

CHALLENGERS

Written by

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SET ONE

A. Donaldson: 0 - 0

P. Zweig: 0 - 0

1

EXT. A TENNIS COURT IN NEW ROCHELLE - LATE AFTERNOON

TASHI DONALDSON, 33, Black, a former player, sits looking out at the court where two men stand across the net from one another *looking like they are about to fight to the death.*

PATRICK ZWEIG, 32, Jewish, scrappy, ranked 201 in the world, has the face of a man who's been beaten down by this sport one too many times. He wears a mishmash of clothes from different companies -- he's got no sponsorship deal, though he has somewhat haphazardly ironed to his shirt the name and logo of a random Italian company, "IMPATTO."

ART DONALDSON, 33, WASP, good-looking, is *the biggest star in men's tennis that the U.S. has seen in a generation.* His shocking presence at this rinky-dink tournament is the sole reason why the modest venue is packed with locals, tourists, and anyone living in the vicinity of New Rochelle who is even *remotely* interested in tennis. He wears a pristine Nike outfit that practically glistens in the hot summer sun.

This is the PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER, an ATP 80 professional tennis event, close to the lowest level of tournament on the men's tour.

On every available surface, there are banners with the name of the local chain of auto shops that is sponsoring this event; out in the parking lot, a guy is selling MERCH with Art's personalized logo; for the first time in its history, the event is being covered by the LOCAL NEWS and by ESPN.

Aside from the goofy-looking trophy that sits waiting for the victor to the side of the court -- an anthropomorphized tire holding a tiny tennis racket, giving a thumbs up -- the winner today receives a measly 80 ranking points and a check for \$7200. But you wouldn't know it looking at Art, Patrick, and Tashi's faces: they all have a focus that feels as if it were about something *much more than tennis.*

UMPIRE

First service, Donaldson.

Art goes into his service motion: right before he tosses the ball, he places it for a second perfectly in the hole on the neck of the racket.

Thwacckkkk!

The ball comes *scorching* off his racket, and Patrick returns it. A rally begins: this is the opening round of a boxing match, two fighters feeling each other out in the ring.

Patrick sends the ball out wide.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

UMPIRE

Fifteen - Love.

They reset. Art sends in another scorcher:

Thwacckkkkk!

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

UMPIRE

Second service.

Art sends in a *slightly* softer ball, and Patrick POUNCES on it, hitting a flat, whopping forehand. Art can't get to it.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Fifteen All.

They reset. Art sends in his next serve, and as they trade blows, we pan through the crowd and settle back on **Tashi**, who watches the match as if it were a final at Wimbledon.

Tashi Donaldson (nee Duncan) is **Art's wife** and also **his head coach**. Her eyes shoot back and forth between her husband and his opponent until Patrick sprints to the net to catch Art's drop shot and *rips it* crosscourt, winning the point.

PATRICK

LET'S GO!!!

Patrick turns at the net and looks *straight at Tashi*, who is already looking at him. They share an intense moment until Tashi feels another set of eyes on her: *her husband's*.

UMPIRE

Fifteen - thirty.

Art steps back up to the line, keeping his eyes on his wife, and when he throws the ball up in the air, it almost feels like he's going to serve it at HER.

Thwackkkkkkk!

CUT TO BLACK:

Loud, blaring sound of an ALARM CLOCK. Lights come up in...

2 INT. HOTEL BEDROOM IN WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA - MORNING

One week earlier.

Art opens his eyes and reaches over to turn off the alarm.

It's 5:30 AM -- barely light outside.

On a table by the closet, there is a fruit basket with a big note that says: "Welcome back to the Winston-Salem Open."

Art looks over and sees Tashi, already up and dressed.

TASHI

Let's go.

He groans and gets up.

3 INT. KITCHENETTE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Art's personal nutritionist, JEREMY, is labelling sports bottles that have **strange-colored liquids** in them: "Set 2," "pre-warm-up," "post-warm-up." Art approaches, and Jeremy hands him one labelled "morning." Art looks at it with dead-eyed dread.

JEREMY

(smiles)

Tastes even better than it looks.

Art chugs it and makes an involuntary grimace.

4 INT. THE LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Art and Tashi eat, watching yesterday's matches on the TV.

TV SPORTS COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Let's take a look at today's
matchups.

A graphic pops up comparing the stats of Art and his first round opponent, FELIX DU MAURIER (18, French, skinny). Art's column is full of more or less every achievement possible in tennis (minus a US Open trophy). Felix's is empty: he's a total deer in the headlights.

TV SPORTS COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)
 Obviously, the biggest matchup
 today is Donaldson and Du Maurier,
 and let's be honest: you gotta feel
 bad for the kid.

Art looks up at the screen and grimaces.

OTHER COMMENTATOR
 Even if Art's been looking pretty
 shaky coming off his surgery last
 season, he's still not the guy you
 want to face heading into your
 first 250 event as a qualifier.

TV SPORTS COMMENTATOR
 No. I think Donaldson's gonna make
 Du Maurier go *merde* in his diapers.

Art reaches over and mutes the TV.

5 INT. WARM UP COURT - A LITTLE LATER

Art and Tashi hold volleyballs doing a hand-eye
 coordination/balance drill. To the side of the court, there's
 a giant banner featuring an **enormous picture of Art -- ten
 years younger -- holding the 2011 Winston-Salem Open trophy.**

6 INT. SPORTS THERAPY ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Art sits in a high-tech-looking ice bath chamber while KEN,
 his physiotherapist, adjusts the temperature using an iPad.

KEN
 You're not a spring chicken
 anymore. You've gotta conserve your
 energy this week, so try to end
 this one today with as few games as
 possible.

ART
 This kid's actually pretty good...

KEN
*Dude. He's a pancake. You're gonna
 flatten him.*

Ken looks back at his iPad. Art just looks at him, annoyed.

7 INT. SIDE OF THE WARM UP COURT - A LITTLE LATER

Art downs a bottle labelled "mid-warm-up." Horrible.

8 INT. WARM UP COURT - A LITTLE LATER

RAUL, Art's hitting partner, feeds balls to Art's backhand as fast and hard as he can. Tashi watches.

9 EXT. GROUNDS OF WINSTON-SALEM OPEN - LATER

Art and his team walk towards the locker rooms. Fans freak out and snap pictures as they pass. ANDREW, their security guard, keeps people from getting too close, but Art still signs a few autographs without stopping as they walk.

10 INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Art and the team sit quietly. The vibe is focused, meditative: a boxer before a fight. Ken massages Art's leg.

KEN
How's this feeling?

ART
Fine.

KEN
Fine?

ART
Good. Good.

There's a knock on the door. Everyone looks up and sees a WOMAN IN A HEADSET standing there.

WOMAN IN HEADSET
We're ready for you.

Art fist bumps everyone and kisses Tashi.

TASHI
You ready?

Art nods.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Decimate that little bitch.

10A INT. PRESS ROOM AT WINSTON-SALEM OPEN - AFTER THE MATCH

A door opens, and Art, looking sweaty and exhausted, walks out into a small room full of press from various outlets around the world.

He sits down in the chair and adjusts his mic, then looks at a REPORTER who's got their hand up.

REPORTER
(standing)
Hi, Art.

ART
Hi.

REPORTER
So, obviously this isn't the result
you wanted today. Why don't we
start with the basics: *What
happened out there?*

Art just looks at the guy.

ART
What happened?

12 INT. THE FANCY HOTEL ROOM IN WINSTON-SALEM - EVENING

Thwacckkkk!

Tashi and Art are watching footage of Art getting crushed.

TASHI
You choked.

On the screen, Art misses an easy shot and throws his racket to the ground. Tashi pauses the video.

TASHI (CONT'D)
That's what *happened*.

ART
He was playing really well...

TASHI
Him and every other guy you've
played in the past six months.

Art starts to say something, but she cuts him off:

TASHI (CONT'D)
We're pulling you out of the Open.

ART

Baby...

TASHI

You're playing like shit -- you've been playing like shit, and I don't want you to embarrass yourself. If this isn't gonna be the year, why bother?

ART

I'm fine.

TASHI

Well, you don't *look* fine.

ART

I'm just rusty. It's a confidence thing.

TASHI

(sighs)

Get your fucking confidence back. I can't do it for you.

ART

No one's asking you to.

TASHI

You are when you play like that. I would have *killed* to have a recovery like yours. I would have literally *stabbed someone*. An old lady. A child. I'm so sick of you using this as an excuse to have a fucking meltdown.

Their daughter appears in the doorway, wearing pajamas.

LITTLE GIRL

Mommy?

They both turn to look at her.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)

You said we could watch a movie.

TASHI

I know, baby. I'll be right there. We're just talking about tennis.

LITTLE GIRL

You're *always* talking about tennis.

TASHI

I know. Go look at the room service menu and figure out what you want to eat for dinner, okay?

She sighs and goes. Tashi turns back to Art.

TASHI (CONT'D)

She likes this hotel.

ART

We can keep staying here...

TASHI

Of course we can. We can just be rich people now if that's all you think you can handle. We can run the foundation full time. Travel. Maybe you can take up some *hobbies*. Or you can keep being a *tennis player*, which is what you still are. So what's it gonna be?

Art doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Huh?

ART

I'm gonna be a tennis player.

TASHI

Good.

Tashi takes out her phone.

ART

What are you doing?

TASHI

I'm looking at the ATP schedule. We need to get you in another event before the Open so you at least have some more match time.

ART

It's too late. Everything's either in Europe or it's already started.

TASHI

Not this one.

Tashi shows him the phone.

ART
That's a challenger.

TASHI
I know. It starts tomorrow. Maybe
someone dropped out.

Art looks at her to see if she's serious. She is.

ART
I haven't played a challenger in
fifteen years.

TASHI
Great. Then it'll be really
embarrassing if you lose in the
first round.

Art looks terrified at this possibility.

TASHI (CONT'D)
(imagining the headline)
"Art Donaldson, six time Grand Slam
Champion, the savior of American
Men's Tennis, knocked out by
unseeded opponent at the -- "
(checks name on her phone)
"*Phil's Tire Town Challenger* one
week before the US Open."

ART
(smiles)
You're evil.

TASHI
I'm gonna call Tom and see if he
can get you in the draw.

She gets up to go make the call.

ART
Hey.

She looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)
I love you.

Tashi points to the TV set.

TASHI
Watch the rest of the match while
I'm in there with Lily. I'm gonna
quiz you on it tomorrow.

She leaves. Art reluctantly presses play on the TV:

Thwacckkkk!

13 INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL, NEW ROCHELLE - SAME TIME

Patrick is standing at the reception desk in a soul-crushingly sad motel lobby: the kind of place you pass on the highway and wonder "*Who stays there?*" It's about as far as you can get from the fancy hotel room we just left. His card has just been declined.

PATRICK

I have to stay here.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

If you want to give me another card...

PATRICK

I don't have another card.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

I'm sorry, sir, but we don't give our hotel rooms out for free.

PATRICK

Can I pay tomorrow? I've been driving all day, I'm exhausted...

FRONT DESK WOMAN

If we gave out beds to every tired person who walked in here asking for one, we'd be a *homeless shelter*, not a business.

PATRICK

Listen: I'm a tennis player. You know the tournament down the road? That's why I'm here.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

That thing at the country club?

PATRICK

Yes. Exactly. It's a professional tournament.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

Doesn't look like one...

PATRICK

You get seven thousand dollars if you win. And you get money just for qualifying. I just need a place to stay tonight so that I can rest before my first match.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

I'm sorry. I need a card on file.

PATRICK

What if I signed a racket and gave it to you?

FRONT DESK WOMAN

Sir, I don't know who you are.

Patrick looks at her. This is among the saddest interactions of his life.

PATRICK

The racket alone is worth like three hundred dollars.

FRONT DESK WOMAN

We need a *card*. For incidentals.

PATRICK

Incidentals?

She nods.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What fucking "incidentals"? Look at this place! It's not the Ritz Carlton!

FRONT DESK WOMAN

Unless you're going to give me a card, I don't think we have much more to talk about.

Patrick glares at her. He angrily grabs his stuff and leaves.

14 EXT. THE MOTEL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick leans against his beat up 2008 Volkswagen Tiguan. He's got his phone up to his ear, waiting. No one picks up.

PATRICK

Fuck.

He writes a text to someone in his phone saved as Lana: **"Hey! Hope you're doing all right. Got a weird favor to ask you. You live near Westchester, right?"**

He sends it, waits. His phone chimes.

Text from Lana: **"I haven't spoken to you in five years."**

He writes back: **"Yeah, I know. How've you been?"**

A moment, then he gets a text back: **"Fuck off, Patrick."**

He puts the phone down and sighs.

15 EXT. STREET IN NEW ROCHELLE - A BIT LATER

Patrick pulls up a few blocks down from the New Rochelle Country Club. He drives slowly, seeing if anyone's around. He finds a sufficiently secluded spot and parks.

Patrick shuts off his car, turns off the lights, and digs around in the backseat for a hoodie that he folds up into a makeshift pillow. He climbs back there, curls up and closes his eyes, looking like he's done this before.

16 BLACK.

Loud sound of KNOCKING. Light snaps back to...

17 INT. THE CAR - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Patrick opens his eyes, and a NEIGHBORHOOD SECURITY GUARD is tapping on the glass of his window with his knuckles.

SECURITY GUARD
Can't sleep here.

PATRICK
(still groggy, gesturing
down the road)
I'm playing at the tournament.

SECURITY GUARD
Don't care. Get it moving.

PATRICK
I was just taking a little nap.

SECURITY GUARD
Move, or I'm calling the cops.

PATRICK

Okay. Okay.

Patrick climbs into the front seat and starts the car.

18 EXT. MCDONALD'S DRIVE THROUGH - A LITTLE LATER

Patrick gets a McMuffin and a coffee off the dollar menu.

19 INT. REGISTRATION ROOM AT THE COUNTRY CLUB - LATER

Patrick walks up to a middle aged MAN sitting behind a plastic fold up table who's got his head in a binder.

ATP OFFICIAL

Name?

PATRICK

Patrick Zweig.

The man looks up at him.

ATP OFFICIAL

Oh wow, that's right. You are.

Patrick looks confused.

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

You probably don't remember this,
but I was one of the line judges at
the Junior US Open back in '06.

PATRICK

Oh. Wow.

ATP OFFICIAL

You were really something back
then, huh?

Patrick doesn't quite know how to respond to that.

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean --

PATRICK

That's all right.

ATP OFFICIAL

You're still an excellent player,
obviously.

PATRICK

It's fine.

ATP OFFICIAL

(awkward smile)

Well, we're glad to have you here.

Patrick nods.

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

You've got your first match against Gonzalez this afternoon. That'll be on court seven. There's a little map of the facility in here if you get lost.

He hands Patrick a packet.

PATRICK

I was wondering, uh... Is there any chance of an advance payment on the prize money?

ATP OFFICIAL

Oh...

PATRICK

Just because I know I'm guaranteed a minimum of four hundred dollars even if I get knocked out today --

ATP OFFICIAL

Well, generally, we don't give out winnings until a player makes his way through the tournament since we don't know how much to pay out...

PATRICK

Right... I just had a problem with my card at the hotel, and I'm... yeah, I need money.

ATP OFFICIAL

Well, you could always just lose today. Haha. Then we'd have to cut you a check this evening.

PATRICK

(doesn't laugh)

Right.

ATP OFFICIAL

Let me see what I can do.

PATRICK

Thanks.

Patrick starts to leave.

ATP OFFICIAL

Oh, by the way...

He stops.

ATP Official leans in like he's sharing a secret.

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

There's a rumor going around that
we had a last minute entry into the
tournament.

Patrick looks at the guy like: "Okay...?"

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

You wanna guess who it is?

PATRICK

(could care less)

Who?

The guy smiles and points to a Nike Tennis poster behind him
which features **Art Donaldson** tossing a ball up for a serve.
Patrick looks at him, confused. Then his eyes go wide.

ATP OFFICIAL

I *know*. People are gonna flip out
when they announce it.

PATRICK

Are you *sure*?

ATP OFFICIAL

Yeah. He crashed out early at
Winston-Salem and wants some more
matches before the Open.

PATRICK

Fuck.

ATP OFFICIAL

Hey, if anyone can beat him, it's
you!

Patrick, in a daze, starts to walk out of the building.

ATP OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I'll let you know about the prize
money, all right?

Patrick leaves.

20 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - PRESENT, LATE AFTERNOON

Thwaccckkk!

A. Donaldson: 1 - 40

P. Zweig: 2 - 40

Back to the match from the opening. Patrick is serving.

The viewer who is not a tennis fan may not notice (and it's not yet necessary that they do), but Patrick's serve is weird: He puts his racket behind his right ear, almost like he's going to throw a shot-put, holding it there before leaping up off of both feet to meet the toss in the air.

The ball comes scorching off his racket.

Art returns, and they rally, ending with Art hitting an overhead smash winner.

UMPIRE
Advantage, Donaldson.

Both men steady themselves. Patrick resets.

Thwaccckkkk!

LINE JUDGE
OUT!

UMPIRE
Second service.

Patrick serves up a slower ball. Art steps up to it looking to demolish it, but he sends it straight into the net.

ART
FUCK!

The crowd gasps. They've never heard Art Donaldson curse on the court before. Tashi looks on, furious at her husband.

UMPIRE
Unsportsmanlike conduct. Verbal obscenity. Warning, Donaldson.

Art doesn't even acknowledge the code violation as he resets.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Deuce.

Thwacckkkk!

Patrick sends in a spinny serve that Art manages to return, but Patrick has set himself up perfectly to dictate the rally, and he rips a forehand crosscourt, winning the point.

Frustrated, Art RAISES HIS RACKET like he's going to SMASH it, but he stops himself: he can't afford the point penalty.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Advantage, Zweig.

The crowd is shocked -- Art Donaldson *never* smashes rackets -- and Patrick *smiles*. He's got Art exactly where he wants him.

Patrick goes into his service motion.

Thwaackkk!

21 EXT. BILLIE JEAN KING NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - MID-AFTERNOON

Fifteen years ago. US Open Boys Doubles Final, 2006.

A big, outdoor court. A few dozen people sit in the stands.

ART and PATRICK, 17 and 16 respectively, are up 5 games to 2, 30-15 in the third set against TWO BOYS FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC (Junior US Open matches, like most adult matches on the ATP tour except for those played at Grand Slams, are **best of three sets**, so we're **one point away from MATCH POINT**).

Patrick steps up to the line and goes into his service motion -- the same weird one he keeps as an adult -- and Art, who is up towards the net, crouches down as far as he can go so that Patrick's serve can pass directly over his head.

Here, as in earlier scenes, we get to see the noticeable differences in the way the two boys play the game: While Art's game is *beautiful*, made up of clean strokes, lots of power from the baseline, a textbook one-handed backhand (a young Roger Federer or Dominic Thiem), Patrick is *something else*: he's an absolute MONSTER on the court, coming up with unexpected, seemingly impossible, low probability shots, the stuff you can't teach (a young Nick Kyrgios or Gael Monfils).

Art and Patrick win the point when Patrick, chasing after a lob, manages to hit the ball on the run, backwards between his legs (a "tweener") and sends it zipping right down the edge of the line as if it were a laser beam.

Patrick and Art smile. The Czech guys look at each other despondently.

UMPIRE
Forty - fifteen.

Match point.

Art and Patrick look towards their box: Their COACH, 50s, looks back at them and clenches his fist.

Patrick lines up to serve. Art crouches down.

Thwaccckkkk!

It's an ace.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Game, set, and match, Donaldson and
Zweig. Two sets to one, six-one,
seven-six, six-two.

They fall to the ground, losing their minds, jumping up and down, hugging and kissing each other.

Art and Patrick are the US Open Boys Doubles champions, and, it is clear, they are also *best friends*.

22 EXT. BILLIE JEAN KING NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Art and Patrick stand on court holding their trophies in front of a TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL and an ESPN CAMERA CREW.

ART
First of all, I think we'd both
just like to congratulate Jan and
Tomas for playing absolutely
incredible this whole tournament.

The crowd politely cheers for the Czech boys.

ART (CONT'D)
Those guys always give us a lot of
trouble, so I just want to say
congrats to them and their team.
And then, uh, I think we'd both
like to thank Mark, our coach.

COACH, in the stands, does a little faux-humble clap.

ART (CONT'D)
And uh... I don't know.

He looks at Patrick and laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

It's crazy. I mean, we always talked about how amazing it would be to win this together, so yeah, it's wild.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

Something a lot of people talk about when it comes to you two is your different playing styles. Are you aware that they're calling this team *fire and ice*?

ART

(laughs)

Like Borg-McEnroe?

PATRICK

Yeah I've heard that.

ART

Who's fire?

PATRICK

Who do you think?

ART

I think *I* should be fire.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

Art, your game tends to be a little more restrained and precise, and Patrick, your game is a bit more...

PATRICK

I'm a crazy person.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

Well, I don't know about *that*, but -

ART

No, he's crazy. That's accurate.

They laugh.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

And now, you both are in the odd position of playing together as a team in doubles today and then facing off against one another in the Boys Singles final tomorrow.

ART

Yeah.

PATRICK

Insane.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

Any predictions about how that's going to go?

PATRICK

I think we're both gonna try to kick each other's asses. Butts! Sorry! Shit. SORRY!

ART

You have to get us off the air.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

All right, well, are you rooting for anyone in the Girls Singles final later this afternoon?

PATRICK

Tashi Duncan, obviously.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

Do you know each other?

PATRICK

No, but she's incredible. And Art's never seen her play in person. We're gonna try to catch it after this.

TOURNAMENT OFFICIAL

All right, well you guys enjoy that. And again, congratulations.

23 EXT. A DIFFERENT COURT - LATER

Art and Patrick sit in stands which are *noticeably fuller* than they were for the doubles final. They're eating hot dogs from the concession stand with their trophies on the seats next to them, waiting for the Girls Singles final to begin.

ART

Can you do me a favor?

Patrick looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)

Can you not, like, *demolish* me tomorrow?

PATRICK
Shut the fuck up.

ART
No, look, I'm at peace with the
fact that you're going to win.

PATRICK
It's not a *fact*.

ART
Statistically, it's *likely*.

Patrick laughs.

ART (CONT'D)
I'm just saying, like... throw me a
couple games? Maybe a set?

PATRICK
If it matters to you so much, I can
just *give* it to you.

ART
Wow. Okay. Thank you.

PATRICK
I mean, every once in a while, a
kid who wins the juniors turns out
to be an *actually* great player, but
most of them fall off the map or
end up in like, the top 300. It's a
curse.

ART
You seemed excited about the
doubles trophy...

PATRICK
That's different. That's *you and*
me. That was just really fun.

ART
Well, if you're gonna let me win
tomorrow, I'll take it. But you
have to *actually play*. You can't
just retire. I need it to look like
I really beat you.

PATRICK
Do you have *money* on this or
something?

ART

No. My grandma's just gonna be watching with her whole nursing home, and she keeps calling me about it saying how proud she is.

PATRICK

(laughs)

Don't guilt me with your *dying* grandmother!

ART

She's not *dying*!

PATRICK

You said she was in a nursing home.

ART

She's just *old*.

Over the sound system:

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Now entering the court, hailing from Russia, girls singles number 4 in the world, IRINA PETROVSKA!

The crowd politely claps, and Patrick and Art watch as the 17 YEAR OLD RUSSIAN GIRL enters. She is short, stocky, serious-looking, doesn't wave or smile at the crowd.

PATRICK

Jesus.

ART

I know. She's like a bond villain.

Petrovaska unzips her bag and gets out some Wilson rackets.

PATRICK

Did you know Tashi Duncan already has a Nike deal?

ART

What? How?

PATRICK

She's probably going pro in like, a month. I watched her at the Junior Australian Open. She could win the real thing tomorrow.

ART

Is she really that good?

PATRICK
She's in another league. She's
beautiful.

ART
You mean her game?

PATRICK
No, I mean she's the hottest woman
I've ever seen.

And right on cue...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
And now entering the court, the
girls singles world number 1 and
winner of the Junior Australian
Open... TASHI DUNCAN!

Art and Patrick lean forward in their seats as 17 year old TASHI enters dressed head to toe in the sleekest 2006 Nike gear. She looks, somehow, like a stunning supermodel AND a brutal force of nature, shooting a million dollar smile.

This Tashi feels somehow a lot *lighter* than her adult version. She already seems like an ambassador of the sport -- a young Serena Williams or Roger Federer.

She heads over to her bench and gives a fist pump to her FATHER in the stands, a serious-looking, sharply dressed man.

As she's taking out her rackets and testing their tension, Art and Patrick can't take their eyes off of her.

ART
Fuck.

24 THE MATCH

To say that Tashi is *smoking* the poor Russian girl would be an understatement -- she is making her look like a toddler.

Tashi's game has all the control and discipline of Art's and all the wild improvisation and raw athleticism of Patrick's: fire and ice in one player.

As Petrovska has an absolute meltdown, cursing at herself in Russian, yelling to her box, smashing her rackets, Tashi looks like she is effortlessly *taking off from the ground.*

As Patrick and Art watch, both of them are ***steadily growing boners under their shorts.***

Patrick looks down at his crotch after a particularly incredible point, realizes what's happening, and tries to cross his legs to hide it. He picks up his doubles trophy from the seat next to him and holds it in his lap.

A moment later, Art looks down, sees his own boner, and does exactly the same thing.

They both look straight ahead trying to look as casual as possible, neither of them realizing that the other is in exactly the same boat.

25 INT. THE JUNIOR PLAYER'S TENT - LATER

Tashi stands with her father, holding the girls singles championship trophy, talking to some well-wishers. Irina Petrovska cries holding her runners up trophy, being comforted by her coach. Art and Patrick stand in the corner, still holding their doubles trophies, staring at Tashi.

Art notices Tashi's father leaving her side for a moment.

ART

We should go say hi.

PATRICK

No, come on. Let's just enjoy.

ART

Patrick, I'm not leaving this tent without introducing myself.

PATRICK

All right, fine. But be cool.

ART

I'm always cool.

26 THE FRONT OF THE RECEIVING LINE - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick and Art stand there full of nervous energy, waiting for Tashi to notice them. When she does, they both put out their hands at the same time for her to shake them.

PATRICK

Hey, I'm Patrick Zwei--

ART

Art Donald--

TASHI

I know who you guys are.

They both retract their hands, surprised.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Fire and ice, right?

ART
(embarrassed)
Oh my god.

PATRICK
In the flesh.

TASHI
You guys should start a boyband.

PATRICK
How do you know we haven't?

Art clocks Patrick already putting on the charm and realizes he has to say something.

ART
You were... fucking incredible.

TASHI
Thank you.

ART
No really, it was like... a different game. It wasn't even tennis.

Art looks over at the still crying Petrovska.

ART (CONT'D)
I felt bad for Irina.

TASHI
Don't. She's a sore loser. And a racist bitch.
(off their surprise)
We've been playing each other since we were twelve, and she always mutters shit in Russian under her breath at the changeover.

They look over at Irina, who's now scowling over at Tashi.

TASHI (CONT'D)
(to Art)
I heard you're playing for Stanford next year.

ART
Yeah. How did you -- ?

TASHI
Me too.

Beat.

ART
What?

TASHI
I just accepted the offer, and they mentioned you.

PATRICK
You're not going pro?

TASHI
No. Not yet.

PATRICK
Why?

Tashi looks surprised by the intensity of the question.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Sorry, but you could be winning
slams *tomorrow*. Why would you waste
your time playing *college tennis*?

Art looks at Patrick, stung. Tashi's about to say something when her father returns.

TASHI'S FATHER
Baby, we've got to get going. Meet
me at the car in two minutes.

TASHI
Okay.
(to the boys:)
I've gotta go do this interview.
But, uh... there's gonna be a
little party at the ball room later
tonight. You guys should come.

PATRICK
Uh..

ART
Yes! We'll be there!

TASHI
Cool. Good meeting you.

Tashi leaves. Art and Patrick stand there in a daze.

27 EXT. BILLIE JEAN KING NATIONAL TENNIS CENTER - LATER

Art and Patrick walk away from the tent.

PATRICK

I'm not going to that party.

ART

You're not?

PATRICK

No. We've got a *final* tomorrow. We should rest, prepare.

ART

I thought it didn't matter to you?

PATRICK

Yeah, but -- I mean, don't *you* want to get some rest?

ART

I mean, I guess I --

Art stops himself, realizes what Patrick's trying to do.

ART (CONT'D)

You *piece of shit*.

PATRICK

What?

ART

You wanna be the only one who shows up!

PATRICK

No, I --

ART

Wow, you're an asshole.

PATRICK

That's not what I'm doing!

ART

Are you *that* threatened by me?

PATRICK

Art, look at me. Is that the kind of thing I would do?

Art looks at him. It *is*.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to *trick* you out of having a chance to talk to her. I just think you're gonna regret it if you spend the night before our final out at some party instead of, you know... studying my game.

ART

I've been *studying your game* since we were kids. It hasn't made a difference.

PATRICK

(joking)

You know, it hurts me sometimes how little you believe in yourself.

Art laughs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Seriously. I'm not going.

ART

Promise me.

PATRICK

I promise.

ART

Swear on your life.

PATRICK

I swear.

(beat.)

And you?

ART

What do you care?

PATRICK

I'm just asking.

ART

If you're not going, I won't go.

PATRICK

Great.

ART

Cool.

They look at each suspiciously.

28 INT. THE PARTY - THAT NIGHT

Patrick and Art are "dressed up," standing in the middle of the party, looking around for Tashi.

ART
I can't believe you.

PATRICK
I'm only here because I knew you'd be here.

ART
Aren't you *dating* someone?

PATRICK
What, *Jen*? She's not my *girlfriend*.

ART
Does *she* know that?

PATRICK
(she doesn't)
Yeah. Of course. Totally.

He looks around.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
How are we gonna deal with this?

ART
Deal with what?

PATRICK
We can't both just go in there
dick's swinging. We're gonna cancel
each other out.

The doors open at the other end of the party, and the boys see **Tashi making her entrance**, wearing a gown, looking royal.

ART
Oh my god.

PATRICK
I'd let her fuck me with a racket.

Seemingly the whole party claps for her as she smiles.

29 ANOTHER "RECEIVING LINE" - A LITTLE LATER

Art and Patrick wait again for their turn to be noticed.

ART

Hey!

PATRICK

We made it!

TASHI

Oh, wow, you guys again!

Awkward beat -- they all aren't sure whether they should hug or something, so they just kind of wave at each other.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I didn't realize when I invited you that your final was tomorrow. Are you sure you don't need to be preparing or something?

ART

(trying to play it cool)
Nah. It's just the *juniors*.

PATRICK

We both know how it's gonna go.

Art looks at him, pissed.

TASHI

Well, so cool that you came.

ART

Yeah, you know, we should get to know each other if we're gonna be at school together next year.

TASHI

Totally.

PATRICK

(cutting this conversation
off, to Tashi)
Hey, do you smoke?

TASHI

(surprised)
Cigarettes?

PATRICK

Yeah.

TASHI
No. Do you?

PATRICK
Yeah. Do you wanna get some air?

Tashi looks at Art, who is looking at Patrick, annoyed. She understands that these two boys are deeply smitten with her, and she decides that she's going to have fun with it.

TASHI
(smiles)
Sure.

30 EXT. THE PARTY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The three of them are alone on a balcony overlooking the tennis courts. Patrick leans against the railing, smoking. Tashi and Art sit at a table.

PATRICK
(to Tashi)
So I have to ask you about the Stanford thing.

TASHI
(laughs)
Okay.

PATRICK
What's the deal?

TASHI
What do you mean?

PATRICK
I mean, what are you trying to do?
What's the angle?

TASHI
I wanna get better, obviously.

PATRICK
By beating up on a bunch of girls who were the best players at their *high schools*?

TASHI
You know, they also offer *classes* at college. I don't want my only skill in life to be *hitting a ball with a racket*.

PATRICK
(realizing something)
Oh, I get it.

Tashi looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Oh, that's really smart. You're making them *wait* for you. You want all these girls you've been obliterating in the juniors to go pro and have a year or two where they get comfortable without you, and then you want come back from the shadows and just be like: "Remember me?"

Tashi tries not to react, but he's not far off.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
And, of course, they *will* remember you. And so will all the women on tour who've been watching you in the juniors. Meanwhile, you get to be the tennis phenomenon who *cares about her education*, getting straight A's at *Stanford*, carrying all these country club players to the NCAA championships.

TASHI
Is this why you came to my party? You wanted to tell me what a monster I am?

PATRICK
It's brilliant. Seriously. I can already see the Nike campaign.

TASHI
And when are *you* going pro?

PATRICK
As soon as I can. Next season. It's a young person's game.

Tashi scoffs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Hitting a ball with a racket is a great way to avoid having a job. And it's definitely a great way to avoid having to go to school.

TASHI

See, that's your problem. You think you're like an *artist* or something. Your coach has been telling you you're a genius since he "discovered" you as a thirteen year old, and he's just been letting you do whatever you wanted since then.

PATRICK

(smiles)

I didn't know you'd been watching.

TASHI

I haven't been. I just watched you play *once* at the Junior Australian Open, and it was obvious to me that no one's ever *taught* you anything. They're all afraid of messing with the *magic*. That's why you still have that atrocious serve.

PATRICK

It works.

TASHI

It's an abomination. But yes, your *whole game* works... for the juniors. But what's gonna happen the moment you go pro? You're gonna be playing *challengers*, right? You're gonna have to start at the bottom like everybody else. And you're gonna be up against guys who are like, 500th in the world. Guys whose names you've never heard. Guys who *suck*. And they're going to *beat you*, because you're a little boy, and they are *men*. They know how to deal with the shitty umpires and the line judges and the grind of the tour. They know what it's like for no one to give a shit about them. They know what it's like to *lose*. And they *need* to win, because it's their job. You just want to win, because you love it when people tell you how talented you are.

Before Patrick can respond, she moves on to Art.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, Art couldn't get your coach's attention if he shot him in the stomach, but I wouldn't be surprised if he's better than you in a few years. Or, at the very least, I wouldn't be surprised if this is still his job and you're... I don't know... playing in a rock band or something.

PATRICK

Why do you keep trying to put me in a band? Earlier, it was a boyband.

TASHI

I was being generous. My point is that you can actually *build something* out of ice. Fire just tends to burn shit down.

Beat. Tashi looks at her watch.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I should get back to the party before my dad comes looking for me. See you at school next year, Art.

She starts to leave.

PATRICK

Wait!

She stops.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Are you on Facebook?

TASHI

I have no idea what that is.

ART

I think he's trying to ask you for your number, which is what I am also doing... right now.

Tashi looks at them and laughs.

TASHI

You *both* want my number?

ART

Very much so.

She shakes her head.

TASHI
I'm not a home-wrecker.

PATRICK
We don't live together.

ART
It's an open relationship.

TASHI
I can't give my number to *both* of you, and I don't want to choose one and mess with the vibe before the final tomorrow. I'd never forgive myself.

ART
We'll forgive you. Also, Patrick has a girlfriend.

PATRICK
I do not.

Tashi laughs. She's enjoying this very much.

TASHI
How about this? I'll be watching your match tomorrow. Whoever wins can text me.

Patrick smiles.

ART
Fuck.

TASHI
I didn't say I'd text *back*.

ART
If you wanted to choose him, you could have just said so.

TASHI
You can beat him. You *should* beat him, actually.

ART
Are you saying you *want* me to?

TASHI
I'm saying you're not getting my number if you don't.
(MORE)

TASHI (CONT'D)
 (beat. She smiles.)
 Later.

She heads back inside. Patrick and Art watch her go.

ART
 Remember earlier when you said
 you'd let me win?

PATRICK
 That was a lifetime ago.

ART
 What about my grandmother in the
 nursing home?

Patrick stubs out his cigarette on the railing.

PATRICK
 I hope she has a fucking stroke.

31 THE MATCH - NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

Thwaccckkk!

There are a few dozen spectators and a camera crew, but Art and Patrick are really playing for an audience of one:

Tashi sits in the dead middle of the stadium, feet up on the seat in front of her, an Empress watching two gladiators.

Art plays the best tennis of his life, but Patrick's too good for him. He doesn't just beat Art: he *embarrasses* him.

Art scoops up a ball on the run and sends it shallow to Patrick's ad court. Patrick sprints to it, looking like he's going for a smash towards the baseline, but it's a fake out: he hits an absolutely perfect volley, winning the point.

Art throws his hands up in despair, and one of the LINE JUDGES (the guy from the registration desk fifteen years later) can't help but mouth in disbelief: *Wow*.

Patrick turns to look at Tashi in the stands and does a cocky little bow. She smiles and claps for him.

32 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - PRESENT DAY - EVENING

Thwaccckkk!

A. Donaldson: 2 - 0

P. Zweig: 5 - 15

Tashi now has her head in her hands as Art appears to have fully given up in the first set.

Patrick goes into his service motion and sends in an ace.

UMPIRE
Thirty - Love.

Patrick moves to the other side.

Thwacckkkk!

Another ace.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Forty - Love.

Patrick moves to the other side.

Thwacckkkk!

It goes just a little bit wide.

LINE JUDGE
OUT!

UMPIRE
Second service.

Patrick steadies himself, goes into his motion, and serves up a ball that's just as hot.

Thwacckkkk!

Art doesn't even try to move for it.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Game and first set, Zweig. Zweig
leads one set to love.

A few people in the stands politely clap for Patrick as Art is already heading for his bench, not even looking over at Tashi or his team.

Patrick looks over to catch Tashi's eye, but she's got her head buried in her hands.

Umpire sets a timer on his phone. It starts ticking down:

1:29, 1:28, 1:27...

SET BREAK

A. Donaldson: 2

P. Zweig: 6

33 EXT. ANOTHER COURT, NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - AFTERNOON

Earlier that week.

Thwaccckkkk!

Patrick rallies at match point in the first round with ERNESTO GONZALEZ, 29, an intense-looking guy from Argentina.

The stands are completely empty. Even the Umpire looks bored.

Ernesto makes an unforced error, sinking the ball in the net.

ERNESTO
(absolute rage and self-hatred)
AHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

He lets out a stream of expletives and smashes his racket to smithereens against the concrete while Patrick just calmly approaches the net for the handshake. Patrick has seen this -- and done this himself -- thousands of times.

UMPIRE
Game, set, and match, Zweig. 2 sets to love, 6-2, 7-6.

Ernesto finishes his rant/demolition, and then he just drops the rage completely and approaches to shake Patrick's hand.

34 INT. COUNTRY CLUB KITCHEN - LATER

Patrick eats a free meal surrounded by busboys, line judges, and other staff.

35 INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Patrick showers in the country club locker room.

36 EXT. COUNTRY CLUB PARKING LOT - LATER, NIGHT

Patrick sits in his car, looking at his bank balance on his phone. He's got **\$70** in his checking account.

He opens up Tinder and starts swiping right on every woman near Westchester when he's startled by a knock on the glass.

PARKING LOT ATTENDANT
Gotta close the lot for the night.

PATRICK
Yeah, okay.

Patrick starts his car.

37 EXT. THE RITZ CARLTON, WHITE PLAINS - LATER

Patrick pulls up in his beat-up Tiguan to the front driveway which is full of Mercedes, Land Rovers, and BMWs.

VALET GUY starts to open his door, but Patrick stops him.

PATRICK
How much is it?

VALET GUY
Overnight or just for dinner?

PATRICK
I'm just going to the bar.

VALET GUY
Twenty.

PATRICK
Twenty?

Valet guy nods. Patrick shuts the door and drives away as Valet Guy just shakes his head.

38 INT. LOBBY BAR AT THE RITZ CARLTON - LATER

Patrick sits across from his DATE, a lawyer in her late 30s.

He's severely underdressed for the environment -- jeans and a T-shirt -- whereas she's still wearing her work clothes.

DATE
So, do you play at like...
Wimbledon and the *US Open*?

PATRICK
Sometimes. When I qualify.

DATE
What does that mean?

PATRICK

Those big tournaments usually have spots for 128 players. That's how many people are there at the start. So if you're ranked in the top 100, you instantly get a spot, but everyone else has to play a sort of *tournament before the tournament*. And even to get *there*, your ranking has to be pretty high. So, some years I make it, some years I don't. If I win this thing in New Rochelle, then my ranking will be high enough for the Open.

DATE

You'll get a spot?

PATRICK

I'll get a spot in the *qualifiers*.

DATE

Ah.

PATRICK

(laughs)

I told you tennis was boring.

DATE

No! Really.

PATRICK

Tell me about real estate law.

DATE

Oh. Well --

Patrick instantly tunes out and just pretends to listen. His eye wanders to the background behind his date: the bar, its sad collection of travelers and locals, the TV playing SportsCenter, the bartender side-eyeing a woman who might be a prostitute talking to a rich older man.

Patrick's eye settles on the reception desk to the hotel, and when it focuses, he realizes that a woman is standing there, staring at him. It's **Tashi**.

His eyes go wide. So do hers when she realizes that it's him.

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

Are you okay?

PATRICK

Sorry?

DATE

You just got this crazy look on
your face.

PATRICK

Oh. I just...

He looks back towards the reception desk where Tashi is
standing with her daughter, Lily, who wears a bathing suit,
and Andrew, their security guard.

Tashi says something to Lily and Andrew. She kisses Lily's
head, and Andrew takes Lily up in the elevator.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

There's someone I know over there.

Date turns and sees Tashi.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(already getting up)

Do you mind if I...

DATE

(clearly a little upset
but trying to be cool)

Oh. Yeah. Of course.

Patrick starts walking over there.

Tashi finishes up at the front desk and walks hurriedly
towards Patrick, meeting him in the center of the room.

PATRICK

Hi.

TASHI

What the fuck are you doing here?

PATRICK

I'm playing at the --

TASHI

I know that. You're not staying at
this hotel are you?

PATRICK

No. Why are YOU staying here? I
assumed you guys would *rent a villa*
or something.

TASHI
Lily likes hotels.
(off his confusion)
Our daughter.

PATRICK
Oh.

TASHI
Art can't see the two of us
together. He already thinks I
planned all of this just to
humiliate him.

PATRICK
(smiles)
Didn't you?

TASHI
Not *this* part.

Patrick takes her in. There is palpable energy between them.

She looks over towards the bar, where Patrick's date is
watching them.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Are you on a *date*?

PATRICK
No. Well, yes, but it's not... I
mostly just need a place to sleep.
(off her judgment)
What? We can't *all* stay at the
Ritz.

TASHI
(re: his date)
Can you go seal the deal and get
out of here so we don't run the
risk of you guys running into each
other? You're on opposite sides of
the draw. You won't play each other
unless you're both in the final.

PATRICK
I don't think we have to worry
about that.

TASHI
No. You usually start to fall apart
near the second round.

Beat. Patrick just looks at her, stung. He smiles.

PATRICK
You knew I was gonna be here, and
you made him show up anyway...

TASHI
He needs the practice if he's gonna
have a shot at the Open.

PATRICK
Yeah, no, I get it.

TASHI
That's why we are where we are.

PATRICK
(looks around)
Looks like we're all in the same
place.

TASHI
(shakes her head)
We're not.

They look at each other.

39 EXT. A TENNIS COURT AT THE MARK REBELLATO ACADEMY - MORNING
Thwwaacckkkk!

Fifteen years ago. A few weeks after the US Open.

Art and Patrick rally, practicing together.

ART
What do you mean you won't say?

PATRICK
I don't kiss and tell.

ART
Since when?

PATRICK
Since she told me she'd stop seeing
me if I told anyone.

ART
She had to know you'd talk to *me*.

PATRICK
(laughs)
She didn't indicate that there were
any exceptions.

ART
Fine, just give me a signal.

PATRICK
A signal?

ART
I'll ask questions, and you just react. You won't have to speak.

PATRICK
Isn't this *hard for you to hear*?
Like, wouldn't you rather not?

ART
No. It was obvious from the start that she was more into you. I'm competitive, but I'm not *deranged*.

Patrick smiles and stops the ball when it comes to him.

PATRICK
Who's serving first?

ART
You.

PATRICK
Okay.

Patrick bounces the ball and starts to go into his motion.

ART
Hold on.

He stops.

ART (CONT'D)
If the two of you slept together,
do a normal serve.

PATRICK
What?

ART
I'm not asking you to tell me. I'm just saying if you fucked, serve like me.

PATRICK
Like *you*?

Art nods.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
You know you have a tic, right?

ART
A tic?

PATRICK
Yeah. Right before you throw the ball up, you place it in the exact center of the neck of the racket.

ART
I do?

PATRICK
Every time.

Art takes out a ball from his shorts and mimes his service motion to see if Patrick is right. He is.

ART
Holy shit...

Patrick laughs.

ART (CONT'D)
Okay, so do that.

PATRICK
I'm not telling you anything, Art.

ART
You *won't* be telling me.

Patrick looks at Art. Art smiles, egging him on.

Patrick bounces the ball and goes into **Art's service motion**.

Art's too distracted to get in position to return it, but it doesn't matter:

Thwacckkkk!

Patrick serves up an ace.

Patrick smiles and shrugs. Art smiles back, but as Patrick looks away and resets for his next serve, Art's expression changes, and we can see exactly what he's feeling: **HATRED**.

Not only did Patrick sleep with Tashi: it turns out he's also perfectly capable of serving the "normal" way. He just *won't*.

Patrick goes back to his own service motion now, and as Art gets into position to return, we can see that he's determined to harness his hatred to *demolish* whatever comes his way.

Thwwacckkkk!

40

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - PRESENT DAY, EVENING

CLOSE UP on the Umpire's timer still ticking down from 90 seconds: 1:26, 1:25, 1:24...

Art wipes himself off with a towel and takes his shirt off. He gets out a fresh Nike shirt from his bag and puts it on the bench next to him, letting himself air out.

He takes out one of his sports drinks labelled "between sets" and glances over at Patrick's bench.

Patrick is also shirtless, and he's got his arm slung over the side of the bench, slouching, exuding cocky ease. In his hand, he's got an opened bag of *peanut m&ms*.

Art looks up at Patrick's face and sees that Patrick's looking back at him. Patrick extends the hand with the m&ms as if to say "You want one?" Art scowls at him with the same unmistakable look of ***hatred***. Time to harness it once again.

He looks over at Tashi, who's been watching this whole interaction. So does Patrick. For a moment, the three of them are *all* looking at each other in a kind of Mexican stand-off.

Suddenly, the Umpire's alarm starts beeping, LOUD.

UMPIRE

Time!

There's a loud CLICK, and the court's overhead LIGHTS come on.

Art puts on his fresh shirt. Patrick puts back on the same sweaty shirt he was wearing. Art downs his "between sets" bottle in one gulp, not even grimacing.

They both take to the court and look at each other across the net. Set one is ancient history. All that matters now is what happens next.

Thwacckkkk!

SET TWO

A. Donaldson: 2, 0 - 0

P. Zweig: 6, 0 - 0

41 EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - DAY

Fourteen years ago.

Tashi rallies against a TEAMMATE as the rest of the team watches. She wins a point crushing a forehand down the line.

Her teammates cheer, as does someone standing outside the fence. Tashi looks over and sees **Art** watching. She smiles.

42 INT. CAFETERIA - A LITTLE LATER

Tashi and Art eat dinner together: Gatorade, greens, pasta.

ART

So when are you going pro?

TASHI

(rolls her eyes)

You're gonna ask me this too?

ART

I mean, you can't keep doing this for three more years. That's obvious.

TASHI

What about you? Has anyone taken one set off of you yet in practice?

ART

No, but I still have to try.

TASHI

I'm trying!

Art looks at her like: "Give me a break."

TASHI (CONT'D)

If we win the championships, I'll leave.

ART

So, April.

TASHI

I said "if" we win.

ART

Right. So April.

Tashi smiles.

TASHI
Did Patrick tell you he's coming to
watch the Pepperdine match next
week?

Art's demeanor immediately changes at the mention of Patrick.

ART
Yeah, he told me.

TASHI
We should get dinner or something.

ART
Yeah. Sure. If you want.

Tashi notices he's being weird.

TASHI
What's up?

ART
Nothing.

TASHI
Did you guys have a fight or
something?

ART
No. We're fine. I just...

TASHI
Art.

ART
Really. Nothing.

TASHI
(looks at him)
This whole "thing" you're doing is
stupid. You're not good at it.

ART
I'm not doing a "thing." I'm
just...

TASHI
Uh huh?

ART
I'm surprised that you guys are
still seeing each other.

Beat. Tashi studies his face.

TASHI

Okay.

She grabs her tray and starts to get up.

ART

I'm sorry.

TASHI

Why did you want to have dinner
with me today?

ART

I told you: I had extra meal
credits. They were gonna expire.

TASHI

Don't be such a fucking pussy. What
do you have to tell me? Is he
seeing other girls on tour?

ART

No. Or, I mean, I don't know. He
might be.

TASHI

He might be?

ART

I don't know. That's not what I'm
trying to say.

TASHI

Then what are you trying to say?

ART

I'm just...

Tashi waits. She gets up, annoyed.

ART (CONT'D)

(blurts out)

He's not in love with you.

She stops. Beat.

TASHI

Who says I want somebody to be in
love with me?

ART

I mean --

TASHI

When did I say *I* was in love with
him?

ART

You didn't.

TASHI

So why would I care whether or not
he loved me?

ART

I guess you wouldn't.

TASHI

Cool.

ART

Cool.

Beat.

ART (CONT'D)

Don't you think you deserve it?

She looks at Art and sees the longing in his face.

TASHI

Jesus fucking Christ.

ART

I mean, who *wouldn't* be in love
with you?

Tashi just laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

Sorry.

TASHI

I think you might be the worst
friend in the world.

ART

Maybe.

TASHI

Definitely.

Beat. They look at each other.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Thanks for dinner, Art.

She leaves. Art watches her go for a moment before taking the saddest ever sip of Gatorade.

43 INT. FORTE CHALLENGER 100, KAZAKHSTAN - SAME TIME, DAY

Thwaacckkkk!

Patrick plays in a tiebreaker against KENJI SHINODA, 30, a journeyman player from Japan ranked just outside the top 100.

Shinoda rips a forehand crosscourt, and Patrick responds with a risky winner, sending it *right down the edge of the line*.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

UMPIRE

6-3, Shinoda.

PATRICK

No. No way. That was in.

UMPIRE

The ball was called out.

PATRICK

Did you see it?

UMPIRE

That's what he called.

PATRICK

Yeah, but did you see it?

Umpire shrugs -- he could give a shit.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(to Shinoda)

You *know* that was in.

Shinoda shrugs like: "What do you want *me* to do about it?"

UMPIRE

First service.

PATRICK

No. Come on. What about hawk eye?
Can I challenge it?

UMPIRE

(laughs)

We don't have hawk eye.

PATRICK
Un-fucking-believable.

UMPIRE
Watch it.

PATRICK
All fucking week you guys have been
pulling this shit....

UMPIRE
Code violation: unsportsmanlike
conduct, verbal obscenity. Warning,
Zweig.

Patrick laughs petulantly, gets to the baseline and gets into
position to return. Shinoda serves up an ace that Patrick
doesn't even move for.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Game, set, and match, Shinoda.

44 EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - DAY, THE NEXT WEEK

Thwacccckkk!

Art rallies against a TEAMMATE, clearly already becoming a
better, much more confident player.

Teammate sends the ball into the net and chastises himself as
Art lines up for his next serve.

Art sends in an ace right down the T.

TEAMMATE
Out!

Art looks at the guy.

ART
You sure?

TEAMMATE
Yeah, man. It was out.

Beat. Art shrugs and serves up a slightly softer ball.

They rally, and teammate tries to lob him, but Art hops up to
meet the ball and demolishes it in an un-returnable smash.

His teammates cheer, and Art smiles.

VOICE (O.S.)
 THAT'S RIGHT, BABY! SHOW THAT
 MOTHERFUCKER WHO'S BOSS!

Art looks over, and he sees **Patrick**, wearing shorts, flip flops, sunglasses, and a Stanford T-shirt waving over at him.

PATRICK
 FINISH IT OUT, DONALDSON! COME ON!

Art doesn't smile. He turns his attention back to his opponent, steps up to the line and sends in another scorch.

Thwwaaaccckkk!

45 EXT. STANFORD CAMPUS - A LITTLE LATER

Patrick and Art sit on the grass, eating churros.

PATRICK
 So tell me about college life.

ART
 I told you already on the phone.
 It's mostly just work.

PATRICK
 Yeah, but what about the fun stuff?
 The parties, the ladies. You're the
star of the fucking tennis team.

ART
 (laughs)
 It's not exactly like being the
 quarterback at Nortre Dame.

Patrick looks off at a **poster of Tashi** on a bulletin board nearby that says in all caps beneath her: **THE DUNCANATOR!!!**

ART (CONT'D)
 Tashi's a different story.

PATRICK
 So... Nothing? No one?

ART
 No... What about you?

PATRICK
 What do you mean? I'm *taken*. What
 do you think I'm doing here?

ART
(joking)
You're not here to visit *me*?

PATRICK
I love you, Art, but, sadly, there
are some things you just can't do
for me.

Patrick notices Art's expression darken.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
What?

ART
Nothing, just... Are you really
committed to this thing?

PATRICK
To Tashi? Yeah. I mean, we're
taking it step by step, but, you
know, *I like her*. I think she's
making me an honest man.
(off Art's look)
You don't believe me?

ART
No, I just... You know... I'm not
sure how *she's* thinking about it. I
don't want you to get hurt.

PATRICK
(laughs)
You don't want *me* to get hurt?

ART
Yeah.

PATRICK
I didn't know you were so concerned
about my feelings.

ART
Of course I am.

PATRICK
Did she say something to you?

ART
No, I just got the impression that
she's not really thinking about
this as a *serious relationship*.

PATRICK
You got that *impression*?

ART
Uh huh. From a conversation we had.

PATRICK
Hmm.

Patrick looks at him and smiles.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
You fucking snake.

Art looks confused.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Honestly, I'm proud of you. I'd be doing the same thing.

ART
I'm not --

PATRICK
I mean, *of course* you still have a thing for her.

ART
That's --

PATRICK
It's fine. I like it. I don't think you're gonna try to *fuck* her while we're still together. It's exciting to see you this way.
(beat.)
It's what's been missing from your tennis.

ART
What?

PATRICK
I mean, you've always been so concerned with doing a *good job*, you know? Playing *well*. And you DO play well. You play *beautifully*. But you've never had that thing where you just really, really, REALLY want to win. Like, *my* thing is that I'll just chase the ball like a fucking animal, but you've always been obsessed with hitting it exactly the right way.
(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(beat)

It's exciting to see you lit up about something, even if that something is my girlfriend.

ART

Is that what you guys are calling each other now?

Patrick looks at him, smiles.

PATRICK

You know this just makes it hotter for *me*, right? You sitting here, pining for her?

(looks around)

I mean, every single one of these assholes is trying to fuck Tashi. Why should my best friend be any different?

ART

I would never --

PATRICK

I know. It's not your style. You're playing *percentage tennis*: waiting for me to fuck up.

They look at each other for a long, uncomfortable beat.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Come on, walk me over there.

46 INT. TASHI'S DORM ROOM - LATER

Patrick and Tashi have just finished having sex. They're laying in bed, looking at each other.

PATRICK

I missed you...You have no idea how lonely it is on tour.

TASHI

Is that why you haven't won any challengers?

Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

I just told you I *missed* you.

TASHI

I watched the Shinoda match online.
You could've had him in the third
set if you didn't start tanking.

PATRICK

Tashi.

TASHI

What?

PATRICK

We just had what I'm assuming is
the best sex of *both* our lives.

TASHI

Exactly. We can talk about tennis
without you thinking it's about
your dick. You won't feel
emasculated because you know you
just fucked my brains out.

PATRICK

I fucked your brains out?

She rolls her eyes. He kisses her. They make out a bit. They
look at each other.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

When were you gonna tell me about
Art?

TASHI

Oh. I thought you knew. He's *your*
friend.

PATRICK

I mean, I feel *bad*, because I know
he's in pain, but I find the whole
thing kind of delicious.

TASHI

You're not threatened by him?

PATRICK

(smiles)

No.

TASHI

You *should* be. He's good looking,
he's smart, he's good at tennis.

PATRICK

He's always been *very good*.

TASHI

I'm serious. He's gotten a lot better since he's been here. I've been impressed.

PATRICK

Are the two of us still playing for your number? I thought I won.

TASHI

You *always* think you've won before the match is over.

Patrick looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

You have all this experience visualizing victory, but none visualizing defeat. The moment the match starts slipping away from you, you decide you'd rather just *throw* it on your own terms than accept that you might get beaten by a guy who you know isn't nearly as talented as you are.

PATRICK

Is the match *slipping away from me*?

TASHI

I'm just saying you could *learn something* from Art. I mean, *look at him*, still trying to stay in this thing even when he knows you're in here fucking me. He's not afraid of a little *pain*. He spent so much time practicing with you as a kid that now his default position is that the guy on the other side of the net is gonna be better than him. And it makes him a much better player. Meanwhile, *you* think you can just *play your game* and the match will take care of itself.

PATRICK

Are we still talking about tennis?

TASHI

We're *always* talking about tennis.

PATRICK

Can we not?

Beat.

TASHI

Sure.

Tashi gets up and starts getting dressed.

PATRICK

What are you doing?

TASHI

I have to do my routine. I'll see you after the match.

PATRICK

Tashi...

TASHI

If you're not interested in me fixing your game for free then don't worry about it.

PATRICK

Why do you care so much?

TASHI

I'm *dating* you. It's *embarrassing* for me if you suck.

PATRICK

I *suck* now?

Tashi shrugs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

It's not college tennis out there. We can't all walk around calling ourselves the *Duncantor*.

She looks at him: he's actually *jealous* of her college tennis career.

TASHI

Wow.

PATRICK

I'm happy they like you here. I just don't need you to be my coach.

TASHI

Well, *someone* needs to be.

PATRICK
(laughs)
Can we just --

TASHI
I mean, what do you need from me?
Or, what do you *think* you need? A
cheerleader? A fuck buddy? A
girlfriend?

Patrick doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)
There are lots of girls who will be
your girlfriend. You're talented,
you're charming, and you've got a
big dick. Go be with one of them.

PATRICK
Is this like a new strategy you're
using to pump yourself up before
the match? Have a little fight to
get the energy going?

TASHI
I don't *need* a fight to get the
energy going.

PATRICK
No. Just an hour of *meditation*.

TASHI
And what? You think that's lame?
You think I'm trying too hard?

PATRICK
I think it's unnecessary given that
you're playing *Sally Fucking
Country Club* from Pepperdine.

TASHI
How's coasting by on talent working
out for you?

PATRICK
What are you trying to do right
now?

TASHI
I'm trying to *make this work for
me*, Patrick.

(MORE)

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'm trying to justify being with this *boy* who just wants me to tell him that his game is perfect and suck his dick, but the more I'm listening to myself, the crazier I feel for being here. I mean, do you have any idea how frustrating it is having to listen to you complain on the phone every week about all the ways you're getting "screwed over" on tour? How can you think that's a good use of my time?

PATRICK

Excuse me for *inconveniencing* you.

TASHI

You *are*!

(shakes her head)

I need to be alone now. I'll see you after the match.

PATRICK

No.

TASHI

What?

PATRICK

I'm not *going* to the match. Not if you think you can just *dismiss* me. I'm not some fucking lapdog who's gonna sit around and let you punish me. I'm not Art.

Tashi laughs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I mean, maybe you need someone like that -- someone who's gonna hop on board with your life and be Mr. Tashi Duncan.

TASHI

That's what you think I want?

PATRICK

Yeah. A member of the fan club.

TASHI

You're *not* a member of my fan club?

PATRICK

I'm your *peer*. I'm not your fucking groupie. And I'm definitely not your *student*.

TASHI

Okay. Please leave me alone now so I can do something useful.

PATRICK

No problem, *Duncanator*.

Patrick grabs his stuff and starts to leave.

TASHI

Don't expect to sleep here tonight.

PATRICK

Break a leg!

He leaves, slamming Tashi's door behind him.

Tashi closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, and exhales very slowly.

47

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LOCKER ROOMS - A LITTLE LATER

Art is talking to some other players. He sees Tashi heading for the locker room and can tell that something is wrong.

ART

Tashi.

She looks over at him. He walks up to her.

ART (CONT'D)

Where's Patrick? I've been texting him.

She shrugs.

ART (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

TASHI

Yeah. I'm fine.

She goes to enter the locker room.

ART

Hey.

TASHI
 (glares at him)
I'm fine, Art.

Tashi heads inside. Art just stands there, confused.

48 EXT. STANFORD CAMPUS - SAME TIME, EVENING

Patrick smokes on a bench next to a sign that says "STANFORD IS A SMOKE FREE CAMPUS." He watches people heading towards the tennis courts with face paint and handmade banners.

He scoffs and looks the other way, where he sees a bunch of kids passing a joint back and forth, walking towards the frat houses.

He gets up and heads in that direction.

49 EXT. THE COURTS - A LITTLE LATER

Art sits amidst the big crowd, looking around for Patrick.

He sends a text: **"Where are you?? Match is about to start."**

After a moment he gets a text back: **"Had a big fight. Now's your chance, bro. Good luck :) "**

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 And now... Your 2004, 2006, and
 2007 NCAA Women's Tennis Champions.
 Give it up for STANFORD WOMEN'S
 TENNIS!

The team comes out onto the court, and Tashi doesn't smile or wave to the crowd at all. She looks up at the stands, scanning them for Patrick, and she spots the empty seat next to Art. She and Art make eye contact before she heads for the bench, looking like she wants to destroy something.

51 THE MATCH

Thwaccckkkk!

Tashi plays against a VERY AVERAGE GIRL from Pepperdine, using her as a punching bag to get out her aggression. She forces the girl into a punishing rally, winning the point by switching up direction at the last moment and ripping a forehand down the line.

UMPIRE
 Love - 40.

Tashi moves over for her next return and looks at the girl like: "hit me." The girl, exhausted, goes into her motion and sends in the best she's got. Another punishing rally begins.

Thwackkkkkk.

Thwackkkkkk.

Thwackkkkkk.

Thwackkkkkk.

Tashi's barely even paying attention as she smacks the ball, replaying the fight with Patrick in her mind. Art looks on, concerned.

Thwackkkkkk.

Thwackkkkkk.

Thwackkkkkk.

Tashi shifts her body to change direction again and send another screamer down the line, but she's on autopilot, and she doesn't notice that the Pepperdine girl has mishit her forehand, giving it just the *tiniest bit of spin*.

As Tashi goes into her windup, *the ball comes up off the concrete heading in the opposite direction*.

Tashi's already in the middle of her motion, but her body instinctually tries to correct itself mid-swing: her legs go one way, her upper body goes another, and **her left ankle contorts in a way that is completely unnatural**.

CLOSE ON ART'S HORRIFIED FACE as he sees it all unfold a millisecond before the rest of the crowd:

SNAP.

Crowd gasps, and Art is already on his feet, rushing down to the court where Tashi is on the ground, **SCREAMING IN PAIN**.

Art pushes through people to get down there as a TRAINER is already on the floor with her trying to calm her down.

Tashi writhes around, sobbing, holding her ankle.

TASHI

No no no no no no no no.

55 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Art sits with Tashi. They've been there for hours.

She stares at the wall, completely drained of life. Art just looks at her, nothing he can say.

Patrick appears in the doorway, eyes red, still stoned, and Art and Tashi turn to look at him.

PATRICK
I'm sorry, I --

TASHI
Out.

PATRICK
Tashi...

TASHI
OUT!

PATRICK
Listen --

TASHI
OUT! OUT! OUT!

He just stands there. Tashi looks like she's about to leap out of the hospital bed and strangle him.

ART
Patrick. *Get the fuck out of here.*

Patrick looks at him, then at Tashi, who turns away from him.

He shakes his head and goes.

54 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - PRESENT DAY, NIGHT

Thwaccckkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 3 - 15

P. Zweig: 6, 1 - 0

Art and Patrick have a punishing rally -- slugfest tennis, ugly and brutal -- and Tashi *physically* reacts to each hit as if she were playing the match through Art.

Art hits a backhand to the baseline. Patrick can't get there.

PATRICK
Out!

UMPIRE
Thirty - Love.

PATRICK
(to Umpire)
That was out! That was WAY out!

UMPIRE
The ball was called in.

Patrick turns and looks at the LINE JUDGE.

PATRICK
Are you blind?

UMPIRE
Patrick.

PATRICK
(in the guy's face)
Are you here to do your job, or are
you just excited that Art
Donaldson's over there?

UMPIRE
I'm going to give you another code
violation if you don't stop this.

PATRICK
(yelling across net)
Art! This guy wants your autograph!

UMPIRE
Code violation. Unsportsmanlike
conduct. Verbal abuse. Point
penalty, Zweig.

Patrick throws his hands up. Art smiles: Patrick's tilted.

PATRICK
(to Art)
This how you wanna get your points?

ART
I'm ready to serve, Patrick.

PATRICK
Yeah, I bet.

UMPIRE
Forty - Love.

Art bounces the ball and goes into his service motion. Tashi, watching the toss, grits her teeth at the moment of impact.

Thwackkkkkk!

57 EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - EVENING

Art and Tashi rally **a couple months after Tashi's injury**. Tashi's ankle still has a little bit of wrapping around it. She "wins" the point, but she doesn't look happy.

TASHI
Stop going easy on me.

ART
I'm not.

TASHI
I have to know whether I actually
have a shot here. It's pointless
unless you make me work.

Art nods. Tashi gets in position to return. Art sends in a fast one, which Tashi returns, and they rally.

After a few shots, Tashi hits an angry forehand aimed *right at Art's head*. He barely dodges it.

TASHI (CONT'D)
If you don't actually start hitting
the ball, I'm walking off the court
and I'm never talking to you again.

ART
Tashi --

TASHI
What? You don't want to hurt me?

He doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Fuck you.

Tashi starts to leave.

ART
Wait.

TASHI
Fucking pussy.

ART

Wait.

She looks at him. He holds up a ball.

ART (CONT'D)

Okay?

Tashi nods and gets into position to return.

Art serves, and they start a rally, now at *actual* full-speed.

No one has dared to play like this with her since her injury, and she's getting more and more confident with each shot.

Art surprises her with a very shallow drop shot, and she sprints to catch it at the net, but *her ankle gives out from under her*, radiating sharp pain.

Tashi yelps and drops the ground. Art, terrified, drops his racket, runs and hops over the net. Tashi is sobbing.

ART (CONT'D)

Fuck. Let me go get a trainer.

TASHI

(through tears)

I'm fine!

ART

You're obviously not *fine*! Don't move.

He starts to go.

TASHI

ART!

He stops.

TASHI (CONT'D)

There's nothing that anybody can do. Nothing happened. I'm just fucked. My ankle is fucked.

She keeps crying. Art stands there awkwardly, not sure what to do. He gets on the ground and puts his arms around her. Tashi leans into his body and sobs.

ART
What about coaching?

TASHI
(laughs)
Who wants to be coached by an 18
year old who's never played
professionally?

ART
I mean, you probably couldn't start
out as somebody's *head* coach, but
you could work your way up.

She shakes her head and takes a drink.

TASHI
I'll never forgive myself.

ART
You have to.

TASHI
I'll never forgive *Patrick*.

ART
Well, *that* I don't give a shit
about.

Tashi looks at him.

TASHI
You know, we were fighting about
you. Or, at least, that was part of
it.

Art takes this in. It's clear that it upsets him deeply.

TASHI (CONT'D)
I didn't say that to make you feel
bad, I just... You're being a
really good friend to me right now.
I know that's maybe not what you
want to be, but I don't have the
space to be wondering whether you
want something else.

ART
I'll be whatever you need me to be.
I'll fuck off if you want me to.

TASHI
No. I want you here.

ART

Okay.

TASHI

I need you here, actually.

Beat.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Will you go do something with me? I
wanna try something.

Art looks at her.

59 EXT. A CONVENIENCE STORE NEAR CAMPUS - NIGHT

They stand outside smoking the **cigarettes** Art has just
bought.

They both cough a lot -- neither knows what they're doing --
but it's clearly making Tashi feel better.

60 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwackkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 5 - 0

P. Zweig: 6, 3 - 0

Art serves for the second set. They rally, intercut with...

61 EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - NIGHT

Thwackkkk!

Tashi does drills with Art, who listens to her coaching.

62 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwackkkk!

Art wins a point at the net against Patrick.

Fifteen - Love.

63 EXT. NCAA CHAMPIONSHIPS - DAY

Thwackkkkk!

Art battles in the finals of the NCAA championships while Tashi watches from the bleachers.

64 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwackkk!

Art serves an ace.

Thirty - Love.

65 INT. TALLAHASSEE CHALLENGER 80 - DAY

Thwackkkk!

Art rallies in his first professional tennis match.

66 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwackkkk!

Patrick sends the ball crosscourt. Art gets there and hits a stunning backhand down the line.

Forty - love.

Set point.

67 EXT. PRACTICE COURT AT CINCINNATI MASTERS - DAY

Thwackkk!

Art, now 20 years old, hits around with his coach, KARL, a German former player in his 50s.

He goes to the side to wipe himself down with a towel, and he notices Tashi in the stands. They wave at each other.

68 EXT. THE GROUNDS OF THE CINCINNATI MASTERS

They walk. Tashi smokes.

TASHI

You're standing too far back on
your returns.

ART

I am?

TASHI

Yeah. You're still returning like you're a little *shocked* to be on the pro tour. And you shouldn't be. Especially with McDonald tomorrow, his serve's not that big, so you're gonna keep having to step up to it, and you'll waste a lot of energy.

Art thinks about it.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I mean, listen, you should do what Karl tells you. *He's* your coach.

ART

He works for *me*.

TASHI

(laughs)

That's what Katerina keeps telling me.

ART

You want to jump ship? Come join my team?

TASHI

Can you *afford* an assistant coach?

ART

Kind of, actually.

TASHI

Art Donaldson. Look at you.

He shrugs. They smile at each other.

69

EXT. THE MATCH AGAINST MCDONALD - THE NEXT DAY

Art looks down and notices where he's standing for the return, and he creeps up a few paces before MCDONALD goes into his service motion.

Thwacckkk!

Art steps into the return and crushes it, winning the point.

He looks at Tashi in the stands. She shrugs.

70

INT. A RESTAURANT - THAT NIGHT

ART

I'm serious about you coming to work with me.

TASHI

I don't know...

ART

I mean, I get it. You want to work with someone who's got a little more potential.

TASHI

You've got plenty of potential. I just... Do you think it'd be a good idea?

ART

Why not?

TASHI

I don't know. We have a *history*.

ART

You mean we're friends? Everyone's friends with their coaches.

TASHI

No, I mean...

ART

Ah. You're referring to when I *declared my love for you*.

TASHI

Yes. That.

ART

That was a long time ago.

TASHI

It wasn't *that* long ago.

ART

Well, it *feels* like a long time ago.

TASHI

(mock offended)

You're not in love with me anymore?

Art looks at her. She laughs, but he doesn't.

ART
I'm really proud of you, Tashi.

TASHI
(embarrassed)
Oh god.

ART
I'm serious. You're doing really well.

TASHI
What? You thought I was gonna *kill myself* after the injury?

ART
No. I'm just glad you didn't leave tennis. It would've been a waste.

TASHI
What *else* was I gonna do? My only skill in life is hitting a ball with a racket.

Art laughs, a little sadly.

ART
Before you got injured, I used to beat myself up everyday for not winning that match against Patrick. I kept imagining that if I had pulled it off somehow, maybe you and I would've ended up together. But then after you got injured, all I could think about was that if I had won that match, you might still have your whole life, your whole career. I could have prevented a crime against the *history of sports* if I had just been a *little bit better at tennis*.

TASHI
Are you saying you want me to join your team because you feel guilty?

ART
No. I'm saying I want you to join my team because I want to *win*.

Beat.

TASHI

You'd probably beat him if the two of you played now, don't you think?

ART

I don't know. We've never played each other professionally. And he didn't qualify for this, so we'll have to wait and see. We don't keep in touch.

Tashi laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

What?

TASHI

I really *was* a home wrecker, huh?

Art looks at her for a moment. He sighs.

ART

Honestly, I think I'd have trouble even *looking at the guy* across the net.

TASHI

Art.

ART

What?

TASHI

You never said whether you were still in love with me.

ART

Oh.

(shrugs)

Who wouldn't be?

They look at each other for a long beat. Art smiles.

71

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Art and Tashi stand in front of Tashi's door. Long pause.

TASHI

Thanks for dinner.

ART

Least I could do.

TASHI
It was good seeing you.

ART
Yeah. You too.

Beat.

TASHI
Goodnight.

ART
Goodnight.

Neither of them moves. Tashi laughs. So does Art.

TASHI
What?

ART
I really want to kiss you right
now, but I'm worried that if I try,
you'll think I'm the worst friend
in the world.

TASHI
To whom?

Beat. He kisses her. They break apart and look at each other.

He kisses her again, and she kisses him back. They start
making out, very sweetly and passionately.

72 INT. TASHI'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

89 Art and Tashi very awkwardly but sweetly fumble around,
making their way to Tashi's bed, where they start taking off
each other's clothes.

They get under the covers, and he goes down on her. She
starts to moan.

After a bit, he emerges, and they start kissing again. She
strokes him. He closes his eyes, trying to concentrate. She
keeps stroking him until, eventually, she stops.

TASHI
Is something wrong?

ART
No, I just... Shit.

TASHI
 (smiles)
 You're fine.

ART
 I've been dreaming about this for
 five years...

TASHI
 Art. Look at me.

ART
FUCK.

She laughs. He just sits there looking ashamed and furious at himself, like he wants to go commit *seppuku*.

Tashi looks over at him. She reaches her hand down and starts stroking him again. He looks at her.

TASHI
 You can do it.

ART
 Tashi --

TASHI
 Shh. Come on. Focus.

He does. She keeps stroking him.

Finally, he starts to get hard.

TASHI (CONT'D)
 There we go.

Art smiles, grunts.

TASHI (CONT'D)
 You just needed a little coaching.

ART
 Ohhhh...

She keeps stroking, faster and faster.

73

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwackkkkk!

Thwackkkkk!

Thwacckkkk!

Thwackkkkk!

Patrick is *smashing his racket to bits* against the concrete to the same rhythm of the hand job Tashi gives Art. He's just lost the point and the second set, and Tashi watches, smiling as if this gives her great pleasure.

UMPIRE

Game and second set, Donaldson.

Match is tied at one set all.

Umpire sets the timer to 90 seconds.

Both men head to their benches. Patrick picks up his limp, smashed racket and throws it into his tennis bag.

SET BREAK

A. Donaldson: 2, 6

P. Zweig: 6, 3

74

INT. LOBBY AT THE RITZ CARLTON, WHITE PLAINS - EVENING

Earlier that week.

Tashi is talking to the guy at the reception desk.

TASHI

So the steam room's just *broken*?

RECEPTION DESK GUY

Just the sauna. But they have to close down the whole facility while they do repairs.

TASHI

Fuck.

RECEPTION DESK GUY

There's still the jacuzzi on the 20th floor.

TASHI

You can't open it just for an hour every night? The steam room's an important part of my husband's post-match routine. It's part of the reason we decided to stay here.

RECEPTION DESK GUY

I'm sorry...

She sighs and walks away, heading for the elevator.

VOICE (O.S.)

You know, there's a steam room at
the country club.

She turns and sees Patrick.

PATRICK

Unless Art doesn't want to hang
around the rest of us.

TASHI

What are you doing here? Isn't it
about time you started prostituting
yourself for a place to sleep
tonight?

PATRICK

I'm still at that girl's house.

TASHI

Wow. *It must be love.*

PATRICK

(smiles)

Come have a cigarette with me. I
have to talk to you.

TASHI

I don't smoke.

Patrick looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I quit when I got pregnant.

75

EXT. SMOKING AREA BEHIND THE HOTEL

TASHI

Blow it away from me.

PATRICK

Sorry.

He exhales in the opposite direction.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I'm gonna propose something to you,
and it's gonna make you angry. It's
gonna make you very angry. But you
have to hear me out. Okay?

Tashi just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I don't think it's an accident that we're both here. I don't think it's a coincidence. We're both at a turning point, and the universe is throwing us together because we need each other. You and I need each other right now in order to get to the next phase in our lives.

TASHI

If you're about to say what I think you're about to say, please *don't*.

PATRICK

I want you to be my coach.

Beat.

TASHI

What?

PATRICK

I'm finally ready to listen to you. I wanna give myself over to you completely. I know that if I do, we can do something really incredible together. Art's best days are behind him. You know that, I know that, *everybody* knows that. That's why you made him come here: just to confirm that he's done. And even in the best case scenario -- I mean, let's say he has a great season, wins the Open, completes his career grand slam -- he's still gonna retire as someone who was just *really, really good*. That's what you will have done together: you will have taken a guy who was a mediocre player and you will have made him *really, really good*. But he's not gonna be *one of the greatest who ever lived*. And I know that's not on the table for me. I'm not an *insane person*. I know I fucked that up a long time ago.

Patrick looks at Tashi very seriously.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(with resolve)

But I still have a *season*. I still have *one good season*, and I need you to bring it out of me. I mean, imagine if you could turn *Patrick Zweig* into a guy who wins a slam. I know you're gonna say no. You maybe *should* say no. But it'd be one of the most incredible things that's ever happened in the history of tennis. Maybe in the history of sports. So that's my proposal. What do you think?

Long beat. Tashi just looks back at him, completely stone-faced.

She **SLAPS** him *so hard* across the mouth that he spits out his cigarette.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

OW!

TASHI

How dare you fucking ask me that.

PATRICK

(still holding his face)

Jesus Christ.

TASHI

Do you think it's cute what you're doing? Do you think it's funny?

PATRICK

I wasn't joking!

TASHI

Go fuck yourself.

PATRICK

I mean, obviously, we'd wait until after this week. Otherwise, it would be a conflict of interest.

TASHI

(laughs, furious)

You want some *coaching*? You wanna hear the most useful advice I can give you about your tennis?

Patrick looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Quit. Right now. Right this instant. Go find the nearest country club and ask them for a job as a tennis pro. You could even go ask them at New Rochelle. Really anything would be a better investment of your time than playing professionally for a single second longer.

PATRICK

You know that when I'm good, I'm one of the best in the world.

TASHI

You're the 201st best in the world. And you wanna know the thing about rankings? *They're always right.*

PATRICK

I still have a shot.

TASHI

You're almost 33. You'd have a better shot with a handgun in your mouth.

Beat. Patrick lets that sit. She starts to leave.

PATRICK

Tashi --

TASHI

You want some money?

PATRICK

That's not --

TASHI

(reaching into her wallet)
I think I have like... five hundred dollars in here. Take it. It's *nothing* to us.

PATRICK

I don't want your money.

TASHI

Well then what the fuck are you hoping to get out of this conversation? Are you just trying to piss me off?

(MORE)

TASHI (CONT'D)

You think if you *tilt* me that it's gonna affect Art's game if you both make it to the final? What kind of pathetic, small-dick pussy shit are you trying to accomplish here?

PATRICK

(looks at her)

Are you okay?

TASHI

Excuse me?

PATRICK

Every time I've seen you these past few days, you seem really on edge.

TASHI

What do you think is the common denominator there?

PATRICK

Are things good at home?

She looks at him, furious.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I'm just trying to figure it out. He's got six slams, you've got more money than you know what to do with, you can do whatever you want for the rest of your life. What are you so angry about?

TASHI

I'm not angry.

PATRICK

Then what? Depressed? Resentful?

TASHI

I'm entirely content with my life.

PATRICK

But you're *not*. I can feel it.

TASHI

You don't *know me*, Patrick. And if you were smart enough to analyze me, you would've figured out your own bullshit by now.

PATRICK

(laughs)

My bullshit is simple. I was too good too early, I fucked it all up, and now I hate myself. Sadly for me, *knowing* that you hate yourself doesn't do much in the way of helping you *stop* hating yourself -- it actually just makes you hate yourself *more* -- so that's my cross to bear. But you don't hate yourself. So who do you hate?

TASHI

Who do you *think* I hate?

PATRICK

Art, actually.

Beat.

TASHI

Art.

Patrick nods.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Why would I hate my husband? I'm sick of being *the woman behind the man*?

PATRICK

No. You're not that boring.

Tashi scoffs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Honestly? I think you hate him because he's *tired*. I mean, for a guy like *that* to keep competing at the level you're demanding of him at 34, coming off a surgery -- it's *exhausting*. And you can feel him giving up already even though you know he's not gonna retire until you let him.

TASHI

He's a grown man. He can do whatever he wants.

PATRICK

(not finished)

He never imagined his life would be this good. He never imagined he'd get this far. And you can tell that the only reason he's pushing himself to keep going after the injury is that he thinks he owes it to you. And he *does* owe it to you. The least he can do after all you've done for him is to keep his head down and win you guys one US Open trophy to complete the collection. But you can tell he's doing it for *you*, and you find that absolutely infuriating.

Tashi starts to say something, but Patrick cuts her off.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

More than infuriating: you find it *disturbing*, on a fundamental level, that you're married to a guy who's not obsessed with squeezing every *last inch* out of his game. He's not a crazy person like you and me. He's not an addict. He's just a guy who wanted to do a *really good job*. And he *did*. No one can say that he didn't. And now he's dreaming about getting fat together, eating hamburgers again, waking up late on the weekends, watching your daughter grow up, maybe getting a job doing *commentary* on the Tennis Channel. He's ready to be *dead*. And you're starting to realize that you might not want to be buried with him. Because who *is* he to you if he's not playing tennis?

TASHI

You think he's just a racket and a dick? Win me titles and give me babies?

PATRICK

I think there's real love there. But no fire. Just *ice*.

TASHI

You doubt Art's desire for me?

PATRICK

I know that he *needs* you. I'm just not sure that he *wants* you. Not in the way you want to be wanted.

TASHI

That's the stupidest fucking thing I've ever heard.

PATRICK

(laughs)

I knew you'd say that.

TASHI

I mean, you wanted me, didn't you? Where'd that get me?

PATRICK

I still do want you.

TASHI

Fuck you.

PATRICK

I've *always* wanted you. A lot.

TASHI

You've always *needed* me too. You're just too stupid to realize it. That's why Art Donaldson is Art Donaldson and you're living out of your car.

Beat. Patrick doesn't have a response.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I have to go watch *Frozen* with Lily.

PATRICK

Does Art know about Winston-Salem?

Beat. Tashi looks at him, searching his face.

TASHI

I chose *him*, Patrick.

PATRICK

You chose me first.

TASHI

I was young. We all make mistakes when we're young.

PATRICK
We're still young.

TASHI
Not in tennis years.

Beat. Patrick smiles.

PATRICK
You keep saying you came here
because Art needed matches, but I
think you came for something else.

TASHI
For what? For you? You think I'm
here to throw it all away for you?

PATRICK
Maybe you just wanted to see me.

TASHI
I've *seen* you. You look like shit.

Tashi starts to go.

PATRICK
I'm gonna beat him.

She stops.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
If we both make it to the final,
I'm gonna beat him. I *have* to. I
need the cash, and I need the
ranking points.

TASHI
Even if you *could* beat him, it
wouldn't change anything.

PATRICK
I've never lost to him, Tashi.

TASHI
You guys haven't played each other
in a long time...

PATRICK
It'll break him. You know it will.

TASHI
It won't *make* you. It's too late
for that.

Tashi starts to leave again, but he grabs her hand and puts a piece of paper in it.

PATRICK

My number. In case you change your mind about the coaching.

She looks at him.

TASHI

I won't.

76 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Umpire's phone timer ticks down: 0:16, 0:15, 0:14...

On his bench, Art's got his eyes closed. He breathes in and exhales slowly. Patrick looks over at him with resentment.

The Umpire's ALARM goes off.

UMPIRE

Time!

Patrick takes the court to serve, Art to return. He looks at Art across the net, then at Tashi in the stands.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

First service, Zweig.

Patrick goes into his motion:

Thwacccckkkk!

SET THREE

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 0 - 0

P. Zweig: **6**, 3, 0 - 0

77 EXT. PRACTICE COURT AT WINSTON-SALEM OPEN - DAY

Ten years earlier, 2011.

Tashi feeds balls to Art's backhand as a few spectators watch -- Art's already becoming a big deal in tennis, so some of them have their camera phones out, sneaking videos.

We follow ANOTHER PLAYER from behind as he approaches the court and sits down in the stands, watching them.

After a bit, Tashi notices him out of the corner of her eye and lets one of Art's shots sail right by her. Art looks over and sees **Patrick** sitting there.

They all look at each other for a moment before Art turns to Tashi, smoldering and determined, ready for the next ball.

She feeds him one, and he steps to it, hitting an absolutely *monstrous* forehand that sounds like a gunshot:

Thwacckkkkkk!

78

INT. PRESS ROOM AT WINSTON-SALEM - LATER IN THE WEEK

Art, sweaty, sits behind a press table.

REPORTER

Art, you're coming off of a win in Cincinnati, you've just made the final here in Winston-Salem, and a lot of people are saying this might be the year you win your first slam. How do you explain your success over the past few seasons?

ART

Well, uh, it's really all because of Tashi Duncan.

REPORTER

Your girlfriend.

ART

My *coach*. I do what she tells me to do, and then I win.

The reporters laugh. Some of them look back towards Tashi, who is standing at the back of the room with a complicated expression on her face. Art looks at another reporter.

REPORTER

Hi, Art. In his press conference yesterday after losing in the quarterfinals, Patrick Zweig said he was rooting for you to win the tournament. Did you get a chance to watch him play this week, and do you have any advice for how he might improve his game?

ART

(annoyed)

I didn't get a chance to watch him.

REPORTER

But as for his game? What maybe he could be doing differently heading into the US Open?

ART

Is he *playing* the Open?

REPORTER

If he qualifies.

ART

I think Patrick can figure out his own game.

(getting up)

Thank you.

79 INT. HOTEL ROOM IN WINSTON-SALEM - THAT NIGHT

A slightly less-nice room in the same hotel where Art and Tashi stay ten years later.

Art sits in bed, looking at his phone. Tashi comes in from the other room, fully dressed.

ART

You okay?

TASHI

Yeah, I just can't sleep yet. I'm gonna go for a walk or something.

ART

You sure you don't want to just lay here?

TASHI

No. You need your rest. It's a big day tomorrow.

ART

(smiles)

It's a big day every day.

Tashi comes over to him and kisses him.

ART (CONT'D)

I *really* wanted that asshole to make it to the final...

TASHI

I know. But we all know how that
would've gone. You don't have
anything to prove.

Art smiles.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'll be quiet when I come back in.
I'll probably just end up
downstairs having a tea or
something.

She starts to leave.

ART

Hey.

She stops.

ART (CONT'D)

I'm gonna tell all the press people
from now on that they have to refer
to you as my coach first.

TASHI

(laughs)

You think I give a fuck about that?

ART

I know you don't. *I* do.

TASHI

I don't care what they call me as
long as you keep winning.

Art smiles. Tashi turns off the lights at the doorway.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Sleep. I'll see you in the morning.

Tashi shuts the door.

80

EXT. WINSTON-SALEM - NIGHT

Tashi walks, passing restaurants, a sports bar where a TV is
playing highlights from Art's match that day.

She goes into a convenience store and buys a pack of
cigarettes. She walks around smoking one.

81 INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Tashi drinks a cocktail, deep in thought.

VOICE (O.S.)
Seeing you with a drink still
weirds me out.

She looks over. It's Patrick, holding a Budweiser.

PATRICK
I keep thinking your dad's gonna
show up out of nowhere and smack it
out of your hands.

TASHI
My dad died last year.

PATRICK
Fuck. Jesus. I'm so sorry.

TASHI
(laughs)
Don't be. He hated your guts.

PATRICK
We didn't know each other...

TASHI
He knew *about* you. As far as he was
concerned, you were the boy who I
let ruin my life.

Patrick lets that hit him. Tashi watches him process it.

TASHI (CONT'D)
You *lost*. Why are you still here?

PATRICK
The qualies for the Open aren't for
a couple more days. I'd rather
waste money on a hotel room in
North Carolina than in New York.

TASHI
You're not supposed to stick around
after you lose. You're supposed to
run home with your tail between
your legs.

PATRICK
I know. Like you've been *banished*
or something.

TASHI

More like you're so ashamed that the only thing you can do is go back to the drawing board.

PATRICK

Well, maybe if I had coach, they'd be punishing me with practice right now, but I don't, so I get to hang around in lovely *Winston-Salem* for a few more days.

TASHI

Practice isn't punishment. Not if you love the game.

Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

Can we talk?

TASHI

We are talking.

PATRICK

Can I say something about what happened to you?

Beat.

TASHI

No.

She starts to get up.

PATRICK

Tashi --

TASHI

Why don't we talk about what's happening to you?

PATRICK

I'm trying to apologize.

TASHI

You didn't do anything to me. I did it all to myself.

PATRICK

It was an *accident*.

TASHI

I don't care *what* it was anymore.
It's just hard for me to look at
you. You make me feel like a very
stupid little girl.

Beat. They look at each other.

PATRICK

I'm really proud of you, Tashi.

TASHI

Oh, for fuck's sake...

PATRICK

What you're doing with Art is
incredible.

TASHI

I *know* it is.

PATRICK

I really *am* rooting for him.

Tashi studies his face. He notices her drink is empty.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Can I buy you another?

She hesitates.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Come on. It's the least I can do.

She shrugs. He signals the bartender.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So why are you down here instead of
sleeping upstairs with your
boyfriend?

TASHI

Fiancé. He asked me to marry him
before we came here.

PATRICK

And you said *yes*?

TASHI

Of course I said yes. Why else
would I be telling you?

PATRICK

Jesus.

TASHI

I think the word you're looking for is "congratulations."

PATRICK

Yes. Wow. Congratulations.

TASHI

We haven't gone public with it yet. Actually, we haven't really told anybody. I don't know why I just told you.

PATRICK

I guess you wanted me to know.

TASHI

Yeah. I guess I did.

Beat.

PATRICK

Why *not* go public with it?

TASHI

I don't want people asking us questions about it in every press conference before the Open.

PATRICK

Who cares? Aren't you excited?

TASHI

Of course I'm excited. What are you getting at?

PATRICK

I'm just trying to figure out why you aren't up there with him the night before his big match.

TASHI

I'm loud when I'm tossing and turning. He needs sleep.

He looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

You don't believe me?

PATRICK

You're not very convincing.

TASHI

I don't care what you find
convincing.

Their drinks arrive. They both nod thanks to the bartender.

PATRICK

I'd imagine it's hard... watching
him climb the rankings, win slams.

TASHI

He hasn't won any slams yet.

PATRICK

Sure, but he's *going to*.

TASHI

Is it hard for you?

PATRICK

Of course it is. His whole career
feels like one big judgment of all
the ways I can't get my shit
together.

Tashi laughs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What?

TASHI

You still think you're *better than*
him. You think your potential still
means something.

Patrick doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Have you considered that it
doesn't? That maybe he was *always*
the one who was gonna be a winner?

PATRICK

I think you and I -- and he -- all
know that the only reason he's
winning is because of you.

TASHI

So what? He's still *winning*. All
that matters is what actually
happens, Patrick. "If" is a drug
for losers.

PATRICK
So it's not hard for you?

TASHI
Why would it be? Art's *my man*.
We're *doing something* together.
We're building a life together.
It's a *relationship*.

PATRICK
Is that what you wanted with me?

TASHI
(laughs)
Are you serious?

PATRICK
Yeah. This is a safe space.

TASHI
You weren't interested in a real
relationship.

PATRICK
I was *interested*.

TASHI
Well, you weren't *capable*.

PATRICK
Maybe not *then*...

TASHI
What -- now? You've changed so much
in the past five years?

PATRICK
I don't know.

TASHI
You're *exactly* the same fucking guy
you were then. That's why you keep
tanking your matches. Tennis got
hard. Tennis became *work*. Tennis
made you feel normal. And you *hate*
feeling normal. The whole point of
this game for you is that it made
you feel like you were *high*. But
Art's perfectly content being
sober.

PATRICK
And you like that about him? His
sobriety?

TASHI

Clearly I like *something* about it.

PATRICK

I know it *makes sense* for you, but does it turn you on?

Beat. Tashi just looks at him.

TASHI

I think I've reached the limit of my willingness to have this conversation with you.

PATRICK

You're gonna *marry* the guy, you should at least be able to say whether he *turns you on*.

TASHI

Competence turns me on. Maturity turns me on.

PATRICK

Art's *mature*?

TASHI

More than you. I mean, you're both these prodigiously talented little white boys, so, you know, there's a *ceiling*. But at least he *knows* it. At least he's *ashamed* of it. And, believe it or not, that shame turns me on. Big time.

PATRICK

So why aren't you up there?

TASHI

I already told you. Couldn't sleep.

Beat. They look at each other.

PATRICK

I think maybe you're realizing that soon it's going to be *too late*.

TASHI

Too late for what?

PATRICK

He's about to become Art Donaldson. You're about to become *Tashi Donaldson*.

TASHI

I'm not about to become *anything*.
I've always just been exactly who I
am.

PATRICK

(laughs)

You're right. That's why Art and I
would've murdered each other for
your number.

TASHI

(smiles)

I thought you weren't threatened by
him?

Beat.

PATRICK

How do you think he'd feel about
the two of us sitting here?

TASHI

How do you feel about me and him
getting married?

PATRICK

Honestly? It causes me a tremendous
amount of *pain*.

TASHI

Fuck you.

PATRICK

I'm serious. When you told me just
now, it felt like someone had
stabbed me in the chest.

TASHI

Good.

PATRICK

That's what you always wanted,
right? For me to be in pain?

TASHI

I thought it might be a useful
experience for you.

PATRICK

Well, I'm *experiencing* it. What do
I do now?

They look at each other, something dark and powerful passing between them.

82 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwacckkkk!

Thwacckkkk!

Thwacckkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 3 - 30

P. Zweig: **6**, 3, 3 - 30

They rally, ending with Patrick at the net looking like he's going for an overhead smash. Art runs to the baseline to try and return it, but at the last second, Patrick switches it up and goes for an underhand shallow volley, winning the point.

A sizable portion of the crowd now claps for him.

Tashi looks around uneasily. Art heads back to the baseline and gets ready to return the next serve.

UMPIRE

Forty - thirty.

Patrick goes into his motion.

Thwacckkkkk!

83 INT. STEAM ROOM AT THE NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

The day before.

Art sits, meditating, with a towel over his face.

The door opens, and a COMPLETELY NAKED MAN with just a towel around his neck walks in. He sits down right next to Art.

PATRICK

Can you do me a favor?

Art, startled, takes the towel off his face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(echoing Art from when
they were teenagers)

Can you not, like, *demolish* me
tomorrow?

Art just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Congrats on being a *Phil's Tire*
Town Challenger finalist.

ART
Yeah. You too.

Art gets up and starts to leave.

PATRICK
Art. Come on. Can we talk?

ART
(stops)
Can you put your dick away?

PATRICK
This is a *steam room*.

ART
What do you want to talk about?

PATRICK
We've been here for a week, and we
haven't said two words to each
other. I don't want to go into the
match tomorrow feeling like this.
It's just silly, man. It's
dramatic.

Art doesn't say anything.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I mean, really: why are you still
so angry with me?

ART
That's a serious question?

PATRICK
I don't buy that it's because of
Tashi. Or, I don't think it's
because of *what happened to her*. I
think maybe you're still just
pissed off that she and I used to
be together *at all*.

Art glares at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Maybe you're just really *disturbed*
by the fact that she could be into
someone like me.

ART
When we were *teenagers*.

PATRICK
Right. When we were teenagers.

Beat.

ART
You're right. I *do* find it
disturbing.

PATRICK
(laughs)
Well, there's no need, man. *Lots* of
girls were into me. None of them
wanted to *marry* me. That's not what
I was for.

ART
What were you for?

Patrick doesn't say anything.

Art looks down at Patrick's dick. Patrick smiles and finally
covers it with the towel.

PATRICK
Honestly, I thought you'd be *happy*
that I was in the draw. You've
always wanted to beat me at a
tournament, haven't you? Especially
the week before the Open. It's the
perfect confidence booster.

ART
I know what you're trying to do
right now --

PATRICK
(laughs)
I'm not trying to do anything. This
is a *challenger*. I don't have to
play mind games with you.

ART
Right. You don't give a shit.

PATRICK
I didn't say that.

ART
We both know you have considerably
more at stake here than I do.

PATRICK
Do I?

Art looks at him for a long beat.

ART
Where do you get your swagger from?

Patrick's not sure what he means.

ART (CONT'D)
I mean, I understood it when we
were kids -- you were hot shit: you
could beat us all with your eyes
closed -- but how are you *still*
walking around like the world owes
you something? You're 33 years old,
your career's in the toilet, you're
broke, nobody knows who the fuck
you are, and you walk in here
swinging your dick around like I'm
supposed to be afraid of it, but
all I see is a naked little boy
who's still screaming about winning
the *Junior US Open*. Do you
understand how *embarrassing* it is
that you're *here*?

PATRICK
Not quite as embarrassing as you
being here.

ART
I'm just stopping by, man. This is
where you *live*. And it's almost
certainly where you're gonna die.

PATRICK
Listen, Art, I --

ART
(cutting him off)
I've always tried to figure out
what *happened* to you, but the more
I think about it, the more I
realize it's about what *didn't*
happen. You didn't *grow up*.
(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)

You still think we're seventeen.
And now you still want me to be
impressed with the fact that my
wife liked you when she was a *girl*,
but why would I give a shit about
that? And why the fuck would I give
a shit about what happens tomorrow?
It's just *practice* for me, Patrick.
Do you understand that? I mean,
maybe you're playing for something
else, but *I'm just here working on
my forehand*. I'm just *using you* to
get warmed up for a chance to win
the Open, because it's the *one*
thing in tennis I haven't done
already.

PATRICK

You've never beaten *me*.

ART

(laughs)

So what? This is a game about
winning the points that *matter*. You
beating me is a nice story for you
to tell people when you're giving
them tennis lessons, but I
guarantee you the thing they'll all
be the most excited about is that
you *met me at all*. They'll ask you
what I'm like. They'll ask you if
I'm nice. They'll ask you if we
were friends. And then they'll ask
you *how I did it*. They'll ask you
to teach them *how to be like me*.
And you won't have a *fucking clue*
what to tell them. I mean, I could
try to explain it to you, but the
truth is that you don't *really* want
to know. You just want to keep
telling yourself whatever worthless
stories you've been telling
yourself about why our lives have
turned out the way they have. And
even if you *did* want to know, I
couldn't possibly explain it to you
in a language you'll understand,
because the thing you learn when
you've been operating at my level
for as long as I have is that it's
so fucking lonely to win this much.
Nobody gets it. But *everyone on
Earth* gets what it's like to be
you.

(MORE)

ART (CONT'D)

The reason why they're sending a camera crew from ESPN to cover a fucking *challenger* tomorrow is that people like looking at my face on TV because they think it might help them solve the mystery of how I have what I have. But you're getting your own personal close up right now, so you should understand better than anybody: there is no fucking mystery -- *you just can't have it.*

They stare at each other for a long, tense beat. Patrick laughs.

PATRICK

I just wanted to come in here to wish you luck, Art.

ART

That makes no sense.

PATRICK

I wanted to tell you that I'm looking forward to it. I miss playing with you.

ART

Oh yeah?

Patrick nods.

ART (CONT'D)

I don't miss playing with *you...*
I'm too old for it.

Art gets up and leaves. Patrick watches him go.

84

INT. HOTEL ROOM AT THE RITZ CARLTON - THAT NIGHT

Twhacckkk!

Art and Tashi sit in the living room watching **footage of Art and Patrick's US Open Boys Singles match from 2006**, the only available footage they can study of the two of them playing.

On the screen, Patrick is running Art around the court, at the height of his powers, and Art is trying his hardest to keep up with him. They both look *so much younger*.

Lily, their daughter, walks into the room from the kitchen, holding a juice box.

LILY

Mommy --

They both look over at her. Tashi smiles.

TASHI

Come here, baby. *Look.*

Tashi points to the screen.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Guess who that is?

Lily looks at the boy currently serving. She looks confused for a moment, but then she looks over at her father and she *gasps*. Tashi and Art laugh as Lily just stands there, staring.

They all watch the point play out on the screen: teenage Patrick and teenage Art rally intensely, fire and ice.

LILY

Who's the other boy?

TASHI

That's who daddy's playing tomorrow.

On screen, Patrick wins the point with a ridiculous shot. It sails by Art, and Patrick smiles up at the stands, cocky.

LILY

He's *good*.

Tashi starts cracking up, but when she looks over at Art, she can see that he's not laughing at all. He's just staring straight ahead at the screen, stone-faced.

85 INT. ART AND TASHI'S ROOM - LATER

They lay in bed. It's around 10PM.

ART

Tell me it doesn't matter.

TASHI

What?

ART

Tell me it doesn't matter if I win tomorrow.

Beat.

TASHI

No.

Art looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

You tell *me* if it matters. You're a *professional competitor*, Art.

ART

I can't help but feel that when we step onto the court tomorrow, we're all gonna be seventeen again.

TASHI

You think you two are playing for my number?

ART

I've been playing for your number for fifteen years.

TASHI

We have a *kid* together.

ART

I know... I just don't know what it would mean if I can't even beat him.

TASHI

What would it mean to *you*?

ART

It would mean that I *choked*. There's no way he's better than me. Not anymore. So it would mean I got beaten by a teenager.

TASHI

You've been getting beaten by teenagers all year. It's an occupational hazard.

ART

I'm talking about *me*. If I lose to Patrick, it means I got beaten by seventeen-year-old *Art Donaldson*. And how are you gonna look at me if I let that happen?

TASHI

Just like this.

She looks at him.

TASHI (CONT'D)
It can't be about avoiding my
judgment. I'm not a nun. I'm not
your mommy.

ART
I know that. I just want you to
tell me you'll love me no matter
what.

TASHI
(laughs)
Who am I? Jesus?

ART
(meaning it)
Yeah.

Beat.

TASHI
You *know* you can win.

ART
What if I don't?

TASHI
Figure it out.

ART
It feels like I *have* to.

TASHI
Nobody *has* to win a tennis match.
There's just two people who *really*
want to.

They look at each other.

Silence.

ART
I'm gonna say something, and it's
probably going to make you angry,
but I want you to hear me out.

She just looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)
I want to retire this year whether
we win the Open or not.

Beat.

TASHI
(coldly)
Why?

ART
I'm still gonna try. I'm still
gonna go for it. But I'm *tired*. I
don't feel like I have anything to
prove anymore. And I don't want to
be one of those guys who doesn't
know when to walk away. It's so
pathetic to still be doing this
shit when you're forty.

TASHI
Who cares how old you are if you
can still beat teenagers?

ART
I'm sick of fighting all the time.
I don't mean with each other. I
just mean I feel like we've been at
war for as long as we've known each
other. We've been *soldiers*. I want
to find out who we are to each
other in peacetime.

Silence.

TASHI
Okay.

ART
Okay?

TASHI
If you wanna quit tennis, quit
tennis. You don't need my
permission.

ART
We're doing this together. We've
always been doing this together.

TASHI
I'm just the coach. I work for you.

ART
Coach me then.

TASHI
I *am* coaching you.

Beat.

TASHI (CONT'D)
If you don't win tomorrow, I'll
leave you. How's that?

Art laughs.

TASHI (CONT'D)
I'm serious... Does that help you?

ART
Yeah... Thank you.

TASHI
Great.

Beat.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Okay. Time to fuck me.

ART
What?

TASHI
Just so it's not all jumbled up in
your head before tomorrow.

ART
I don't want to fuck you to prove a
point, Tashi.

TASHI
I'm telling you to do the *exact*
opposite. Fuck me because you *want*
to. And then go win tomorrow
because you want to. Or because you
can. I don't give a shit what the
reason is.

Art looks at her.

ART
Is Lily asleep?

TASHI
Are you gonna do it or not?

He looks at her. They kiss.

They start making out. At first, it's very soft, but it
starts getting more intense.

They start taking their clothes off.

Tashi reaches under the covers and starts stroking Art.

She does it for a long time. Art closes his eyes, looking like he's really trying to focus. Finally, Tashi stops, and Art looks completely defeated and furious at himself.

ART

Fuck.

TASHI

Focus.

ART

I'm sorry --

TASHI

Shut up. Look at me.

ART

Tashi, I'm just too --

TASHI

Shh. Come on. We're gonna make it happen. We always do.

She starts to reach under the sheets again, but Art stops her. She looks at him.

ART

Will you just hold me?

Tashi doesn't say anything.

ART (CONT'D)

Just until I fall asleep?

TASHI

Art --

ART

Please.

Tashi looks at him for a long beat. He's begging her.

TASHI

Okay.

They cuddle, with Tashi spooning Art.

ART

Thank you.

TASHI

Shh.

ART

I love you.

TASHI

I know.

He closes his eyes. She pets the back of his head, softly.

TASHI (CONT'D)

You want me to turn off the light?

ART

Yeah.

She reaches over to turn it off, and right before the room goes dark, we can see the look of unease on her face.

86 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

CLOSE UP on Art's racket, going into his service motion.

CLOSE UP on Tashi's face, watching.

CLOSE UP on the racket CRACKING DOWN on the ball.

Thwacckkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 6, 5 - 40

P. Zweig: 6, 3, 5 - 40

They rally. Art hits a backhand crosscourt that sails right by Patrick.

UMPIRE

Advantage, Donaldson.

He steps back to the line -- if he wins this point, he's only one game away from winning the match.

Thwackkkk!

Patrick runs in the return. The ball zips past Art.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Deuce.

Reset.

Thwacckkk!

They rally. Art sends the ball into the net.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Advantage, Zweig.

Thwaccckkkk!

They rally. Art lobs Patrick, winning the point.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Deuce.

87 INT. HOTEL ROOM AT THE RITZ CARLTON - NIGHT

Art is asleep. Tashi lies awake in bed next to him.

She looks over at Art -- he's snoring.

She looks at the clock: it's just past midnight.

Quietly, so she doesn't wake him up, she gets out of bed.

88 INT. HOTEL LIVING ROOM

Tashi creeps around in the living room, holding some clothes.

She goes over to the door of her daughter's room, which is cracked slightly open, and looks in -- Lily's asleep too.

She creeps over to the chair where her purse is sitting and ruffles around in there for something.

89 INT. BATHROOM

Tashi, now dressed, holds the piece of paper with Patrick's number. She composes a text.

"Pick me up outside the hotel in 15 minutes."

She hesitates. She sends it. She waits.

She gets a text back: **A thumbs up emoji (the white one).**

Tashi looks at herself in the mirror.

She goes, turning off the light.

90 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwaccckkkk!

Art sends in a scorcher. Patrick gets his racket on it, but it's too soft. Art smashes the ball at the net.

UMPIRE
Advantage, Donaldson.

Reset.

Thwacckkkk!

An ace.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Game, Donaldson. Donaldson leads 6
games to 5.

Art pumps his fist and looks at Tashi, who looks back at him with a complicated expression.

He and Patrick cross each other at the net to change sides. Patrick smiles at him, which confuses Art. Then he turns and smiles at Tashi.

91 EXT. RITZ CARLTON DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Tashi waits, wearing a hoodie. Valet Guy looks over at her.
Patrick pulls up in his car. Tashi gets into the back seat.

PATRICK
What are you -- ?

TASHI
Just drive.

92 INT. THE CAR

TASHI
I told the valet guy I was waiting
for an Uber.

PATRICK
(laughs)
I'm sure he doesn't give a shit.
You don't have to act like we're
pulling off a bank heist.

TASHI
Just pull over somewhere.

93

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET IN WHITE PLAINS

Patrick pulls over the car and shuts it off. Tashi exits and gets into the front seat.

She sits down on something uncomfortable and pulls it out from under her ass. It's the "IMPATTO" logo patch.

PATRICK

Sorry. This Italian company is paying me two thousand bucks to wear that on my shirt tomorrow.

She throws it in the backseat.

TASHI

(looks around)

We shouldn't stay parked here too long. I don't want anyone to think I'm a hooker and call the cops.

PATRICK

We can go back to my hotel. The money just came in this afternoon.

Tashi looks at him.

TASHI

I'm not here to fuck you, Patrick.

Beat.

PATRICK

You're not?

TASHI

No. I just wanted to talk to you.

PATRICK

At midnight before the final?

TASHI

Yeah.

PATRICK

What's on your mind? Are you ready to be my coach?

TASHI

I want you to lose tomorrow.

PATRICK

I'm aware of that.

TASHI

No. I'm asking you to lose tomorrow.

Beat. Patrick starts laughing.

PATRICK

Fuck off.

He looks at her to see if she's serious. She is.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

How little do you believe in your husband?

TASHI

He's been doing well this week. He's ready to come back and make a run at the Open. If he beats you, he'll know that he can do it. He needs this. *We* need this.

PATRICK

In what possible world do you guys *need* this?

Tashi doesn't say anything.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What about what *I* need?

TASHI

What you need is to accept that it's over. The only really life-affirming decision you can make is to walk away and figure out what's next.

PATRICK

(laughs, shakes his head)
You know, I really don't think you get enough credit for being *such* a fucking asshole.

TASHI

Every tennis player is an asshole.

PATRICK

Yeah, but you're on another level.

TASHI

I'm actually being incredibly kind to you right now. To both of you.

(MORE)

TASHI (CONT'D)
I'm trying to take such good care
of my little white boys.

PATRICK
So... What? You're gonna bribe me
to take a fall? That's your act of
benevolence?

TASHI
I'm just *asking* you.

PATRICK
Why the fuck would I do that?

TASHI
Because you owe it to me. And you
owe it to him.

Beat.

PATRICK
No. No fucking way.

TASHI
All right. Then take me back to my
hotel.

Beat.

TASHI (CONT'D)
DRIVE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!

PATRICK
You know what the most frustrating
part of this is? You know what
really drives me crazy?

TASHI
Start the car.

PATRICK
You *did* come here to fuck me. But
you're so full of shit that you
won't even admit that to yourself.

TASHI
I really don't want to start
screaming, Patrick.

PATRICK
I mean, I get it: you have a
daughter, you're *married*. You're
rich.

(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You can't figure out in your head why you would sneak out of the *Ritz Carlton* to come see *me*. But that's what you're doing.

TASHI

I'm asking you for a favor.

PATRICK

No, you're asking me to do all the work of blowing up your life. And I'm not fucking playing. You wanna betray Art with me, you're gonna have to at least meet me half way.

TASHI

Listen... if fucking you is the only way to get you to throw the match...

PATRICK

Oh, go fuck yourself, you absolute loser.

TASHI

(laughs)

I'm the loser?

PATRICK

Yes. Yes you are. Look at you.

Patrick starts the car.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Time for your Uber driver to drop you back off to your family.

TASHI

It's actually not a bad career idea for you. If you just cleaned this car once in a while...

PATRICK

MY CAR IS FINE!

TASHI

NO IT'S NOT! YOUR CAR IS A PIECE OF SHIT!

A light turns on in one of the houses down the street.

PISSED OFF PERSON (O.S.)

HEY! SHUT THE FUCK UP! PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO SLEEP!

Patrick puts the car in drive and they pull away.

94 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwacckkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 6 - 0

P. Zweig: **6**, 3, 5 - 15

Patrick serves to stay in the match.

They rally, really running each other around the court, both of them starting to feel the exhaustion setting in. Patrick wins a point at the net.

UMPIRE
Thirty - love.

He looks at Tashi, who seems like she's in pain. He goes into his service motion.

Thwacckkkk!

95 INT. PATRICK'S CAR

They ride back, not looking at each other.

PATRICK
Fuck it. I'll do it.

Tashi looks over at him.

TASHI
Why?

PATRICK
What do you mean why? There's no outcome tomorrow that's gonna make my life any better -- only one that will make your lives worse. So what's the point?

Beat.

TASHI
You're just saying that.

PATRICK
What do you care?

TASHI

I care because I want you to actually do it.

PATRICK

I just said I'll do it.

TASHI

Tell me you understand *why*.

PATRICK

(laughs)

I'm not married to you, Tashi. I don't have to demonstrate that I see the wisdom of your desires. Just be happy that I'm doing what you want and shut up about it.

TASHI

You're such a fucking child...

PATRICK

Of course I am. I've spent my entire life hitting a ball with a racket. I play a children's game for money. So does Art. So do you. You wanna talk about which one of us needs to grow up, maybe it's the one who thinks her whole life is going to resolve itself if her husband can win just one more little silver trophy.

TASHI

They're not so little.

PATRICK

Oh, he lets you hold them?

Tashi glares at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I mean, really, what is this going to solve for you? You gonna start loving him again?

TASHI

I never stopped loving him.

PATRICK

Then, what? Even if he completes the set, they'll still be *his* trophies. Not yours.

TASHI

You don't think I understand that?

PATRICK

Well then what the fuck are you doing here?

TASHI

I don't know. Okay? I feel like a fucking idiot.

PATRICK

Well, great. Me too.

TASHI

Why am I in your car?

PATRICK

Because you're stupid. So am I. I'm just not as disturbed by it as you are. I don't have nearly that high of an opinion of myself.

TASHI

(scoffs)

You're one of the most egotistical people I've ever met.

PATRICK

Oh, sure. But I've never been confused about the fact that I'm a piece of shit. That's what you like about me.

TASHI

I don't like *anything* about you.

PATRICK

You like precisely *one* thing about me, and it's that I'm *such* a piece of shit that I never got the memo that I was supposed to treat you like some mystical being who was gonna save my life. I'm so stupid that I could actually see you for what you are.

TASHI

What am I?

PATRICK

In *reality*? A really, really, insanely hot woman. I guess now you'd say a *MILF*.

TASHI

Pull over.

PATRICK

We're almost back at the hotel.
Don't be dramatic.

TASHI

PULL OVER.

PATRICK

Fine, dummy.

Patrick abruptly pulls over on a mostly empty thoroughfare.

Before he even puts the car in park, Tashi undoes her seatbelt and starts to get out.

She stops. She looks at Patrick, eyes full of hatred.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Are you gonna hit me again?

She **spits in his face**, *hard*, and before he has time to react, she grabs him, and the two of them start making out. They kiss desperately, vengefully, grasping at each other over the center console.

Tashi reaches her hand down and feels Patrick over his pants. She's surprised to see that he's already hard.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(smiles)

I've been driving with it for the
past five minutes.

They keep making out.

96

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

Thwacckkkk!A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 6 - 0P. Zweig: **6**, 3, 5 - 30

They rally, Art now determined to close out the match on Patrick's serve. Patrick sends the ball into the net.

Art pumps his fist. Tashi grits her teeth in the stands.

UMPIRE

Thirty - fifteen.

Reset.

Thwaccckkkk!

Art hits his return to Patrick's backhand. Patrick gets his racket on it, but the ball goes flying out.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Thirty - all.

Art looks at Tashi: the finish line is in sight.

97

INT. PATRICK'S CAR

Patrick and Tashi lay naked in the backseat. They both smoke cigarettes. The windows of the car are steamed up.

TASHI
I don't get it.

He looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)
There's lots of talented, entitled pieces of shit who have a tough time their first few years on tour, but I always thought you'd *do something* about it eventually. But you just *never did*. It was like you *wanted* to keep losing.

PATRICK
I don't know. It felt wrong to try too hard.

She looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I fucked up your whole life. It didn't seem fair for me to all of a sudden start *taking my tennis seriously* after you got injured.

TASHI
So now I'm responsible for the death of two careers?

PATRICK

No. *I'm* responsible. Just me. Maybe if it had occurred to me back then that I should just ask you to be my coach, things would've turned out differently. But like I said: I'm very stupid.

TASHI

You're *so* stupid.

PATRICK

Yeah.

TASHI

I can't even *fathom* being as stupid as you are.

Beat. Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

(completely sincere)

I miss watching you play, Tashi.
You were so beautiful.

They share a long look at each other.

TASHI

You have to make him feel like he earned it tomorrow. You can't just give up in the middle of the match.

PATRICK

Are you sure this is what you want?

TASHI

What *else* could I want?

Patrick doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

How will I know if you're gonna do it?

PATRICK

(beat)

You *won't*.

They look at each other. Tashi stubs her cigarette out in an empty tennis ball canister and sits up.

TASHI

Let's go.

98 EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - NIGHT

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 6 - 30

P. Zweig: **6**, 3, 5 - 30

Thwaccckkk!

Patrick sends his first serve into the net.

Reset.

Thwaccckkk!

It goes wide.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

A few people gasp at the double fault.

Match Point.

UMPIRE

Thirty - Forty.

Patrick looks at Tashi. He bounces the ball and goes into his service motion.

Thwaccckkk!

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

UMPIRE

Second service.

Patrick takes a deep breath, bounces the ball, and pauses in the middle of his service motion.

He looks at Art, crouched down, ready to win the match.

He looks over at Tashi, holding her breath.

He looks back at Art, who's now wondering what's taking him so long to serve.

He starts the motion over again. He stops.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Time violation. Warning, Zweig.

Patrick nods at the Umpire. He smiles to himself.

He goes into his service motion again, but this time, he does **Art's service motion**, just like when they were seventeen.

Thwaccckkk!

It's a clean, un-returnable ace.

Art doesn't even move for it. He just stands there.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Forty - all.

Neither man moves. They stare at each other across the net like gunslingers in a western. Tashi looks back and forth between both of them, no idea what's going on.

Art looks over at Tashi, then back at Patrick.

Patrick nods.

ART
Fuck off.

Patrick smiles.

UMPIRE
Code violation. Verbal obscenity.
Point penalty, Donaldson.

Some grumbles in the crowd.

Patrick moves over for his next serve. Art doesn't move.

Tashi looks at him. He looks back at her, totally cold.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Advantage, Zweig. First service.

Art just keeps looking at Tashi.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Art?

Art moves over for the return.

Patrick goes into **Art's service motion** once again.

Thwaccckkk!

Another ace.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Game, Zweig.

There are some grumbles and scattered applause in the crowd.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Set is tied at 6 games all. We will
now go into a tiebreak. Donaldson
to serve.

Art looks over at Tashi, who is looking at Patrick. Tashi
feels Art's eyes on her and looks over at her husband.

He can see now that she understands exactly what's happening.

He turns his attention to Patrick, and they stand looking at
each other as they're given towels to wipe themselves down.

Art receives balls for his serve. Patrick crouches down and
readies himself for the return.

Both men look at each other across the net: Let's really play
now.

Art bounces the ball and goes into his service motion.

Thwacckkk!

He sends the ball screaming *right at Patrick* like he's trying
to *take his head off*. Patrick has to dodge it.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

Art smiles. So does Patrick.

UMPIRE

Second service.

Thwacckkkk!

Art sends in another one, just as hot. This time it's good.

Patrick pounces on the return, and they rally. It's clear
immediately that both of them are playing their best tennis
in years, the best tennis of their lives. They smack the ball
at each other furiously, vengefully, looking wildly *alive*.

As they trade blows, we settle on Tashi, her head swiveling
back and forth between the two of them. Gradually, her look
of anxiety turns into one of *exhilaration*.

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

She grits her teeth and clenches her fists, playing as Art, playing as Patrick, playing as the ball itself.

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

The ball goes into the net, but we stay on Tashi. We don't know who won the point, even as the crowd cheers and Tashi leaps to her feet.

TASHI

COME ON!!!!

Cut to BLACK.

END.