.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Walk around here so I can see you.

Yvonne does as she's told.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Now I KNOW you didn't show any disrespect to Juana because no daughter of mine would do a thing like that.

Yvonne's shoulders sag.

YVONNE

Oh, Mom. Not now.

MONIQUE

Yes, now. I want to know how you could make your father feel bad when all he wanted to do was show off his snotty little kids.

Yvonne sinks onto the couch.

YVONNE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to make Daddy feel bad.

A big tear leaks down her cheek and before she can stop it Yvonne is crying openly.

Monique softens immediately.

MONIQUE

Come here, Baby.

She pats the arm of her chair.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Come here. What is it?

Yvonne sits where she is, suffering.

YVONNE

I don't know.

Monique stands and moves over to the couch. She sits next to Yvonne and reaches out to the girl. Turning her around she wraps her arms around her and puts Yvonne's head on her shoulder.

Yvonne shifts so that she can take full advantage of her mother's embrace, four feet of legs sticking out beside her. She cries into her mother's shoulder.

Monique strokes her daughter's hair, rocking her like a baby.

MONIQUE

Now, now. How am I supposed to
give you a good going over if
you're gonna dissolve into a mess
like this?

Yvonne's response is muffled.

YVONNE

I don't know.

Monique lets her cry another moment, then pushes Yvonne away so she can look into her eyes. She brushes the hair from the girl's face.

MONIQUE

You want to tell?

Yvonne lets out a shaky sigh.

YVONNE

I don't know. I'm too tall.

Monique shakes her head.

MONIQUE

Uh uh. That's old news.

Yvonne thinks for a moment.

YVONNE

Why did you and Daddy get a
divorce?

Monique nods at that. Now they're getting to it. She gives the question some serious thought.

MONIQUE

Well honey, sometimes the things
that make a man a good father don't
necessarily make him a good
husband.

(MORE)

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

In fact, I think I was looking for a father when I found him. I didn't get much of one you know.

Yvonne nods her head and wipes at her tears.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

He got me out of hell, and he still takes better care of me than I do of myself. I'll love him forever. But I guess I just finally outgrew him.

Yvonne sniffs a bit.

YVONNE

Well what happens if I outgrow him?

Monique pushes her girl's head back onto her shoulder.

MONIQUE

Oh, Baby, you can't. He is your father. And you're always gonna be his little girl. I don't care if you're seven feet tall.

Yvonne expresses her muffled horror into her mother's shoulder.

YVONNE

Don't even SAY that.

Monique rocks her girl again, both of them enjoying the moment.

EXT. FRANK'S STREET - DUSK

Philip's mom's Thunderbird turns the corner onto Frank's street, Philip and Yvonne visible inside.

Franky is in the driveway of Frank's house washing his father's car halfheartedly.

INT. PHILIP'S MOM'S CAR - CONTINUING

Philip pulls up to the curb in front of Frank's house and cuts the engine. He looks up at the house with trepidation.

YVONNE

Don't worry. He'll try to be intimidating, but he's a big teddy bear.

Philip takes the keys from the ignition.

PHILIP

Wait, I'm gonna open the door for you. In case he's watching.

Yvonne smiles.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - CONTINUING

Philip rounds the car and opens the door for Yvonne, offering his hand to help her stand.

Frank's face is visible in the living room window.

Philip acknowledges Franky with a look.

Franky rolls his eyes at Philip's choice in women as he swishes a soapy rag around the hood of his father's car.

Philip and Yvonne approach the front door, now standing open with Frank just inside.

INT. FRANK'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Yvonne makes the introduction, Philip shaking Frank's hand firmly.

FRANK

Have a seat for a moment. Can I get you a beer?

Philip is taken aback.

PHILIP

No, thank you, Sir. I don't drink.

Frank glances at his daughter.

FRANK

Right answer.

Frank indicates the chair where Philip is to sit.

Philip perches nervously on the edge.

Frank sits on the couch facing Philip and crosses his leg at the ankle, leaning back with an imperious look.

Yvonne crosses her arms, shaking her head at her father's tactics.

FRANK (CONT'D)
How old are you, Son?

PHILIP
Seventeen, Sir.

FRANK
College bound?

PHILIP
Yes, Sir. I hope so, Sir. I hope
to get a football scholarship.

Frank nods.

FRANK
How're your grades?

PHILIP
I carry a B average. I don't know
this year though. Chemistry is a
little tough.

Frank nods again.

FRANK
What does your father do?

YVONNE
Dad-dy.

Frank ignores Yvonne and keeps his gaze on Philip.

PHILIP
He works in a muffler shop. In
Oakland.

Frank continues his noncommittal nodding.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
I don't really hear from him much.
Haven't seen him in a few years.
My mom's re-married.

FRANK
And what does your step-father do?

Philip is starting to shift uncomfortably in his seat.

PHILIP

He's laid off right now. My mom makes good money at Albertson's though. She's a checker. She has benefits and stuff.

Philip dares to sneak a glance at Yvonne, hoping his answers are acceptable.

FRANK

What time is the movie over?

Philip seems relieved that the personal interrogation is over.

PHILIP

It starts at 8:20 so we should be out about eleven.

Frank stands, so Philip does too.

FRANK

Okay. I'll tell Yvonne's mom you'll have her home at 11:45.

Philip reaches to shake Frank's hand again.

PHILIP

Okay, Sir. Thank you. And it was nice meeting you.

Frank smiles.

FRANK

Well, I doubt that, but next time will go a little easier.

Philip lets out a breath.

PHILIP

Thank you, Sir. Okay. Good-night.

Yvonne steps up and gives her dad a peck on the cheek, whispering into his ear.

YVONNE

You are so mean.

But she's smiling as she pulls away from her dad.

Frank walks the couple to the door, holding it open as they pass by him out to the porch.

FRANK
And drive carefully.

PHILIP
Yes, Sir. I always do, Sir.

EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - DUSK

Philip practically skips out to the car, giddy with relief. He opens the door for Yvonne and turns to wave to Frank who is inspecting the work of his younger son.

Frank waves, then points out several places on his car where Franky will need to put in some more effort.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Yvonne sits at the breakfast table finishing her cereal, the boys' chairs already vacated with sounds of them bickering filtering from the back of the house.

Monique clears their dishes from the table and glances at the kitchen clock.

MONIQUE
Franky! I want you sitting in that car in three minutes.

Monique dumps the dishes in the sink.

Yvonne carries her own bowl over.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
Honey, would you have time to get Franky after school? There's a house I could show and to tell the truth somebody else could do it, but I'm missing out on all the fun at work.

She turns a pleading look to her daughter.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
Would you mind?

YVONNE
Sure. We have a game but it's not until 7:30.

MONIQUE

You have a night game? Why didn't
you tell me?

Yvonne shrugs.

YVONNE

You want to go?

Monique dries her hands.

MONIQUE

Of course I want to go. We'll all
go.

Yvonne gets all hang-dog.

YVONNE

Oh, Mom. We're just playing
Delano. It's no big deal.

MONIQUE

We'll be there. I know you play
better with an audience and don't
try to tell me you don't.

Monique snaps the dish towel at her daughter who scootches
out of the way as Ron chases Franky out the kitchen door.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS QUAD - DAY

Yvonne and PJ eat their lunches at the aluminum tables as
before.

PJ

Anyways, my dad's a real good cook
and my mom is dying to meet you.

YVONNE

That sounds great. I want to meet
them, too. They sound nice.

PJ purses her lips, thinking about her parents.

PJ

They are nice. They're just so
waiting for me to tell them I'm gay
so they can show me how accepting
they are of my lifestyle.

Yvonne hesitates in her eating. She wants to ask about PJ's
orientation, but she's not sure she should.

PJ eyes her friend. She knows what's on her mind.

PJ (CONT'D)
It's okay. You can ask.

Yvonne sets down her burger and looks into PJ's eyes. There's no way to form the question delicately so she just waits.

PJ shrugs and shoves a french fry in her mouth.

PJ (CONT'D)
The truth is, I don't really know myself. I haven't ever - you know - done anything.

Yvonne nods.

YVONNE
But have you ever...is there anyone you ever wanted to?

PJ shrugs again.

PJ
Not really. Not like, I don't know, like you read about or see in the movies.

Yvonne picks up her burger.

YVONNE
Yeah, me neither. Except for Denzel.

PJ
Well, yeah. Denzel.

The girls eat and eye those around them checking for prospects.

EXT. SIERRA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Yvonne waits at the curb outside the school shifting her heavy backpack from one hand to the other as she waits for Franky. She checks her watch.

Only a few straggling kids are filtering out of the gate, most having already been picked up by one of the long line of cars along the street opposite the school.

Yvonne looks up the street and squints as she sees what appears to be her little brother climbing out of the back seat of an old Imperial and entering the school playground from the other side.

She watches as Franky lopes into the corridor between the classroom buildings and moments later sees him emerge from the main entrance of the school.

Franky walks up to his sister looking innocent.

Yvonne narrows her eyes at her little brother.

YVONNE

Who was that?

FRANKY

Who was who?

YVONNE

I saw you get out of that car,
Franky. I'm not stupid.

Franky sizes up his sister, trying to decide how big the lie should be.

FRANKY

It's nobody you know and you are
too stupid.

Yvonne glares at him, hating him.

YVONNE

Why are you like this? What's the
matter with you?

Franky starts walking, turning his back on Yvonne.

She grabs his shoulder, spinning him around to face her.

FRANKY

Oh, you gonna kick my ass? Go
ahead King Kong if it makes you
feel like more of a man.

Yvonne shakes her head, amazed.

YVONNE

How can you even think of such mean
things to say? What is with you?
Nobody ever beat you. You don't
have such a hard life. Why do you
have to be such a little punk?

Franky turns away again.

FRANKY

Forget it, Yvonne. Don't strain
yourself trying to figure it out.

Yvonne watches him walk for a moment, clueless about what to do next. She jogs to catch up with him.

YVONNE

I should tell Mom.

FRANKY

Do whatever you want.

Yvonne has to hustle to keep up with his pace.

YVONNE

Franky, I don't want to fight with
you.

Franky trudges forward, never breaking his stride.

FRANKY

Then don't.

Yvonne sighs.

The two continue on their walk home in silence.

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The girl's basketball game is in full swing.

Yvonne dominates the court as before.

The electronic scoreboard shows Delano trailing 28 - 12.

In the stands Monique, Philip and PJ sit together cheering Yvonne on.

Franky sits alone on the top row of the bleachers, eyes closed, listening to head phones.

INT. CONCESSION STAND - CONTINUING

Ron is at the concession stand. He fills a cardboard box with four cokes and a couple of corndogs.

He doesn't see Carol waiting at the stand for a soda and trying desperately to catch his eye.

Ron passes by her, but his gaze is locked on the refreshments he carries so that they don't spill.

Carol raises a timid hand, almost touching his arm, but shrinks back as the attendant offers the drink she ordered. She watches Ron's retreating back, her disappointment palpable.

Carol stands near the doorway, continuing to watch Ron as he delivers the goodies to his mom and his friends, then takes a seat next to PJ.

Carol tosses her soda into the trash and heads out the door.

INT. GYMNASIUM - CONTINUING

Out on the court there is a now familiar sense of futility among those playing with Yvonne.

Even the spectators are beginning to grumble.

An annoyed parent sitting behind Monique stands and cups his hands around his mouth to shout down to Yvonne.

ANNOYED PARENT

Why don't you give someone else a chance?

Monique turns and nails him with a glare.

Yvonne, arms raised over her head to take a shot from outside the key, hears Ron's voice in her head loud and clear.

RON (V.O.)

Back down, Vonnie. You're losing your audience.

Startled by the clarity of her brother's voice, Yvonne falters and the ball is snatched from her grip by the other team.

Yvonne stares up into the stands looking for her brother as the Delano girl dribbles the ball down court, then passes off to a teammate who shoots and scores.

Coach Cantrell motions to the ref to whistle for a time out.

Striding onto the court, he motions for one of the girls on the bench to move out as he heads toward Yvonne.

Yvonne plants her hands on her hips, rolls her eyes to the ceiling and heads for the bench without even being told.

Brooke manages a rough shoulder bump as Yvonne leaves the court.

Looking up into the stands, Yvonne catches the looks on the faces of her family and friends. It's not pretty. She flops onto the bench and covers her face with a towel.

INT. GYMNASIUM - SOME TIME LATER

The game now over, Yvonne waits with her mother and brothers on the bottom row of the bleachers as Coach Cantrell finishes talking to some clearly irate parents.

Philip and PJ have gone home.

As the other people leave they cast disapproving glances at Yvonne.

Monique bristles.

Coach Cantrell heads over to the Townsend family carrying a metal folding chair. He sets the chair in front of them and straddles it backwards, addressing Monique.

COACH CANTRELL

Your daughter's quite a ball player.

Monique is not impressed with this indirect approach.

MONIQUE

I guess that's not what you're aiming at. Looked to me like you pulled the girl out for flat playing too good.

YVONNE

Mom.

COACH CANTRELL

I admit I've got a problem here and I don't exactly know what I'm going to do about it. I'm open to suggestions.

That takes the starch out of Monique. She looks to her children for any ideas.

Yvonne stares at her feet, Ron stares at his mom, Franky nods his head in time to the beat in his headphones.

Coach Cantrell rubs his eyes.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)

Well...it's late. Yvonne, come and see me before class tomorrow. We'll think of something. Ron, I'll see you tomorrow. Don't worry Mrs. Townsend. We'll work something out.

The coach heads over to the bench area and picks up some towels, then heads for the locker rooms.

MONIQUE

You better believe we'll work something out. Let those other parents get their way when my little girl can play circles around them. How dare them send that stink eye look over here! I have half a mind-

Ron takes his mother's arm and stands her up, still muttering, then does the same to Franky and ushers them all out the door, Yvonne dragging along behind.

INT. RON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yvonne stands in her brother's doorway in her pajamas, hair wet from the shower.

Ron sits at his desk working on a paper.

YVONNE

Ron?

Ron doesn't look up.

RON

Yeah?

YVONNE

That thing happened again. That thing in my head. I heard you tell me to back down. Did you think that? In those exact words? Did you think "back down, Vonnice, you're losing your audience"?

Ron taps his pen on his open book, thinking.

RON

Yeah, I think it was something like that.

Yvonne fully enters the room and sits on the edge of his bed.

YVONNE

This is weird. I can totally hear you talking. Just like we are right now. Have you ever heard it?

Ron shakes his head.

RON

I don't think so.

Yvonne ponders.

YVONNE

Do you think it's because we're twins? You know people always say that kind of stuff about twins, like we could be telepathic or something.

Ron looks at his sister, searching her face.

RON

I don't know. Maybe.

Yvonne picks at a thread on Ron's bedspread a moment, then looks back up at her brother.

YVONNE

I caught Franky cutting school again. He was in a car with some older boys.

Ron is alarmed.

RON

What did you do? Does he know you saw?

YVONNE

Oh yeah. He just gave me a bunch of shit and told me to do whatever I want about it.

Ron shakes his head, staring blankly at his school work.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

What should we do?

RON

I don't know...I don't know.

The siblings look at each other, both at a complete loss.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - DAY

The class is finishing up a chemistry quiz, all the students perched on their high stools, laboring over the questions.

Yvonne can't keep herself from glancing in the direction of her brother's paper, though its facing the wrong direction and she can't possibly read it.

Carol and Ron fill in answers at fairly regular intervals while Yvonne and Philip seem a bit lost and hopeless.

Carol is wearing makeup, and she's squinting and shifting her paper around to see as she's not wearing her glasses. Her bangs have grown out a little, too.

Some of the class begin turning in papers, Carol and Ron among them while the rest continue to struggle.

At last, giving up, Yvonne walks her paper up to the front of the class, followed by Philip.

Back at her seat, Yvonne whispers to her brother.

YVONNE

That was terrible. I'm going to flunk this class.

RON

Maybe you did better than you think.

Yvonne shakes her head.

RON (CONT'D)

Will you tell Mom I'm going to the downtown library after school? I need a book on Japanese poetry and they don't have one here.

Carol pipes up instantly.

CAROL

Can I go with you? I mean, I need a book like that, too.

Ron gathers his books, barely looking at Carol.

RON

Sure. I was just going to take the bus.

Yvonne and Philip share a glance. Ron is so oblivious.

CAROL

Maybe we could stop at Swensen's on the way back or something. Like if we're hungry.

Ron starts to open his mouth to answer when he hears Yvonne's voice in his head.

YVONNE (V.O.)

Look at her, Ronnie. Get a freaking clue.

Ron's eyes open wide and he turns his gaze to his sister.

Yvonne immediately understands he heard her in his head as she had done with him. Her eyes open wide for a moment, too, then she gives a barely perceptible nod in Carol's direction.

Ron turns his attention to Carol.

RON

Um, sure. Okay. I can always eat.

Carol now seems flustered as she gathers her own books.

CAROL

Okay, well...should we meet somewhere? After school?

RON

Okay. The bike racks. Then we'll head over to the bus stop.

The school bell sounds and Carol jets out of the room.

PHILIP

I gotta hustle. See you, Yvonne.

Yvonne acknowledges Philip's exit, then turns to gape at her brother as soon as they're alone.

YVONNE

It happened, didn't it? You heard.

RON

I did. That is so weird.

The two leave the class, still looking at each other in amazement.

INT. GOLDEN WEST HS MAIN HALLWAY - CONTINUING

Ron and Yvonne pause outside the chemistry classroom.

YVONNE

But it only works if you're
concentrating on something else.
Watch.

Yvonne closes her eyes, squinching up her face in an attempt to send Ron a telepathic message.

Ron watches her, then begins to shake his head.

RON

Nothing.

Yvonne purses her lips.

YVONNE

I wonder why?

They ponder it a moment.

RON

Maybe I can find something at the
library.

YVONNE

You know, Carol likes you.

Ron's look is doubtful.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I'm telling you little brother, she
seriously likes you. Didn't you
notice she was totally wearing
makeup today?

RON

What does that mean?

Yvonne shakes her head. Boys are clueless.

YVONNE

I'm just telling you. Want to eat
lunch?

The two head toward the exit doors.

INT. COACH CANTRELL'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Yvonne steps into Coach Cantrell's office and is surprised to see her father sitting in a chair opposite the coach.

YVONNE

Daddy?

Frank stands and gives his daughter a little peck on the side of her head.

Yvonne takes a chair next to her dad and then turns to the Coach, her look one of trepidation and curiosity.

Coach Cantrell clears his throat.

COACH CANTRELL

We have an idea. It was your father's idea really, but I think it's a good one.

The two men look at Yvonne with apprehension.

YVONNE

What?

Frank's look tells the coach to take the lead.

COACH CANTRELL

What would you think about playing on the boy's team?

Yvonne is flabbergasted. It never occurred to her.

YVONNE

You're kidding.

The coach stands up and walks around his desk, half sitting on it as he makes his case.

COACH CANTRELL

You were right when you said it isn't fair for you to have to hold back. I haven't been able to think of any way for you to play full out and stretch your ability - except for this.

Yvonne looks at her dad.

Frank's expression is open, simply waiting for his daughter to respond.

YVONNE

Will they let me? They won't want
a girl on their team.

COACH CANTRELL

They probably won't at first -
until they play with you...see how
good you are.

Yvonne stares at her shoes.

FRANK

What are you thinking?

Yvonne looks up at her father.

YVONNE

I don't know. If I'm not very good
they're gonna hate me - and if I'm
better than them...

COACH CANTRELL

They might hate you more.

FRANK

It's up to you, Honey. It might be
too hard on you, I just don't know.
But it's something to try.

Yvonne stares at the clutter on Coach Cantrell's bulletin
board.

The men wait.

Finally Yvonne sighs.

YVONNE

Okay. I guess I should try it.

Frank smiles, his face proud. He stands to shake hands with
the coach.

COACH CANTRELL

Okay, I'll make the announcement to
both teams today. Take the day
off. I'll see you at boy's
practice tomorrow.

Yvonne walks out with her dad.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - DAY

Frank drives as Yvonne stares out the passenger window.

YVONNE
Where're we going?

FRANK
To pick up Franky.

Yvonne's expression is a bit pained, hoping that her little brother is on time.

EXT. SIERRA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUING

Frank pulls into the line of cars waiting to pick up the junior high school students.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - CONTINUING

Yvonne watches the exiting kids nervously, then looks at the side of her father's face.

YVONNE
Daddy?

Frank continues to watch out the window for Franky.

FRANK
Yes, Baby.

YVONNE
How come you don't talk about Juana anymore? Did you...break up?

Frank turns his gaze to Yvonne.

FRANK
No, we didn't break up.

YVONNE
Well, you never say anything about her. I thought you were going to get married.

Frank taps on the steering wheel.

FRANK
We decided to wait.

Frank meets Yvonne's eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

It was obvious you kids aren't
ready for something like that.

Yvonne winces.

FRANK (CONT'D)

It's okay. We're not in any hurry.
We've both been at the county for
sixteen years. I don't think
either one of us is going any place
soon.

Frank smiles and reaches out to rest a reassuring hand on his
daughter's leg.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Don't worry. You were fine. We
tested it out and now we know.
Things are fine just the way they
are.

Yvonne feels somehow relieved. She smiles back at her dad,
then catches sight of Franky heading for the car.

Franky pulls the back door of the car open and sticks his
head inside.

FRANKY

Now what did I do?

INT. SWENSEN'S ICE CREAM PARLOR - AFTERNOON

Ron and Carol sit in a booth, each with a stack of library
books sitting next to their ice cream sundaes.

CAROL

It's actually called a Senryu.
It's the same syllabic structure as
Haiku but the subject matter is not
about nature.

RON

How many structured verse poems are
required?

Carol pulls a printed sheet from a notebook and studies it
for a moment.

CAROL
Four different ones. Three if you
choose a Sonnet.

Ron takes a big bite of his sundae.

RON
I don't know. I'm way better at
free verse. And short stories.

Carol shrugs.

CAROL
Who isn't?

The two eat in silence for a moment.

CAROL (CONT'D)
There's a poetry reading at Borders
Friday night. We might be able to
get some ideas.

Ron keeps his eyes on his ice cream, thinking fast.

RON
This Friday?

Carol is too smart for her own good. She knows what his
hesitation means even before he does.

CAROL
Oh, wait a minute, what am I
thinking? I can't even go this
Friday.

Ron is relieved he doesn't have to come up with an excuse.
He never even suspects Carol read him like a book.

RON
Maybe they'll do it again.

Carol focuses on her ice cream.

CAROL
Yeah...maybe, but I doubt it.

INT. YVONNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yvonne is studying at her desk, or more accurately, shooting
wads of paper into her nerf basket.

Ron knocks on her open door, comes in and sits on her bed.

RON
Cool, Yvonne. The coach told us
you're on our team.

YVONNE
What did the other guys say?

RON
Oh, they were all asking me about
you. They're not freaking out or
anything if you're worried about
that.

Yvonne taps her pencil.

YVONNE
I am worried about that.

Ron shrugs.

RON
They've all seen you play. You're
taller than most of 'em. I don't
think it'll be a problem.

Ron looks down at his lap. There's something else on his
mind.

YVONNE
What?

Ron looks up at his sister.

RON
I have a problem.

Yvonne nods, way ahead of him.

YVONNE
Carol.

RON
I don't know what to do. I can't
help but be nice to her, but if I
am then will she think I want to go
out with her? I can't ignore her.
She's in the Steinbeck Competition
with me.

YVONNE
And chemistry.

RON

Oh, God...chemistry. I like her,
but I don't want to - you know. I
can't stand it if I hurt her
feelings.

Yvonne shakes her head.

YVONNE

I know...I don't know. Maybe you
should ask Mom...or Dad.

Ron nods.

RON

Yeah...Dad, I guess. He's more -

YVONNE

- sensitive.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

The boys are warming up, shooting some baskets and just
milling around the court waiting for practice to begin.

Yvonne and Ron walk into the gym together, Yvonne making a
brave attempt at nonchalance.

The boys look her over openly, trying to decide how they
should act.

As Yvonne passes one cluster of players she overhears the
nickname they have apparently already given her: Too Tall.

Yvonne keeps her gaze straight ahead and straightens her
spine just a little.

Ron heard it, too and shoots a protective glare in the
direction of the boys.

INT. GYMNASIUM - A SHORT TIME LATER

Practice is in full swing. Yvonne can't get a grip on
anything. They play a lot faster and a lot rougher, but they
all seem to be giving Yvonne a wide berth. It's more like a
game of keep away.

Coach Cantrell sounds his whistle.

COACH CANTRELL

All right men. Townsend?

Ron and Yvonne both look up.

COACH CANTRELL (CONT'D)
Yvonne, I mean.

Yvonne looks around at the guys and picks this moment as the ice breaker.

YVONNE
You can call me "Too Tall", Coach.

The other players exchange sheepish glances.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
I heard 'em calling me that when I came in. I kind of like it.

She meets glances all around the room.

Ron, the basketball on his hip, allows a sideways smirk of pride to creep onto his face.

Cantrell thinks it over for half a second and realizes it's probably a good idea. Bonding.

COACH CANTRELL
All right - Too Tall, take the forward position.

Yvonne does as she's told and can already feel a little higher degree of acceptance from her new teammates.

This acceptance translates itself into some rougher play however, as the other players begin to test her, to see what she can do.

Ron takes the ball and is dribbling down court in long strides. Yvonne sees an opposing player easing up from behind preparing to snag the ball in Ron's blind spot.

Positioning herself behind her brother Yvonne sends out a command.

Ron gets the communication in his head.

YVONNE (V.O.)
Trailing, right.

Without breaking stride Ron bounces the ball behind him directly to his sister who takes the ball the rest of the way down the court.

RON (V.O.)

Back pick.

Yvonne, hearing Ron's instruction in her head stops dead as Ron rolls behind her. Two of the opposing players, expecting her to hand off to Ron, guard her brother as Yvonne sails the ball to an unattended team member across the court.

He shoots and scores.

Cantrell sounds the whistle.

Ron and Yvonne, both panting from exertion, lock eyes as their teammates slap each of them on the back expressing approval.

It's clear to both siblings they're thinking the same thing. This could be awesome.

INT. MONIQUE'S GARAGE - DAY

Frank and Ron are putting together some metal shelving and installing it along one wall of the garage. Several cardboard boxes rest on the floor apparently waiting for their new berth.

Frank is actually doing the work, Ron reading from the instruction sheet and picking out correct tools.

RON

Dad, I have kind of a problem at school.

Frank tightens a nut and glances up at his son.

RON (CONT'D)

It's a girl.

Frank nods, finishing with the screw and turning the metal shelf around to the other side.

RON (CONT'D)

But it's not what you think.

FRANK

I'm not thinking anything yet.

Ron purses his lips, unsure how to frame his question.

RON

Well, she's really nice and Yvonne says she likes me. And I like her, I really do. But I don't LIKE her.

Frank carries the metal shelf over to the frame of the unit already in position against the wall as he considers his son and this girl.

FRANK

You're a nice person, Son. I'm proud of you for that. It's never a mistake to be kind.

Ron sighs, not sure his father really understands the problem.

FRANK (CONT'D)

But you can't gear your whole life around not hurting people's feelings. You end up in trouble, doing a whole lot of stuff you don't want to do. You can't help but resent them and there's nothing kind about that.

Ron leans on the washing machine feeling a rush of relief. His dad gets it.

RON

Well, what am I supposed to do? I can't ignore her. I don't want to be mean to her. I kind of feel sorry for her. She doesn't seem to have very many friends.

Frank lifts one of the cardboard boxes and sets it tentatively on the new shelving to see if it will hold.

It does.

FRANK

All you can do is what feels right at the time. Even if it hurts her feelings. That's not your problem and it's not your fault as long as you're not being malicious. And I know you never would be.

Ron sighs again. It's not much help.

FRANK (CONT'D)
It's not your job to keep everybody
happy, Son.

Frank places the last shelf on the frame.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's MY job.

Frank stands back to admire his handywork.

Ron stands next to him and wraps an arm around his father's
shoulder giving him a squeeze.

EXT. PARKING LOT AT DR. BAKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Yvonne, under Monique's watchful eye, concentrates mightily
as she eases the Toyota slowly into a parking space.

INT. DR. BAKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Yvonne sits on the edge of the examining table as before,
Monique in the molded plastic chair.

Dr. Baker stands before Yvonne with his clip board. He seems
nervous.

DR. BAKER
Before I tell you this I just want
you to know I'm pretty sure this
last growing spurt is over and you
probably won't gain any more
significant height.

Dr. Baker glances over his shoulder at Monique, getting ready
to deliver a bomb.

Yvonne blinks up at Dr. Baker, wondering what's with him.

DR. BAKER (CONT'D)
You're just a little over 6'3".
Less than a quarter inch over.

Yvonne nods.

YVONNE
Cool. Okay.

Dr. Baker is relieved but perplexed, having expected a more
emotional reaction. He turns a questioning gaze to Monique.

Monique just shrugs. Kids.

INT. PJ'S PARENT'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

PJ's parent's house seems something more like an Arabian tent than a middle class tract house. Beads, flowing fabrics and lush pillows are everywhere.

ARIEL, PJ's mom, even has beads braided into her long, curling hair and her flowing blouse and harem pants are something straight out of Sheharizade.

HUNTER, PJ's dad, wears an embroidered cotton shirt open at the collar, faded jeans and sandals. The long gray hairs that haven't succumbed to male pattern baldness are gathered into a ponytail with a leather tie.

The girls sit at the dining room table as Hunter moves back and forth from the kitchen setting the table and putting the finishing touches on dinner.

PJ's mom hands Yvonne a square of brightly colored tissue paper and sits back in her chair, beaming.

Yvonne takes the package, her face a question mark.

ARIEL

It's a little something I made.
Priscilla told me you're a Scorpio.

Yvonne's eyes go wide and she glances at her friend.

YVONNE

Priscilla?

PJ, keeping her hand near her lap, makes a fist that only Yvonne can see, threatening to punch her lights out if the name gets out.

ARIEL

I know, she likes PJ, but her name is so lovely...Priscilla Jane.
It's from a book I read as a child.

YVONNE

Thank you, Mrs. Haines.

ARIEL

Oh, call me Ariel. It's a name I chose myself. I love hearing it.
Hunter and I both chose our own names.

Yvonne looks at the package again with uncertainty.

YVONNE

Should I -

ARIEL

Yes, open it.

Yvonne unfolds the tissue paper and lifts out a beautiful beaded necklace, her birth sign attached in the middle made from some delicate metal.

Yvonne holds up the necklace.

YVONNE

It's beautiful. I love it. I really do love it.

PJ smiles, appreciating her mother's talent with jewelry.

Ariel stands to clasp the necklace for Yvonne.

Yvonne touches the jewelry, genuinely admiring it.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I'm just - I can't believe it.
Thank you.

Ariel moves over to her daughter, lightly touching the metal band on PJ's ear. It looks like something an animal research team would use for tagging.

ARIEL

I made this one, too, but Priscilla thought you might like something more...delicate.

Hunter enters the room carrying an ornate porcelain bowl filled with something that smells delicious. He stops to appreciate his wife's artwork.

HUNTER

It looks lovely against your black skin, Yvonne. If you don't mind my saying so.

Yvonne touches the necklace again.

YVONNE

No, I don't mind.

Hunter and Ariel take their places at the table and they set about serving themselves.

Yvonne can't stop herself from gaping around the table. PJ's parents are not what she expected to say the least.

PJ catches Yvonne's eye and smiles. She knows.

MONTAGE OF SCENES

The boys team wins games all along the San Joaquin Valley, Dinuba, Hanford, Lemoore, Fresno.

Announcers overlap in their praise of the Townsend twins, referring to Yvonne by her nickname "Too Tall" and marveling at her prowess out on the court, especially how she and her brother seem to instinctively anticipate each other's moves.

Their parents and PJ are there to cheer them on.

Philip is there, but seems to grow increasingly uncomfortable with Yvonne's star status. As he watches the camaraderie between she and the other male players, jealousy and resentment creep onto his face.

Over all can be heard the echoing sound of the twins' voices as they bark instructions directly into each other's minds.

END MONTAGE

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HS QUAD - DAY

Yvonne, Ron and PJ eat lunch as they have so often.

Ron is perusing a piece of paper as they eat.

RON

I'm not playing the Bakersfield game.

Yvonne is horrified.

YVONNE

What? You have to.

Ron turns the paper toward his sister.

RON

I can't. The Steinbeck quarterfinalists are meeting. We're getting the instructions for the final submittals.

YVONNE

Ron, you can't not show up. You'll
get kicked off the team. Have
Carol get them for you.

PJ watches their exchange like a tennis match, head moving
back and forth.

RON

I can't ask Carol, Yvonne. I have
to be there.

YVONNE

This game is important.

RON

Not as important as the
competition.

YVONNE

I can't do it without you.

The siblings eyes are locked, neither willing to back down.

PJ

Excuse me Ron, but I believe it's
your turn.

Ron gets up from the table and stomps away.

PJ raises her eyebrows.

PJ (CONT'D)

Extreme.

She turns to Yvonne now sulking over her food.

PJ (CONT'D)

Yvonne...I don't want to add to
what looks like kind of a bad day
shaping up for you, but I think
there's trouble brewing at about
3:00.

PJ nods, directing Yvonne's gaze in that direction.

Philip is crossing the quad in the company of another young
black girl and his attention is obviously more than casual.

Yvonne watches him intently, eyes narrowing.

YVONNE

Who is she?

PJ
Her name's Jasmine. She's in my
English class.

YVONNE
What should I do?

Both girls watch as the couple disappears inside the school building.

PJ
Run to the girl's bathroom crying?

Yvonne squinches her face in disgust.

PJ (CONT'D)
Well I don't know. That's what
they do on the after school
matinee.

Yvonne stares down at her lunch trash, then sighs.

YVONNE
I can't even think about that right
now. I've got to talk Ron into
playing the Bakersfield game.

PJ nods, slurping her soda.

PJ
Typical female reaction.

INT. GYMNASIUM - AFTERNOON

Yvonne is practicing some free throws with a couple of other guys waiting for class to begin.

A few players from the girl's team file through the gym from the locker room picking up things they left behind on the bottom row of the bleachers, Brooke and Kristy among them.

Yvonne and Brooke sneak sideways glances while they simultaneously pointedly ignore one another.

Brooke grabs her backpack, then walks diagonally across the court so that Yvonne can hear what she and Kristy are talking about.

BROOKE

I hope it's a good game. I'd love to get a scholarship to UC Santa Barbara. That scout told Cantrell the campus is right on the beach.

Kristy smirks in Yvonne's direction, aware that Brooke is baiting her.

Yvonne catches the ball as it rebounds off the backboard and turns to face Brooke.

YVONNE

What scout?

Brooke stops, eyebrows raised innocently.

BROOKE

The one that's coming to our game Thursday night. No one told you?

YVONNE

No, no one told me.

Brooke continues on her way, tossing her final comment over her shoulder.

BROOKE

Well, I guess they thought it was best since you wouldn't be playing. See 'ya.

Yvonne bounces the ball as her blood begins to boil. The few boys who had been practicing with her glance at each other, unsure what's going on.

TEAMMATE #1

Yo, Too Tall, toss it in, man.

Yvonne smacks the ball in their direction and stomps off the court.

INT. COACH CANTRELL'S OFFICE - CONTINUING

Coach Cantrell reaches to pull open the office door just as Yvonne pushes it from the other side. He can tell with one look that she's upset.

COACH CANTRELL

Townsend?

YVONNE

What scout? Why didn't you tell me about any scout?

The coach shakes his head.

COACH CANTRELL

I was going to tell you about her. Jeez, how do things get around so fast at this school?

YVONNE

Well what am I gonna do now? She's coming on Thursday and my game is Friday.

COACH CANTRELL

I know, Townsend. She's staying for the Friday game. She knows all about you.

Yvonne is taken aback, and immediately a little sheepish.

YVONNE

Oh. Well...good.

COACH CANTRELL

Can we practice now?

YVONNE

Sure.

Yvonne turns back out the door, Coach Cantrell shaking his head as he closes the door behind them.

INT. RON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ron writes at his desk, several books open in front of him for reference.

Yvonne taps on his open door.

YVONNE

Can I ask you something?

Ron leans back with a sigh.

RON

I'm not playing Friday night, Yvonne. I've already decided. I don't care if they kick me off.

Yvonne's expression feigns hurt and surprise.

YVONNE
It's not about that. It's about
Philip.

Ron is chagrined, having leapt to the wrong conclusion.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
I saw him with another girl today.

RON
Yeah?

YVONNE
I mean he was with her. You know
what I'm saying?

Ron leans back in his chair.

RON
You're sure?

Yvonne nods.

RON (CONT'D)
How come you're not crying or
something?

YVONNE
That's what PJ said. I guess I've
been so focused on my game I sort
of neglected him. Anyways, I don't
feel all broken up or anything, but
I have to do something. I mean, he
is kind of my boyfriend I guess.

Ron taps his pencil, thinking.

RON
You have to break up with him
first. It'll save face all around.

Yvonne leans on the door frame. She nods as she considers
the ramifications.

YVONNE
Yeah. He's off the hook and I
don't look like a chump. Good
idea...So, did you hear about the
scout?

Ron tenses a bit.

RON

Yes.

Yvonne stares at her brother, incredulous.

YVONNE

You heard about the scout and
you're still not going to play?

Ron sighs and sets down his pencil.

RON

I'm worried if I don't go to the
quarterfinalist meeting that they
won't think I'm serious about the
competition.

Yvonne lets her arms fall to her side.

YVONNE

Oh, like they keep track.

RON

You don't know, Yvonne.

Yvonne fully enters Ron's room, unable to keep a pleading
tone out of her voice.

YVONNE

They know students have tons of
things they have to do.

Ron leans back and runs his hands over his hair. His sister
is driving him crazy.

RON

I'll get there as soon as I can.
Maybe I can help you from the
stands. At least in the second
half.

Not good enough.

YVONNE

What if the scout leaves early?
She might not even be there for the
second half.

RON

Yvonne, you can play without me. I
know you can.

Yvonne drops to her knees, hands held out in a praying fashion before her.

YVONNE

It's just this one game. Please?
I'll - I don't know what I'll do.
Whatever you want - for a month.

Ron stares at his desk, finally deciding to stick to his guns.

RON

I'll get there as soon as I can.

Yvonne purses her lips, disappointed, then gets to her feet. She heads quickly out the door, afraid she's going to cry.

RON (CONT'D)

I'll hurry, okay? I'll get Mom to
take me and wait in the car.

Yvonne's voice trails back into the room, sounding deadpan.

YVONNE (O.S.)

Yeah. Thanks.

Ron sighs and stares at the homework before him, feeling bad that he's letting his sister down.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASS - MORNING

Yvonne, Ron, Carol and Philip are wearing their lab coats, protective eye wear in place.

In the center of the lab table are several beakers of different colored liquid and each student has half a dozen strips of metal laid out on butcher block paper in front of them.

There's so much tension at the lab table it's almost unbearable.

Carol looks from Ron to Yvonne to Philip, trying to assess what's going on. She speaks softly, directing her question to Ron.

CAROL

Shall I go first?

The others snap into focus.

RON

Uh, sure...What are we doing?

Carol takes a tweezer and selects one of the metal samples from her array, then dips it in one of the beakers of liquid, holding it there as she checks her watch.

CAROL

Thirty seconds.

Almost immediately the chemical reaction between the liquid and the metal starts to fizzle and pop. After thirty seconds Carol pulls the strip out to find it's almost completely eaten away.

PHILIP

Whoa.

Carol sets down her tweezer and logs the result in her lab book, then looks around at her classmates.

CAROL

Um, someone else should go.

Yvonne glances over at her brother, then turns boldly to Carol, deciding to take matters into her own hands.

YVONNE

So, I guess Friday is a pretty big deal for your writing thing.

Carol glances up at Yvonne, not sure she's talking to her.

CAROL

Friday?

Yvonne pointedly ignores the warning look from her brother.

Philip takes one of his strips of metal and dunks it in another beaker of liquid. It makes smoke.

YVONNE

You have like a big meeting or something, right?

RON

Yvonne.

Carol glances at Ron, uncertain.

CAROL

I think we're just picking up our final instruction booklets.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)
Is there - I don't think it's a
meeting.

She senses from Ron that's not the right answer.

CAROL (CONT'D)
- or maybe it is. I don't...know.

Yvonne turns to glare at her brother.

Ron stares at the table, pissed.

Carol stares at Ron, afraid she did wrong.

Philip stares at his metal strip, mystified.

RON
Fine.

Ron turns to Carol.

RON (CONT'D)
Would you mind picking up my
packet? I have a basketball game
and it's kind of an important one.
For some people.

Carol, still unsure, is pleased to have an opportunity to do
Ron a favor.

CAROL
Sure. Yeah. I'll just, maybe I'll
just bring it to the game.

RON
That'd be great. Thank you.

He directs his attention to the experiment, ignoring his
sister.

It's a hollow victory for Yvonne, but she sets her jaw,
determined that she has done the right thing.

EXT. MONIQUE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Yvonne is practicing free throws at the bottom of the
driveway.

Philip's mom's Thunderbird turns into the driveway and Philip
gets out of the car looking kind of spiffed up.

PHILIP
Hey.

Yvonne carries the basketball over and leans against the car resting the ball on her hip.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
Uh, we going out?

Yvonne bounces the ball a couple of times, then takes a deep breath and looks at Philip.

YVONNE
I've been thinking.

Philip turns his face away.

PHILIP
Oh, man. I knew this was coming.

YVONNE
I don't want to be mean or anything, Philip, but I just really need to focus on my game right now. It doesn't seem fair to you, you know?

Philip is looking up at the house, nodding his head.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
Please don't be mad at me.

Philip sighs, then turns to look at her.

PHILIP
I'm not mad. I could sort of tell it was...well, more important.

YVONNE
At least for now.

Philip looks down at his feet.

PHILIP
Yeah, whatever. So...what do we do?

Yvonne rests the ball on her hip and sticks out her hand for a handshake.

YVONNE
Friends?

Philip hesitates just a moment, then shakes her hand.

PHILIP
Yeah, okay. Friends.

Yvonne bounces the ball a few times, then shoots from where she stands behind the basket.

The ball sails over the backboard and sinks in the basket.

Philip shakes his head, amazed at her prowess, then turns to get back in his car.

PHILIP (CONT'D)
See you in chemistry.

Yvonne jogs to get the basketball.

YVONNE
Yeah, see you in chemistry.

She retrieves the ball, then turns to watch the Thunderbird pull away with a sigh.

As soon as Philip is gone she resumes her focused practice.

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The bleachers are full.

PJ picks her way through the crowd carrying a cardboard box filled with refreshments for herself, Frank and Monique who chat animatedly, eyes sweeping the crowd for the scout.

Franky, as before, listens to his headphones at the top of the stands, eyes closed, head bobbing.

Down on the court the two teams warm up, Yvonne unable to keep her eyes off the stands. She tries to catch Ron's eye as they move around the court with the others, but he's ignoring her.

A buzzer sounds and the teams approach their respective coaches for some last minute pep talking.

MONTAGE OF SCENES OF THE BIG GAME

Both teams are playing full out. It's an aggressive game and several of the Bakersfield boys are as tall or taller than Yvonne. They're not cutting her any slack.

The announcer makes mention of the novelty of Yvonne and her twin brother and what it has done for the Visalia team.

Several balls sink into the basket and the electronic score see-saws back and forth, the teams swapping lead position at a rapid clip.

Yvonne's concentration is pathetic. She can't keep her eyes off the stands and her desperate looks at her brother make it clear their telepathic communication is not happening.

END MONTAGE

INT. GYMNASIUM - CONTINUING

There's just a couple of minutes left in the first half.

Ron dribbles the ball down court, two Bakersfield players hot on his trail.

Yvonne sends him a signal.

YVONNE (V.O.)
Trailing, right.

No reaction from Ron. In two more steps the opposing players overtake him and snag the ball, sailing it down court to one of their teammates for a score.

Yvonne, panting from exertion, approaches her brother, speaking under her breath.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
I was trailing.

RON
I heard you.

He turns his back on her, moving to his position on the other side of the court.

Yvonne is panicked.

She gets into position, but in her distracted state, misses the ball passed to her from her teammate. Seconds later, another score for Bakersfield.

In the next moment she nabs the ball passed off to her, only to turn and have it smacked out of her hand.

She glances at the scoreboard. They're trailing by 12.

She's choking, bad.

In the knick of time the half time buzzer sounds.

The team huddles at the sideline.

COACH CANTRELL

Get your head in the game, Too
Tall. You cost us a time out.

Yvonne runs a hand over her face.

Her teammates offer words of encouragement. They're annoyed, but ready to help her pull out of it if she can.

Yvonne's eyes seek out her brother, but he keeps his eyes on his feet. She nods and takes a deep breath.

YVONNE

Okay, yo, ya'll. I got it.

More encouraging remarks as they head back onto the court.

But she doesn't have it. She continues to fumble and flub her way through the third quarter with no telepathic help from her brother.

At the sound of the buzzer signaling the end of the third quarter, Visalia is behind 66 to 54.

The players head over to the bench, toweling their faces and drinking water.

Yvonne stands in front of her brother sitting on the bench.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

If you're trying to prove a point
with me little brother, this is not
the time to do it.

Ron sighs. He doesn't want to try to stick up for himself anymore. He's just tired of being mean.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, okay? I just need - I
need your help. Don't do this to
me.

Finally Ron looks her in the eyes.

RON

Oh, God...All right. I'm sorry,
too.

The buzzer sounds to begin play.

Yvonne, now hopeful, moves energetically onto the court.

Play resumes, but after only a couple of minutes, one of the Bakersfield players loses his footing and hits the floorboards hard.

Ron, running for the other end of the court, sees the downed player at the last second and leaps awkwardly in an attempt to jump over him.

Ron clips the guy's shoulder with his foot and goes down himself, taking his full weight on one knee-cap. He's stunned for a moment, then writhing in pain.

Time stops for Yvonne. She watches her brother on the ground, then turns to see Coach Cantrell and the game nurse rushing to his side.

She finds her parents in the stands, Monique covering her mouth in horror, Frank already stepping over fans to get to his son.

Carol, having just entered carrying folders with the competition papers, stands wide-eyed at the bottom of the bleachers.

That's it. It's over for the Townsend twins tonight.

EXT. GOLDEN WEST HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Frank is easing Ron into the back seat of his car, Monique, Yvonne and PJ huddled around him.

MONIQUE

Are you sure we don't need an ambulance?

RON

Mom.

FRANK

I can get there faster.

MONIQUE

I'm coming with you.

Monique fishes in her purse for her car keys and hands them to Yvonne.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)

Get Franky and meet us at the hospital. And don't speed.

Monique climbs in Frank's car and they rush away.

Yvonne turns to trudge back inside the building.

PJ, jogging to catch up, reaches way up, draping an arm of consolation around her friend's shoulder.

PJ
Supreme bummer. All the way
around.

INT. GYMNASIUM - CONTINUING

The game over, spectators gather their belongings and head for the door.

Yvonne and PJ approach the stands. PJ's eyes sweep the bleachers looking for Franky.

Coach Cantrell picks up Yvonne's bag and meets them at the bottom row of bleachers.

COACH CANTRELL
I'm heading to the hospital, are
you girls okay?

Yvonne nods. She can't help but glance at the scoreboard.

Bakersfield 82, Visalia...78.

YVONNE
We'll be there in a little bit.

Coach Cantrell rests a reassuring hand on Yvonne's shoulder.

COACH CANTRELL
It's just one game, Townsend.
There'll be plenty more.

Yvonne nods, looking glum.

PJ jumps off the bottom row of bleachers, her face dark.

PJ
Bad news. The little dude took a
powder.

Yvonne's eyes sweep the stands. PJ's right. No Franky.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF 7-11 - NIGHT

Yvonne is driving her mom's Toyota, PJ in the passenger seat.

INT. MONIQUE'S TOYOTA - CONTINUING

PJ is straining to see the side of the building where they had found Franky once before.

PJ

Nobody.

Yvonne glances into the parking lot as she inches forward into the crosswalk.

The light turns green and she moves ahead slowly.

YVONNE

I don't really know where else to look.

PJ gives the matter some thought, then shakes her head.

PJ

He's already passed my level of rebellion. I don't know where kids this bad go.

Yvonne purses her lips, not liking to hear her brother talked about that way.

YVONNE

We can't just drive around the whole city.

PJ

Well he wasn't driving. How far could he get?

Yvonne glances at the clock in the car. 8:45.

YVONNE

My parents are going to wonder what's taking so long.

Yvonne pulls up to another red light and looks around feeling hopeless.

PJ

Maybe we should get some help.

Yvonne nods, staring blankly out the windshield.

Traveling on the cross street is the Imperial she saw Franky get out of that day at the Jr. High School.

Yvonne checks traffic, looks in the rear-view mirror, then pulls into the intersection while the light is still red.

PJ grabs the dashboard in terror.

PJ (CONT'D)
Aaaah! What are you doing?

Yvonne steps on the gas.

YVONNE
I know that car.

Yvonne catches the Imperial at the next intersection. It's full of young boys, none of them Franky.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
(to PJ)
Roll down your window. They know Franky. Ask them where he is.

PJ shows a moment of uncustomary intimidation, then puts on her persona and rolls down the window, calling to the boys in the car.

PJ
Yo. Gentlemen. A word?

The light turns green and the two cars move in tandem as the boys look over at Yvonne and PJ more with annoyance than interest.

The driver lifts his chin, indicating PJ should state her case.

PJ (CONT'D)
We're looking for - um, could you pull over for just a second please?

The boys glance at one another and wordlessly agree to pull over.

EXT. DOWNTOWN VISALIA - NIGHT

The car of young men pulls over to the curb, Yvonne and PJ pulling up behind them.

Yvonne and PJ get out of the car and walk up to the passenger door on the sidewalk.

Yvonne bends down to look in the passenger window.

YVONNE

I'm looking for my little brother,
Franky Townsend. I think you know
him.

The boys glance at each other, but don't respond.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

His brother's in the hospital and I
need to get Franky there.

No response.

PJ shoves her hands in her pockets and moves the few steps back to Monique's car and reaches inside for something.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

My parents are waiting.

Nothing.

Yvonne looks hopefully at the boys for a few moments, then sighs and straightens up.

PJ finishes writing something in the palm of her hand and speaks loud enough for the boys to hear.

PJ

It's cool. When your parents call
the cops I'll just show 'em this
license plate number.

There's a click as the back door opens and two of the boys climb out of the car.

They tower over PJ, but are dwarfed by Yvonne.

One boy reaches over and grabs PJ's hand. There's a lot of eye contact going on as they all assess their situation.

The boy lifts PJ's hand to his own face and spits into her palm.

PJ (CONT'D)

Eeeewwwwww.

PJ holds her contaminated hand out in front of her.

Yvonne snaps.

She lets out a continuous stream of commentary as she bitch-slaps the boy with her open hands. She's all over him and his friend, too.

YVONNE

You stupid little punk, you better get your pansy ass back in that car before I tear your head off. Get in there you bastard or you'll be calling the cops yourself. I said get in that car - I'll slap you naked you little bastard -

- and on and on as Yvonne slaps, pushes and pounds the boys back into the back seat of the car, PJ shouting encouragement all the while.

Once the boys are in the car, the driver pulls away, tires squealing.

Yvonne doubles over out of breath and starts to laugh. The laughter almost immediately takes on an hysterical quality and a second later she's crying.

Yvonne sits on the curb, puts her head in her arms and bawls.

PJ stands behind her, patting the top of her head as if she were a puppy.

PJ

That was just awesome. I'm so glad I saw that. You go ahead and cry, girl. That was just awesome.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Yvonne and PJ sit in the car, dreading going inside.

PJ

It's probably for the best. Covering for him only makes it worse.

YVONNE

I know. I just don't want my parents to get hurt.

PJ nods, understanding.

PJ
Well, you can't protect them
forever.

Yvonne sighs and the girls get out of the car.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUING

There are a few clusters of people in the waiting room.

Frank and Monique sit silently along one wall, Coach Cantrell
pacing in front of them.

They all look up as a unit as the girls enter the room.

Frank and Monique's faces react in advance of the information
they know they're about to hear.

Yvonne delivers the blow as gently as possible.

YVONNE
We couldn't find him. I guess he
took off.

Frank and Monique's eyes meet in an instantaneous plan of
action. Frank stands to go.

YVONNE (CONT'D)
How's Ronnie?

MONIQUE
He's in surgery. He tore some
ligaments and fractured his knee
cap.

PJ winces audibly.

MONIQUE (CONT'D)
We'll go in soon. The doctor came
in and told us he was moving him to
the recovery room.

Frank, seeing the dejection on his daughter's face, wraps an
arm around her.

Yvonne buries her face in his massive chest.

YVONNE
I'm sorry, Daddy. Everything is
all my fault.

Frank meets Monique's eyes over Yvonne's head, a soft smile creeping onto his face.

FRANK

Stay here with your mother. We'll
talk about it later.

PJ studies the palm of her own hand, then holds it up for Frank to see.

PJ

These guys might know something
about Franky.

Another glance at her smeared palm.

PJ (CONT'D)

At least, what's left of 'em.

Frank takes PJ's other hand and the two head out of the waiting room.

Yvonne sits next to her mom.

Monique reaches out and takes Yvonne's hand, squeezing it as much to reassure herself as her daughter. They wait in silence.

INT. RON'S HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

Yvonne has a chair pulled up to her brother's bed, one eye on him, one on a basketball game on the wall-mounted television with the sound turned off.

Ron's leg is suspended in a downey-soft traction unit and he's drowsy from pain medication, only half aware that Yvonne is in the room with him.

After several moments he stirs, speaking barely above a whisper.

RON

Can I have some water?

Yvonne leaps to do his bidding, relieved to be of some help.

She holds the cup for her brother as he drinks through the bendable straw, then replaces the cup on the rolling stand when he's finished.

RON (CONT'D)

Where's Mom?

Yvonne sits back down.

YVONNE

She went home for a bit.
She's...she's packing up Franky's
stuff. He's going to live with
Dad.

Ron attempts to raise one heavily drugged eyebrow.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

He took off last night. The cops
picked him up.

Ron shakes his head slowly.

Yvonne can't keep a smirk off her face.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

He barfed in the cop car. He was
drunk.

Ron moans, then seems to lapse into sleep.

Yvonne stares at him until he half-opens one eye again.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

Ron, I'm so sorry. If I hadn't
kept after you to play that stupid
game you wouldn't even be here
right now.

Ron lifts an arm a couple of inches trying to execute a
dismissive gesture.

RON

It's okay.

Yvonne shakes her head.

YVONNE

It seems so stupid now compared to
this. I don't even care anymore.

There's a long pause while Ron formulates his answer.

RON

You can do it yourself.

Yvonne smiles that he offers encouragement even in this
state.

YVONNE

Well, I guess I'll find out now.

Ron nods almost imperceptibly, then drifts back into sleep.

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

It's the final few minutes of another game. Visalia is playing Tulare, the electronic scoreboard reflecting a pretty close game.

Yvonne is holding her own, playing full out. There is no indication from the announcer or from the other players that she is anything other than another strong part of the team.

She finds herself holding the ball at the sound of the final buzzer and lobs the ball from her position more than half a court away.

The shot misses by several feet.

Visalia 72, Tulare 68.

The teammates cheer, high fives all around and then head over to congratulate the other team on a good game.

Yvonne's gaze sweeps the stands and she waves to her family.

Franky is looking very buttoned down sitting next to Frank, no ball cap, no headphones, no baggies.

PJ lifts her fist in the air offering very vocal support for her friend.

As Yvonne approaches the sideline Coach Cantrell moves to have a word with her.

COACH CANTRELL

Good game, Townsend.

Yvonne stoops to pick up a towel, wiping her face.

YVONNE

Thanks.

The coach raises his hand to his forehead scanning the crowd.

COACH CANTRELL

There were some girls I wanted you to - oh, there they are. Come with me.

Yvonne glances around at the mystery, then shrugs and follows her coach.

Near the top of the bleachers sit four girls wearing jackets with a school emblem for the San Diego Aztecs.

As Yvonne approaches they stand to greet her.

Yvonne's step slows, her eyes wide in amazement. Two of the girls are an easy two inches taller than she is - and she's looking the other two eye to eye.

Unbelievable.

Yvonne breaks into a huge grin.

One of the girls reaches out to shake Yvonne's hand.

COLLEGE PLAYER #1
I'm Sheila McCay.

Yvonne is immediately star struck.

YVONNE
I know.

COLLEGE PLAYER #2
We had a game in Fresno so we came to check you out. You're kind of famous you know, the girl kicking ass on the boy's team.

Yvonne glances at her coach, unsure how to respond.

Coach Cantrell just smiles.

COLLEGE PLAYER #1
We'll be sending our coach out here next year to snag you. I don't want you playing for another school.

YVONNE
Well, thanks. Thanks a lot.

The girls pick up their stuff and prepare to go, each offering her a side-five as they file past her.

COLLEGE PLAYER #2
We'll see you in a year. Don't forget us. A lot can happen in a year.

As the girls clamber down the bleachers Yvonne throws her arms around Coach Cantrell with a squeal, then she hurries off to tell her family, taking the steps two at a time.

FADE OUT: