

Alive and Kicking

Written
by
Audrey Wells

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Outcasts United
by

Warren St. John

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EXT. KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP - KENYA - DAY - 2004

CLOSE ON: tattered rags fall through the air and land on a dirt floor in an inglorious heap.

TWO YOUNG SUDANESE BOYS stare down at the pile of treasure. The exceptionally tall one is KUNDAR, 13. The other boy is TAREG.

The boys produce an old plastic bag and take out its contents: a wad of dirty string, and several small, square, foil packages. The boys rip open the generic foil, pull out the condoms inside, and start blowing them up into inflated balloons. Skillfully, they wrap the old rags and socks around the air-filled condoms, shaping a compact ball. They ease the ball into the plastic bag. With nimble fingers, they wind the string tightly around the sphere, over and over, making a lattice, pulling it even.

The transformation is complete. The boys inspect their work.

It's round. It's tight. It has bounce. It will do.

THE SOCCER BALL is placed carefully on the ground.

KUNDAR

Good.

And then ---

BAM - a swift KICK sends it sailing out of the mud hut and down a dirt alley of the KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP, home to 100,000 impoverished refugees in northwestern Kenya.

The barefoot boys cut a swath through the crowded alleys of the refugee camp as they run the ball past tents and mud huts, past the aimless and the hopeless, past children who have never set foot outside this fenced camp, past ragged women, past desperate men, past poverty that shocks.

But the boys don't see that. This unimaginable squalor is their playground, and what they see is a ball. Their joy is contagious. Younger children chase after them as they show off with multiple step-overs and sole changes, kicking the ball off tin roofs, passing it under vendor's carts, dribbling at full speed through the market place, until...

The boys turn down an alley. There's a hut at the end, with a sheet hanging where the front door should be. Kundar unleashes a cannon shot, firing the ball down the street and straight into the hut. The boys laugh and dart after it, disappearing inside.

INT. KUNDAR'S HUT THAT MOMENT

Kundar and Tareg tumble into the hut to find CHRISTIAN, 22, Kundar's older brother, conferencing with five other men. The faces in the room are serious and Kundar, collecting his ball, immediately senses that something is up.

They speak to each other in DINKA, the language of South Sudan:

KUNDAR
What is it?

CHRISTIAN
It finally happened, my brother.

Kundar looks around at all the faces, trying to get a clue.

CHRISTIAN
We are going to America.

EXT. TALKING CIRCLE NIGHT

The men and boys sit in a circle, their emotions high. Some of them are holding back tears. An ELDER speaks. (Again, in DINKA, with subtitles.)

SUDANESE ELDER
You are the future of Sudan. We have heard that going to America is like going to heaven. They will educate you there.

Christian nods. Kundar timidly admits:

KUNDAR
I am afraid to go.

CHRISTIAN
You have been in Kakuma since you were three years old. Refugee camp is not life. You can do nothing here. In America, you can do anything you want.

SUDANESE ELDER
Go and become something.

EXT. KAKUMA ALLEY DAY

Kundar follows his friend Tareg down the alley to his hut.

TAREG
Where is At-lan-ta?

KUNDAR
I don't know. Idwar and his brother
went to America. They went to
Texas. Maybe there.

TAREG
You will make new friends. Don't
forget your brothers here in
Kakuma.

They enter Tareg's hut. Tareg picks a small bundle up off the
floor and offers it to Kundar.

TAREG
I wrote my name on it so you will
remember me.

Kundar unwraps the cloth bundle. Inside is one battered
SOCCER SHOE. The sole is loose. The leather is ripped.
"TAREG" is written in small, ink letters on the side.

TAREG
I am sorry there is only one. But
you will find another one to go
with it in America.

Kundar nods and rubs his friend's head with his hand.

KUNDAR
I will remember you always, Tareg.

EXT. KUNDAR'S HUT DAY

Kundar carefully heats an iron on an open flame and presses
Christian's trousers. He looks troubled.

KUNDAR
Christian? How will mother find us
in Atlanta?

CHRISTIAN
She hasn't found us here. And it's
been eight years.

Kundar doesn't look comforted. He hands Christian his
stained, but nicely pressed pants.

EXT. KAKUMA DAY

Dozens of friends have gathered to see Christian and Kundar off. Kundar and Tareg shake hands over and over, unable to stop, knowing they may never see each other again.

A United Nations truck is waiting. Christian and Kundar step through the gates of Kakuma and re-enter the world outside the refugee camp for the first time in eight years.

Friends press against the chain link fence and call out blessings, their voices full of loss and hope. Tareg shouts:

TAREG

Greet them in America!

KUNDAR

I will!

TAREG

Greet them in the name of the
Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost!

INT. ATLANTA AIRPORT NIGHT

The Atlanta Airport is a bewildering muddle of bizarre new world images, sounds and languages. Christian and Kundar drift like dreamers through the seemingly endless terminal, past moving sidewalks, neon signs, and crowds of travelers.

They arrive at the escalator, and stop dead before its daunting unfamiliarity. Christian gives Kundar a nudge and he gingerly stumbles on. Excited and apprehensive, they hold on for dear life as the moving stairway carries them down.

OUTSIDE ARRIVALS -- the brothers wait with their small duffle bags, unsure what to do next. Kundar notices a BLACK AMERICAN PORTER working near him. He turns to him respectfully:

KUNDAR

Hello. I am Kundar. What is your
name?

The Porter gives Kundar a strange look and keeps on working. Christian nudges his little brother, embarrassed. In DINKA:

CHRISTIAN

Why are you talking to him?

KUNDAR

He lives in Atlanta. He is our
neighbor. No?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
 I'm here, I'm here! There was
 traffic.

They turn to see a harried looking BLACK AMERICAN WOMAN running up to them in a crumpled skirt and suit jacket. This is PATTI, 35.

PATTI
 (breathless)
 You must be Christian and Kundar
 Dikori. I'm Patti Leary, your case
 worker from the International
 Rescue Committee. Welcome to
 Atlanta.

They shake her hand and address her in their best English.

CHRISTIAN & KUNDAR
 Hello. It is very nice to meet you.

Patti looks up at the two lanky, ebony-skinned men.

PATTI
 You are definitely tall ones.

She turns and starts walking, calling over her shoulder.

PATTI
 Come this way.

INT. IRC VAN NIGHT

The IRC van zips along the freeway, speeding past the illuminated highrises and glitter of downtown Atlanta. Kundar, in the back seat, stares out the window in bleary amazement. Patti gives Christian the run-down as she drives.

PATTI
 The IRC will help you get resettled
 and offer you three months of
 assistance. We'll also help you
 find a job so you can start
 repaying the loan on your plane
 tickets. How old is Kundar,
 exactly?

CHRISTIAN
 He is thirteen.

PATTI

We've enrolled him in 7th grade.
They just started school in
Clarkston last week. That's the
name of the town, where you'll be
living.

CHRISTIAN

Not Atlanta?

PATTI

No, you're living in Clarkston.
About half an hour away.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES APARTMENT COMPLEX/CLARKSTON NIGHT

The IRC van pulls into SOUTHERN PINES, a run down, two story
refugee apartment complex in the suburban town of Clarkston.
Four, sixteen-unit buildings surround a dimly lit, central
parking lot.

Kundar and Christian follow Patti out of the van. There are
only a handful of vehicles in the parking lot -- most tenants
can't afford a car -- but the apartments seem to be full.
The sounds of television sets, cooking, children playing, and
people laughing and shouting fill the air. A few rough
looking African men lean on cars, drinking out of paper bags.
Kundar glances at them as he follows his older brother and
their case worker upstairs.

INT. KUNDAR'S APARTMENT NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Kundar and Christian enter the gloomy, stark, one bedroom
apartment. Patti quickly shows them around.

PATTI

I'm sorry, I gotta be someplace. So
let me show you quick.

They enter the kitchenette.

PATTI

You got your electric stove. On.
Off. It's still hot when you turn
it off, so be careful. You got some
canned goods in the cupboards
already. You know what this is?

She turns on the noisy garbage disposal.

PATTI

Don't stick your hand down there.

Patti walks quickly back into the living room. They follow.

PATTI

You got a donated couch. Mattress
in the bedroom. There's the
bathroom. Shower and a toilet.
You know how those things work or
should I show you?

It's going so fast. They just nod. Patti heads for the door.

PATTI

You'll think of other stuff you
need. I'll be in touch.

CHRISTIAN

Thank you.

Patti is about to leave ---

KUNDAR

Miss Patti? Forgive me. I do not
see the iron.

PATTI

What? I don't understand.

KUNDAR

To make the clothes correct for
school. And for my brother, for
work.

Kundar pantomimes ironing clothes. Patti smiles.

PATTI

I like you, Kundar.
(opens the door)
Buy yourself an iron at Thriftown.
Anybody here can show you where
that's at.

She's gone.

INT. KUNDAR'S APARTMENT LATER THAT NIGHT

Christian and Kundar sit on the mattress in the dingy
bedroom, heads bowed, hands clasped.

CHRISTIAN

We are grateful to Almighty God for
He has allowed us to reach this far
on this our small planet.

Christian falls back onto the mattress, exhausted. Kundar goes to their second story window and looks out over the eerie parking lot.

KUNDAR

We are up. We never sleep "up" before. Maybe we fall through the floor.

CHRISTIAN

People in America live in tall buildings. They do not fall through the floor.

The SOUNDS of a men arguing and bottles breaking reaches their ears. Kundar, nervous, gets in bed beside Christian.

KUNDAR

Mother will not find Atlanta.

CHRISTIAN

Think about going to school. Think about doing something for our people. Then maybe she will find us.

EXT. KUNDAR'S APARTMENT LATER THAT NIGHT

3:00 am. Kundar's eyes open suddenly. He hears people shouting and screaming. He smells the air: SMOKE.

Kundar runs to the window and looks out over the apartment complex.

KUNDAR

Christian - wake up.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES APARTMENT COMPLEX NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

DOZENS of TENANTS have come outside in their nightclothes to see what's going on. Kundar and Christian join them.

Smoke billows out of a building across the parking lot. Men shout. Women and children shriek. A POLICE HELICOPTER arrives and sweeps the scene with a powerful searchlight. It hovers, its blades thumping the air.

Kundar stands near Christian, afraid.

KUNDAR

Is this war?

CHRISTIAN

No - the building is on fire.

ON THE APARTMENT BUILDING -- FLAMES now eat the corner units. Smoke belches out the windows. A small explosion rains shattered glass onto the the dazed, frightened residents gathered outside.

WINIFRED, Liberian, 35, grasping three children to her body with arms like steel cable, shrieks to anyone who will listen:

WINIFRED

Daniel? You see Daniel? Where is Daniel?

NEIGHBOR WOMAN

There!

A BOY, 14, runs out of the building, carrying blankets, pillows and anything else he could grab. Kundar and Christian watch as DANIEL, gasping, drops the rescued items at his hysterical mother's feet.

The flames leap higher. Three bad-ass gang members belonging to the AFRICAN MOB SQUAD (AMS) are leaning against a parked car, laughing and enjoying the show.

Winifred whirls on them, enraged:

WINIFRED

I know it was you! You did this to us! Animals!

They laugh louder, pointing at her, taunting.

An AFGHAN WOMAN, carrying a five year old girl and trailed by her two young sons, comes to Winifred's side and tries to soothe her.

But Winifred is no longer looking at the gang members. She is watching her son, Daniel, head back into the burning building.

WINIFRED

Daniel! No! No!

ON KUNDAR - watching in disbelief as the boy goes back into the fire. The Afghan woman's 13 year old son, ROO, is also staring in shock.

Kundar and Roo look at each other. Then back at the building. Will the boy come back out?

EXT. CLARKSTON DAY

It's morning in CLARKSTON, GEORGIA.

A FREIGHT TRAIN moves slowly along the tracks, just as it's done for seventy years. As the last car passes, it reveals FIVE ETHIOPIAN WOMEN, waiting for the crossing bars to lift. Wearing colorful cotton dresses and hijabs, they balance laundry baskets on their heads as they pick their way across.

A BICYCLE APPEARS -- maneuvering through the group of women as they cross the tracks. The rider is 28 years old. She's fair complected with short, chestnut hair, and the athletic build of a girl jock. This is LUMA MUFLEH.

FOLLOWING LUMA ON HER BICYCLE -- we glide down MAIN STREET where "Old Clarkston" meets "New"; past the thirty year old hardware store, the Eritrean restaurant, the mini-mart selling international phone cards.

Luma pulls her bike over in front of the quaint looking COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE. There's a small sign in the window: HELP WANTED. Luma parks her bike and we follow her inside.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE DAY

The cafe is a down-home, classic American diner, untouched since the 1970's. There's a long, laminated counter with swivel stools and ten or so tables.

BEHIND THE COUNTER -- MISS SARALEE, 60, owner of the Country Kitchen, an old school southern belle with a can of hairspray in her petal curls, looks over Luma's JOB APPLICATION.

MISS SARALEE

(reading application)

"Dishwasher." "Bike messenger."

"Flower delivery." "Cashier."

"Salad bar prep." I suppose you can cut fruit up real pretty?

LUMA

Yes, Ma'am. Give me a knife and a canteloupe and I'll amaze you.

MISS SARALEE

(reading)

And you got yourself a B.A..

From Smith College. In?

LUMA

Anthropology.

Miss Saralee looks keenly at the enigmatic young woman before her.

MISS SARALEE

Something about you is not exactly screaming "career waitress". Am I wrong?

LUMA

No, Ma'am. You're not.

MISS SARALEE

Well, that's okay. But you have to like food to work here. You like food, honey?

LUMA

I love food.

MISS SARALEE

Then why haven't you touched my famous peach pie?

There's a beautiful slice of pie sitting undisturbed on a plate before Luma.

LUMA

I will eat this pie. Every bite. I'll take it home with me, and eat it later tonight.

Miss Saralee turns away. She's lost interest.

MISS SARALEE

Sorry, sugar. I don't hire dieters.

LUMA

I'm not a dieter. I'm a Muslim.

Miss Saralee turns back around.

LUMA

It's Ramadan -- for another few days. We're supposed to fast while the sun is up.

Miss Saralee takes in the American-looking girl before her.

MISS SARALEE

Aren't you awfully white for a brown girl?

LUMA

Awfully.

She's teasing -- sort of. Miss Saralee takes Luma's plate away and starts eating the pie herself.

MISS SARALEE
 (biting into Luma's pie)
 So you're fasting, huh? Why do they call it that?

LUMA
 I don't know. There's nothing "fast" about it.

MISS SARALEE
 Got that right. Wanna see fast?
 (finishes the pie)
There. All gone.

LUMA
 Excuse me, Ma'am, but --

MISS SARALEE
 What?

LUMA
 I don't recall saying you could eat my pie.

They exchange small smiles.

MISS SARALEE
 I like you...
 (reading name off application)
 ...*Luma Mufleh*. So much that I'm gonna call you Liz and let you work here.

LUMA
 Thank you.

MISS SARALEE
 Starting now.
 (points to customers)
 More coffee, Oscar and Darlene.

Luma gets right on it, attending to OSCAR and DARLENE ROBINSON- black locals in their 70s - who are clearly counter regulars at the Country Kitchen.

AT THE FRONT DOOR -- in walks MAYOR MIKE McCANN, 65. With his walrus mustache, cowboy boots, and American flag lapel pin, he cuts an iconic figure and he knows it. A black American REPORTER, well familiar with the Mayor, accompanies him inside.

REPORTER

...so the Liberian woman was saying the fire was set - on purpose - by her neighbors, who are - get this - other Liberians. From the civil war back home. Same group she says macheted her husband - and probably did god knows what to her.

They sit at the counter. Luma brings coffee and menus.

MAYOR MCCANN

Terrible.

REPORTER

She gets all the way to the USA just to find out the thugs she came here to get away from are living right next door. Good morning, Miss Saralee.

MISS SARALEE

(trying to catch up)
Who finds this out?

MAYOR MCCANN

Refugee woman at Southern Pines Apartment Complex.

REPORTER

Where there was a fire last night. I was there.

Luma follows the conversation closely as she attends to the counter customers.

MISS SARALEE

That poor woman.
(to Mayor)
Can't you do something for her?

MAYOR MCCANN

I'll help anybody -- but first they've got to want to help themselves. And these people and them people, the different nationalities, they're here now. And they've got to find a way to get along.
(sniffs the air)
What smells so good this morning?

MISS SARALEE

Liz, get the Mayor a slice of pie.

Luma sets the pie down before the Mayor.

MAYOR MCCANN

(to Luma)

This worth the calories? You tried it?

Miss Saralee shoots Luma a silencing look - she's not interested in having Ramadan discussed right now.

MISS SARALEE

Liz don't care for peaches.

Oscar has been listening to the conversation from his seat down the counter. He jumps in:

OSCAR ROBINSON

I say we've got more than our share of refugees in this town. I want to know why they keep coming.

MAYOR MCCANN

They keep coming because the resettlement agencies look at Clarkston and say bingo. We got the cheap housing. We got the proximity to the jobs they can do - hotel maids, chicken processing plants - and we got the bus lines to the jobs.

(tastes the pie)

This should be illegal, Saralee.

OSCAR ROBINSON

Well Darlene says she don't even recognize half the languages they're talkin' at the grocery store no more.

DARLENE ROBINSON

Yesterday I said "excuse me" to a lady in line. She had no idea what I said. I think I scared her.

MAYOR MCCANN

Refugees is like me and you, Darlene - they're people. And they come to this country to try and make a better way of life.

DARLENE ROBINSON

Well, God bless them for that.

MAYOR MCCANN

That's right. Jesus said, "Heaven is a place for people of all nations." So if you don't like Clarkston, you won't like Heaven.

OSCAR ROBINSON

You sure Jesus said all that?

MISS SARALEE

He did when He was giving quotes to the newspaper.

The Reporter chuckles as he jots it down. Luma comes close to the Mayor.

LUMA

What happens to that woman? After her neighbors set her apartment on fire -- where does she go?

MAYOR MCCANN

To another apartment in the same complex, most likely.

MISS SARALEE

Can you imagine? Poor soul.

The Reporter takes a drag off his coffee.

REPORTER

Craziest thing I saw last night -- was one of her kids. Maybe twelve years old. Ran back into the burning building. I thought maybe a little brother or sister was still inside. Place was burning bad.

Luma listens intently as the Reporter continues to talk.

FLASH BACK --- to the night before at the SOUTHERN PINES APARTMENT COMPLEX.

THICK SMOKE pours from the building. The windows of an upper apartment BURST with shooting flames. Winifred, protecting her other three young children in the parking lot, screams in terror for her son Daniel, who is somewhere unseen inside the building.

DARLENE ROBINSON (V.O.)

Did he come back out?

REPORTER (V.O.)

'Bout a minute later.

ON THE ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING - 14 year old Daniel re-emerges from the burning building, coughing and bent over.

MISS SARALEE (V.O.)

And? What'd he go back in for?

The boy's shrieking mother runs to him, smacks him, berates him through her tears. We see the Reporter in the BG, craning his neck, trying to get a look at the boy through the smoke.

CLOSE ON DANIEL - sweat streaked, gasping. Clutching something tightly against his stomach: a tattered black and white ball.

REPORTER (V.O.)

His soccer ball.

EXT. EMPTY PLAYGROUND EVENING

SMACK. A SOCCER BALL hits a concrete wall, inside a hand-drawn chalk circle.

Luma, alone at twilight in a playground, practices kicks from outside the box. She kicks. She "scores". Luma raises her hands over her head in imagined triumph. Again.

COLLEGE KID (O.S.)

Hey - want to start a game?

Startled, Luma turns to see that three, amiable COLLEGE KIDS are watching her.

LUMA

No - I have to go to work.

Luma picks up her ball bag and shyly backs off towards her car.

LUMA

Maybe next time.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A Brazilian soccer game plays on TV. Luma sits on the couch, watching the game and eating Indian take-out. Her modest living room contains almost nothing but books, athletic equipment, and one Persian rug.

ON TV - a COMMERCIAL advertises cheap international phone rates. The "family members" in the commercial - one in NYC, one in Taiwan - seem overjoyed to be talking to each other.

Luma stares at the ad, transfixed. She checks the clock -- then puts down her dinner, turns off the TV, and grabs her cell phone. Taking out an international phone card, she dials and waits. Someone picks up on the other end.

LUMA
(in Arabic)
Hi, it's me. Luma. I'm calling to
say...hello? Hello?

The person on the other line has hung up.

Luma holds the dead phone, enveloped by quiet darkness.

INT. CLARKSTON SCHOOL - CLASSROOM DAY

A packed, unruly seventh grade classroom. Thirty boys and girls, of every possible human skin color, giggle, sleep and doodle through social studies class.

Kundar, in his pressed pants and neat shirt, sits at attention, trying his best to understand the teacher.

A few seats away sits an Afghan boy wearing a Muslim prayer hat on his head and painfully mismatched, polyester, second-hand clothes. Everything about him screams "refugee".

This is Roo, the same boy we saw the night of the fire at the apartment complex. Roo watches Kundar, assessing the new kid in class.

INT. CLARKSTON SCHOOL - SCIENCE LAB - LATER THAT DAY

Kundar stands out like a shy giraffe as students (including Roo) jostle for position around several EGG INCUBATORS. The uninspiring SCIENCE TEACHER explains the task:

SCIENCE TEACHER
Today you will be weighing the
eggs, monitoring the temperature of
their environment...

Some UNRULY KIDS begin to throw their egg back and forth to each other behind the teacher's back. Every time he turns around, the egg goes flying through the air. Kundar smiles uncertainly, not sure if the game is funny or not.

And then - the egg comes suddenly sailing towards Kundar. He has no choice but to catch it. It cracks in his hand. Yellow yolk oozes through his dark brown fingers. Instinctively, Kundar sticks his fingers in his mouth -- AND EATS THE EGG.

He is sucking his fingers clean when he realizes that everyone in class is staring at him.

EXT. CLARKSTON SCHOOL DAY - LATER

SLAM. Kundar's skull connects with the sidewalk as THREE AMERICAN BLACK GANG MEMBERS from the YOUNG DANGEROUS CLICK (YDC) have a little fun with him.

YDC BOY #1

Look at his pants, all ironed and shit.

YDC BOY #2

You get those pants in Africa?

KUNDAR

Please! What am I wrong doing to you?

They laugh at his foreign accent and syntax.

YDC BANGER #3

What the fuck he tryin' to say?

KUNDAR

When I speak wrong English, do not laugh at me, just correct me.

YDC BOY #1

African booty scratcher make me wanna cry.

Done for now, the YDC Boys leave.

Kundar picks himself up and straightens his clothes. Roo - who saw some of what just happened - comes up to Kundar.

ROO

You just got here.

KUNDAR

How you know?

ROO

You ate the egg.
(giving advice)
Don't eat the egg.

The boys start walking together.

ROO

I'm Roo. I got here four and a half years ago. From Afghanistan. I'm here with my mom and my little brother and sister. Who's here with you?

KUNDAR

My big brother only.

ROO

Get him. I will show you some ropes.

INT. THRIFTOWN MARKET DAY

Thriftown Market is a sprawling grocery store, that serves both "old Clarkston" and the refugee community.

IN THE PRODUCE SECTION - Roo holds up a melon for Kundar and Roo, who pay studious attention.

ROO

You see the sign? "*Manager's special.*" That is when you buy.

IN THE PERSONAL CARE AISLE - Roo explains deodorant.

ROO

People here care very much about the smell. This is what you do with this.

Roo demonstrates.

IN THE BREAD AISLE - Roo holds up a cereal box.

ROO

This is cereal. You eat it for breakfast.

Kundar points to another brand in the long display.

KUNDAR

And this?

ROO

Cereal.

KUNDAR

And this?

ROO
Cereal.

CHRISTIAN
All of it is cereal?

Kundar and Christian stare at the vast selection, amazed.

ROO
You put milk in it and eat it.

INT. KUNDAR'S APARTMENT MORNING

Kundar pours milk INTO the cereal box. He peers inside. Gives it a little shake. He's not certain about this.

A familiar, rhythmic BANGING reaches his ears. Curious, Kundar goes to the window.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES PARKING LOT THAT MOMENT

The banging is a soccer ball hitting the outside wall of the building: Daniel's soccer ball.

Kundar comes outside and watches Daniel juggling the ball with ease, doing round-the-worlds and Maradonas, keeping it up, up, up and then -

KICK - Daniel passes the ball to Kundar. He grins. They're on! Their bare feet pound on the asphalt as they chase the ragged, deflated ball, bouncing it off cars and garbage cans. Nothing is off limits.

Roo comes out of his building and sees them playing. Of course, HE JOINS IN.

CUT TO:

EXT. GAS STATION DAY - SAME TIME

Luma waits in line to pay for gas, behind a WOMAN wearing a HIJAB. As the Muslim woman attempts to pay, the WHITE GAS STATION CASHIER waves her aside:

GAS STATION CASHIER
Sorry, there's no gas.

The Woman looks at the Cashier with uncomprehending eyes.

GAS STATION CASHIER
 NO GAS. Comprende? There's no gas
 for you here.

The Woman leaves. Luma watches her go. The Gas Station Cashier turns to Luma, who looks all-American in her athletic shorts, baseball cap and "Country Kitchen" T-shirt.

GAS STATION CASHIER
 How much do you want today?

LUMA
 I thought there was no gas.

GAS STATION CASHIER
 There's plenty of gas. For you. How
 much you want?

LUMA
 I -- I don't want any.

Luma turns and walks back to her car.

EXT. STREETS OF CLARKSTON DAY

Luma drives down the street in her YELLOW VW BEETLE, anxiously looking for a service station. She rolls her window down and asks a foreign looking PEDESTRIAN:

LUMA
 Excuse me. Is there a gas station
 around here?

The Pedestrian points.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUOUS

Luma's lost.

A wrong turn has brought her into the cul de sac of an apartment complex. She slows, cussing softly to herself.

SUDDENLY -- a SOCCER BALL bounces off the hood of her car. Luma BRAKES as A BOY darts in front of the Beetle, chasing after it. Luma follows the boy with her eyes and sees that he's dribbling the ball into the parking lot of SOUTHERN PINES.

IN THE SOUTHERN PINES PARKING LOT ---

KUNDAR, ROO AND DANIEL -- chase after the ball for all they're worth.

ON LUMA - she enters the lot and takes a seat on a wall, giving herself a good view of the boys. Her face lights up as she watches them play the street soccer of Kakuma refugee camp, of Liberian slums, of Afghan alleyways, laughing, showing off, arguing.

FLASHBACK - THROUGH LUMA'S EYES - young ARAB MEN play soccer in a field. An eight year old CHILD with CLOSE-CROPPED HAIR dribbles the ball through their midst...

BACK TO SCENE --- Luma smiles at the memory as she watches the boys go crazy.

Roo kicks the ball and it gets lodged under a parked car. All three boys do a RUNNING SLIDE under the car, scraping their bare legs on the asphalt, kicking, kicking, kicking to dislodge the ball until POP it comes flying out and bounces back onto the parking lot, where it STOPS AGAIN-

-- UNDER LUMA'S FOOT.

The boys stare at her.

LUMA

This ball is kind of flat.

She looks at Daniel. Could he be the one who risked his life for this ragged, deflated, sorry-ass ball?

LUMA

This yours?

Daniel nods. Luma reaches back into her Beetle and brings out a new, shiny white ball.

LUMA

Wanna play with this one?

The boys stare at it. They stare at her. They nod.

LUMA

Can I play, too?

They look at each other: what the hell -- she's got the ball.

Short, one, two touch passes get the game underway. It's a little formal at first. Then Roo's kick sends the bouncy new ball splat into a MUD PUDDLE right in front of Luma. The huge splash covers Luma's face in mud.

The boys freeze. Is she going to be mad? No, she's going to get even. Luma kicks the ball straight back, tagging Roo's shirt with a big muddy mark of her own. The boys laugh.

And then it's on. They're hot-dogging, going one-better on each other with their individual tricks. Luma's having as much fun as they are - and revealing considerable skills. They set up two broken chairs for goals and joke and squabble over every shot.

LATER - BACK AT THE YELLOW BEETLE

Luma is getting ready to leave. The boys stand around her.

KUNDAR

Are you coming back?

LUMA

I could. In a couple of days.

She walks around to the drivers side - holding her ball.

ROO

What about your ball?

Luma looks at the longing on the boys' faces.

LUMA

Why don't you take care of it for me until I get back?

Luma tosses the ball to Roo and we...

CUT TO:

KUNDAR'S APARTMENT - Kundar cooks dinner for his brother Christian, who now wears a janitor's uniform. Kundar rolls the ball under his feet as he stirs the pot.

ROO'S APARTMENT - Roo sleeps on a twin mattress curled around his little brother and sister. And the ball.

IN THE PARKING LOT - Luma's come back to Southern Pines for another session of crazy street soccer with the boys.

DANIEL'S APARTMENT - Daniel is trying to fix a leak under the kitchen sink. He's lying on his back, rolling the ball under his foot while he works.

THRIFTOWN MARKET - Roo pushes the shopping cart for his MOM. His baby sister rides inside - as does the soccer ball.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES PARKING LOT DAY

Kundar, Daniel and Roo - now a threesome - entertain each other with ball tricks in the parking lot. Roo attempts a fancy move and falls on his butt, to their great amusement.

A menacing voice breaks through their laughter.

AMS THUG #1
Kick it here.

It's the thug from the African Mob Squad and his friends.
He's jacked up and in a dangerously good mood.

AMS THUG #1
Why you no want to play with me?
Kick it here.

The boys exchange glances. They know if they kick the ball to him they'll never see it again.

KUNDAR
It's not our ball.

AMS THUG #1
That's right. It's not your ball.
It's my ball. Kick it here. Unless
you want a hole in it.

He takes out his HAND GUN and aims at the ball in Roo's hands. Roo throws it to him immediately. The AMS Thugs walk off, kicking the ball and hooting with laughter.

Roo and Kundar stare at the ground. But Daniel looks after the thugs with cold rage in his eyes.

EXT. MAIN STREET DAY

The boys walk down Main Street, in serious discussion.

DANIEL
She will be angry at us.

KUNDAR
But we have no choice. We must tell
her.

Roo spots the Country Kitchen restaurant across the street.

ROO
There. There is where Coach works.

KUNDAR AND DANIEL
"Coach?"

They walk across the street.

ROO
 We can't just play in a parking
 lot. We need a field. We need a
 team.

They arrive on the sidewalk outside the Country Kitchen.
 Through the store front windows, they watch Luma working
 inside.

ROO
 She will be our coach.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE DAY - LATER

LUMA
 Why would I want to do that?
 Coaching takes a lot of time and
 effort.

The boys are seated at the counter, eating from a fruit plate
 and watching Luma work. Miss Saralee chats with customers
 nearby.

ROO
 If we had a team, we could play
 somewhere good. Where they don't
 steal your ball.

Luma looks at Kundar.

LUMA
 Why do you want to start a team?

KUNDAR
 Because I dream to be a great
 footballer. I dream to be Ronaldo.

LUMA
 Uh-huh. You?

DANIEL
 I want to play for Chelsea like
 Drogba.

ROO
 Pele. That's me.

LUMA
 Interesting. You know what all
 those guys have in common, don't
 you? They all went to college.

THE BOYS

No. No way. You're joking.

LUMA

Do I look like I'm joking?

She doesn't. She looks dead serious. And she's a straight-faced liar.

LUMA

They did homework, they got good grades, and they went to university. Pele has a masters in biochemistry.

ROO

Wow.

Miss Saralee shoots Luma an amused look.

DANIEL

I will study and go to college if I can play soccer.

LUMA

Good for you.

ROO

So you'll coach our team?

LUMA

I didn't say that.

KUNDAR

But I will also go to college if I can play soccer.

LUMA

You've got it backwards.

ROO

He gets confused.

Kundar nods in agreement.

ROO

We want to play real soccer. We need a coach.

LUMA

Let's say we did start a team. We'd have to practice after school. What would your mothers say?

Daniel and Roo shrug.

KUNDAR

My mother is still in Sudan. She is not here. Maybe she think I am still in refugee camp. That is why.

The COUNTER CUSTOMER sitting next to Kundar overhears the words "refugee camp" and stiffens. He picks up his coffee and newspaper and moves down a few seats away from the boy.

Luma bristles at the slight. Tries not to show it. She turns back to the boys.

LUMA

To form a team, we would need more boys. Like at least a dozen. That would be your problem to solve, not mine. How would you do that?

INT./EXT. LUMA'S YELLOW VW BUG -- CLARKSTON STREETS - DAY

POP MUSIC blasts as Luma and the boys cruise Clarkston streets in her Yellow Beetle. Kundar, Daniel and Roo scan the block for possible recruits to the new soccer team.

ON THE SIDEWALK -- Roo spots some boys, lugging laundry bags as big as they are. They have that unmistakable "refugee fashion sensibility." He points excitedly.

ROO

There! Those boys!

LUMA

Okay. Go.

She pulls over and the boys jump out, carrying a handful of FLYERS. They run over to the laundry boys and start talking to them in an animated way. Luma watches from the car, peering at them through her shades, realizing what she's getting into. She sinks down in her seat and pulls her tattered Smith College cap over her eyes.

LUMA

(to herself)
Oh boy.

RECRUITMENT MONTAGE -

- Kundar leans out the window and tosses the soccer ball up and down, grinning invitingly to some refugee boys walking along the street.

- At a bus stop, Daniel shows a flyer to some French-speaking African refugee boys. There's a photo of a soccer ball on it. "*Voulez-vous jouer au football avec nous?*" reads the caption. The boys faces light up like halogen bulbs.

-In Thriftown Market, a 14 year old Burmese boy pushes the shopping cart for his mother. Roo drops a flyer into the cart. The boy picks it up and looks at it curiously.

EXT. ARMISTEAD FIELD DAY

CLOSE ON: A good-looking Somali boy, 14, wearing boxer shorts, a flannel shirt and flip-flops. He stands staring, awestruck, at something that's taking his breath away.

It's ARMISTEAD FIELD - A normal playing field, by American standards; but a dreamlike heaven to this boy. He gapes at the verdant, manicured sports meadow, bordered on one side by a thick woods. The lush grass seems to be crying out for feet and a ball. He kicks off his flip-flops and flexes his toes in the grass, closing his eyes at the sensation.

The field is empty, except for two boys who have also arrived early. They are similar in appearance, with dozens of tight shoulder-length braids in their hair. The Somali boy, OMAR, walks up to them uncertainly.

OMAR

(In Somali English)

This where the try-outs are?

LUCIEN and BENJAMIN just stare. They are from the Congo and are just starting to speak English. Omar tries again:

OMAR

Football?

This is a word they all understand.

LUCIEN & BENJAMIN

Football. Yeah.

A RUSTLING SOUND behind them makes them all turn. At the edge of the field, TWO DEER are grazing. The boys stare at it.

LUCIEN

(in African-French)

Should we chase it?

BENJAMIN

(in African-French)

No. We're not in Africa anymore.

The sound of a car engine sends the deer running. The boys look up to see Luma's Yellow Beetle arriving.

LATER - THE TRY-OUTS

TWENTY BOYS between 12 and 14 years old stand shoulder to shoulder. Not a single parent is in attendance.

Luma surveys the line-up. There's not one kid in cleats in the whole group. They've come in bare feet or tattered socks, old hiking boots and flip-flops. Blue jeans, long T-shirts, baggy shorts and pajama bottoms complete the picture.

ON THE SIDELINE - Kundar opens a plastic grocery bag and brings out a towel. He unfolds it to reveal the one, TATTERED SOCCER SHOE given to him by his dear friend Tareg, in Kakuma. He slips off his flip-flops and puts the shoe on his right foot. Leaving the other foot bare, he joins the others.

LUMA

Thanks for coming to try-outs today. You can call me Coach Luma.

MOHAMMED, self-possessed at 14, Iraqi, turns to Roo, confused.

MOHAMMED

The coach is a woman?

Roo nods. Luma surveys the array of inappropriate footwear.

LUMA

We're going to play barefoot today.

Half the kids look at Luma uncomprehendingly. She takes off her own cleats and throws them aside, illustrating her point.

LUMA

Barefoot.

The boys kick off their flip flops and pull off their hiking boots. Kundar carefully removes his one shoe. Luma makes a sign dividing the group down the middle.

LUMA

Two groups. Show me what you can do. Let's play!

ON THE FIELD - the boys begin ricocheting across the lush grass, passing the ball and dribbling with joyful abandon. Kundar, Daniel and Roo are excited. The new boys show off for Luma with fancy footwork and hot-dogging.

Luma sits cross legged on the edge of the field, watching the ridiculous fun from beneath the bill of her baseball cap.

One kid tries to do a bicycle kick and lands on his butt in front of Luma. She calls the boys in. They run to her.

LUMA

Okay. That was interesting.

Luma looks at the expectant, panting, sweaty, stinky, hopeful, mud-covered boys. What has she gotten herself into?

LUMA

I'm not looking for superstars. I'm looking for a team. And players who are willing to learn. If you don't follow the rules, you're off the team. If you do follow the rules, you're going to have a lot of fun.

LUGMAN, a self-confident Bosnian, looks skeptical.

LUGMAN

Rules?

OMAR

She's a girl. She doesn't know how to play anyway.

Luma overhears. She turns to Omar, calmly.

LUMA

Stand in goal. Now.

Omar, surprised, lazily takes the position. "Goal" is a couple piles of sweatshirts. He waits between them, smirking.

LUMA

Ball?

Kundar throws the ball high to Luma, who controls it with ease and cracks a thunderous shot directly at Omar. He dives out of the way as the ball fizzes past his ear. She levels a cool gaze at the boy as he gets back on his feet.

LUMA

Who doesn't know how to play?

The boys are slack-jawed. Kundar, Daniel and Roo exchange smiles.

Luma holds up a stack of papers. She starts passing them out to the boys.

LUMA
 This is a contract.
 (in Arabic)
 If you can't read it, call me.
 (in French)
Si vous ne comprenez pas, dites-moi.

The boys react, realizing she speaks Arabic and French as well as English.

LUMA
 If you can't live with it, I don't want you on the team. If you can, then come back Thursday at 4:30 with that paper signed, and we'll play again.

And with that, Luma turns and walks away.

The boys watch her get into her yellow Beetle. They look down at their "contracts."

Roo starts reading out loud:

ROO
 (reading contract)
 "I will have good behavior on and off the field."

GABRIEL
 (chubby-Sierra Leone)
 "I will not smoke."

DAH
 (small - Burma)
 "I will not do drugs."

WALKING HOME FROM THE FIELD - MONTAGE CONTINUES

The boys struggle to read the contract as they walk, butchering pronunciations...

NEGASI
 (quiet - Ethiopia)
 "I will not drink alcohol."

GABBA
 (lively - Eritrea)
 "I will not get anybody pregnant."

REFUGEE APARTMENT COMPLEX - MONTAGE CONTINUES

MOSES
 (joker - Liberia)
 "I will not use bad language."

LUCIEN
 (tough - Congo)
 "I will try hard."

STREETS OF CLARKSTON - MONTAGE CONTINUES

MOHAMMED
 (poised - Iraq)
 "I will be on time."

SEVEN
 (hard worker - Burma)
 "I will listen to Coach."

LUGMAN
 (slick - Bosnia)
 "I will ask for help."

SOUTHERN PINES - MONTAGE CONTINUES

KUNDAR
 (reads)
 "I want to be part of the Fugees."

DANIEL
 Fugees? What is Fugees?

ROO
Re-fugees. It's what we are.

VARIOUS - BOYS READ THE LAST LINE OF THE CONTRACT AND SIGN.

VARIOUS BOYS
 "I want to be part of the Fugees."

They sign.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE DAY

Luma's shift is over. Miss Saralee watches her pack up to go.

MISS SARALEE
 Where you off to, sugar? 'Nother
 hot date with ESPN and your couch?

LUMA

I'm going to a player's house to meet his mother.

MISS SARALEE

Hot date with a Fug-ee.

She's made it rhyme with "bug-ee."

MISS SARALEE

These Fug-ees are going to take over your life, you know.

LUMA

It's pronounced Foogees.

MISS SARALEE

That's nice.

(beat)

They're still going to take over your life.

Luma exits, leaving her boss with a knowing smile on her face.

INT. ROO'S APARTMENT NIGHT

ROO

Coach! Come in! Meet my brother, Aziz! And my sister, Noori!

Roo lets Luma into his dilapidated apartment. His younger siblings, AZIZ, 9, and NOORI, 5, rush up to Luma as if she were a long lost relative.

ROO

(in Pashto)

Mor! My coach is here!

Roo's mother, FREBA, 32 and deeply modest, enters without a head scarf and gets her first glimpse of Luma --from behind. Seeing Luma's bare legs and short hair, Freba mistakes her for a man. She shrieks and flees the room.

FREBA

(in Pashto, O.S.)

I thought you said your coach was a woman!

Roo and Aziz start laughing, fit to pee.

ROO

She is!

FREBA
A Muslim woman!

ROO
She is!

Freba re-enters timidly, tying on a head scarf. Luma offers an apologetic smile. Freba points to Luma's bare legs.

FREBA
You! Not Muslim!

LUMA
Yes, I am. Really.

FREBA
No! You not!

LUMA
(in Arabic)
*"ashhadu 'an la 'ilaha 'illa-Allah,
wa 'ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasulu-
Allah!*

Freba stares at Luma with confusion and disbelief - she's just recited a Muslim prayer.

LUMA
I'm from Jordan. I came here to go to school. University. And I stayed.

FREBA
Where you family?

LUMA
In Jordan.

FREBA
All?

LUMA
All.

FREBA
You alone here?

Luma nods.

ROO
Like us.

Roo's Mom sighs. This Americanized-Jordanian-shorts-wearing female-soccer-coach is almost too weird to understand. But she wants to be hospitable.

FREBA
Please to sit. Eat.

LUMA
Thank you.

Luma takes a seat on the floor as Freba disappears behind a partition curtain into the kitchen area.

Luma notices a "U.S. Citizenship Study Guide" on the carpet next to her and picks it up.

LUMA
Your mother is becoming a US citizen?

ROO
If she can pass the test. We are teaching her.

Aziz grabs the study guide and flips it open to any question. By far the most fluent English speaker in the family, he reads aloud with confidence:

AZIZ
Mor: "The idea of self government is in the first three words of the constitution. What are these words?"

Freba, returning from the kitchen with a tray in her hands, shrugs helplessly. The boys smack their foreheads. They've been over and over this!

ROO AND AZIZ
We the people!

Freba blushes. This stuff is hard to learn.

FREBA
(trying to memorize)
We the people! We the people!

Freba offers Luma a glass of Sunny Delight and some Afghan sweets she's made. Luma bites into a flaky pastry, averting her gaze from a couple gigantic cockroaches that dart brazenly in and out of a mildewed crack in the wall.

LUMA
Delicious. Thank you.

ROO
Mor - can I play soccer?

FREBA
Who will take care of Aziz? Eh?

Roo looks stricken. This is a big stumbling block.

FREBA
(to Luma)
Aziz play soccer too?

Aziz bats his long, ostrich eyelashes at Luma.

LUMA
How old are you?

AZIZ
Ten!

Lying. He's at least five years younger than any of the other boys on the team.

ROO
And he is very fast.

AZIZ
Like Superman!

FREBA
(in rapid Pashto)
I can not let you play soccer if your little brother doesn't play. What should I do, bring him to the hotel to clean rooms with me? The neighbor will only watch Noori. I have no one else but you to watch Aziz, and...

As their mother prattles on, Roo and Aziz turn to Luma, imploring her with their long-lashed brown eyes...

CUT TO:

EXT. ARMISTEAD FIELD DAY

Aziz tears down the field, panting like a puppy with his tongue hanging out of his mouth. He'd rather drop dead than stop running.

CLOSE ON - a donated box of worn-out cleats getting dumped onto the ground.

The boys gather around the shoes. Luma starts eyeballing their shoe size.

LUMA
(handing him worn cleats)
Negasi - you're a size seven.

Kundar looks through the cleats. He finds a left-foot shoe - a mate to the right-foot shoe his old friend Tareg gave him in Kakuma. He puts it on, and admires his mismatched pair.

Daniel tries his "new" cleats out. He kicks the ball and the sole goes flying into the air --the glue holding them together has rotted. Teammates collapse with laughter.

LUMA
Okay! Move it! Get in groups of four for a passing drill.

Luma watches as the Arab kids form a foursome, the Asiatic kids form another, the light skinned Africans another, and the dark skinned Africans a fourth.

It's automatic - the kids go with the kids that look like they do. Even Kundar, Roo and Daniel split up.

The Fugees take the field and instinctively start passing drills, each group calling to each other in their own native language. Arabic. Swahili. French. Burmese.

Luma watches, arms folded across her chest. Then she blows her whistle and summons the boys back in. Sweating and panting, they form a circle around her at midfield.

LUMA
This has to STOP.

The boys look at Luma quizzically. They have no idea what she's talking about. She points to a patch of ground.

LUMA
I need a Liberian here, with a Congolese, and an Iraqi.

Reluctantly, Daniel, Benjamin and Mohammed step off together.

LUMA
Here. Burma. Bosnia. Sudan. Congo.
Let's go.
(another group)
Somalia. Ethiopia. Burma.
Afghanistan.
(another group)
(MORE)

LUMA (CONT'D)
Liberia. Eritrea. Iraq. Sierra
Leone. Okay.

The rest of the boys now stand in ethnically diverse groups.

LUMA
Don't ever let me see you split up
like that again. I don't care what
language you speak, what color you
are, or what country you're from.
From this day forward, we are all
the same. No one here is better
than anyone else. And this is a
team where everybody unites. And if
you don't, I'll kick you off. No
more Arabic. No more Swahili. No
more French. There's only one
language spoken here. And that's
English. And here's another thing:

The boys brace for more...

LUMA
I don't want to be hearing anybody
call anybody else "Hey you". We
have names. How do you find out
somebody's name? What do you say?
Anybody? Kundar?

KUNDAR
You say, "What is your name?"

LUMA
Okay, ask him. And say your name
first.

Kundar shyly turns to a Burmese kid he doesn't know.

KUNDAR
I am Kundar. What is your name?

SEVEN
Seven. What your name?

OMAR
Omar. What your name?

GABBA
Gabba. What is your name?

And on and on, until every Fugee has spoken his name.

JUST THEN - a SQUAD CAR shows up at the edge of the field.
It's from the Clarkston Police Department.

Two officers exit the car and start approaching Luma. Many of the boys glance at each other nervously.

Luma turns to Kundar, Daniel and Roo.

LUMA

Run laps.

The boys start running, and the rest of the Fugees follow. Luma goes to meet the Cops.

WITH LUMA AND THE COPS

LUMA

Hello Officers. Can I help you?

COP #1

You have to leave the field.

LUMA

Why is that?

COP #2

You're not supposed to be here.

LUMA

But I went to the clerk's office at city hall. They put me on the schedule.

COP #2

You can't use this field without a permit.

LUMA

I have permission.

COP #1

Miss - you have to leave the field.

There's intimidation in their voices. This is a shut-down. This will have to be it for tonight.

Luma nods and turns to the boys, waving them off the field.

LUMA

Come on, let's go! Wrap it up.

EXT. CLARKSTON CITY HALL DAY

"Small Town -- Big Heart" proclaims the town motto on a quaint painted sign outside city hall. Luma enters.

INT. CITY HALL DAY

Luma stands before the desk of the Clarkston City Clerk.

CLERK

I see the permit here. But it looks like its been revoked.

LUMA

What? Since when?

CLERK

Couple days ago, it seems.

JUST THEN -- Mayor McCann crosses the lobby of the building. Luma sees him.

LUMA

(to Clerk)

Thanks. Excuse me.

Luma runs to fall in step beside Mayor McCann.

LUMA

Good morning, Mr. Mayor, I'm...

MAYOR MCCANN

(friendly recognition)

Liz. From the Country Kitchen. You make a strong cup of coffee.

LUMA

I'm also Luma. Luma Mufleh.

MAYOR MCCANN

Luma. That's a pretty name. Why don't Miss Saralee call you that? Don't tell me: she can't pronounce it!

LUMA

Mr. Mayor, I'm here because I'm a soccer coach. Boys' soccer.

MAYOR MCCANN

Are you? That's wonderful! My grandson plays soccer. Over in Blue Springs. For the "Rocket Fire." Seems all these soccer teams got to have names like they're about to take off to outer space. What do you call your team?

LUMA

The Fugees.

MAYOR MCCANN

Now that's different. How'd you come up with that?

LUMA

It's short for "refugees".

Something almost imperceptible stiffens at the corners of the Mayor's mouth. He proceeds down the hall. Luma follows.

MAYOR MCCANN

So what can I help you with today, Luma?

LUMA

I had my boys out practicing on Armistead Field. The police came by and shut us down. I came here to get a copy of my permit and found out it's been revoked.

MAYOR MCCANN

That's frustrating, yes, I see. But if you were given a permit to play soccer on Armistead Field, it was a mistake.

LUMA

I don't understand.

Luma follows the Mayor into his office.

MAYOR MCCANN'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

The Stars and Stripes hang in the corner of the Mayor's office. A framed print of a bald eagle takes up the wall behind his desk.

MAYOR MCCANN (CONT'D)

We don't got soccer fields in Clarkston. We got baseball. When the land was given to the city, they gave it for Little League.

LUMA

But a green field is a green field. You could play anything on it.

MAYOR MCCANN

That ain't exactly so. Some games are harder on the grass than other sports. Soccer really wears on a field. Tears it up much worse than baseball. Or football.

LUMA

Mr. Mayor, the soccer program keeps the boys off the streets, and out of gangs.

MAYOR MCCANN

Believe you me, I appreciate that. These boys need something to do and somewhere to go. And I don't have no beef with it. But I do have a problem with these big guys, grown men I call it, wearing cleats and all, really workin' over the field.

LUMA

Grown men? These are school kids.

MAYOR MCCANN

You seen school kids these days? They can be pretty big by the time they're twelve. And most of 'em don't give a hoot about lawn care.

He chuckles warmly. Luma stares at the Mayor.

MAYOR MCCANN

Armistead Field is reserved for Little League Baseball. But that's just one field. I'm sure you can find another field for the soccer folks.

Luma swallows.

LUMA

I'm sure I can.

MAYOR MCCANN

Indian Creek Field. People like to play soccer out there.

Luma is almost out the door. She stops, turns.

LUMA

Excuse me, Mr. Mayor, but does Clarkston have a Little League team?

The Mayor busies himself with the papers on his desk.

MAYOR MCCANN

Hasn't been one in a few years. Let me know if you want to start one up. Sure could use someone like you. You could be our first female Little League coach.

He chuckles. He likes the idea. Luma turns and leaves.

EXT. ARMISTEAD FIELD DAY

CLOSE ON: A cracked and weathered sign. The words "Armistead Field" are written on it.

Luma runs her hand over the chipped paint. The sign is rotting, but you can still decipher three, simple hand painted illustrations below the letters.

The first illustration is of a baseball. The second, a football. The third - just as prominent - is a patchwork orb of geometric shapes: a soccer ball.

Luma leans back against the sign, thinking.

FADE OUT.

FADE UP

EXT. INDIAN CREEK FIELD DAY

The field at Indian Creek is a rutted, gravelly moonscape of gray Georgia chalk. The field and surrounding asphalt track are covered in glass from broken bottles and trash from overflowing bins. There are no soccer goals.

But there's soccer. Various groups of refugee men play pick-up games. Children toddle aimlessly into the middle of the scrimmage, chased by mothers in African dress. Old men in caftans shuffle around the surrounding, buckled asphalt track. Uninviting as this field looks, the refugees have RSVPd, and everyone has come.

Including the African Mob Squad (AMS). In the parking lot, gang members lean on their cars, smoking blunts and drinking out of paper bags.

ON LUMA AND THE FUGEES -- on the field, setting up orange cones for drills.

Luma realizes that Lucien and Benjamin are not with the group. They've hung back to talk to some gang members they know. She calls them over sharply.

LUMA

Lucien! Benjamin! Get over here.

They run over. She gives them the once-over, noticing their pants are low.

LUMA

Pull up your pants.
 (they hesitate)
 Either pull them up or take them
 off and practice in your underwear.

JUST THEN -- the POP POP POP of gunfire sends half the Fugees diving to the ground. More follow in a panic. Luma hits the dirt, too.

LUMA

What are we doing?

GABBA

They're coming to get us!

Luma lifts her head. All they heard was FIRECRACKERS. The AMS, out in the parking lot, is laughing about it already.

LUMA

(to herself)
 This is crazy.

She gets back up off the ground and brushes the grey dust from her shirt.

LUMA

Guys -it's just firecrackers. Get
 up. We've got a lot of work to do.

ON THE FIELD - LATER

Luma practices with the boys. She plays defender; they're the strikers. Luma demonstrates the moves, showing incredible skills. She challenges the boys to get around her:

LUMA

I want to see your move. Come on.
 Try your "Gabba" move on me.
 Where's your "Daniel?" Bring it.

They can't get around her. She's too pro, too fast, too agile. The boys are blown away. Later, walking off the field:

KUNDAR

Coach, when you learn to play?

LUMA

When I was a younger than you. The men used to play in a field next to my grandmother's house. Sometimes they let me join in.

ROO

They let girls play?

ON LUMA - not ready to fully answer this question.

LUMA

Sure.

EXT. LILBURN SOCCER FIELD DAY

CLOSE ON: a brand new pair of cleats stepping onto a manicured soccer field.

PHOENIX PLAYER

I think I should change my studs.

PHOENIX PLAYER'S DAD

You better pick the right ones. I paid three hundred dollars for those shoes.

The Gwinnett Phoenix are the Fugees' opponents in their FIRST GAME. The PHOENIX PLAYERS warm up with shiny new soccer balls while their SOCCER MOMS set up lawn chairs and ice chests.

The Fugees arrive on the field, and the Phoenix players turn to stare.

But the Fugees are staring back. The Phoenix have matching gear bags; the Fugees are carrying their stuff in plastic grocery bags. The Phoenix have spiffy uniforms; the Fugees are still in white T-shirts with their numbers hand-written on the back.

CLOSE ON: CARDBOARD, being folded and molded into makeshift SHIN GUARDS. The Fugees furtively stuff the cheap fakes down their socks, hoping they'll pass for the real thing.

Moses steals a glance at the Phoenix, who are warming up in brand new cleats.

MOSES

Look at their shoes.

The kids look down at their own footwear. Dah's socks stick through the holes in his heels. Moses' shoes have pieces of cardboard taped onto them. Kundar is wearing his mismatched pair -- the right shoe from his old friend Tareg, the left held together with masking tape. They look back at the top-of-the-line cleats on the competition.

DAH

It is not possible to beat them.

KUNDAR

Of course it is possible. They say anything is possible in America.

A Phoenix player runs past them and hisses:

PHOENIX PLAYER

Why do you have a *girl* for a coach?

LATER

The Ref checks the players in. The Fugees tap their shin guards and turn to show the hand-written numbers on their T-shirts. Luma's face remains impassive as the Ref butchers all the boys' names.

REF

(butchers pronunciation)
*Kundar Dikori. Lugman Subasic.
 Seven Tsui. What is this? Roohullah
 Gulamad? Wait, here's one: Mohammed
 Mohammed!*

(snickers)

*Mohammed Mohammed. Serious! Like
 once ain't bad enough!*

Mohammed keeps his cool. The Ref reaches Aziz.

REF

*Azizullah Gulamad.
 (to Luma)
 No shin guards.*

LUMA

He'll have them before he goes on the field, I promise. I just don't have enough to go around.

The Ref shakes his head. Some team.

ON THE PLAYING FIELD - THE GAME

PARENTS cheer on the Phoenix sideline as their sons walk onto the field. On the Fugees' sideline: no one but Luma.

LUMA
 (loudly for the boys)
 Go Fugees!
 (quietly, to herself)
 Yay, hurray, oh god.

FAST ACTION CUTS -- The Fugees show speed and individual skills. Daniel selfishly plays hot-dog street soccer. Oblivious to teammates, he advances the ball down the field and cracks a shot on goal. Score. Fugees BEAT Phoenix, 3-2.

What joy! The Fugees tumble onto their backs. Kick their legs in the air. Spread their arms and fly across the field.

The Phoenix players and their stunned parents are silent with shock. What just happened?

IN THE PARKING LOT - LATER

Luma gathers the team.

LUMA
 So how do you think it went?

GABBA
 I was very fast. Did you see me?

MOSES
 Not as fast as me.

DANIEL
 I scored.

OMAR
 So did I.

LUMA
 "I was fast. I scored. So did I."
 There's no "we". That's why you
 played such a horrible game.

DAH
 Horrible? But we won.

LUMA
 You won because the other team was
 bad. I didn't see good soccer out
 there. I saw ball hogging. I heard
 yelling. Omar, I saw you take the
 ball away from Aziz.

Omar shrugs. The tiny Aziz doesn't get his respect. Plus they are from different countries and don't share a language.

LUMA

This ball is an object to be shared among friends. It is not about one superstar. You play like that again next time, and you'll lose.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- GAME TWO - DAY

Pouring rain. The soccer field is a mud lake.

The Fugees have just LOST THEIR SECOND GAME. The boys walk off the field with mud in every orifice. Judging from their dour expressions, they've just been schooled. Bad.

Luma looks satisfied.

LUMA

See?

EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- GAME THREE - DAY

The Fugees have just LOST YET ANOTHER GAME. And this time Luma is pissed.

LUMA

SEE?

She gathers the panting, sweating boys around her.

LUMA

You know better than I do why you lost. Is the ref cheating?

THE BOYS

No.

LUMA

Are they faster than you?

THE BOYS

No!

LUMA

Are they better than you?

THE BOYS

No!

LUMA

So the score's two to nothing for what reason?

Silence. The boys look at each other.

LUMA

I'll tell you why. Because you do not know how to play soccer. You know how to play street ball. You're not showing any teamwork. You're just out there for yourselves. So fine. If you want to play on the streets, go ahead. But let me know. Because this is a waste of my time.

Luma turns and walks angrily to her car. Roo runs after her.

ROO

We want to play as a team!

Luma turns around. The Fugees are looking at her and nodding.

ROO

And we want to win.

LUMA

You want to win? Then you have to work as a team. And a real team is a family. Are you sure that's what you want?

The boys nod. They want it. Luma puts her bag down.

LUMA

Alright then. But if we're going to be a family, we're going to have to do what families do.

CUT TO:

INT. BOWLING ALLEY DAY

CLOSE ON: a BOWLING BALL, hitting a strike.

POP MUSIC blares in the noisy, old school bowling alley, where Luma has brought the Fugees for "family time".

They kick the ball. They forget to let go of the ball. They throw the ball. They slide on the floor. They wipe out on their butts. They show off their Michael Jackson dance moves when "Thriller" comes over the sound system.

And most of all, they laugh. They laugh and laugh, hanging on to each other, holding their sides, laughing as if laughter were an ocean that they'd all just held hands and jumped into, together.

EXT. INDIAN CREEK FIELD DAY

The boys are re-energized for practice with a brand new attitude. Sit-ups, push-ups, leg-lifts, grunting, straining, they give it their all.

Luma rides her bicycle around the rutted field. The boys run hard to stay apace. Kundar and Daniel push each other, showing speed and endurance, almost catching the flag flying on the back of Luma's bike. Roo tries valiantly to keep up...

..but ends up puking his guts out on the dirt. Luma stops her bike and comes up to Roo, who's still retching. She checks out his barf with interest.

LUMA

Oreos. I like those, too.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD DAY

The Fugees are in the middle of playing North Atlanta. Atlanta scores, and the team's COACH lets out a loud, obnoxious, victory CROW from the sidelines.

Then it's the Fugees turn. With deft one-touch passing and teamwork, the Fugees score. Luma's only reaction is to adjust her frayed Smith College baseball cap.

At the half, the Fugees are up 3-1.

Luma gathers her players in a corner of the field. The North Atlanta Coach screams at his players on the other side:

NORTH ATLANTA COACH

If you followed my instructions,
nobody could beat you! Nobody!

Luma turns towards the offending noise.

LUMA

See that coach? I want him to sit
down and be quiet. That's when you
know we've won - when he sits down
and shuts up. Got it?

THE BOYS

Yes Coach.

SECOND HALF -- with exceptional team work, the Fugees keep scoring.

Lucien takes a shot and the keeper tips it around the post for a corner kick. Roo RAISES HIS HAND indicating the set play. Daniel does the fake run to create space for Kundar to meet the oncoming cross full on with his head, directing it straight into the top corner. GOAL!

The ref blows the whistle - game over. Final score 9-2 Fugees. It's a shellacking.

The North Atlanta coach plops down on the bench and finally shuts up. The Fugees look over at Luma. There's no conqueror's smirk on her lips. She's stone-faced.

DANIEL
Is coach happy?

KUNDAR
See if she touch her hat.

As if she's heard them, Luma lifts her Smith cap off her head, runs her fingers through her short hair, and puts it back on at a jaunty angle.

The boys look at each other and smile.

She's happy.

EXT. TACO BELL AFTERNOON

Tacos. Burritos. Gorditas. The Fugees celebrate their win at Taco Bell, scarfing their food at a couple outdoor tables.

LUMA
I'm going to have to drive you home
in shifts.

Luma works out her "shuttle route" on a piece of paper.

LUMA
I'll take you five first, then you
five, and then come back for the
rest of you. Gives you a chance to
do your homework. Starting now.

Negasi, usually quiet, appears at Luma's side.

NEGASI
Can you help me with this, Coach? I
don't understand very well.

Negasi pulls out Shakespeare's MACBETH. Luma winces. Gabba pulls out an algebra book.

GABBA
Can you help me, too?

SEVEN
Me, too.

They all want help. Luma turns to Roo.

LUMA
Roo? How'r you doing on your homework? Kundar?

Roo and Kundar fidget and shrug. Not so good.

LUMA
Can any of you do your homework?

EXT. VARIOUS DAY

MONTAGE: Picnic tables, apartment building stairwells and Taco Bells become the "study halls" for the Fugees. Luma sits shoulder-to-shoulder with the boys, pouring over algebra and English homework after practice.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE NIGHT

AT A CORNER TABLE -- Six Fugees struggle with math homework. Luma hovers briefly over their shoulders, making corrections, before hustling to attend to customers.

BEHIND THE COUNTER - JESUS, the cook, leans through the kitchen window waving an order slip.

JESUS
What does this say?

Luma squints at the order slip she wrote.

JESUS
You don' have a foggy idea, do you?

Luma rubs her eyes. He's right. She's exhausted.

INT. ATLANTA MANSION DAY

Champagne bubbles rise in fluted glasses. Silver trays shine. Wood gleams. Hair glistens. Pearls glow. Soft chatter wafts through a stylish, mostly-female cocktail party.

"WELCOME, SMITH ALUMNI" says the guest book on the rosewood entry table. Luma signs her name and enters the chic gathering in her usual garb -- jeans, a sweat shirt, sneakers. Accepting a glass of champagne from a waiter's tray, she takes up position by a velvet-draped window and braces herself with a swig.

ACROSS THE ROOM -- a small clutch of young women are enjoying a good catch-up when one of them happens to notice Luma.

SMITH ALUM #1
Hey -- look who's here.

SMITH ALUM #2
Didn't she play volleyball?

SMITH ALUM #1
Volleyball, basketball, soccer.
Incredible athlete. Everyone was in love.

TRACY
Who with?

TRACY JOHNSON-- 27, fresh, sexy, and in full possession of the social graces - walks up and joins their conversation. The women nod to Luma, still hiding in the corner.

SMITH ALUM #1
That one, over there.

Tracy looks over just in time to see the awkward Luma spill her glass of champagne. Tracy smiles softly.

TRACY
Hard to believe.
(to her friends)
Excuse me.

Tracy takes leave of her circle and weaves her way over. Luma spots her coming and attempts a cool pose.

TRACY
Well, hello.

LUMA
Hi.

TRACY
You haven't changed.

LUMA
I'm older.

TRACY

You haven't changed your clothes.
You were wearing that exact same
sweatshirt at the U2 concert five
years ago.

LUMA

Oh. I'm pretty sure I've done
laundry since then.

Luma reddens slightly. Tracy narrows her gaze ---

TRACY

Where did you go? Back to Jordan?

LUMA

No.

TRACY

You've been here the whole time?

LUMA

Here and there.

TRACY

Have you seen your parents?

LUMA

You know how some people can pick
up a conversation right where they
left off years before, and it feels
like no time has passed? I'm not
one of those people.

TRACY

Fair enough.

Tracy sips her champagne. Luma, uncomfortable, pretends to
look about the room with interest.

LUMA

Everybody here looks so successful.

TRACY

They're Smithies. What did you
expect, pole dancers?

LUMA

Don't knock it 'till you've tried
it.

(on Tracy's look)

Wait - have you?

TRACY

No. But thank you. I work at Jacobs Hicks Financial. I tell people where to stick their money.

LUMA

(wry)

I've done that.

TRACY

I thought you didn't want to talk about the past.

LUMA

I don't.

TRACY

That is what people tend to do at these things, you know.

LUMA

I prefer the present.

TRACY

Alright then. What are you up to "presently"?

LUMA

I feed the people.

TRACY

You're in non-profit? World Food Program?

LUMA

Country Kitchen Cafe.

TRACY

You're *waitressing*?

LUMA

And I'm coaching soccer.

TRACY

That I can believe. You, cultivating a new crop of Mia Hamms.

LUMA

Not girls' soccer. Boys. Refugee boys.

TRACY

Is that right. They any good?

LUMA

Good? They're Africans. Afghanis. Burmese. So yeah, they play. They play like their lives depend on it. Which they sort of do.

TRACY

How so?

LUMA

Soccer is the only shot they'll ever have at college.

TRACY

They getting the grades?

LUMA

Not yet. Half of them just started speaking English. And their moms can't really explain "Macbeth" to them, you know? So I'm there helping them with their schoolwork every night...

TRACY

I thought you said you were their soccer coach.

LUMA

...after soccer. And there's a lot of them. And after practice, they smell really, really bad. Teenage boy sweat. You've never experienced b.o. like that before in your life. Like toxic fumes. You could pass out. You should really smell it sometime.

TRACY

Noted.

LUMA

Seriously.

TRACY

Is that an actual invitation?

LUMA

I'll pick you up. We play this Saturday, at noon.

Tracy stares at Luma.

TRACY

You didn't return my calls for four years.

LUMA

I'm sorry. I didn't return anyone's calls for four years.

The two young women look into each other's eyes. They have a history.

LUMA

You said -- I should find you if I ever needed anything.

TRACY

And what you need is for me to go to a refugee boys' soccer game?

LUMA

No. What I need is for you to tutor algebra.

EXT. INDIAN CREEK - BENCHES - EVENING

A dozen FLASHLIGHTS hover like fireflies over a picnic table at Indian Creek Field.

CLOSE ON: algebra pages, illuminated by the yellow glow. Tracy leans over the Fugees, explaining the math. They try hard, rubbing their heads with their palms.

Tracy comes over to Luma, eyes wide.

TRACY

I think they forgot to teach algebra at the Congo civil war.

Tracy nods to Lucien and Benjamin, over in the parking lot.

TRACY

Those two can't add.

ON Lucien AND Benjamin - they are talking to somebody in a parked car. The driver leans his head out -- he looks like a typical AMS GANG MEMBER.

Luma peers at them. The AMS guy is wearing his hair in long, tight braids -- just like Lucien and Benjamin.

CUT TO:

EXT. TACO BELL AFTERNOON

LUMA

From now on, there will be tutoring every day after practice. It is not optional. If you don't show up for tutoring, you're off the team.

The Fugees groan. They are once again gathered at the "Taco Bell Study Hall" with their homework. Tracy has come straight from her office and is still in her suit.

LUMA

And there's another new rule. You have to keep your hair cut shorter than Coach's.

Everyone looks around. This new rule will only affect two people: Lucien and Benjamin, who have shoulder length braids.

LUCIEN

Why we have to cut hair?

LUMA

It's a matter of respect. The way you look is the way people will treat you. If your hair isn't shorter than mine by the next practice, don't bother to show up.

As Luma keeps talking, Lucien vents angrily under his breath:

LUCIEN

You play with your feet. The hair don't touch the ball.

Lucien shoves his math homework across the table and kicks back, glowering.

EXT. INDIAN CREEK - DAY

The boys are doing warm-up drills. Luma calls out to Kundar:

LUMA

Kundar! Lucien and Benjamin are late. Do you know where they are?

Kundar nods over to the parking lot. Luma looks:

ANGLE ON: Lucien and Benjamin are across the parking lot, hanging out with the AMS gang. Their hair is untouched. Luma barely flinches.

LUMA
 Alright. Get back in.

EXT. CLARKSTON SCHOOL DAY

Kundar exits school carrying his knapsack over his shoulder. As he turns the corner, he is surrounded by the same Young Dangerous Click (African-American gang members) who jumped him before.

YDC BOY #1
 Hey Africa. Where you goin?
 (tries to hand him small
 package)
Here. Walk this across the street
 for me.

Kundar avoids the hand-off and steps away.

KUNDAR
 I am sorry. I go other way.

YDC #2 twists Kundar's arm behind his back and jams him into a corner, smashing his face hard against the wall. They all close in on him.

YDC BOY #2
 You ain't goin' nowhere.

YDC BOY #1
 Your ass be in the real jungle now.

YDC BOY #3
 This nigga make me look white.

YDC BOY #1
 Where you think you goin' wit dat
 fancy backpack?

YDC BOY #3
 He goin' to college.

YDC BOY #2
 College, dat must be nice. I want
 to go to college. You goin' take me
 wit you?

YDC BOY #1
 Somebody musta told him dis is
 America. He think everybody gonna
 get their dream come true. Let me
 'splain something to you. There
 ain't no room left at the top.

(MORE)

YDC BOY #1 (CONT'D)
 There ain't even room left at the
 bottom.

The YDC boys see some AMS gang members walking nearby. Avoiding the coming confrontation, they rip Kundar's knapsack from his back and quickly leave.

Kundar, wincing in pain, looks up to see Lucien and Benjamin pass by with three of their homies. Lucien shakes his head at Kundar's battered face and says in Swahili:

LUCIEN
 (in Swahili)
 You should be one of us.

BENJAMIN
 (makes gang sign)
 African Mob Squad! AMS.

They walk off, leaving Kundar holding his face.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN NIGHT

CLOSE ON: a pot of chicken stew, bubbling away. Tracy gives it a stir.

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE - Luma cleans the cut above Kundar's eye.

LUMA
 If you keep getting beat up on the
 same road, what can you do?

KUNDAR
 Take other road.

LUMA
 That's right. Stay away from those
 guys.

Luma puts an ice pack on the boy's swollen eye.

KUNDAR
 I think I am too black for this
 place. The black people here are a
 little bit brown. I am the wrong
 color black.

Tracy watches a tear roll down Kundar's face.

KUNDAR
 Really I am not feeling good. I am
 discouraged being a human being.
 (MORE)

KUNDAR (CONT'D)

When I come here I see a bright
future with extreme hopeful joy.
But maybe there is no room for us.

LUMA

There's room for you. There's room
for anybody who wants to do his
best.

KUNDAR

But they do not want us here.

LUMA

They do want you. They just forgot
they want you. Remind them.

KUNDAR

How?

Tracy turns from the stove.

TRACY

You tell us how.

Kundar struggles to satisfy her.

KUNDAR

Maybe I can do good things,
because...

TRACY

Because why?

KUNDAR

...because my heart has caught the
thought of being a leader.

LUMA

Good. Let your heart keep that
thought.

(points to his good eye)

Can you see out of that eye?

KUNDAR

Yes.

LUMA

Then go into the living room and
read for a while.

Kundar nods, glad to be allowed to stay at Coach's.

As soon as he is gone from the kitchen, Tracy throws her oven-
mitt at Luma's head. Luma ducks.

LUMA
What's that for?

TRACY
I had my life all planned out, you
know.

Tracy's eyes are full. Luma gives her a little smile.

LUMA
Sorry?

Tracy turns back to the stove and starts stirring again.

FADE OUT.

FADE UP

EXT. UPSCALE CLARKSTON NEIGHBORHOOD - HALLOWEEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: severed heads, mounted on stakes. Rotten bodies,
half out of the grave. Skeletons, swaying from trees.

It's Halloween in Clarkston, and spooky strobe lights have
transformed the homes in this UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD into
haunted mansions. Manicured front lawns sprout headstones
draped with zombies and skeletons. COSTUMED CHILDREN,
shrieking with laughter, race down the sidewalks.

IN QUICK CUTS -- DOOR AFTER DOOR swings open to reveal 13
Fugees, grinning ear to ear and chanting "Trick or Treat!"
The boys are decked out in outlandish dime store costumes:
garbage bag capes, Groucho glasses, rainbow wigs and vividly
painted faces. The HOMEOWNERS look genuinely startled as they
pass out candy to the elated boys.

ON THE SIDEWALK AGAIN - Dah crows over his candy loot as the
boys dash to the next house. He giggles to Gabba:

DAH
I can't believe this works!

GABBA
I agree! When you knock on a door
in Eritrea, they don't give you
candy!

AT A GEORGIAN-STYLE HOME - the polished front door opens to
reveal a pleasant woman in a sequined pumpkin sweater, 60.
Gasping at the happy horde before her, she quickly collects
herself:

WOMAN

Look how scary!

(calls, O.S.)

Honey, you've got to come see how scary these boys are.

The woman's husband - Mayor McCann - appears at her side. The Mayor surveys the boys with pleasure.

MAYOR MCCANN

Very scary! Let's see: there's Batman, I think. And Harpo Marx, sort of. And...what are you, son?

Luma steps out of the shadows.

LUMA

Happy Halloween.

The Mayor puts two and two together.

MAYOR MCCANN

Luma! These boys must belong to you.

LUMA

They're the Fugees.

THE BOYS

Trick and treat!

LUMA

It's their first Halloween.

MAYOR'S WIFE

First Halloween! I love it! Here boys, take a chocolate bar. Everybody take one.

As the boys help themselves to extra large chocolate bars, Luma takes advantage of having the Mayor to herself. She motions for Tracy to step forward.

LUMA

Mr. Mayor, this is my friend Tracy Johnson. She's helping out with the team now.

Tracy offers the Mayor her perfect, golden-girl smile.

TRACY

(charming)

We've been practicing over at Indian Creek. You should come on down and see us sometime.

MAYOR MCCANN

Why, I'd love to.

TRACY

Wonderful. We'd like to show you all the broken glass on the ground. And the gangs in the parking lot.

LUMA

Little League usually doesn't start until spring, right? So maybe we could get some practice time in at Armistead Field after all.

MAYOR MCCANN

Interesting. Let's be sure to talk about that. Thanks for bringing them by, Luma. Nice to meet you, Tracy. Have fun, Boys!

THE BOYS

Happy Halloween!

Smiling, the Mayor pulls his wife back inside and shuts the door. Tracy laughs at Luma as the boys run on to the next house.

LUMA

Had to try.

IN THE STREET -- the boys have found a plastic jack-o'-lantern. They joyfully dribble the orange plastic orb, shouting as they pass it to each other down the street full of trick-or-treaters.

The plastic pumpkin gets a swift kick from Moses and goes flying into a front yard. Daniel goes after it...

And comes face to face with a ghastly, realistic HORROR DISPLAY OF DECAPITATED, SCREAMING HEADS ON STAKES. The eyes are popped out, the tongues are lolling, the flesh hangs from the severed necks. Daniel freezes. Kundar calls him from the street.

KUNDAR

Daniel!

Daniel snaps out of it and kicks the plastic pumpkin back onto the road.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE LATER THAT NIGHT

The Fugees are flopped on Luma's living room floor, working on a candy coma. They trade booty; pour powdery sugar straws into each other's mouths; compare blue tongues.

GABRIEL

This is the best day of my life.

Gabriel empties some Good n' Plenty in his mouth. Aziz flops back on a floor pillow, contemplating a large chocolate bar.

AZIZ

Look at the size of this chocolate bar.

ROO

It's from the Mayor's house. To give a chocolate bar this big, you have to be a great man.

KUNDAR

(admiring the size)
A very great man.

Luma and Tracy are flopped on the couch.

LUMA

Fugees law: pick out all the Snickers Bars and give them to Coach.

GABBA

Why?

LUMA

Because. They're my favorites.

Roo lets Luma steal a Snickers Bar from him. He giggles.

OMAR

Did you see the place with the heads?

LUGMAN

The chopped heads. Sticking up.

ROO

With the eye balls popping!

Omar and Roo stick their tongues out and roll their eyes back, making grotesque, gurgling sounds. The other boys laugh --- except for Daniel, who looks increasingly disturbed by these antics. There's something building in him. With sudden force he leaps to his feet and up-ends a side table:

DANIEL

AHHHHHH!

Everyone falls into a stunned silence. Daniel runs from the room. Luma stays still. Tracy leaps to her feet.

TRACY

Daniel! What's wrong with him?

MOSES

(quietly)

He was a soldier in Liberia. They make him do things like that.

LUGMAN

How do you know?

MOSES

Because I am Liberian too.

All the kids are quiet. Tracy bolts after Daniel. Luma follows.

IN THE HALL -- THAT MOMENT

Luma catches Tracy's arm as she heads down the hall.

LUMA

Leave him alone.

TRACY

What? Why?

LUMA

Don't baby him. His life was hard and it's still going to be hard. Babying him won't help. He needs to grow up.

TRACY

I don't want to baby him. I want to comfort him.

LUMA

Don't.

Tracy stares at Luma, shocked.

TRACY
He's a child.

LUMA
He's a young man.

TRACY
I don't agree with you.

LUMA
Fine. Don't. But this isn't your
call. And this isn't your team.

Tracy looks wounded. She turns and walks out the door.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD DAY

F/A-18s roar over a soccer field in a V-formation.

Daniel and other Fugees tilt their heads back to watch as the deafening fighter jets pass overhead. They flinch.

NORCROSS PLAYER #1
Hey. You boys lost? Africa is that-
away.

PLAYERS from the NORCROSS COMETS jog past, laughing in their flashy red and black uniforms.

ACROSS THE FIELD -- The COMETS COACH approaches Luma.

COMETS COACH
Never played against a girl coach
before.

The mockery is obvious. Luma ignores him.

COMETS COACH
You're the quiet type, huh? Well, I
just came over here to welcome you
to Norcross and to ask you what's
it like to coach a team of niggers.
But I guess I'll have to wait and
see.

He walks off.

IN THE HUDDLE - LATER

Luma prepares her team for what they're about to face.

LUMA

You're going to hear things out there today, and when you do, you're going to pretend you don't understand and you're going to smile. The more they say, the bigger you smile. Got it? Don't let them get in your head.

The boys nod.

ON THE PLAYING FIELD - THE GAME

The two teams compete fiercely, fueled by mutual contempt. As Kundar fights a Midfielder for the ball, the Coach shouts:

COMETS COACH

Come on! Beat their black butts!

Kundar sees Luma watching. He remembers what she said - and turns and smiles at the coach. A huge, white smile.

COMETS COACH

Watcha lookin' at, boy? Turn your face!

Kundar smiles bigger at the Comet's Coach.

COMETS COACH

I said turn your face, ni---!

REF

That's it! You're gone!

The REF throws up a RED CARD on the Comets Coach. The Coach leaves, smirking, and the ASSISTANT COACH replaces him from the sideline.

But the game keeps getting uglier. The mean-spirited Comets make monkey sounds as they play. YELLOW CARD. Lugman shouts at a player in Bosnian and shoves him. RED CARD. The game is spinning out of control.

Then, as Daniel breaks away with the ball and blows past a DEFENDER, the Comets player throws his elbow up and clips Daniel in the face. Daniel goes down, holding his eye. When he takes his hands away from his face, they're full of blood from a gash on his cheek.

Before the Ref can red card the defender, Daniel rushes the player, tackles him to the ground and starts punching. Kundar, Roo and Omar try to break them up as Luma sprints across the field, shouting.

The boys pull Daniel off, but he's still raging. Luma grabs him from behind in a bear hug and holds on.

LUMA

Stop! You've got to stop!

REF

That's it! YOU! Number 8! Red card!
Outta here! YOU! Number 14! Red
card! Outta here! Any more of this
crap and I'm forfeiting the game!

LATER - the game continues.

Luma, Daniel and Lugman sit on the bench. Daniel holds a shirt on his bloody face. Luma stares at the ground. She doesn't raise her head until the whistle blow signals the end of the game. The Fugees have lost: 3-2.

Luma gets up and signals for Daniel to follow. They walk away silently.

EXT. HOSPITAL NIGHT

Luma, Daniel, Roo and Kundar exit through the emergency doors of the Decatur hospital. Daniel's got a white bandage on his cheek.

INT. LUMA'S YELLOW VW BUG -- NIGHT

Soothing music plays on the radio as Luma drives the boys home from the hospital.

Luma watches the boys in her rear view mirror. All three are in the back seat, with Daniel in the middle. Roo and Kundar lean on their friend, as if their body warmth could help him heal.

But then something else appears in the rear view -- FLASHING LIGHTS. The SQUAWK of a police car siren startles them all upright. Luma bites her lip.

LUMA

My tail light.
(pulling car to the side)
Boys, I'm getting pulled over.

The boys look confused.

KUNDAR

What means "pulled over"?

LUMA

The police are stopping me. It's not that big a deal.

Luma rolls down her window. COP #1 appears with a flashlight in his hand. He shines it into the car.

COP #1

Driver's license and registration, please. Did you know one of your tail lights is out?

LUMA

Yes. I'm sorry. I was just about to take care of that.

He reads her driver's license.

COP #1

Luma H. Mufleh. What does the "H" stand for?

LUMA

Hassan.

COP #1

Hassan? Where's that from?

LUMA

Jordan.

COP #1

It's Arab? What'r you doing here?

LUMA

We're on our way back from the hospital.

The Cop shines the flashlight in Luma's face.

COP #1

No. What are you doing here? In the United States?

Luma squints in the relentless glare. Steadies her voice.

LUMA

I'm a soccer...

COP #1

Get out of the car. All of you.

LUMA

I'm sorry, why do the boys have
to...

A SECOND SQUAD CAR pulls up, lights flashing.

COP #1

Get out of the car now.

They all start to get out of the car. Cop #1 motions the boys
to the curb.

COP #1

Down on the curb. Sit on your
hands.

LUMA

Officer, you know these kids.
You've seen them at practice.

COP #1

Put your hands behind your back.

COP #1 handcuffs Luma. Rattled, she tries her best to
reassure the boys:

LUMA

(to the boys)

It's okay. It's just a
misunderstanding...

The Cop is already pulling Luma to the squad car. Roo jumps
to his feet and shouts:

ROO

Where are you taking my coach?

COP #1

Sit back down and shut up, Taliban.

At the mention of that word, something comes over Roo. He
looks from Cop #1's GUN...to COP #2 exiting his squad car,
hand on his nightstick...to his friends sitting on the ground
in mute submission...to his coach getting stuffed into the
back of the squad car.

And suddenly Roo is running.

COP #2

I'll get him.

Roo is a rocket fueled by terror, already halfway down the
street.

Cop #2 jumps back into his car and guns it, taking off in pursuit. Luma watches helplessly from the back of the other squad car.

Cop #1 pulls his gun on Kundar and Daniel to make sure they stay put. Kundar is shaking, looking at the Cop with pleading eyes -- but something hard has come over Daniel. He knows about stuff like this. He whispers calmly to Kundar:

DANIEL
Put your head down.

Kundar drops his head. He's scared out of his wits, breathing in gasps. Daniel is cool. His is the voice of experience.

DANIEL
Do not look him in the eyes. Do not move.

EXT. STREETS OF CLARKSTON - THAT MOMENT

Roo's legs are churning as he tears down the sidewalk. The squad car pulls up behind him and he pivots, sprinting down an alley. The police car follows, smashing garbage cans aside. Roo leaps over a wall.

RESIDENTIAL AREA - THE CHASE CONTINUES

Roo's pace is relentless. All those laps in soccer practice are serving him now. For a moment we think he's lost the squad car...then it pulls into view behind him. Roo cuts across a back yard.

UPSCALE NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

Pushing on, gasping, Roo runs down a sidewalk in an upscale neighborhood. The Squad Car turns the corner and barrels down the street, just as Roo turns up a front path.

Lungs bursting, the boy reaches the handsome wooden door, presses the brass door bell and collapses with exhaustion on the front steps.

The Squad Car pulls to the curb just as the door swings open to reveal ---

MAYOR McCANN'S WIFE

Roo throws himself at her feet:

ROO
Please help us, Missus.

The Mayor's Wife looks from the little boy at her feet to the Cop exiting his car at the curb. She calls inside, over her shoulder:

MAYOR MCCANN'S WIFE

Mike! Better get out here.

The Mayor appears at the door next to his wife. He looks down at the gasping Roo. He puts his hand out to stop the approaching officer.

MAYOR MCCANN

Get up, son. What's this about?

Roo looks up with a tear stained face.

ROO

They took my coach away.

INT. HOLDING CELL - COUNTY JAIL NIGHT

Luma sits in a holding cell, stoney-faced. She looks up as a guard unlocks the door.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - MOMENTS LATER

Luma enters the processing/release area to find Tracy waiting for her.

LUMA

Where's Roo?

TRACY

He's okay. He's outside with the others.

LUMA

Thanks for bailing me out.

TRACY

I didn't have to. You were already being released. Roo worked his connections.

LUMA

What?

The jail guard returns Luma's possessions to her. Tracy snarls at the woman:

TRACY
 (to jail guard)
 Since when does a broken tail light
 put you behind bars?

LUMA
 Let's just get out of here.

EXT. COUNTY JAIL NIGHT

Luma and Tracy exit the County Jail. Daniel, Kundar and Roo are waiting outside by Tracy's car. When Roo sees Luma, he rushes up and flings his arms around her waist.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE NIGHT

Chocolate syrup makes dark swirls in four mugs of hot milk.

TRACY
 Sometimes scary stuff happens. Even
 here. But that doesn't mean that
 things won't turn out alright in
 the end.

Tracy hands the hot chocolate to the boys.

LUMA
 Go watch TV.

The boys leave the room with their cocoa. Luma, exhausted, sinks into a kitchen chair. Tracy confronts her:

TRACY
 Roo thought he was never going to
 see you again. He thought the
 Taliban had got you for good.

Tracy hands Luma a cup of hot cocoa.

TRACY
 These kids need to talk.

LUMA
 They don't want to talk.

TRACY
 No - you don't want to talk. They
 want to talk. They need to talk.

Luma stares into her cocoa. Maybe she's right.

LUMA
What do you have in mind?

INT. CNN - ATLANTA DAY

Tracy, Luma and the Fugees follow a FILM EDITOR down a long corridor inside CNN headquarters in Atlanta. The boys are excited by the bustling atmosphere. Luma whispers to Tracy:

LUMA
How did you get CNN to donate all
this to us?

Tracy nods to the Editor.

TRACY
My friend's a big shot. And she's a
Smithie.

Luma smiles.

INT. EDITING SUITE -- CNN -- DAY

The Editor, accompanied by three ASSISTANT EDITORS, stands in a room containing several Avid systems.

EDITOR
Somebody told us you boys like
soccer.

The boys laugh in agreement.

EDITOR
We have photos of all your favorite
soccer stars. We also have photos
of your home countries. Pictures
of people. Pictures of animals.
Pictures of war.

An Assistant brings up samples of these kinds of stills on the Avid.

EDITOR
Your job is to work with your
editor and make a little "video
poem" -- just two minutes long -
called "Where I come from." We'll
help you find the photos you want,
and then you'll add your own words,
and some music. It's just for you.
Let's get started.

MONTAGE -- MAKING THE VIDEO POEMS

(Note: this scene is inspired by the real "Poetry Workshop" that the Fugees participated in. Dozens of these two minute video-poems, set to music, were made by the boys.)

With CLOSE CAMERA WORK and DISSOLVES, moving from the eloquent faces of the boys, to the emotional faces of the editors, to the heart-wrenching STILLS on screen, we glean something about the lives of the Fugees before they came to the U.S., and start to understand just what horrors they are refugees from.

KUNDAR - "I come from fences" (photo: hands reaching through the fence at a refugee camp)

MOHAMMED - "I come from fire" (photo: a Baghdad street filled with burning cars)

LUGMAN - "I come from no more sisters" (photo: crying girls dragged away by soldiers)

GABRIEL- "I come from heroes" (photo: Africans play World Cup soccer)

OMAR - "I come from blood" (photo: bomb victims)

GABBA - "I come from beauty"(the mountainous jungle)

ROO - "I come from no more father"(photo: Taliban street execution)

SEVEN - "I come from speed." (photo: Ronaldo in action)

KUNDAR - "I come from walking" (photo: refugees, including toddlers, fleeing on foot)

NEGASI - "I come from hungry" (photo: Kevin Carter's photo of the vulture and the African child waiting to die)

MOSES - "I come from Michael Jackson" (photo: the King of Pop)

VARIOUS BOYS - "I come from family."(photo: a happy black family)

Luma and Tracy watch in emotional silence. All the boys are deeply engaged in making their video poems.

Except for one. Daniel.

He sits alone in a corner, doodling in a notebook. He never even looks up.

INT. LUMA'S YELLOW BEETLE -- NIGHT

Luma has brought the boys back to Southern Pines. Kundar, Aziz and Roo say goodnight and get out of the Beetle. But Daniel stays in the car.

DANIEL'S POV --- the African Mob Squad is hanging out in front of his building, laughing and harassing each other. One of them aims his finger, "pulls the trigger" and laughs.

DANIEL

If I get out of this car, I might hurt that man.

He's not joking. Luma looks at him.

LUMA

Let's go ask your mother if you can come home with me tonight.

INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT NIGHT

Winifred is watching television. The little ones are asleep on the floor beside her. Daniel and Luma enter.

Winifred glances up at Daniel, picks up the nearest object -- an alarm clock - and hurls it, hitting him in the shoulder.

DANIEL

Aye! What did I do?

LUMA

Hold on, there!

Winifred rages at Daniel, nostrils flaring.

WINIFRED

Dirt! You come home with dirt! All over your soccer uniform! Mud! All over it! Where is the mud now? Here! In this house! Why do you bring dirt in this house? You have no respect! No respect! You are like the baggy pants men! You are dirt like them!

(shrieks at Luma)

You are his coach. You tell him. You tell him not to bring his dirty uniform into this house.

Luma takes it all in -- the tortured, unbalanced woman - the younger children, awake now, and cowering behind the couch -- Daniel, trembling with fear and rage.

LUMA
 (calmly)
 Daniel - apologize to your mother
 for the dirt.

Winifred is throwing whatever she can reach at her son. A pillow. A magazine. A pen.

LUMA
 (calmly)
 Go on. Apologize.

Daniel falls to his knees.

DANIEL
 I am sorry for the dirt, mother.

Winifred raises her hand to strike Daniel. Luma steps between them.

LUMA
 Wait! Let me punish him. I won't
 let him play at the next practice.
 I'll just make him run laps.

Daniel starts to cry. His tears calm Winifred down. Her hands fall limply at her sides.

WINIFRED
 (approving his tears)
 He learns now.

LUMA
 I want to take him home with me for
 a few days. You have your hands
 full. Let me discipline him.

Daniel sneaks a look at Luma.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE LATER THAT NIGHT

Daniel puts his dirty soccer uniform into the washing machine at Luma's house. She gently demonstrates:

LUMA
 (teaching him)
 You put the soap here. And you
 close it. And push this button.

LUMA'S OFFICE/GUEST ROOM LATER

Daniel lies down on a mattress on the floor. Luma tucks a blanket around him with unusual tenderness.

LUMA

From now on, when your uniform is dirty, bring it here. Your mom's under a lot of pressure and stress. She's had a hard life and we don't want to make it harder.

DANIEL

Yes, Coach.

LUMA

Okay. Sweet dreams, Daniel.

Luma rises and heads for the door.

DANIEL

What means, "sweet dreams?"

LUMA

It means dream about something sweet.

DANIEL

Like ice cream?

LUMA

That works.

DANIEL

I do not dream about sweet things. I dream about rice. Big bowls of fufu. And big, big chickens. You fill your plate. You eat it all. Then you have more. All you can eat.

LUMA

We have those places here. They're actually called "All You Can Eat."

The boy gives Luma a skeptical look.

DANIEL

No. You are joking.

LUMA

I'm not joking.

DANIEL

(laughing)
You are joking!

LUMA

No! I'm not joking!

Daniel falls silent. Then, amazed:

DANIEL
You are not joking?

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDEN CORRAL RESTAURANT DAY

ROO
"Help Yourself to Happiness."

An awe-struck Roo reads the trademark banner hanging above the sprawling buffet tables at the chain restaurant, GOLDEN CORRAL. Daniel reads another sign:

DANIEL
"All you can eat."

LUMA
Told you.

Daniel just stares, frozen in amazement like the rest of the Fugees. Luma and Tracy put trays in their hands.

LUMA
It's called a "buffet". You get a tray and you take whatever you want.

The boys survey the nearly incomprehensible abundance. There's a hot buffet with rows of steaming meats; a soup and salad bar; a dessert buffet that explains America's obesity problem.

TRACY
Go on. You're allowed.

AT THE BUFFET TABLES - The Fugees go for it. Quantity is the objective, as everything gets piled indiscriminately on top of everything else.

Daniel makes a mountain of spaghetti and tops it off with mashed potatoes, chicken and Texas toast. Gabba plops a hunk of meatloaf on top of pork ribs and banana pudding. Gabriel builds a tower of chocolate cake, mac n' cheese and coconut shrimp.

Chubby American CUSTOMERS forget to put their forks in their mouths as they witness the scene, slack-jawed.

TRACY

Look. Seven's eating a food pyramid. Although I'm not sure it's what the US department of agriculture had in mind.

Luma looks over at Seven's meat and ice cream "pyramid". The food land-slides over Ehblue's tray. Luma covers her eyes.

LUMA

Guys! You don't have to fit it all on one plate! You can go back for more!

Kundar doesn't hear her. He's too busy pouring jelly beans onto his lasagna.

DRUMS kick into rockin' 4/4 time and CARRY OVER to...

INT. LUMA'S BEETLE/TRACY'S BRONCO DAY

Crammed into Luma's Beetle, five happily satiated boys sing at the top of their lungs to the tune of the soccer favorite Olé! Olé! Olé! Olé!

THE BOYS

(sing)

Buffet! Buffet Buffet Buffet!
Buffet! Buffet!

Moments later, Tracy's FORD BRONCO appears, caravanning behind Luma. The eight boys in her truck are singing too.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD DAY - MUSIC CONTINUES

MUSIC CONTINUES - Warming up with pre-game laps, the boys sing to their coach as they run past her:

THE BOYS

Buffet! Buffet Buffet Buffet!

LUMA

Yeah, right. First win the game.
Then we'll talk.

PLAYING FIELD -- LATER -- GAME ON

The buffet's a good motivator. The Fugees are winning.

Moses scores. He does a celebratory dance, pulling off his shirt and sticking out his "big" stomach, rubbing it as if it were fat and full.

MOSES

Booooooffet!

Moses gets a RED CARD for the shirt stunt. As he leaves the field, his teammates rub their stomachs back to him.

THE BOYS

Booooooffet!

BACK AT THE GOLDEN CORRAL -- The Fugees are back for more. Ahhh. Winning is good! Buffets are great! Olé!

EXT. INDIAN CREEK FIELD DAY

The Fugees return to Indian Creek Field for practice.

POLICE TAPE cordons off a section of the parking lot at the practice field. There's a CHALK OUTLINE of a body on the pavement. Daniel stands over it and stares. Luma comes up behind him and moves him along.

LUMA

Laps. Now.

But she looks back at the blood-stained asphalt, ill at ease.

In the parking lot -- Lucien and Benjamin, now baby members of the African Mob Squad, look over at Luma. One of them raises his hand in greeting.

Luma ignores him.

INT. THRIFTOWN MARKET DAY

Kundar, Daniel and Roo commandeer two shopping carts down the aisles of Thriftown Market. Their carts are piled high with staples -- cereal, bread, toilet paper.

As Luma throws ten boxes of spaghetti into the cart, a passing SHOPPER quickly stuffs something in her pocket and whispers in passing:

SHOPPER

It's for them.

Surprised, Luma reaches into her pocket and pulls out a one hundred dollar bill. She turns to thank the anonymous donor, but he's already gone.

ELDERLY WOMAN (O.S.)

Young lady? Where do they keep the Campbell's in this store?

Luma turns to see a NINETY YEAR OLD WHITE WOMAN addressing her. She's got a lot of life in her, despite her age.

ELDERLY WOMAN

I just can't find my mushroom soup.

LUMA

We'll get it for you. Boys? Aisle 10. Campbell's mushroom soup. How many would you like, ma'am?

ELDERLY WOMAN

Just two. Thank you.

The boys rush off.

LUMA

Don't run!

Just then, the Elderly Woman's son comes around the corner - and he happens to be Mayor McCann.

MAYOR MCCANN

Can't find anything, mother. I'm lost.

ELDERLY WOMAN

That's alright. She's not.

Now Mayor McCann sees Luma. The humor is not lost on either of them.

MAYOR MCCANN

Mother, this is Luma Mufleh. Luma, my mother.

LUMA

Pleased to meet you, Ma'am.

ELDERLY WOMAN

My son doing a good job for you, young lady?

LUMA

Well, actually...

Mayor McCann's eyebrows shoot up. But for Luma, there's no time like the present.

LUMA

...I hoped to talk to you, Mr. Mayor, about Indian Creek. There was another shooting there just the other day.

(MORE)

LUMA (CONT'D)

And Armistead Field - is it still open every afternoon? Because it would be much safer for practice.

MAYOR MCCANN

Here's the thing about Armistead Field...

The SOUND of RAISED, UPSET VOICES interrupts the Mayor's reply.

OSCAR ROBINSON (O.S.)

What'd you have to go and do that for?

The Mayor, his mother and Luma round the corner to see what's going on.

AT THE MEAT COUNTER -- THAT MOMENT

Clarkston old timer Oscar Robinson (we've met him before -- at the Country Kitchen, with his wife) and the market owner, STAN MARVIN, are in a standoff. Oscar's twenty year old GRANDDAUGHTER stands uncomfortably to the side.

OSCAR ROBINSON

Why did you have to go changing things?

MARKET STAN

I'm just trying to stock the foods that our community wants to eat, Mr. Robinson.

OSCAR ROBINSON

But I'm your community. And I don't come in here to buy goat! I come in here to buy pork.

MARKET STAN

And you can still buy pork chops, ham, bacon, everything. They're in their own meat section, right over there.

Stan points to a meat counter across the store.

OSCAR ROBINSON

But why are they in another meat section?

MARKET STAN

Because some of the customers find pork offensive.

Roo, Daniel and Kundar appear next to Luma. They have found the soup cans. Roo - wearing his *keffiyeh* on his head - is one of the customers Stan is talking about.

OSCAR ROBINSON

Well I find that "other section" offensive. I am offended that I have to go to another section to buy my pork. I want to buy my pork where I buy my beef, and my chicken. Let them go to another section for their goat.

Oscar sees the Mayor standing there listening.

OSCAR ROBINSON

Mike. You're the Mayor of this town. You should make laws about this.

MAYOR MCCANN

Now Oscar, Stan here is just trying to take into account that there's lots of different folks shopping at Thriftown now. And we're all just trying to find a way to live together.

OSCAR ROBINSON

I voted for you, Mike. They didn't. You should be helping the real Americans.

They've attracted a crowd. "Old" Clarkston people. Refugees. Luma and the boys. Everyone stands, riveted with tension.

MAYOR MCCANN

Stan. Maybe you can leave the pork where it was for loyal, long-time customers like Mr. Robinson. Why don't you move the goat to another counter?

MARKET STAN

(defensive, frustrated)
Because, the goat is not the problem. The pork is the problem.

OSCAR ROBINSON

(irate)
Bacon is a problem? Ham is a problem? Excuse me, but where do I live? Do I still live in Georgia? Do I still live in America?

MARKET STAN

Mr. Robinson, please! The bacon
and the ham are right over there!
They're just in a separate section!

OSCAR ROBINSON

A separate section? Separate!
"Separate but equal!" Are you
trying to segregate me? Because I
will not be segregated! Not again!
You want to segregate somebody,
segregate them!

He's pointing at Roo. Roo, the "towel head."

A stunned silence takes hold of the crowd. Luma steps in
front of the boys protectively.

LUMA

Boys, wait for me outside.

Kundar and Daniel head outside. Roo is about to follow when
he remembers the soup cans in his hands. He runs to the
Mayor's mother and puts them in her cart. Then he dashes
after Kundar.

Oscar Robinson's Granddaughter walks up and pulls on her
grand-father's sleeve.

OSCAR'S GRANDDAUGHTER

Come on, Granddaddy. Let it go.
(to Luma)
Sorry.

She leads her angry grandfather away, leaving Luma and the
Mayor, standing together in silence.

LUMA

So. What were you about to say to
me about Armistead Field?

The Mayor just looks at Luma. Then he takes his mother by the
arm and walks away.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE NIGHT

Quiet night in the diner. Miss Saralee does paperwork while
Luma works the counter.

The door jingles open. Mayor McCann enters, comes to the
counter and sits.

LUMA

Coffee?

MAYOR MCCANN

That'd be fine.

Luma pours the Mayor his coffee.

MAYOR MCCANN

Year and a half after I took office, I was home watching the television. News anchor said something about refugees coming to Georgia. *Bantus*. I remember thinking, "*Bantus: that's a funny word. Never met a Bantu before.*" Two days later, I became the mayor of seven hundred of them. Impoverished people fresh out of Hell who didn't speak a word of English. Didn't know how to drive. Never seen a telephone before. And that was just the start. Over the next few years, they sent us more. Liberia. Congo. Bosnia. Burundi. Burma. Sudan. Afghanistan.

(sips his coffee)

Do you know how big Clarkston is, Luma? I mean exactly.

LUMA

No, sir, I don't.

MAYOR MCCANN

One point one square miles. About 7,500 people. These days, one out of three of them comes from somewhere over there. A gentleman like Oscar Robinson Jr. goes down to Hungry Harry's pizza joint and finds out it's become an Eritrean restaurant. He wants to go to church and finds a mosque on the corner of 3rd and Main. He doesn't recognize the town he grew up in anymore. And sometimes neither do I.

Luma nods. Stays quiet.

MAYOR MCCANN

You a US citizen, Luma?

Miss Saralee snaps her magazine down.

MISS SARALEE

What exactly are you asking her,
Mike?

MAYOR MCCANN

I'm asking "Liz" if she's a U.S.
citizen.

MISS SARALEE

For heaven's sake, she's got a
green card.

LUMA

(staying cool)

I am not a citizen yet. But I can't
wait for the day when I can become
an American. And vote.

MAYOR MCCANN

That right?

MISS SARALEE

What point you making, Mike?

MAYOR MCCANN

I'm just making conversation.

MISS SARALEE

Then you won't mind if I
participate. Do you remember why
folks want to come here? They'd
like to save their lives. They'd
like to escape being persecuted for
their religion. They'd like to get
away from disease and starvation.

MAYOR MCCANN

You don't have to remind me about
Africa.

MISS SARALEE

I'm not. I'm reminding you about
Ireland, *Michael McCann*. What
happened to the welcome mat your
people stepped on?

He looks at her. She's got him there.

MISS SARALEE

America is changing. We just got to
get used to it.

MAYOR MCCANN

Maybe so. But not everything has to change. Some things have to stay the same. And some things will stay the same, as long as I am Mayor.

(to Luma)

Young lady, there will never be soccer in Armistead field. That field was meant for baseball.

He puts his money on the counter.

MAYOR MCCANN

Baseball.

He exits.

EXT. ARMISTEAD FIELD DAWN

Deer graze peacefully in the morning mist that shrouds Armistead Field. It's as quiet as a mountain meadow.

EXT. STREET NEAR SCHOOL DAY

Kundar walks down the street away from school. He passes a group of AMS GANG MEMBERS (not Lucien and Benjamin) playing street basketball.

A couple of them notice Kundar and step out to block his path. He looks at them.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE DAY

Luma opens her front door to find Kundar standing there, bleeding from the mouth. She sighs.

LUMA

I thought we agreed you were going to take another way home.

Kundar shrugs. Luma stands aside and he enters.

LUMA'S KITCHEN -- MINUTES LATER

Luma hands Kundar an ice pack. When he holds it to his mouth, she notices his bloody knuckles. She frowns.

LUMA

What are those?

KUNDAR
They said things.

LUMA
So?

KUNDAR
I hit them.

LUMA
(furious)
You're supposed to walk away. You know what this means, don't you? I can't let you play in the next game. You have to sit out. You're one of my leaders, you're supposed to set an example. I'm disappointed in you. You let me down and you let your team down.

Kundar stares at the floor, absorbing her anger.

LUMA
What did you fight about?

He doesn't answer.

LUMA
You have to tell me. What?

He shifts in his chair. Her impatience grows.

LUMA
Kundar!

KUNDAR
(mumbles)
They say that you are gay.

Luma stiffens. Here is the thing she doesn't talk about. The thing that has made it impossible for her to go back to Jordan. That has also made her, in effect, a refugee.

LUMA
And...is there a problem with that?

KUNDAR
There is a problem. Which is that it is not of their business.

LUMA
Good.

They share an awkward silence.

KUNDAR

Can I ask you a question, Coach?
I want to ask you for a long time.
Please promise to tell me the big,
big truth.

LUMA

(apprehensive)

I'll answer your question if I can.

Kundar looks up at Luma, his eyes full.

KUNDAR

Do you think my mother is still
alive?

It's not the question she expected. They hold each other's
eyes for a long, long moment. Luma swallows.

LUMA

Yes.

The boy's face cracks with hope. Luma looks away.

LUMA

Put the ice on your hand. And get
some rest. We have a game on
Saturday.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A HOME VIDEO of an elaborate, fairy-tale wedding
reception in AMMAN, JORDAN. Dozens of banquet tables
encircle a tiered fountain in a classical garden. Uniformed
servants carry platters of delicacies; honey-colored women
drip with jewels; powerful men congratulate each other.

The BRIDE and GROOM pose for photographs. The PARENTS of the
bride join in, dragging along their younger daughter, a
laughing, protesting, 22 YEAR OLD LUMA. She is wearing a
DRESS and diamonds in her ears.

TRACY

Hah. Look at you. In *pink*.

Tracy sits beside Luma on her living room couch, watching the
video on TV.

BACK TO THE VIDEO -- The bride and groom pose in front of a
wedding gift: a Rolls Royce, adorned with a huge, white bow.

TRACY

God, you're rich.

LUMA

Were.

TRACY

The boys have no idea.

LUMA

Why should they?

Luma keeps staring at her family on the TV screen.

TRACY

When was the last time you tried calling?

LUMA

A few months ago. When my dad heard it was me, he hung up.

ON THE TV SCREEN - Luma's mother, the cream of Jordanian society, embraces elegant guests.

LUMA

I don't want to go back to Jordan. I mean, I want to go back, I miss... I just wish I could see my grandmother again.

ON THE TV SCREEN - Luma's GRANDMOTHER, a bright-eyed 80 year old matriarch, laughs as 22-year-old Luma teases her.

LUMA

I used to sit on her garden wall and watch the men play football in the field next door. Sometimes they let me join in.

FLASHBACK -- it's a CONTINUATION of the MEMORY FLASH we've seen before. EIGHT YEAR OLD LUMA, her hair very short, sits on her grandmother's garden wall in AMMAN, watching a group of YOUNG MEN play soccer. They invite young Luma into the game. Her face lights up with joy. She jumps off the garden wall, and runs to join them.

LUMA (V.O.)

My hair was short. I'd needed stitches on my head and they'd shaved my hair off. And my body - well, I was eight.

IN THE FLASHBACK - a smiling YOUNG MAN, 20, calls to Luma:

YOUNG MAN

Boy! What's your name?

EIGHT YEAR OLD LUMA
(hesitates)

Ali.

He kicks the ball to her and she dribbles it nimbly.

LUMA (V.O.)

"Ali" was my brother's name. I got away with it for about a year. The whole time, my grandmother knew what was going on. But she never told on me. She let me play. It was our secret.

FLASHBACK ENDS -- BACK TO SCENE -- Luma watches the home video of her grandmother on the TV screen.

LUMA

I haven't even heard her voice in four years.

Tracy puts out a comforting hand.

TRACY

I'm sorry.

LUMA

(stands abruptly)
Let's not cry about it, alright?

She walks from the room, knocking into a table as she goes. Tracy looks back at the video.

ON THE TV SCREEN - The eighty year old woman takes Luma's shining face into her soft, withered hands and pats it. Soul mates. Cheek to cheek, they smile into the camera.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD -- DAY

A suburban Saturday morning on the soccer field. SOCCER MOMS tuck their blond ponytails into their caps and unfold their lawn chairs as their SONS warm up on the field.

ACROSS THE PITCH -- Luma has the Fugees in a huddle.

LUMA

Guys, we've worked really hard to get here. And a win today will get us into the Savannah tournament.

ANGLE ON --- a beat-up MINI-VAN, honking its horn in greeting as it pulls into the parking lot. Luma watches it arrive with a glint in her eye. Christian, Kundar's brother, is the van's driver. The surprised boys watch as he gets out and walks around to open the side door.

LUMA

So to cheer you on, I brought you something you've never had before...

The van door slides open to reveal:

LUMA

...fans!

SEVEN FUGEES MOTHERS -- Roo and Aziz's Afghan mom, Gabba's Eritrean mom, Gabriel's Sierra Leonian mom, Moses' Liberian mom, Mohammed's Iraqi mom, Omar' Somalian mom, and Negasi's Ethiopian mom step out of the van and wave joyously to the boys. With their head wraps and bright African dresses, they look ready to attend a village wedding.

The boys put their hands on their heads and groan with embarrassment.

GABBA

Coach, what you are doing to us?

GABRIEL

I am dying now.

LUMA

Let's show your moms how great you are. Let's go!

THE GAME -- Daniel is on fire. His control of the game is unstoppable - his ease and grace are a thing of beauty. He shoots and scores.

The African mothers run out ONTO THE FIELD and break into dance. They hand clap. They sing. The REF is nonplussed. He blows his whistle and tries to shoo them off.

REF

No parents on the field!

But with Daniel's next score, the moms race back onto the field and dance some more.

REF

I'm warning you! Don't do that again!

Yeah, right. The Fugees score another, and here come the moms again into the middle of the field, raising their arms up and down to the sky. The ref shoots Luma a look, as if to say "can't you stop them?" Luma shakes her head side to side: nope.

The American Soccer Moms are too stunned to sip their lattes. Their sons are too distracted to watch the ball that keeps fizzing past them. Their coach is yelling. And the Fugees' speed of play is at a level that they can't comprehend.

Fugees win! Some mothers ULULATE with joy. Luma bites her lip, trying not to smile too hard.

ACROSS THE FIELD -- The stunned American Soccer Moms watch the African moms celebrate their sons' victory.

WHITE AMERICAN SOCCER MOM #1
Who. In the world. Are they?

Soccer Mom #2 shrugs.

WHITE AMERICAN SOCCER MOM #2
They're soccer moms.

IN THE PARKING LOT -- LATER

The Fugees and their mothers pack it up in the parking lot. The REF approaches Luma.

REF
Your boys played a great game.

LUMA
Thanks.

REF
Wasn't a fair fight, though. No one has a chance against you, long as you got "Ronaldinho" on your team.

He's talking about Daniel, comparing him to one of the most famous African soccer stars. Luma looks at the boy, laughing with his friends, reliving the game. There's an unfamiliar look on his face. Something like - happiness.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES APARTMENT COMPLEX DAY - LATER

The boys have been dropped off at their apartment complex. They're still on a high from their victory.

KUNDAR

Savannah is a beautiful country a long way from here. I explode to see it.

AZIZ

I'm gonna be famous there after we win the tournament. They're gonna copy my moves. Want to see?

ROO

Aziz - we have to help *Mor* study for her test.

Daniel smiles at the bickering brothers as he peels off towards his building.

IN FRONT OF Daniel's BUILDING -- His younger siblings are playing in front of a NEIGHBOR'S place. The Neighbor Woman calls to Daniel as he passes:

NEIGHBOR WOMAN

Your mama is shopping. When you come take the kids?

DANIEL

I change my clothes and be right there.

INT. DANIEL'S BUILDING STAIRCASE - THAT MOMENT

Daniel bounds up the staircase to the second floor. Reaching the upper hallway, he sees that the door to his apartment is partly open. He can hear MALE VOICES cackling inside.

Quietly, Daniel approaches and pushes the door open to reveal --

The two guys from the AFRICAN MOB SQUAD (AMS) - in the process of robbing the apartment. Jacked up and reckless, they casually ransack the place with their backs to the door.

In an instant, Daniel's face transforms. All joy drains away. The child disappears as the child soldier takes over.

AMS #1 has a GUN sticking out of the back of his pants. It takes Daniel less than two seconds to take the gun and put a bullet in the back of the man's head.

CUT TO:

KUNDAR'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT - KUNDAR HEARS the GUNSHOT while he cooks dinner.

Roo's APARTMENT - NEXT MOMENT - Roo reacts as TWO MORE GUNSHOTS ring out.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATER

The Yellow Beetle screeches into the parking lot, passing an AMBULANCE, sirens wailing, speeding away from the scene. Luma jumps out of her car in time to see a BODY BAG being loaded into the back of a SECOND AMBULANCE. POLICE are on the scene, interviewing anxious residents.

Luma finds Winifred in the crowd.

LUMA

Winifred!

Winifred, throbbing with grief, whirls around to confront Luma. She spits with contempt:

WINIFRED

I gave you my boy! You were supposed to take care of him! And look what happened! This is your fault! Your fault!

Winifred points to a POLICE CAR. Daniel is handcuffed, sitting in the back. Luma looks at him in disbelief. Daniel registers her face - a long beat. He fucked up. His life is over. They both know it.

He looks away.

INT. LUMA'S LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Luma sits curled up in a ball, tiny and miserable. Her eyes are swollen from crying.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE - OFFICE DAY

PANNING photographs of the Fugees on Luma's office bulletin board. Daniel's face is in so many of them.

CLOSE ON - Luma's email. She's received an invitation to the Savannah "Boys Rule" Tournament.

Luma deletes the email.

EXT. INDIAN CREEK FIELD - DAY

A WIDE SHOT of the dust-covered playing field. The Fugees stand in a group, facing Luma.

We can't hear what she's saying, but from the reaction of the boys, we can guess what it is: she's telling them it's over.

Luma turns and walks off the field, leaving the dejected Fugees staring after her. After a moment, they start to wander off in different directions.

ON THE EDGE OF THE FIELD - Lucien and Benjamin have seen the whole thing. They silently watch as Kundar, head hanging, walks slowly away by himself.

EXT. REFUGEE APARTMENT COMPLEX DAY

Refugee men play street soccer under a drizzling sky. The ball bounces across the paths of...

Gabriel, Gabba and Seven - crossing the parking lot of their apartment complex. The boys don't react as the ball skips past them. They just keep shuffling along, garbage blowing about their feet.

EXT. SOUTHERN PINES - PARKING LOT DAY

An IRC CASE WORKER throws four worn suitcases into the back of a VAN. Three small children climb into the rear passenger seat -- Winifred's children. She's moving.

Kundar, Roo and Aziz watch as Winifred gets into the passenger seat and slams the door. The Van drives out of the parking lot. As it passes by the boys, Winifred doesn't even glance their way. The van disappears.

The last piece of Daniel is gone.

INT. KUNDAR'S APARTMENT DAY

Kundar sets breakfast on the table. Christian, dressed in his work uniform, starts to eat. Kundar stares at his food.

CHRISTIAN

You come from Kakuma. You have seen worse things. Eat.

KUNDAR

I can not.

CHRISTIAN

Coach wants you to eat.

KUNDAR

There is no more coach. There is no more Fugees.

Christian looks straight at his little brother.

CHRISTIAN

When we come here to Atlanta, we do not know anyone. We are alone. Then you find Coach. She give you hope. Now she is the one who need hope. You go and give it to her.

Kundar's eyes change. Something about this makes sense to him.

LATER

Kundar sits alone in the apartment, thinking. Suddenly, he springs up and walks to the closet. He takes out the ironing board.

INT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE NIGHT

Luma pulls the dinner shift at the Country Kitchen. As she carries plates to a table, she glances out the store front window and is surprised to see Kundar and Roo waiting for her on the sidewalk.

EXT. COUNTRY KITCHEN CAFE SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Kundar is carefully dressed in his freshly pressed pants and shirt. Roo is in his best refugee-wear. They stand at attention as Luma comes out on the sidewalk to join them.

LUMA

What are you guys doing here?

Kundar and Roo glance at each other for courage.

KUNDAR

We talk to the other boys. We feel that to cancel Fugees is not justice. We ask you please to change your mind.

Luma stares at the ground.

LUMA
I'm sorry, boys.

ROO
But the tournament. Don't we
deserve to go?

LUMA
Yes, you deserve to go. It's me who
does not deserve to go.

KUNDAR
Coach, you always say to us, we are
your leaders. Leaders make
decisions for the people. So we
make a decision for the Fugees.

LUMA
And what is that?

ROO
We decide that you are the greatest
coach in the world.

KUNDAR
All the Fugees will follow your
rules. Even the Fugees that left
for gangs. They will come back and
be Fugees again. For you. For
coach.

LUMA
Kundar - it's a nice thought. But
it's never going to happen.

KUNDAR
It is going to happen. It is
happening now.

Kundar nods to the shadows. Two boys step out -- Lucien and Benjamin, the boys from the Congo who left the Fugees to join the AMS. They stand quietly before Luma.

Kundar nods to them --- *go ahead*. Lucien and Benjamin pull off their baseball caps and run their hands shyly over their close-shaven heads. Their long braids are gone.

LUCIEN
My hair is shorter than coach's.

BENJAMIN
Mine too.

Luma looks at them. No more gangsta clothes. Button down shirts. Jeans worn high. She swallows.

LUMA

So what? It takes more than that to be a Fugee.

The boys keep trying.

LUCIEN

"I will have good behavior on and off the field."

BENJAMIN

"I will not smoke."

LUCIEN

I will not do drugs."

BENJAMIN

"I will not drink alcohol."

They are reciting the Fugees contract by heart.

LUCIEN

"I will not get anyone pregnant. I will not use bad language."

BENJAMIN

"I will be on time. I will listen to Coach."

LUCIEN

"I will try hard. I will ask for help."

LUCIEN & BENJAMIN

"I want to be part of the Fugees."

Luma drops her head. Should she give them - and herself - another chance?

She turns to her "leaders".

LUMA

Practices are not going to be easy. You're going to be running more than the other teams. Kicking the ball a lot more. And I'm not going to be nice. So if you thought I was mean in the past...

Kundar covers his face with his hands in relief. They are going to the tournament.

INT. MAYOR MCCANN'S LINCOLN DAY

Mayor McCann drives his white Lincoln through Clarkston. He cruises past a hand-lettered street sign for a CAR WASH. Sounds like a good idea.

MAYOR MCCANN
Hey kids -should we get the car
washed today?

IN THE BACK SEAT --- Mayor McCann's red-headed grand-children, DYLAN, 14, and BRITNEY, 10, are too busy playing their DS games to respond.

MAYOR MCCANN
My first job was washing cars.
Dollar an hour.
(on their non-reaction)
Guess I told you that before.

The Mayor turns the steering wheel into the parking lot. Immediately, Omar and Benjamin run up and start wiping it down. The Mayor sighs to himself, realizing what he's just gotten himself into.

MAYOR MCCANN
Fugees.

Roo appears smiling at the Mayor's window:

ROO
Help send Fugees to Savannah, five
dollars!

MAYOR MCCANN
Sure, why not.

MINUTES LATER - PARKING LOT

The Mayor, Dylan and Britney stand outside the car as the Fugees give it a soapy wash. The Mayor gets a funny feeling.

MAYOR MCCANN
Dylan - isn't your team playing a
soccer tournament in Savannah?

Dylan doesn't answer his grandfather. He's still too absorbed in his DS game.

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT -- THAT MOMENT

An immaculately dressed FILIPINA WOMAN, 60, watches as Fugees suds her Mercedes Benz. She sees Luma.

FILIPINA WOMAN

These boys are doing a good job.

LUMA

They're motivated.

FILIPINA WOMAN

I've been hearing about them. At the convention I'm attending for Jewish philanthropists.

LUMA

You're kidding. I mean, you're Jewish? I mean, I'm sorry.

FILIPINA WOMAN

Yes, I'm Jewish. My husband was. He was Hungarian. He came over as a refugee in 1956. My husband would have loved these boys.

(going for her purse)

So how much is it?

LUMA

Five bucks.

FILIPINA WOMAN

No, I mean, how much do you need to raise?

LUMA

Oh! Well -- we're paying for hotel rooms, food, bus fare...

FILIPINA WOMAN

Bus fare? I don't think you'll need bus fare...

She takes out her check book and starts writing.

FILIPINA WOMAN

...not if you have your own bus.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY TO FLORIDA DAY

MUSIC UP -- "Going On" by Gnarls Barkley -- as the new FUGEES MINI-BUS comes into view, rocketing down the highway as if propelled by the youthful jet-fuel of the boys inside it. On the side of the blue bus, the new green and yellow LOGO proclaims that the hands waving out the windows belong to THE FUGEES FAMILY.

INSIDE THE BUS -- the boys, totally charged up, sing and clap -- OH YEAH -- they are going to Savannah! Luma is at the wheel. She trades grins with Tracy, as excited as the boys are.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAVANNAH NIGHT

A hotel room with two queen size beds. Kundar, Roo, Aziz, Moses, Gabba, Gabriel and Seven will share them -- when they finally get to sleep. Which is never.

Moses is imitating an opponent. He pretends to let a ball roll slowly through his legs as he looks down at it, dumbfounded. The boys roll on the beds with laughter.

Luma walks in and stumbles backwards from the collective boy-stench.

LUMA

Anybody ever heard of a shower?

She grabs Gabriel and Moses and smells their heads. Reels.

LUMA

Moses! Gabriel! Soap. Now.

She confiscates a bag of hot Cheetos from Seven and pops one in her mouth.

LUMA

Seven, why are you eating this junk?

SEVEN

Why are you eating it?!

LUMA

Because I'm not playing tomorrow.

A loud fart rips the air.

KUNDAR

I know that fart! Gabriel!

GABRIEL

Not me! It's Gabba's.

ROO

Smell it!

The boys sniff the air deeply. There can be no mistake.

THE BOYS

He's right! It IS Gabba's!

They die of laughter. Luma walks out of the room and down the hall to the other room they've rented.

HOTEL ROOM #2 - She flings the door open to reveal Negasi, Lucien, Benjamin, Lugman, Omar, Mohammed and Dah inside. Omar is in the middle of a wicked impersonation of their coach.

OMAR

(impersonating Luma)

*Spread out, Fugees! You clump like
bubble bees! You play like craps!*

The boys laugh so hard they roll off the beds. Tracy, standing helplessly in the middle of the boy chaos, dodges a flying pillow.

TRACY

(understatement)

I don't think they're sleepy.

HOTEL HALLWAY -- MINUTES LATER

Luma tapes both hotel room doors shut. There's no way to open them without breaking the tape. She calls through the doors:

LUMA

If I check on you later and the tape is broken, on either room, then no one will play tomorrow. Now go to sleep!

Furious giggling comes through the walls.

LUMA

NOW.

Silence. For a second. Then more suppressed laughter. Luma smiles and heads to her room.

INT. LUMA AND TRACY'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

Luma and Tracy share a room with two queen beds. The phone rings. Luma answers it.

LUMA

Hello?

(to Tracy)

They hung up.

We HEAR the boys giggling from their room next door. Luma's phone rings again. She picks it up again.

LUMA

Do that again and I'll make you run
laps till you puke.

(listens)

What do you mean, Aziz's scared?

CUT TO:

HOTEL ROOM #1 - LATER

Aziz sleeps peacefully, piled into bed with three other boys. Luma sits next to them in the crappy upholstered chair. Her head falls forward onto her chest and she sleeps.

EXT. SOCCER TOURNAMENT - SAVANNAH - DAY

Acres of emerald grass glitter with morning dew.

HUNDREDS of people - PLAYERS, COACHES, PARENTS, SIBLINGS, ONLOOKERS - begin their takeover of the vast green space as the two day SAVANNAH "BOYS RULE" TOURNAMENT gets underway.

SUVs and Minivans complete their American pilgrimage across the parking lot. Mothers and fathers groan like faithful pack animals as they lug their burdens of folding chairs, blankets and coolers to the holy land of soccer fields below.

ON A HILL ABOVE THE SOCCER FIELDS -- the Fugees stand in awe of the vast green complex.

OMAR

I can not believe.

LUGMAN

It's the World Cup.

They huddle together, as intimidating teams brush past them, matching gear bags thrown over their embroidered jerseys.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD DAY

THE TOURNAMENT - GAME ONE

ON THE FIELD - the boys are ready to play their first game. They gather around Luma.

LUMA

You beat the Meteors 3-2 earlier in the season. But don't get lazy. They're here for revenge.

Several boys look around nervously, overwhelmed.

LUMA

I want to see your best game and I know what your best game looks like, each and every single one of you. I want to have a hard time picking out MVP today. We deserve to be here as much as anybody. Now let's go out and prove it and have fun.

ON THE FIELD - QUICK CUTS - The Fugees face the METEORS. And the Fugees are not in good form. Kundar lobs a beautiful cross toward the center, but there is no one in the middle to finish. Gabriel stands in goal, raises his arms over his head and tries to jump for a ball - which sails over his fingertips. Meteors are up 1-0 at the half.

AT THE HALF - GAME ONE

Luma is livid.

LUMA

Now do you wish you'd gotten a little more sleep last night?

The boys trade shamed glances.

LUMA

They're beating you to the ball, they're out-hustling you, they're taking more shots. All you guys did was talk talk talk on the bus. And look at the way you're playing! Looks to me like I've got players who know how to talk and don't know how to play. You are down one to nothing, and you will not finish this game off unless every single one of you plays his position, wins every 50/50 and takes some shots! Showing up is not enough. Do you want to win this or not?

THE BOYS

Yes!

The Fugees pile their hands on top of each other.

THE BOYS

Go Fugees!

SECOND HALF - GAME ONE

The Fugees step it up, playing a more focused and communicative game. They fight for every ball, firing a series of shots; Roo taps a ball past his defender and then sprints after it, leaving the Meteors player frozen behind. He dribbles it all the way to the Meteors' keeper then taps the ball to his left - GOAL! The Fugees score a second. 2-1 Fugees.

KUNDAR

Come on guys, we gotta win. We gotta get one more.

And Seven adds another with a canon shot from fifteen yards out. Game over - FUGEES WIN.

TRACY

That's more like it.

LUMA

(happy)

More like it? I'm having a heart attack.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - LATER THAT DAY

The Fugees, wearing fresh T-shirts, and the BLUE SPRINGS ROCKET FIRE warm up on the field to play their SECOND TOURNAMENT GAME.

The Rocket Fire - an all white, suburban team - keep looking over at the Fugees in shock.

We recognize the CAPTAIN of the team -- it's Dylan, the Mayor's red-haired grandson. Warming up with laps, he asks as he runs past Seven and Omar:

DYLAN

Hey, guys. Where's your coach?

The boys point to Luma. Seeing a woman, the Rocket Fire Players are genuinely confused.

ROCKET FIRE PLAYER

No, he said, where's your *coach*?

Seven and Dah shake their heads and walk off. They've heard this before.

ON THE FIELD - GAME TWO

IN QUICK CUTS -- Coin toss! First kick! Clock starts! Game on! The Fugees are focused, elegant and organized. They're demolishing the Rocket Fire, with a 3-1 lead at the half.

ON THE ROCKET FIRE'S SIDELINE - A HAND reaches into an ice chest, pulls out a secret beer, and cracks it. Mayor McCann takes a thoughtful sip. His wife admonishes him.

MAYOR MCCANN'S WIFE
Mike...that's not allowed.

The Mayor's SON-IN-LAW also reaches for a beer.

MAYOR'S SON IN LAW
Hand me one. We're getting smoked.

The Mayor's DAUGHTER, Dylan's mother, can't stop staring at the Fugees.

MAYOR'S DAUGHTER
They're beating the pants off of us. Where are they from?

Mayor McCann takes a drag off his beer.

MAYOR MCCANN
They're from Clarkston.

ON THE PLAYING FIELD -

The Fugees completely control the second half with inspired, exciting team work. Even Rocket Fire PARENTS are admiring their skills. FUGEES WIN GAME TWO: 5-2. Both teams give their respective CHANTS and then line up to shake each other's hands. As Dylan slaps Kundar's hand, he smiles:

DYLAN
Hey, thanks for the lesson.

Kundar returns the smile.

INT. FUGEES BUS AFTERNOON

The Fugees rock out inside the bus, a crazy-happy tension release after a winning day.

Tracy is driving. Luma leans back in her seat, eyes closed, semi-conscious despite the noise.

TRACY

Two for two. Happy?

LUMA

No. We're only half way there.

But she cracks a little smile.

EXT. BRIDGE TO TYBEE ISLAND AFTERNOON

The Fugees bus crosses a picturesque bridge, traversing a golden inlet dotted with shrimp boats. A sign tells us we are headed to one of the "Golden Isles": TYBEE ISLAND.

EXT. TYBEE BEACH MAGIC HOUR

Gentle breakers wash up onto Tybee beach. The Fugees stand barefoot in the sand, awestruck before the undulating, pastel ocean. Omar points to the horizon.

OMAR

Africa is out there.

GABBA

Way out there.

NEGASI

How long would it take to get there?

LUMA

Depends how you go. Flying?
Sailing? Riding your bike?

KUNDAR

Walking.

LUMA

A long time. It's thousands of miles away.

LUGMAN

It's too far to walk.

ROO

Kundar could do it.

(proud)

He's already walked everywhere.
He's Sudanese.

Kundar puts his hand on top of Roo's head, palming it with brotherly affection.

MOSES

Race to the ocean!

The boys run to the ocean and jump in.

ON THE BEACH -- LATER

The Fugees play in the waves. They bury each other in the sand, give each other sand boobs, chase sea gulls.

Nearby, an ALL AMERICAN FAMILY roasts marshmallows over an open fire. Aziz comes close to observe. Luma and Tracy watch from a distance as the family offers Aziz a marshmallow stick. He sits down with them and starts chatting away.

TRACY

Aziz. What a charmer.

Smiling, Tracy looks back out over the lavender ocean and the peacefully lapping waves. The breeze blows her hair.

LUMA

I forgot to say thank you.

TRACY

To?

Silence. Expecting an answer, Tracy looks over at her friend - and sees that Luma is looking straight at her.

TRACY

Oh.

Luma's eyes are wet with gratitude.

TRACY

You're welcome.

They lean up against each other, and look back out across the beach. The boys splash and laugh, silhouettes now against the darkening waves and the orange sky.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAVANNAH NIGHT

The boys are crashed out on top of each other, already sleeping deeply, four to a bed. Luma and Tracy check on both hotel rooms, quietly closing the doors on the sleeping boys.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT -- SAVANNAH NIGHT

The moon illuminates the hotel parking lot. Luma, alone, makes a call on her cell phone. It connects.

LUMA
 (in Arabic)
 Hello? Can you hear me? It's Luma.
 (pause)
 Dad? Dad?

She checks her phone. It seems that he's hung up on her again. Of course. Luma is about to put the phone away when she hears TWO ARGUING VOICES coming from it. From the SOUND of things, an old woman is chastising a man, *and winning*.

Luma quickly lifts the phone back to her ear.

LUMA
 (in Arabic)
 Hello? Hello? *Grandmother? Is that you? Yes, I'm still here!*

A catch in Luma's voice.

LUMA
 (joyful, in Arabic)
Teteh! It's so good to hear your voice! How are you feeling? Good! How is everyone...Really? And Leila... still fat? I knew it. When are you coming to visit me? It's not too far...you don't have to get on a plane, you could come by boat! It would only take three months.
 (listens, laughs)
 I miss your *kibbeh*. If you came we could open a restaurant, your food is so good. The best. My kids would eat your food. Yes, my kids. From Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq. It's hard to explain but - I have a family here. A big one. I am not alone, Teteh. I promise you. You miss me, Teteh... I miss you, too, more than you know.
 (listens)
 I know you try to get through to him...I know you do. Thank you, Teteh, I pray for the day. And may God protect you. Good bye.

Luma hangs up -- and then she throws her cell phone high into the air. She catches it and closes her eyes with joy.

LUMA
 (in prayer)
 Thank you.

She straightens herself up and goes back into the hotel.

EXT. SOCCER TOURNAMENT - SAVANNAH - DAY TWO --- DAY

Boys in red and black striped jerseys warm up on the field. We recognize their uniforms -- they're the NORCROSS COMETS, the racist team the Fugees lost to earlier in the season.

IN THE HUDDLE - Luma pep talks her team.

LUMA

You remember this team. Even though they beat you last time, they know you're better than them, so they're going to try to get in your head. They'll try to make you so mad that you can't play. Don't let that happen.

The Fugees look at each other with resolve.

LUMA

If you win this game, you'll play for the championship.

ON THE FIELD - GAME THREE

The Comets haven't lost their charm. A COMETS PLAYER runs past Kunder making monkey sounds.

COMETS PLAYER

You're still here? I thought you went back to Africa.

Kunder shoots a killer smile at the Comets Player -- but Omar offers a better reply. He shakes himself free on the right side, dribbles downfield and fires a line drive into the top right corner of the net. Goal!

ON THE COMETS SIDELINE - the COMETS PARENTS scream and turn red in the face.

ON THE FIELD -The Comets get dirtier. Accelerating past, a player maliciously TAKES OUT LITTLE AZIZ, clotheslining him across the throat. Aziz SLAMS onto his back. Luma runs out to check on him. He's got to come out of the game. Roo and the other Fugees are furious.

FAST ACTION - SECOND HALF - The Fugees channel their rage and score early. 2-1 Fugees.

WITH TIME RUNNING OUT, the Comets get desperate. Kundar runs past a Comets' midfielder for the ball, and the player fakes an injury. He throws himself on the ground, screaming and holding his ankle.

The Ref yellow cards Kundar. The Comets are getting a free shot...and a chance to even the score.

A blond haired striker sets up to take the kick. He charges and connects with all his might. The ball sails on a head-high line drive toward a mass of bodies in front of the goal. Unable to see the ball, Gabriel, the goalie, is frozen. From the midst of the scrum, a green and yellow jersey LEAPS INTO THE AIR -- IT'S KUNDAR. He cocks his neck and thrusts his head into the speeding ball. There is a violent thud and the ball ricochets back toward the striker who kicked it, sailing over his head and bouncing into the empty space at midfield. The ref blows the whistle - once, twice, three times - it's the end of the game.

THE FUGEES HAVE BEAT THE COMETS! The boys shout joyfully at the sky. They lift Aziz into their arms, break into song and begin dancing as a group, to the astonishment of the defeated team. They're in the final!

POST-GAME HANDSHAKE -- the Comets players spit in their hands before they shake with the Fugees. The Fugees just grin as they slap their slimy palms. After all - they won.

EXT. CHECK IN TENT -- LATER

Kundar winces as he eases off his shoes. The big toe nail is off on his right foot. It hurts just to look at it. Roo grunts in sympathetic disgust.

ROO

Your cleats are too tight. You didn't know you were growing out of your shoes?

Roo grabs the offending right shoe, ready to toss it. Kundar snatches it back. That old, tattered cleat is his most precious possession. He runs his finger over the ink letters that spell out his old friend's name: TAREG.

KUNDAR

I have to wear this shoe.

Tracy walks up with news.

TRACY

Rest up, boys. We're playing them in the final.

ANGLE ON: A group of elite looking, muscular boys walk by, sporting Beckham's haircut, the latest sneakers and designer sunglasses. Their duffle bags tell the world that they are the CONCORD THUNDER.

ON THE FIELD -- LATER

It's coming up on game time. The Fugees run laps. Tracy nods to the Concord Thunder, warming up across the field. They look huge. To a man, they're taller than the Fugees.

TRACY

They've been playing together for four years. And we've been playing together for...

LUMA

...four months.

IN THE HUDDLE WITH THE FUGEES-

Luma prepares her team.

LUMA

We're going to keep the ball on the ground because they're so tall. We're a fast team. So we'll spread the ball to our wings, and keep it out of the middle, away from their big guys. Seven and Kunder are super fast - they won't be able to catch them. This team is full of dirty tricks. If they push you, elbow you or kick you, let it go. Pick yourself back up right away, no red card. This is our game. The championship. This is it.

Luma's pep talk is interrupted by a cry of "Go Fugees!" coming from the sidelines. The Fugees look over and see a strange sight: FANS.

Some people from the apartment complexes in Clarkston are there. Patti, from the International Rescue Committee is there. The Reporter is there. Christian and Freba are there. And Mayor McCann and his family, including Dylan and some of his teammates, are there.

LUMA

There are good players and there are great players. Good players can do everything well. They can score, they can defend, and sometimes they win.

(MORE)

LUMA (CONT'D)

But great players are the ones who love the game; that play with everything they have and won't let anyone stop them. Daniel was a great player, because he played his best every game. And he was great because of you. Because of the way you set him up, passed to him, backed him up. He's not here today, but if he were, he would be telling you to work harder, run faster, to believe, to be proud and to win. I want you to win it for him.

KUNDAR

We should pray.

MOHAMMED

But we are not one religion.

ROO

(thinks - points)

You do one. And you do one.

The boys nod and form a circle, draping their arms around each other and bowing their heads. They pray in their native languages - Kundar in Dinka, Mohammed in Arabic.

KUNDAR

Amen.

THE BOYS

Amen.

MOHAMMED

Amin.

THE BOYS

Amin.

ON THE FIELD - THE FINAL GAME - IN QUICK CUTS

It's an ugly game. The Concord Thunder scores immediately. The Fugees are getting manhandled.

Gabba catches an elbow to the face and gets a bloody lip. Moses is elbowed in the midsection and crumples over. A Thunder player and Kundar leap in the air to control a high ball and their skulls collide with a GRUESOME THUD.

The Fugees keep attacking. With one minute left in the half, Kundar, using stepovers and his favored Ronaldinho move, carves his way through the Thunder's defense, and delivers a pinpoint cross with his injured foot for Benjamin to meet -- but the Linesman flags offsidess. The goal is disallowed.

AT THE HALF - WITH THE FUGEES AND LUMA

Roo rubs the scrapes on the backs on his legs.

ROO
They're cheating.

LUMA
So what are you all going to do
about it?

The boys look at each other, exchanging angry glances.

LUMA
We could cry about it - say it
isn't fair and leave - or we could
show them how to play, Fugees
style. So do you want to quit?

THE BOYS
No.

LUMA
Do you want to quit?

THE BOYS
NO!

LUMA
Then this is what I want you to do.
Go in there and play our kind of
soccer. The beautiful soccer that I
know you can play. I want to see
passing and shooting and goals. If
someone pushes you down, get back
up. And if they push you down
again, get back up again. I don't
want to see anyone out there who's
scared. If the ref makes a bad
call, just accept it and get on
with our game. In the next 35
minutes, I want you to play the
best game you've ever played as a
team. I want you to talk to each
other, help each other and protect
each other out there. Hold your
heads up high and play like
gentlemen.

(MORE)

LUMA (CONT'D)

If you play that way -- no one will be able to touch you. Are you guys ready? On the count of three.

The boys put their hands in a huddle.

THE BOYS

1, 2, 3, go Fugees!

THE FINAL - THE SECOND HALF

FAST ACTION SHOTS move us forward through the game.

The Fugees come out shooting. Seven unleashes a sizzling shot that finds the upper right corner over the Fire goalie's head. GOAL! Fugees tie, 1 - 1.

A Concord Thunder DAD yells from the sidelines:

CONCORD DAD

Time to get physical!

It's a dog fight. The Concord Thunder stoops to every dirty trick. Elbowing. Clotheslining. Ankle kicking. They grab the Fugee's uniforms and pull them to the ground. Somehow - the ref seems oblivious to all of this. But the Fugees don't give up. They fight for every 50/50 ball.

Then, with five minutes left in the game, a Thunder forward gets behind the Fugees' defense and shoots. Gabriel leaps into the air but the ball brushes his hands and deflects under the bar. Goal. 2-1, Concord Thunder.

THE FINAL MINUTES - SPECTATORS are shouting. The CLOCK is winding down.

Dah shoots - the goalie stretches full length and tips the ball out for a corner.

FINAL PLAY as the clock winds down -- Roo approaches the ball at the corner flag, and RAISES HIS HAND. He's calling the SET PLAY we've seen before. Roo corner kicks it to Kundar who leaps up and is ready to connect with his head when a Thunder player YANKS HIS JERSEY and pulls him down. Kundar misses the ball by half an inch.

A defender kicks the ball away. The whistle blows. The game is over.

The Fugees have lost the championship.

INT. FIELD TENT DAY

THE TOURNAMENT TROPHY is raised high by the captain of the Concord Thunder. Teammates and proud parents clap and cheer. First place medals gleam around their necks.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

And now for second place. The Fugees.

ON LUMA AND THE FUGEES - standing politely by. The TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL turns to them.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

You played like champions today.
Your coach should be very proud.
And I would like to thank you...
(swallows hard)
... for giving us one of the
greatest shows of sportsmanship
that I have ever seen.
Congratulations.

The boys stand tall, heads lifted high - looking somehow more like men than when we first met them, only months ago.

The Tournament Official hands Luma the second place medals for her team. Luma moves down the line - Kundar, Roo, Aziz, Seven - putting a medal around each boys neck - Gabba, Gabriel, Dah, Moses, Mohammed - and shaking each hand - Lucien, Benjamin, Lugman, Omar, Negasi. They can see it in her full, brimming eyes. They can hear it in her voice when she says their names.

Coach has never been more proud.

ON THE WAY TO THE PARKING LOT - LATER

The Fugees, their second place medals glinting around their necks, walk back to the bus together. Arms around each other. Bumping shoulders. Fugees family.

As the boys turn into the parking lot, the sound of CLAPPING reaches their ears. They look up to find that DOZENS OF FAMILIES and PLAYERS have lined up to applaud the real tournament winners. Their new fans reach out to slap hands. *Way to go! Good game! We'll be looking for you next year!*

Luma follows behind the boys, beaming. Up ahead she sees that Mayor McCann is part of the crowd, standing with his cheering family. As Luma passes him, they meet eyes. He's clapping. Nodding his respect.

FAMILIES AND PLAYERS
 Fugees! Fugees! Fugees! Fugees!

The boys look at each other. At the crowd of Americans clapping and chanting their name.

Maybe this is what it feels like to be home.

INT. VISITING ROOM - YOUTH PRISON - DAY

CLOSE ON - the tournament medal -- in Daniel's hands.

It's visiting hours at the prison. Daniel rubs the shiny metal between his fingers.

He looks up at Luma, seated across from him, his eyes full. She takes his hand.

INT. LUMA'S HOUSE DAY

Luma's living room is tinsled out for the holidays. Luma, goofy in a Santa hat, hands out presents to the boys - new Fugees sweatshirts.

Tracy catches Luma's eyes across the room. All around them, Fugees are rough-housing, laughing, and teasing each other around the Christmas tree.

There's only one word for it. Family.

INT. ATLANTA SPORTS ARENA DAY

A U.S. JUDGE is in the middle of delivering the CITIZENSHIP OATH into a microphone.

U.S. JUDGE

*"...I pledge to support, honor, and
 be loyal to the United States of
 America..."*

FIVE THOUSAND IMMIGRANTS stand in neat rows on the arena floor, repeating the oath in a symphony of foreign accents. The Judge's voice reverberates over the PA system.

U.S. JUDGE

*...its Constitution, and its laws.
 Where and if lawfully required, I
 further commit myself to defend the
 Constitution and laws of the United
 States against all enemies, foreign
 and domestic..."*

IN THE STANDS - THOUSANDS OF FAMILY MEMBERS bear witness to the NATURALIZATION CEREMONY from their seats overlooking the arena floor.

ROO AND AZIZ, antsy with excitement, fidget in their seats next to Luma. Aziz can't stop pointing into the crowd below.

AZIZ

Look at *Mor!* Do you see her?

ANGLE ON -- FREBA, their mother, a tiny figure almost lost in a center row. She's a foot shorter than the Mexican and Pakistani men standing on either side of her. She's wearing her best dress and hijab.

U.S. JUDGE

*...either by military,
noncombatant, or civilian service.
This I do solemnly swear, so help
me God."*

FREBA

(repeating the oath)
"... so help me God."

The U.S. Judge looks up at five thousand people about to change their lives.

U.S. JUDGE

Congratulations.

THOUSANDS OF TINY AMERICAN FLAGS shoot into the air. Strangers, now countrymen, embrace with joy.

CHEERING fills the stadium. Luma, Roo and Aziz jump to their feet, whistling and clapping. The NATIONAL ANTHEM starts to play. Luma knocks the hats off the boys' heads.

LUMA

Put your right hand over your heart. Like this. No, Aziz, your other right hand. Face the flag. You're Americans now.

The boys do as she says. As a GOSPEL SINGER belts out her Southern Baptist rendition of the NATIONAL ANTHEM, Roo looks down again at the arena floor.

There's his mother. Botching the lyrics to The Star Spangled Banner. Tears streaming down her face.

EXT. SCHOOL DAY

School is out for the day. As Kundar leaves the building, he spots Luma and his brother Christian standing on the sidewalk, waiting for him. Alarmed and unsure, Kundar approaches.

KUNDAR

What? What happened?

Luma and Christian break into huge, excited smiles.

CHRISTIAN

She found us.

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS DAY

The entire Fugees team has come to the airport to help Kundar and Christian welcome their mother to Atlanta. Luma, Tracy and the boys wait by the Fugees bus, parked outside baggage claim.

Kundar and Christian, wearing pressed slacks and shirts, wait eagerly at the base of the escalator from arrivals.

KUNDAR

How will I know her?

CHRISTIAN

You will know her.

Kundar smiles and looks back up at the escalator.

And then she is there.

She's riding down, wearing her Sudanese dress, clinging to Patti from the IRC. Her eyes search the crowds for a glimpse of her children, an expression of indescribable hope on her care-worn face.

And then, at last, eight years of separation come to an end.

KUNDAR

Mother.

Oblivious travellers politely sidestep the weeping African family and drag their suitcases on by.

INT. FUGEES BUS - LATER

The bus fills with singing and clapping as the Fugees family celebrates together.

Kundar's mother sings as loudly as any Fugee. All the boys, Tracy and Luma fill the air with joyful sound as Luma drives under an airport sign that reads "INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS", and on down the highway.

FADE OUT

THE END