

**Tigerbelles**

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Based on a true story.

FADE IN:

EXT. WILMA'S YARD - RURAL TENNESSEE - DAY (1947)

YOUNG WILMA RUDOLPH (aka "Skeeter"), 7, and her older sister YOUNG CHARLENE, 12, playfully collect laundry hanging on a line. In the background is the Rudolph family home... large, but slightly dilapidated wooden house/farm in the midst of the swath of green land.

YOUNG WILMA  
Betcha can't beat me back!

Charlene waves her off and continues gathering clothes.

YOUNG CHARLENE  
You got them little legs.

YOUNG WILMA  
I'm still faster than you.

A shirt that Wilma's collecting skims the ground.

YOUNG CHARLENE  
Skeeter, you better pick them clean  
clothes up off the ground! Mama'll  
kill you!

As Wilma gathers the clothes in her arms, Charlene gets a mischievous glint in her eyes.

YOUNG CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
Mark... set... GO!

Charlene takes off running with a basket full of laundry. Wilma chases after her, laughing the whole way. Despite her small size, she's amazingly quick.

Suddenly, Wilma STUMBLES and falls directly into a muddy pile. The clean laundry's filthy. Charlene sprints back.

YOUNG CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
Mama's gonna lick you good.

She tries to help Wilma up, but her legs are rubbery.

YOUNG CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
C'mon, Skeeter. Stand up.

YOUNG WILMA  
I'm trying to.

YOUNG CHARLENE  
(growing concerned)  
C'mon, Wilma, this ain't funny.

Wilma looks to her big sister, then down to her immobile legs. Her little brow furrows with worry.

YOUNG CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
Mama! Mama!

EXT. US ROUTE 79 / INT. OLDSMOBILE - MOMENTS LATER

A rust-caked OLDSMOBILE speeds erratically along a country road dotted with LIVESTOCK and BLACK SHARECROPPERS working the fields. BLANCHE RUDOLPH, late 30s, grasps the wheel tightly as she drives. Charlene sways with each jerky turn of the car. Wilma lays stiff-as-a-board across her lap.

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - LATER

The Oldsmobile SCREECHES to a halt in front of the hospital.

YOUNG WILMA  
Mama, am I gonna be okay?

BLANCHE  
Skeeter, you gon' be back out there running with your brothers and sisters in no time. A doctor's gonna fix you up like new.

Wilma's not so convinced. Blanche isn't really either, so Charlene takes a stab.

YOUNG CHARLENE  
And guess what? He's gonna be Colored just like you.

Wilma raises her eyebrows in disbelief. Blanche takes Wilma's chin in her hand, Wilma's eyes towards hers.

BLANCHE  
You my little fighter, you know that? Scarlet Fever? Beat it. Double-pneumonia? Beat it. And you gon' beat this too. You know why?

YOUNG WILMA  
Why?

BLANCHE  
Cause you're a Rudolph. That's what we do.

Charlene curls Wilma's hand into a FIGHTING FIST. She wraps her own hand around it. Sisters in this fight together.

CUT TO:

WILMA'S MIND'S EYE: A SERIES of STYLIZED SHOTS, the SOUND FADING IN AND OUT.

INT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - DAY

- Wilma's on a cold metal table. A BLACK DOCTOR and NURSE fit METAL BRACES on her legs. She winces in pain.

-SLAM! The heavy lid of the IRON LUNG MACHINE is shut down on Wilma's small body. She finds herself in DARKNESS.

-SNAP! The BLACK DOCTOR fastens the rigid BRACES below Young Wilma's knobby knees. She forces a clumsy step.

- Charlene and Blanche look through a window as a NURSE exercises Wilma's legs in a shallow pool.

EXT. WILMA'S YARD - RURAL TENNESSEE - MORNING

Wilma sits in a makeshift wagon while Charlene massages her legs. Blanche oversees the FAMILY construction of a homemade polio contraption.

Wilma grits through a tiresome, clunky walk along the PARALLEL BARS. She glances up seeing a group of KIDS at the end of the road staring with confusion. Wilma stops and Blanche sees the gossiping Kids. She redirects Wilma's attention to focus on the task at hand. Charlene matches Wilma step-for-step, while the whole FAMILY cheers her on at the end of the bars... an official finish line.

EXT. WILMA'S YARD - RURAL TENNESSEE - DAY

Wilma toys with her cumbersome brace as she stares out at her Brothers and Sisters playing basketball on the homemade dirt court. Her eyes hone in on their youthful and agile legs scurrying on the court.

EXT. WILMA'S YARD - RURAL TENNESSEE - DUSK

Wilma's Family walks toward their house in the distance. Charlene and Wilma remain in the distance at the parallel bars. Blanche yells out from the PORCH.

BLANCHE

Wilma! Charlene! Supper time!

YOUNG CHARLENE

Just a few more minutes, Mama!

Wilma stares at the BRACES on her legs. Mind racing.

YOUNG WILMA

Take 'em off, Charlene.

YOUNG CHARLENE

You not ready yet. And Mama'll be mad as all get out.

YOUNG WILMA  
 Mama said I can beat whatever comes  
 my way. Take 'em off.

Hesitant, Charlene unstraps the BRACES. They hit the ground with a heavy THUD. Wilma, unsteady, wills her legs to move. Her face is full of pure grit and determination. She stumbles, Charlene moves to steady her. Trying again, Wilma takes a few wobbly steps before falling on her face.

This time, she holds up her hand to stop Charlene. She pulls herself back to her feet, takes a shaky step, and then another, and then another. Charlene breaks into a proud and awe-filled grin.

ANGLE ON: The BRACES, sitting like discarded shells in the dirt, as Wilma's LEGS gain strength and speed in the background.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - DAY (1958)

CLOSE ON: The BRACES sit dusty on a closet shelf, as we pull back to reveal WILMA, 18, pretty but serious with eyes mature beyond her years. Overwhelmed, she balances her daughter, YOLANDA, 1, on her hips while tossing items in a suitcase.

Wilma's FAMILY OF 21 KIDS bustle about, helping her pack. ED RUDOLPH, 50s, dressed in a PORTER'S UNIFORM, breezes by.

ED RUDOLPH  
 Now don't forget your coat, girl!

WILMA  
 I won't, Daddy.

CHARLENE, 23, a no frills woman, hands Wilma a PHOTOGRAPH.

CHARLENE  
 Here it go.

INSERT PICTURE: Wilma doting a newborn Yolanda with kisses.

Wilma smiles and makes funny faces at Yolanda who manages a little smile in return.

WILMA  
 You gonna miss mama? Mama's gonna miss you.

Guilt wafts over her face. Charlene doesn't miss this.

CHARLENE

Don't go letting out no more tears.  
You done cried two rivers worth and  
it ain't changing the fact that you  
gotta go.

Yolanda starts to whimper. Wilma sniffs her diaper. She puts her on the bed and starts to change her.

WILMA

Leaving y'all to carry the load  
while I'm at school... it don't  
feel right, Charlene.

CHARLENE

You act like you finna go living  
high and party with stars. College  
ain't no vacation. You gon' be  
working on your education and we  
all gonna work on raising Yolanda.

WILMA

It still don't feel right.

CHARLENE

Neither does cleaning white folks'  
houses.

As Charlene crosses the room to trash the dirty diaper, Wilma glances back at the BRACES in the closet. She goes still.

WILMA

What if I can't keep up with the  
other girls?

CHARLENE

You the fastest person I done ever  
saw, Skeeter.

WILMA

Not faster than Jesse. I can't  
outrun cars.

CHARLENE

I bet if we put you next to Mama's  
car you'd be.

WILMA

That's only cause it's raggedy.

They chuckle as Charlene gives her a hug. She gives Wilma a long look.

CHARLENE

Skeeter, you got a window of  
opportunity.

(MORE)

CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
 Don't try to find a way to pull  
 down the shade. You gotta show your  
 shine.

ED RUDOLPH (O.S.)  
 Robert's here!

Wilma carefully puts the PHOTOGRAPH of her and Yolanda in her  
 suitcase. Charlene grabs some bags and follows Wilma through  
 the hustle and bustle of the house.

EXT. WILMA'S HOUSE - PORCH - SAME TIME

ROBERT ELDRIDGE, 18, a handsome, sweet-natured country boy  
 gets out of a battered farm PICKUP TRUCK. Wilma's YOUNGER  
 SIBLINGS flock to him. He happily gives them attention. He  
 gives a courtesy nod to Ed and Blanche Rudolph.

ROBERT  
 Afternoon, Ma'am... Sir.

ED RUDOLPH  
 Hey there, Robert.

Robert skirts through the playful Kids, eyes only on Wilma.

CHARLENE  
 (playful)  
 And you don't see me standing over  
 here, huh?

ROBERT  
 (good heartedly)  
 Good Lord, Charlene. Gimme a  
 chance, wouldya?

She laughs as Robert finally makes his way in front of Wilma,  
 heavily smitten. He tickles Yolanda in Wilma's arms.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
 Hey, Skeeter.

He gives her a tender kiss on the cheek.

BLANCHE  
 Alright, enough of that there.

ROBERT  
 I'm being good, Mrs. Rudolph.

BLANCHE  
 You better be.

Yolanda squeals as Robert continues to tickle her.

BLANCHE (CONT'D)  
 One baby is enough, don't you say?



WILMA

Mama.

Blanche purses her lips, standing by her statement. Avoiding this conversation, Robert grabs Wilma's suitcases and loads them into the truck.

Ed Rudolph hands Wilma an ENVELOPE. Wilma looks inside to find a small STACK OF CASH.

WILMA (CONT'D)

Daddy, no. I can't take this.

ED RUDOLPH

Naw, now. Everybody pitched in where they could. The lil' ones even picked corn on Johnson's farm.

BLANCHE

And I sold my washing machine.

WILMA

Mama! No, get it back. You saved up to get that machine.

BLANCHE

We gonna make do over here, Skeeter. That running scholarship the school giving you ain't gon' cover everything.

ED RUDOLPH

Now you be careful down there in Nashville. Mind Coach Temple and your manners. And don't be sasssing no white folks.

Wilma hugs her Family. She holds Yolanda tightly in her arms.

WILMA

Be a good girl now.

She fights letting the tears in her eyes fall, but she can't stop the outpouring. Robert and Charlene look to one another, each sympathetically watching this goodbye. Wilma hands Yolanda off to Charlene before climbing in Robert's truck.

Her Family waves goodbye as Robert's truck pulls away, leaving her world behind. He flips on the radio. The Drifter's "There Goes My Baby" comes on.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CAPITOL HILL (NASHVILLE) - DAY

This is the quintessential Southern Black Church. COACH ED TEMPLE, 38, opens the station wagon trunk revealing several BOOKS in BOXES. Ed's stoic both in stature and attitude until...

he looks into the rearview mirror meeting eyes with C.B. TEMPLE, 36, who playfully winks at him while putting on lipstick. She's the honey to Ed's vinegar.

COACH TEMPLE

(teasing)

I think you got enough of that gunk on, don't you?

C.B.

A lady's presentation is always a direct representation of her man.

C.B. looks in the side mirror and adjusts her hat. Perfect.

C.B. (CONT'D)

And I'd say that the world thinks you're pretty put together.

Ed chuckles and grabs one of the boxes from the back of the trunk. She gets out and he takes in her beauty.

COACH TEMPLE

If the ladies who taught me how to read looked like you, I wouldn't be able to spell 'go.' Folks are gonna be looking more at you than at that chalkboard.

C.B.

I think they'll manage just fine.

C.B. gives him a kiss. In the background, a FRUMPY WOMAN overloaded with bags struggles with the church door.

C.B. (CONT'D)

(to the Frumpy Woman)

Hold on, Sister! Here I come!

As C.B. climbs the stairs to help the Frumpy Woman, a HEFTY MAN with wrinkled clothes, hustles to get the door for C.B. She turns back to Ed with an "I told you so" smirk. He smiles to himself as he hauls the box inside.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE - DAY

Robert's truck makes its way through downtown. Well-dressed MEN and WOMEN make their way in-and-out of stores. Wilma takes it all in.

WILMA'S POV: A perfectly made-up BLACK MOTHER and DAUGHTER stand beneath a department store sign that reads COLORED ENTRANCE. It's the city, but it's still the Jim Crow South.

INT. ROBERT'S PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Wilma anxiously taps her foot. Robert sees she's nervous and sweetly reaches over and takes her hand as the truck pulls past a sign that reads: TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON: A pair of large, masculine BLACK HANDS pours chalk into a CHALK LINER MACHINE.

CLOSE ON: An imperceptibly CROOKED CHALKLINE is rubbed out by a MAN'S FOOT, then replaced. A perfectionist.

CLOSE ON: A WHISTLE, CLIPBOARD, STOPWATCH, NOTEPAD full of notes, and a SCALE are unpacked from a crate.

CAMERA TILTS UP to reveal Ed appraising his immaculate contributions to an otherwise unkempt track. This is the place where Ed is ALL vinegar. He grimaces as he eyes the partially completed track: it's missing the last two turns leaves it in the shape of a U.

As Robert's pickup truck drives past, Ed locks eyes with Wilma in the front seat. Wilma offers a shy wave. Ed sternly acknowledges her with a tight nod.

Ed's attention drifts across the yard... MARVIN JOHNSON, 38, the men's football and track coach, oversees a THREE-MAN GROUNDS CREW carefully attending to Men's Field. Ed, with zero help, goes back to pushing his chalk liner.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - SAME TIME

Robert's truck winds through campus. Smartly put together BLACK STUDENTS walk along the paved paths. Some STUDENTS converse on the grass. Other Kids electrify with laughter at tables in the QUAD. A few GUYS toss a football back and forth.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - HALE HALL - SAME TIME

Handsome brick buildings surround a well-manicured courtyard. Wilma and Robert park next to a Lincoln sedan.

AT THE LINCOLN

A cute, well-coiffed and full-figured student, BARBARA JONES, 18, is surrounded by a dozen leather suitcases. Her HEN-PECKING MOTHER, late 40s, and DOTING FATHER, late 40s, buzz around her. As Barbara starts to pick up a heavy box...

BARBARA'S FATHER

Let me get that for you, baby.  
Young women shouldn't be doing  
heavy lifting.

He scans the yard and notices a group of MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS. Among them is the suave and preppy kid, WENDELL, 19, causally leaning against a car checking out the Freshmen.

BARBARA'S FATHER (CONT'D)  
Hey! You boys wanna make a couple  
of bucks?

He takes a billfold from his pocket and the Boys hurry over to pick up the mountain of luggage. Barbara catches Wendell's attention. He shoots a flirty grin. She happily reciprocates.

AT ROBERT'S PICKUP TRUCK

Wilma has been watching all of this.

WILMA  
Must be nice.

Robert playfully flexes a bit.

ROBERT  
Them lil' boys? You got all the  
muscle you need right here.

With a wink, he takes Wilma's suitcase from her. Suddenly, a BLARE of R&B music approaches.

A shiny black CADILLAC pulls up beside Wilma. A leggy, red-headed vixen climbs out. This is BILLIE WHITE, 21, grown as she wanna be and a tad intimidating. The OLDER-LOOKING MAN in the Cadillac pulls off. All heads turn as Billie struts past the Freshmen.

BILLIE  
What? Never seen a senior before?

Wilma gets a kick out of that. She turns to Robert.

WILMA  
I ain't never seen that type of  
woman before.

INT. HALE HALL - WILMA'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Lugging a suitcase, Robert walks in the room to see Wilma tentatively unpacking a bag. Wilma can't help but to peek over at Barbara and her family across the room.

Barbara's Father organizes the desk while Barbara's Mother places an ornate bedspread on the bed. Barbara's not doing a thing... other than checking her makeup in the mirror. Robert and Wilma exchange a glance: This girl is spoiled.

BARBARA'S MOTHER  
...now the sorority usually takes a  
line early spring.  
(MORE)

BARBARA'S MOTHER (CONT'D)  
 You're legacy, so you have one foot  
 in the door, but you still need to  
 do your part.

Wilma's bag accidentally falls to the floor sending the  
 PHOTOGRAPH of her and Yolanda across the floor. Barbara  
 finally moves from her throne and beats Wilma to the picture.

BARBARA  
 Who's this?

Polite, Wilma swiftly takes the photo from Barbara.

WILMA  
 That's my sister's daughter.

BARBARA  
 Well, aren't you a good auntie? Mu--

Wilma jumps in to change the subject.

WILMA  
 Looks like we're roommates. I'm...

ELEANOR (O.S.)  
 Wilma?

A bookish, intelligent looking upperclassman, ELEANOR  
 WILLIAMS, 22, calls from the doorway. She checks names off  
 her clipboard.

WILMA  
 Yes, but you can call me Skeeter.

Barbara's Parents give each other a side-eye over the  
 nickname. Eleanor merely continues her checklist.

ELEANOR  
 And... you must be Barbara.

BARBARA  
 Yes, and you are...

ELEANOR  
 Eleanor. Coach Temple wants you on  
 the track at four p.m. sharp.

WILMA  
 Today? I haven't even unpacked yet.

Eleanor finally looks up from her clipboard.

ELEANOR  
 Wilma, you're here on a  
 scholarship, right?

WILMA

Yes.

ELEANOR

Then you're on Coach's time now.

BARBARA

(to herself)

I'm not on scholarship.

Eleanor gives Barbara and her Family a solid once over.

ELEANOR

I suggest neither of you be late.

Eleanor walks away. Wilma turns to Barbara who resumes primping in the mirror.

WILMA

You run track?

BARBARA'S FATHER

Oh, BJ runs alright. You are looking at the fastest young lady in the whole state of Illinois.

Barbara gives Wilma a brazen smirk. Competition is on.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

Wilma, in a long baggy T-shirt and frumpy shorts, jogs slowly. Next to her is Barbara in a polished, form-fitting track uniform with CHICAGO scrawled across the chest.

They run through campus, passing STUDENTS on the TENNIS COURTS and DRUM MAJORS practicing their signature moves.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - SAME TIME

Wilma and Barbara, competitors at the core, glance at each other then start jogging faster and faster until finally they are full-on RACING each other. They arrive at the track breathless just as...

Ed BLOWS his WHISTLE. A DOZEN ATHLETES surround him, including Billie and Eleanor.

COACH TEMPLE

Welcome to your first Tigerbelles practice. I'm Ed Temple. You can call me 'Coach.'

Ed's manner is precise and no-nonsense.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

(motioning to Eleanor)

This is Eleanor Williams.

(MORE)

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 She's my assistant coach and a graduate student here. She's also your teammate, but you're expected to treat her with respect of a coach.

Ed takes in Barbara's uniform, non-approving.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 You may've been hot stuff where you came from, but none of that matters here. You are all at the same starting line.

Barbara subconsciously fidgets with her uniform.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 There are no secured spots on this team. If you've been offered a scholarship, don't mistake that for easy sailing.

Wilma shuffles nervously.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 You're expected to be at every practice early. If you're showing up as my whistle blows, you're late. We might all be Colored, but my watch doesn't run on C-P time.  
 (then)  
 Tigerbelles do not slack off on their school work. Remember you are using track in exchange for an education. I expect y'all to maintain at least a three-point-five G.P.A. Curfew is nine p.m.

Billie guffaws out loud, then stifles it. Ed scowls, pointedly looking at Billie.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Athletics open up doors for you, but education keeps them open.  
 (then)  
 Tigerbelles should look presentable at all times. You are ladies first, students second, and athletes third. I expect for you to be foxes not oxes.

Wilma and Barbara glance at one another.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 You all represent this university, but more specifically you represent me. Is all of that clear?

Wilma, Barbara, and the rest of the FRESHMAN RUNNERS stand shocked, overwhelmed. Billie feigns a yawn behind Ed's back.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Alright. Line up for weigh in.

Wilma whispers to Barbara.

WILMA  
Scales? Is he serious?

BARBARA  
I'm not getting on a scale.

Ed brings out a SCALE. Eleanor lines everyone up.

CUT TO:

BILLIE, who jumps on and jumps off. No problem. Ed looks down the line.

COACH TEMPLE  
Miss Jones, you're next.

BARBARA  
I was taught ladies never reveal  
their age or their weight.

Ed, barely looking up from his notepad, motions with his pen for Barbara to get on the scale.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
I've always watched my waistline.  
Is this really necessary?

COACH TEMPLE  
We need to get those hips in runner  
shape. This isn't a cotillion. Get  
on the scale.

Ed inspects the number, raises an eyebrow.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
You're one cookie away.  
(down the line)  
Miss Rudolph.

Hesitant, Wilma steps on the scale. Ed squints in concentration.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Stand up straight.

He adjusts Wilma's posture. Ed reads the scale and takes Wilma in for the first time.



COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Looks like you've put on some  
weight since recruitment last year.

WILMA  
I... I know. I'm gonna lose it.

Wilma shrinks back into the Team. Ed CHIRPS his whistle.

COACH TEMPLE  
My runners need to be in top shape.  
If you wanna keep your scholarship,  
you're gonna need to put in work.

BARBARA  
(under her breath)  
I'm not on scholarship.

Eleanor and Billie are in earshot; they roll their eyes.

COACH TEMPLE  
Alright. Today's warmup will also  
be the first cut.

Wilma and Barbara's jaws drop.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Get on the track and loosen up your  
legs with two miles. Anyone over  
fifteen minutes... thank you for  
coming out, but this will be your  
first and last practice.

The GIRLS begin running on Ed's whistle. Each Girl has a unique running style. Billie's stride is nonchalant, but powerful. Eleanor's steady and calculated. Barbara's gait is showy and slick. Wilma's long legs make her look as though she is gliding on ice. Billie leads the pack with Wilma doing her best to keep pace with her.

INT. JANE E. ELLIOTT CAFETERIA - DAY

STUDENTS scramble about. SORORITY GIRLS (AKAs) wear pink sweaters and talk loudly at a table. Barbara eyes them longingly as she and Eleanor push their trays through the line. Then her eyes widen as she watches Billie loading up her tray.

BARBARA  
Billie, aren't you scared of  
putting on weight?

BILLIE  
Nah. All the practicing makes it  
slide right off. Just wait.

Billie inhales a big bite of cake. Barbara checks out the desserts. She chooses a few.

ELEANOR

I'd take Billie's advice with a grain of salt if I were you. She gets plenty of exercise outside of practice, if you know what I mean.

She does. She reluctantly puts back only one of her desserts.

AT THE TABLE

Wilma scans the cafeteria and spies Billie, Barbara, and Eleanor. Intimidated, she walks towards them.

WILMA

Is it okay if I sit here?

BILLIE

(aloofly gestures to sit)  
It's not a Woolworth's lunch counter, so go on 'head.

There's an awkward silence. Wilma breaks it.

WILMA

I saw you in that Cadillac. Is that man your boyfriend?

BILLIE

(laughs)  
Jimmy's lead sled caught your eye, huh? Naw, he's just a friend. I'm not really the 'boyfriend' type. A lot of girls come here to get their M.R.S. Degree. That's not my style.

WILMA

M.R.S. degree?

BILLIE

You a real country gal, aren't you?  
(then)  
They're here to find themselves a husband, you know... a man who can keep 'em spoiled like their daddy.

Everyone instinctively looks at Barbara who doesn't seem to notice. There's another awkward beat. These four women may be teammates, but they have absolutely nothing in common.

ELEANOR

Alright ladies, so after dinner, you should get back to your rooms so you can get to bed. Practice is bright and early tomor--

BILLIE  
 --Ease up, Granny. Here I am still  
 sweating from practice today and  
 you're already talking about  
 practice tomorrow.

WILMA  
 Is Coach Temple always this strict?

ELEANOR	BILLIE
(emphatic)	(rolling her eyes)
YES!	YES!

ELEANOR  
 So please don't make a habit of  
 breaking curfew like Billie.

BILLIE  
 Eleanor tells Coach everything.

ELEANOR  
 It's my job.

BILLIE  
 Yeah, but you ain't gotta like it  
 so much.

BARBARA  
 Coach's got more rules than with my  
 mama and daddy.

WILMA  
 If his rules help me keep my  
 scholarship, I'll follow 'em.

ELEANOR  
 What's your major?

WILMA  
 Elementary education.

BARBARA  
 Hope you make teaching more  
 exciting than this conversation.  
 College is supposed to be fun.

WILMA  
 Running is fun.

ELEANOR  
 It has to be more than fun. It has  
 to be your life. No distractions.  
 Just school and track.

Billie winks at a BOY staring at her from afar.

BILLIE  
There's always room for a little  
bit more.

Eleanor purses her lips.

ELEANOR  
Rhonda got 'a little bit more' last  
year and you see what that got her.

WILMA  
Who's Rhonda?

BILLIE  
She ain't nobody now.

WILMA  
What happened to her?

BILLIE  
She got knocked up and Coach threw  
her off the team.

Shit. Fear washes over Wilma's face.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
He sent her packing right back to  
whatever country hill she came  
from. We ain't seen her since.

BARBARA  
He didn't have to do all that.

ELEANOR  
His track, his rules. No mothers on  
the field. Kids are the ultimate  
distraction.

Barely breathing, Wilma forces a nod. Just then, Wendell  
walks in with confidence. He stands in the middle of the  
cafeteria and gives a distinctive ALPHA FRAT CALL with gusto.

WENDELL  
ROLL CALL! A-PHI-A!

A table full of ALPHA PHI ALPHA BROTHERS stand up. They're  
smartly dressed in Frat regalia of the times: Button downs,  
trousers, oxfords, some wear bow ties.

ALPHA FRAT BROTHERS  
A-PHI-A!

A RIVAL FRAT GUY responds with another chant.

RIVAL FRAT GUY  
PHI BE-TA Siiiiiii-GMA!

WENDELL

A-PHI-A!

RIVAL FRAT GUY/SIGMA BROTHERS

Brothers! I said my brothers!  
(Yeah)/This house (this house)/Is  
full (is full)/Of blue and white/I  
said this house (this house)/Is  
full (is full)/Of Blue and White!

In response, Wendell and the Alphas chant.

WENDELL/ALPHA BROTHERS

A-Phi-A, A-Phi-A./The Phi Beta  
Sigmas got some soul!/A-Phi-A, A-  
Phi-A/But they just can't compare  
with the black and gold!

They begin to STEP. The rhythm of their steps fills the cafeteria. Then the rival Sigma Frat jumps in to battle. Suddenly, AKA sorority start their signature ladylike moves. Not to be outdone, ZETA PHI BETA Sorority begins to battle.

It's a magical moment. Our Tigerbelles watch in awe. Barbara, in particular, is intrigued. She catches the eye of Wendell. The STEPPING and CHANTS continue over:

MONTAGE - THE FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL:

INT. HALE HALL - WILMA'S ROOM - DAY

An ALARM CLOCK goes off. Wilma groggily looks over at the other bed. Barbara's asleep with an eye mask, pink rollers, and a scarf over her hair. Wilma quietly slides out of bed.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Wilma in Math class, studiously taking notes.

PROFESSOR

If you'll turn to page three of the  
reader that's being handed out...

The STUDENT ahead of her, sporting a TSU FOOTBALL shirt, turns to hand her the readers. This is JESSE, 20. Wilma almost gasps at how good looking he is.

JESSE

Here you go.

Wilma takes a reader and smiles shyly. Jesse can't help but to take a look back over his shoulder.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - LIBRARY - DAY

A stern LIBRARIAN walks Wilma through her campus job.

LIBRARIAN  
 To maintain your scholarship,  
 you'll work fifteen hours a week  
 shelving books.

The Librarian wheels out MOUNDS OF BOOKS. Wilma sighs.

WILMA  
 Yes, ma'am.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS - DAY

Wilma leaves the library, making her way across campus. She sees a group of NURSING STUDENTS pass by. Then, TWO THEATER STUDENTS recite Shakespeare. Wilma smiles to herself; being at college is a dream come true.

END MONTAGE

INT. HALE HALL - PHONE BOOTH - AFTERNOON

Barbara's already dressed in her practice gear. She's propped up next to the dorm PHONE BOOTH. Wilma comes in the lobby.

BARBARA  
 (on the phone)  
 There she is now.  
 (off phone)  
 Wilma! It's your boyfriend.

Barbara sticks the phone in Wilma's hand with a mischievous glint in her eye.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
 See you at practice. Don't be late.

Barbara hurries off. Wilma stares at the phone, torn.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. CLARKSVILLE STREETS - PHONE BOOTH - SAME TIME

A FOR COLORED ONLY sign is firmly tacked to the phone booth. Robert toys with the cord, subtly clocking looks from the WHITE BYSTANDERS passing by.

WILMA  
 Robert?

Robert brightens when he hears Wilma's voice.

ROBERT  
 Hey, you.

WILMA  
 I've gotta go to practice. You give  
 my mama the money?

ROBERT  
Yeah, but she said she don't want  
you sending no more. I swear that  
woman woulda cut me if it she ain't  
have to answer to the Lord.

WILMA  
Mama's all bark.

ROBERT  
She know how to bite too.

Facts. Wilma chuckles.

ROBERT (CONT'D)  
I just got a quick question.

WILMA  
Yeah?

ROBERT  
What you got on right now?

WILMA  
Robert! You crazy.  
(lowers her voice)  
I'm gonna be naked in a minute.

ROBERT  
Now that's what I'm talking about.

WILMA  
No, really. I gotta go change. I'll  
try you later, okay?

ROBERT  
Alright, I--

She hangs up and takes off running. Robert's left listening  
to the dull DIAL TONE, a little overlooked.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - LATER

It's 5:58. Ed taps his watch suggestively as Wilma runs up,  
just in the nick of time. He blows his whistle.

COACH TEMPLE  
Three lines, girls. Eleanor, run  
'em through the warm up.

Eleanor leads them through exercises: high knees, butt kicks,  
lunges. Wilma and Barbara focus on each other, competing even  
in the warm-up.

TIME CUT TO:

Wilma's feet dig into the starting blocks. Sweat pours from her face. Barbara and Billie flank her on each side. BANG! They take off. Suddenly, Ed emphatically waves his arms and BLOWS his whistle bringing the Girls to a halt.

Ed marches to Wilma and positions her back to the blocks.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
You're not doing a hard post on  
your take off.

Wilma's confused. She looks to Barbara and Billie. They don't have a damn clue what he's talking about either.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Get in your starting stance.

Ed stands in front of her inspecting her heel-to-toe relationship. Her feet are shoulder width apart.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Now post up to me to assemble the  
hard post.

Ed holds his arms out in front of Wilma, bracing for impact.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Run into my hands like you're  
taking off.

She does. His hands halt her shoulders mid-stride.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Hold the stance.

One of Wilma's legs stays up, holding her hard post position.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Feel your body in that line? That  
there's a triple extension. You  
gotta hold that hard post.  
(to the Tigerbelles)  
Your position needs to be  
perpendicular to the ground at a 90  
degree angle.

Eleanor takes copious notes. As Wilma strains to hold the position, her butt sticks out causing her stance to falter.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
You're broken at the waist.  
(to the Tigerbelles)  
Breaking at the waist gives you  
what we call a bubble butt. You  
don't want that.



BILLIE

Mine ain't never hurt me.

Billie laughs and tries to give Eleanor a hand-slide, but Eleanor shushes her.

COACH TEMPLE

This ain't about body type, Billie.  
It's about posture.

Ed motions for Barbara to hold her hard post position. He nods his approval. Points to Billie. She nails it.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Always remember that if don't get out of those blocks right, you cannot win. It doesn't matter how fast you think you are. You'll only end up being the fastest second place. Got it?

WILMA

Yes, Coach.

COACH TEMPLE

And you're lopsided. Favoring one leg. It's breaking your stride.

Wilma lowers her gaze, feeling a little picked on.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Follow me.

(beat)

You have an injury you haven't told me about?

WILMA

Nothing you don't know about, sir.

Wilma catches Barbara, Eleanor, and Billie watching.

WILMA (CONT'D)

(low)

Just the polio when I was kid.

COACH TEMPLE

Well, it looks like you're still carrying it. Come here.

Ed digs around in his crate of EQUIPMENT. He pulls out an ANKLE WEIGHT and straps it onto Wilma's left ankle. He snakes the strap around Wilma's shoulder blades into a figure 8 and then loops it under her armpits. He tightens the strap and she immediately stands up straighter, but is self-conscious.

WILMA

My braces came off over 10 years ago. The doctors said I was good.

COACH TEMPLE

And they did a good job teaching you to walk. But I'm gonna teach you to run. Until you straighten out, you'll need to wear this 24-7.

He motions for her to head back to the track. Wilma tightens her face to hide embarrassment. Eleanor takes notice of Wilma's dismay with Ed's solution.

WILMA

How'm I supposed to run in this?

ELEANOR

Trust me: *Trust him.*

WHISTLE BLOWS! Wilma starts to run, clearly slowed by the contraption. Ed watches her in the back of the pack.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - GIRLS' LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Billie, Eleanor, and Barbara peel off her sweaty track attire. Wilma shleps in, the dispiritedness still present.

BARBARA

I can eat a whole poundcake by myself after today.

ELEANOR

Keep on and you really will have a bubble butt.

In her underwear, Barbara monitors her svelte figure. Everything is taut and in place. Wilma turns away and tucks herself into a corner to hide her body. With her back to the Girls, she takes off her top. A C-SECTION SCAR is present on her stomach. She quickly slides on a shirt to hide it.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Coach won't hesitate to cut you if you get too big, Barbara.

Wilma glances at her own image in the broken mirror.

WILMA

He has to know that life happens though, right? Folks can't be perfect all the time.

BILLIE

Coach be wanting perfection like we Jesus walking on water... knowing damn well we all gonna drown.

BARBARA  
 (looking in the mirror)  
 My body weight *is* perfect.

Barbara playfully shows off, giving dramatic face poses.

BILLIE  
 That's cause all your weight is in  
 that big head of yours. Swear it  
 blows up more every damn day.

BARBARA  
 Being confident doesn't mean you're  
 conceited. There's a line.

BILLIE  
 You musta crossed that line long  
 before you came here. Shit, I know  
 Wilma is tortured on the daily  
 living with you.

BARBARA  
 I'm not stuck up.

No one nods in agreement. Billie turns to Wilma.

BILLIE  
 Am I right or am I wrong?

WILMA  
 I-I don't know. BJ, I mean you can--

BARBARA  
 --Don't let Billie get you into a  
 discussion you can't handle.

Wilma goes quiet to keep the peace.

BILLIE  
 Wilma, you grown. Don't let Barbara  
 scare you. She all talk.

BARBARA  
 More like all beauty.

ELEANOR  
 Beauty doesn't break the tape. If  
 people have time to comment on how  
 beautiful you are, then you're not  
 running fast enough.

BARBARA  
 (offended)  
 What about you? You take down every  
 word Coach says like it's gospel  
 and you still can't outrun me.

The gauntlet is thrown.

BILLIE  
Oh, shit.

To save face, Eleanor fires back.

ELEANOR  
Billie, I bested you in the 400, so  
I wouldn't get on a high horse.  
Half the time you do too much  
drinking to even climb one.

Barbara chuckles causing Billie to one-up Eleanor.

BILLIE  
Wilma got a late start and still  
got past you like you a crawling  
baby. I guess that stick up your  
ass must've slowed you down.

Barbara sucks her teeth and scans Eleanor, reading her.

BARBARA  
Age before beauty. Humph.

Eleanor turns to Wilma who cuts her eyes to the ground. It's  
best to be Switzerland. Stay neutral. Irritated, Eleanor  
grabs her things and heads for the door.

ELEANOR  
(over her shoulder)  
We'll see who's crawling after  
Coach makes cuts.

Icy, Billie and Barbara leave in opposite directions. Wilma  
takes a deep breath, alone without a team.

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The Rudolph Family gathers around the kitchen table.  
Makeshift decorations adorn the kitchen coupled with a  
handwritten HAPPY BIRTHDAY SIGN. A group of LITTLE GIRLS dote  
over Yolanda.

Wilma's glued to the stack of school books crowding the  
kitchen table. She subconsciously fidgets with the brace  
contraption on her body. Robert slides a slice of untouched  
birthday cake closer to Wilma, but she doesn't notice.

CHARLENE  
College done made you too good for  
my cake now? Don't be getting all  
uppity on us.

WILMA

I'm tryna lose weight. Coach Temple says we can't have sweets before a track meet.

ROBERT

Temple's Ten Commandments.

WILMA

Robert.

ROBERT

Way I see it, his rules should stay down at the campus. They shouldn't be in your home life.

WILMA

I don't get to punch out of being an athlete when practice ends. It don't work like that.

ROBERT

You can't punch out of your family either. You don't even know how to make your own decisions.

This stings.

WILMA

Just cause you don't like my decisions, don't mean I ain't the one making 'em.

CHARLENE

Alright, y'all cut out that bickering. We got presents to open.

Yolanda GIGGLES as she holds onto the table, trying to take her first steps.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Look at the birthday girl over there trying to strut.

WILMA

She standing up now?

ROBERT

Her first step can't be far off.

WILMA

(dejected)

I guess Imma miss that too.

Charlene saddles up next to Wilma trying to bring hope.

CHARLENE

Me and Yolanda gon' come spend a weekend in the dorms with you. You can get in more time with her.

WILMA

So Barbara can tell Coach and get me kicked off the team? Naw.

CHARLENE

She won't do that, Skeeter. She's your teammate.

WILMA

She's competition not a teammate. They all made that clear.

CHARLENE

That's fear talking.

WILMA

No, that's Barbara talking. She don't miss a day telling me how she deserved the scholarship I got.

(beat)

Barbara can't find out about Yolanda. None of 'em can.

Robert and Charlene turn to one another, unsure of how to soothe Wilma. Charlene pushes the cake closer to Wilma.

CHARLENE

One bite can't hurt. I promise I won't tell.

Charlene looks for backup from Robert, who looks on, almost testing. Wilma sits there longingly looking at her cake. She takes a big bite, closing her eyes in satisfaction. Robert kisses her gently on the cheek as an apology.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - DAY

The Tigerbelles gather with noticeably fewer girls in attendance. Ed beckons them closer.

COACH TEMPLE

Our meet is in two weeks. It's our only meet this season. 'Til now, the girls that couldn't cut it have been taking themselves out. But today is the day I skim the cream.

Proven correct, Eleanor self-righteously raises her brows to Billie, Barbara, and Wilma. Wilma stiffly stands wearing the brace contraption, hoping this is all worth it. The Tigerbelles all look at one another. Who's it gonna be?

MONTAGE - SKIMMING THE PACK:

Ed BLOWS the whistle and the Girls run. He takes notes. As Eleanor takes off with urgency...

A CLUNKY RUNNER

...takes to the track, but her stride has no cadence and she weaves in between the lines. Ed motions for her to leave the track. Saddened, she does.

Ed lines the Girls up for another run. Barbara digs deep as she hustles around the track.

A STIFF RUNNER

...makes the turn on the track with her upper body rigid. Ed blows the whistle and points for her to leave. Down goes another runner.

The Girls line up for another run. Billie passes the others with ease, looking like a winner.

A HEEL-HIKER

...can't avoid over-striding. It makes her foot land too far in front of her knee. Ed adjust his glasses. He waves his hand for her to stop running. She let's the tears flow.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - LATER

Another run. Wilma's fingers press into the track, awaiting Ed's whistle. Ed BLOWS it and they're off. He immediately notices Wilma's posture is off.

COACH TEMPLE  
(mumbling to himself)  
Damn it. Just listen.

This faux-pas puts Billie in the lead. Barbara and Eleanor are close behind. Wilma kicks into another gear to catch up. Ed zeros in her, and only her.

-- WILMA'S LEGS running, her FEET STRIKING the track.

-- Ed is one with his STOPWATCH. His eyes widens as he looks between his stopwatch and Wilma.

-- Wilma breathes rhythmically, running in stride. She passes Eleanor and closes in on Barbara with cheetah like speed.

-- Ed stops staring at the stopwatch. Seeing something special, the whistle drops from his mouth.

-- WILMA'S ARMS PUMPING. Her face suddenly contorts into a strained look. She's flies by Barbara.

Billie crosses the finish line with Wilma only inches behind her. Wilma almost caught up, but failed. Ed shakes his head in frustration.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Best second place!

Wilma's frustrated with herself as Ed addresses the Girls.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
If you're still on this field, make  
sure you're ready to run at the  
Tuskegee meet.

The remaining Girls on the track congratulate each other.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Miss Rudolph, come to my office.

INT. TSU - COACH TEMPLE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ed's makeshift office is nothing more than a desk in the middle of an equipment storage shed. Wilma follows Ed.

WILMA  
Sir, I know what you're gonna say.  
I was awful out there.

COACH TEMPLE  
Your biggest mistake today was that  
you thought you knew better than  
me. I already told you. Bad posture  
cannot win.

Wilma tugs at the brace.

WILMA  
I woulda caught Billie if I ain't  
have this on. It slows me down.  
(finally)  
This thing makes me feel like I'm a  
dang cripple.

COACH TEMPLE  
It's your broken spirit that's  
slowing you down. Your past doesn't  
have to be a cinderblock. It  
doesn't have to define you. You  
need to work to move past it.  
(beat)  
Did you know you were on pace for a  
record-setting run *with* the brace?

Her surprised look portrays a resounding no.



COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

And I think if you would've held your hard post, you would've taken it. You have something really special. Something only a few runners in a lifetime possess. I can help you uncover it, but you need to listen. To trust me.

(beat)

And you must make Tigerbelles your priority. You're running anchor at the Tuskegee meet.

WILMA

Really?

COACH TEMPLE

Now go on, Skeeter. Get showered.

Wilma's thrown off. Did he just call her "Skeeter?"

WILMA

You never called me that before.

COACH TEMPLE

You weren't officially my runner before. Now don't think this means you get to call me 'Ed' though.

(beat)

Go change out.

INT. TSU - JUST OUTSIDE COACH TEMPLE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Wilma scans the area, she's alone. She pumps her fist in the air and lets out a SHRIEK of joy.

INT. TSU - COACH TEMPLE'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Ed can't help but to smile as the excited SOUNDS of WILMA'S SHRIEKING comes into his office. As the sounds die out, Ed's eyes fall on an OLD BOX sitting behind his desk. His worried look shows that this box haunts him.

He slowly approaches the box. He exhales as he opens it. It's full of NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS, MEDAL RIBBONS, and OLD RACE NUMBER RUNNING BIBS. He rifles through each item.

INSERT: A headline reads: MARVIN JOHNSON, TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY TRACK AND FOOTBALL STAR SWEEPS HBCU NATIONALS.

Ed scans the write up.

INSERT: ED'S NAME is toward the bottom. He's listed as an ALSO RAN. The PHOTO shows Marvin Johnson crossing the finish line with Ed far off in the background, forgotten.

Ed slams the box shut, unsettled by those memories.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - LATER

Ed walks toward the infield where COACH MARVIN JOHNSON, 38, YELLS from the sidelines at the FOOTBALL TEAM. Dressed in his pristine TSU sweatsuit, it's clear his BMOC (Big Man on Campus) status never died.

But Ed has his gaze and step locked in on the man chit chatting with Marvin Johnson... Tennessee State University's President, WALTER DAVIS, 60. Just as Ed is about to speak to Davis... CLACK!!! Both Ed and Davis' attention is drawn to the clashing of shoulder pads from the massive HIT on the field. Jesse (Wilma's classmate) has made the impressive tackle. Marvin proudly looks on.

MARVIN

Know you not used to it, but that's the sound of winning, Temple.

He nudges Ed in fun and belts out an annoying laugh. Jesus, Ed can't stand this guy and we can see why. He tries to be the bigger man.

COACH TEMPLE

Team's looking good, Marvin.

MARVIN

I think this is our year.

Ed moves closer to Walter.

COACH TEMPLE

Walter, a word?

Davis tries to contain his irritation. Ed has a history of pestering him. They move away from Marvin.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

Sure, Ed. What is it?

COACH TEMPLE

Well, you know I'm taking the Tigerbelles to the HBCU national meet next week.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

Yes, I'm sure that'll be, uh, very exciting time.

COACH TEMPLE

It will once we win it.

(beat)

I'm hoping that success will help you consider me for something more prominent with the university.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
And what would that prominence be?

COACH TEMPLE  
The men's track coach position.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Marvin's already our men's coach.

COACH TEMPLE  
I know, but Marvin's never brought  
you a title. I can do that with  
these girls.

Ed has Davis' ear; he adds to his pitch.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
And when I do, it's worth thinking  
about a restructure. If I could get  
my hands on the men's team, I could  
really make a mark for the school.

Davis considers it and dangles a carrot.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Let's see what you can do in  
Tuskegee first and then we'll talk.

Ed nods. A potential victory on its way.

EXT. OUTSIDE NASHVILLE / INT. ROBERT'S PICKUP TRUCK - MORNING

The early morning light kisses the horizon. Charlene holds Yolanda in her arms. She and Wilma are squeezed together as Robert drives to campus. Wilma anxiously taps her feet.

WILMA  
Is this as fast as you can go?

ROBERT  
Just a few more miles, Skeeter.  
I'll get you there in time.

WILMA  
Coach is gonna be mad. This is the  
most important day of our season.  
If I don't get this right, nothing  
else matters.

Robert abruptly HITS his brakes. Traffic has backed up ahead of them. Robert cranes his heads out his window to see what's going on. POLICE LIGHTS FLASH ahead.

CHARLENE  
What's going on?

ROBERT  
Looks like a hog truck overturned.

WILMA  
I can't wait.

CHARLENE  
You gon' have to.

Like hell. Wilma's grabs her overnight bag. She gives Yolanda a very quick kiss and leaps out.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
Hold on!

Wilma doesn't even look back to see Yolanda reaching out for her. Charlene lets out a heavy laden sigh.

EXT. ROAD - SAME TIME

The campus of Tennessee State University sits in the distance. Wilma runs through the HOGS and TRAFFIC towards it.

EXT. HALE HALL - SAME TIME

Ed and the Tigerbelles wait in a van. All of the RUNNERS are there, except for one. Billie slumps in her seat wearing sunglasses. Very hung over.

COACH TEMPLE  
Where's Skeeter? I told my sister-in-law we'd be there before it gets dark. We need to be on the road in ten minutes!

Frowning, Billie slightly lowers her sunglasses.

BILLIE  
Well, yelling ain't gonna make her up and appear.

COACH TEMPLE  
I've told y'all a thousand times if you're not early, you're late. I...

As Ed continues to rant, WILMA DARTS into the van.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Where in God's tarnation have you--

WILMA  
--The roads got blocked. I had to run the rest of the way.

Eager, Barbara nudges Billie, waiting on Ed to erupt. Their eyes dart between the two, anticipating. Ed takes in Wilma profusely sweating and still winded.

COACH TEMPLE

Well... alright. Let's go. Get here ahead of time in the future. No more of this fastest second place, you hear?

WILMA

Yes, sir.

Slightly pissed, Barbara mouths, "What the hell?" to Billie as Ed slams the van door shut.

EXT. TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - DAY

A BANNER reads: 1958 HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES TRACK MEET. Our Tigerbelles arrive, turning the heads of their opponents. They're definitely in the "foxes" category. Barbara stops walking, looking unimpressed.

BARBARA

There's no bleachers. Where are my fans supposed to sit?

BILLIE

Fans? Girl, please. You better be glad we get a damn baton.

HONKS blare out. Barbara's Parents jump out of their Lincoln with Family and Friends. Their SIGNS and fervent waves feign celebrity status. She beams, playing the part.

Barbara throws an "I told you so" look to Billie.

CHARLENE (O.S.)

Skeeter!

Wilma turns to see her entire Family has also made the trip. Robert uses Yolanda's little hand to wave at Wilma.

BILLIE

Look who gotta a man with a built in family.

WILMA

Robert's a play uncle. That's my sister's baby.

BILLIE

As fine as he is, you better make sure you ain't next.

Billie looks to Eleanor for backup, but she's wandered off to a STOIC and PROPER COUPLE. They give a tight and polite wave to Eleanor. These devout church goers are Eleanor's parents.

WILMA

I'll be back for warmups.

As Wilma runs over to her family, Billie can't help but to notice she has no family in attendance. Her eyes dart from Barbara, to Eleanor, and finally to Wilma. All surrounded by their blood. Billie quickly refocuses her attention the ALABAMA STATE TRACK ASSISTANT COACH who's smiling at her. Billie switches toward the young coach. Meanwhile, Wilma gathers with her family.

WILMA (CONT'D)

What y'all doing here?

Charlene points to Barbara's Family fawning over Barbara doing her best poses. They're celebrating absolutely nothing.

CHARLENE

That... but much better.

WILMA

Mama, you supposed to be at work.

BLANCHE

I told Mrs. Roberts I'd come in tomorrow. Wasn't no way I was missing my college girl's big day!

Wilma takes in her Family staring at her... expectations high. She takes a deep breath.

Ed spots President Davis in the CROWD making small talk. Ed gets serious, feeling stakes of his own.

MONTAGE - TUSKEGEE TRACK MEET:

ATHLETES from Tuskegee University, Alabama State, Prairie View A&M, and Florida A&M mill about.

-- Line up for the 100. Wilma and Barbara get in the blocks. Wilma fidgets. The RUNNER next to her gives a tough gaze.

TUSKEGEE RUNNER

Shoulda spent more time training  
and less on your hair.

The GUN FIRES! Wilma wins easily. Barbara struggles for SECOND PLACE. She looks to her family, downcast.

-- Line up for the 200: Barbara, Billie, and Wilma walk to their lanes and shake out their muscles. Eleanor looks at the Tigerbelles and then at Ed. He's glowering.

ELEANOR  
 (clapping)  
 Girls, get set! Run strong! This is  
 our race!

The Starter FIRES his pistol. Wilma's got a bubble butt.

COACH TEMPLE  
 No bubble, Skeeter! Longer strides,  
 Billie! Barbara, focus! Eleanor,  
 pick it up!

-- The race ends with Billie placing first, Wilma second, and  
 Barbara narrowly securing third. Eleanor closes in fourth. Ed  
 glances up at President Davis, who claps, very pleased.

-- The 4x100 relay: The Tigerbelles huddle.

ELEANOR  
 Okay, the Tuskegee lead off is fast  
 off the blocks, so nail the first  
 twenty steps. If she only does  
 fifteen--

BARBARA  
 --Lord, everything's not a math  
 lesson. Hell, just run.

ELEANOR  
 There's a method for a reason. Now,  
 Billie, if--

BILLIE  
 --I got this, Old Lady.

The team disbands to take their places around the track.  
 Billie lines up next to the Tuskegee Runner who was throwing  
 shade in warm-ups.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
 Let's see what your hair looks like  
 when I whoop your ass.

BANG! Billie takes off with spring in her step and passes the  
 baton to Eleanor. Eleanor runs hard then passes perfectly to  
 Barbara. Barbara catches her Family CHEERING from the corner  
 of her eye and turns on the gas. The handoff with Barbara and  
 Wilma is not clean! Ed cringes at this error, but Wilma  
 easily cruises with her long strides. She takes FIRST PLACE!

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
 That's how it's done! Everybody  
 better get hep!

Each of the Tigerbelles celebrate separately with their  
 families and clicks. To his dismay, Ed witnesses this.  
 President Davis CLAPS with fervor and beckons Ed over.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Strong end to your season, Ed.

COACH TEMPLE  
Thank you. So, does that mean...?

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Like I said, Marvin's already our men's coach. I'm not in the habit of fixing things that aren't broken. Again, good job today.

Davis walks off leaving Ed angsty. He turns to see Billie doing a victory dance as the Girls finally reconvene to celebrate together. They boast loudly around Billie.

COACH TEMPLE  
(angrily, sternly)  
Billie!

Billie stops. The other Girls quiet down. The smiles drain from their faces.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
That was *not* a performance to celebrate. Not from *any* of you. Your times were off.

WILMA  
But Coach, we won--

COACH TEMPLE  
--You beat the competition, but you did not *win*. Winners challenge *themselves*. Winners give their *best* performance. Can any of you say you did that today?

There's some truth in his words no matter how harsh.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Today wasn't good enough. It's not something to be proud of.

BILLIE  
(under her breath)  
Congratulations to you too.

Her sarcasm wasn't quiet low enough because Ed spins back.

COACH TEMPLE  
Get back on the track!

BARBARA	BILLIE
We don't even have any more meets this season.	You gotta be kidding me.



ELEANOR  
Really, sir? Is this necessary?

Undeterred, Ed points at the track. In disbelief, they obey. The FANS suddenly stop their chatter. The other TEAMS whisper to one another. Barbara, Eleanor, and Wilma look at their Families... each family gut-wrenched. Humiliated and with shame on their faces, the Tigerbelles start to run.

EXT. MAISIE'S HOME - NIGHT

A small, neat home belonging to Ed's sister-in-law, Maisie.

INT. MAISIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor have made beds on the couch and pallets on the floor with a variety of mismatched pillows and blankets.

Eleanor pores over a SPORTS ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE and studiously jots down notes. LEGGY FEMALE ATHLETES are on the cover. Billie notes this.

BILLIE  
Burning the midnight oil on your studies, huh? Anatomy lesson?

Eleanor ignores her and continues reading.

BARBARA  
I cannot believe he made us do punishment laps in front of everybody. I'm not down with this shaming folks stuff.

BILLIE  
He tells us to be foxes, but he treats us like dogs.

ELEANOR  
Coach has his reasons.

BILLIE  
Eleanor, do you ever think anything he does is wrong? Did you see him turn water into wine? Cause if he did do that, he sho' forgot to share it with us.

ELEANOR  
I believe you had your share of 'water' last night.

BARBARA  
Well, I'm not gonna let Coach Killjoy keep *me* from celebrating.

Barbara pulls out a hat box and gently removes the lid to reveal... a perfectly baked PIE. All of their eyes bulge.

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Mama and Daddy brought it for me.

WILMA  
(smiles playfully)  
You mean for us?

The Girls dig in, inhaling each bite with pure exultation.  
Wilma lets out a joyful moan.

BILLIE  
Don't you need to save them sounds  
for Robert?

Wilma gasps and Eleanor metaphorically clutches her pearls.  
Barbara doubles over laughing.

BARBARA  
You wrong for that, Billie.

BILLIE  
Truth ain't never hurt nobody.  
Ain't he's Skeeter's boyfriend?

ELEANOR  
And future husband I take it?

BILLIE  
Stop rushing folks to the alter.  
Why somebody would wanna be locked  
down and married at this age is  
beyond me.

WILMA  
I love Robert. I've loved him since  
we were lil' bitty kids.

Barbara takes another bite, all ears.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
He was my best friend. Truth was he  
was my only friend back then. He  
stuck up for me when other kids  
used to pick on me.  
(beat)  
But I don't think I'm ready to be  
his wife. Not just yet.

BILLIE

Good! You got a whole lifetime to be some man's wife, but you only got this lil' time now to be yourself.

Wilma takes in Billie's words.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Explore your options... cause I'm sure as hell gonna explore mine.

The Girls laugh and give each other hand-slides.

INT. MAISIE'S HOME - DEN - SAME TIME

Ed holds the rotary phone in his hand as he cradles the handset. MAISIE, 30, gestures toward the phone with a wave.

COACH TEMPLE

(on the phone)

...Your sister says hello.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B., in a pretty nightgown, finishes wrapping her hair in a satin scarf.

C.B.

Tell Maisie I miss her.

COACH TEMPLE

(to Maisie)

C.B. sends her love. And Maisie, thanks again for letting me and my team sleep here.

MAISIE

After what they did out there today, it's all my pleasure, Ed. Have a good night.

C.B. motions to The Temple children walking down the hallway. EDWINA, 6, and LLOYD, 4, come in and kiss her goodnight. She holds the phone toward them.

C.B.

It's your Daddy.

EDWINA

Hey, Daddy!!! I miss you!

LLOYD

Daddy!!! When are coming home?!

A moment of relief graces Ed's face.

COACH TEMPLE  
I miss y'all too.

C.B.  
They will be all yours come  
tomorrow evening.

COACH TEMPLE  
I'll be there. We should be back no  
later than noon.  
(beat)  
You nervous about your meeting?

C.B.  
I'm fine. It's the men of the church who get nervous every time a woman takes the lead on anything.

COACH TEMPLE  
You do know how to strike fear.

She laughs. He somehow knows just how to make her do that.

C.B.  
Long as you know to stay in line.

COACH TEMPLE  
Always, baby.

Edwina and Lloyd start playing around. Time to shut it down.

C.B.  
(to the Kids)  
Say 'Goodnight.'

EDWINA LLOYD  
Goodnight! Love you, Daddy! Goodnight! Love you!

C.B.  
Now go on and get to bed. Love you.

C.B. makes sure Edwina and Lloyd have gone down the hallway. Their door SLAMS. C.B. leans into the phone listening to the silence on the other end.

C.B. (CONT'D)  
You gonna talk or just hold the  
weight of the world?

She knows him. Ed shifts his weight as he leans against the wall. His mind is heavy.

COACH TEMPLE  
Walter won't give me a chance.  
Marvin's boys aren't up to snuff.  
They can't even outrun my girls.

C.B.  
 See the good, baby. Y'all came in  
 first place... in every event, Ed.  
 I don't know how you can do better  
 than that.

COACH TEMPLE  
 By getting the job, C.B.

The TIGERBELLES' LAUGHTER wafts into the room. Ed, still  
 irritated, furrows his brow.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 (shouting out the door)  
 Hold it down in there!

INT. MAISIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

The Girls hear Ed and softly GIGGLE with the forks firmly in  
 their hands.

BILLIE  
 Oh, I'm gonna hold it down alright.

She digs into the pie. The Girls quietly laugh as they follow  
 suit, eating right out of the tin.

Eleanor slips out the room.

RESUME - ED AND C.B. PHONE CONVERSATION - SAME TIME

COACH TEMPLE  
 And it's not about coming in first.

Eleanor listens on the other side of the door.

C.B.  
 What's it about then?

COACH TEMPLE  
 The girls' effort. They only get  
 one meet a season. They need to  
 leave it all out there on the  
 track. They're doing this apart,  
 not together. It's not good enough.

Eleanor takes this in.

C.B.  
 It wasn't good enough for *what*? You  
 can't take your dreams out on  
 everyone else.

There's a KNOCK on the door closest to Ed.

COACH TEMPLE  
 (into phone)  
 I've got to go now. I love you.

He hangs up the phone and steps out into the hallway to find Eleanor standing there.

ELEANOR  
 Coach, I'm sorry for interrupting,  
 but I think you need to see this.

She shows him the SPORTS ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE.

INSERT: ELEANOR'S HANDWRITTEN NOTES are on the page.  
 TIGERBELLES RUNNERS NAMES appear.

Ed studies the page, then locks eyes with Eleanor. Knowing. She gives a subtle smile. He nods, optimistic... Whatever he has just read is a game changer.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ed lugs his bags from Tuskegee inside. Then, he spots his portly mother-in-law, MAMA GRACE, 60, on the couch crocheting. She delivers a judgmental glance over the top of her glasses as he walks in the door.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Oh! Hi, Mama Grace. I wasn't  
 expecting you here. Where's C.B.?

MAMA GRACE  
 She had her literacy program  
 meeting at the church. She waited  
 and waited on you, and then had to  
 call me to watch the kids.

Shit, he forgot. Mama Grace seems to take some joy from this. HEADLIGHTS shine through the window as the sound of TIRES on GRAVEL invade the house. C.B. comes in the front door. She looks at Ed, visibly annoyed.

COACH TEMPLE  
 C.B., I'm sorry, sweetie. I tried  
 to make it back in time, but I had  
 some moves to make and fast.  
 Eleanor showed me something that--

C.B.  
 --That could've waited. You know I  
 have commitments and  
 responsibilities too.

MAMA GRACE  
 To the Lord!

Both C.B. and Ed throw Mama Grace a glance.

COACH TEMPLE  
Mama Grace, let me drive you home.

MAMA GRACE  
At this time of night? What would  
my neighbors think? Oh, no. I'm  
spending the night tonight.

C.B. and Ed turn to one another... not exactly their choice.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The bedroom is well-kept with his and hers beds. It's functionally decorated with practical mid-century decor. Ed walks in and looks at C.B. in bed, reading a CHURCH PAMPHLET about her LITERACY PROGRAM.

COACH TEMPLE  
Good you're still awake. Something  
I need to show you.

He pulls out the Sports Illustrated Magazine. A WHITE TRACK TEAM from Texas is on the cover. C.B. raises a brow.

C.B.  
Women runners on the cover? That's  
good for you. For next year at  
least.

COACH TEMPLE  
Look at page eighteen.

She turns the page and now we REVEAL...

INSERT: CHART OF RUNNING TIMES. The Tigerbelles' TIMES are written on it by Eleanor for comparison.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
They got the cover with *those*  
times. Their time in the one  
hundred is point five below our  
*slowest* runner. Point seven in the  
two hundred.

C.B. closely examines the page.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
And look at the relay. These Texas  
girls aren't the best runners in  
country. My girls are.

He swallows hard, but is certain.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
The National meet is in six weeks.  
In New York.

C.B. shakes her head, knowing what this means.

C.B.  
National meet, not a Colored meet.

COACH TEMPLE  
That's why I stayed behind in  
Tuskegee.

He settles on the bed next to C.B.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
I need to put 'em up against a  
whole set of runners they don't  
know. Both men and women.

C.B.  
But your speed is your speed, isn't  
it? Doesn't matter who's running.

COACH TEMPLE  
Beating each other at practice only  
gets them so far. I gotta bring 'em  
together, C.B.  
(beat)  
To beat them white girls, they need  
an 'us against the world'  
mentality. And they can't be an  
'us' if they're focused on 'I.'

C.B. nods in agreement as she sits up in bed.

C.B.  
Is President Davis on board with  
this plan of bringing in other  
runners? You think he's gonna let  
the girls run up against grown men?

His silence is a resounding no, but to clarify:

COACH TEMPLE  
High school boys, not men.

C.B.  
How are you gonna creep around and  
do this without getting caught?

COACH TEMPLE  
There'll be hurdles, but I can  
clear them. Baby, if we win in New  
York there's no way Walter can keep  
snubbing me. It'll be the first for  
the school. Hell, the first for any  
Black college.

C.B.'s eyes move to the literacy pamphlet, then back to him.



C.B.  
Six more weeks of training and  
fundraising... I've got my own work  
to do, Ed.

COACH TEMPLE  
I'll make it up to you.

She purses her lips.

C.B.  
Oh, so you *want* my mama to keep  
showing up at the house, I see.

He chuckles.

COACH TEMPLE  
Not one bit. I can't do this.

He cuddles up to her and kisses her neck.

C.B.  
(giggling, whispering)  
Mama's in the other room.

COACH TEMPLE  
Then you best be quiet.

The two whisper and make love.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - EVENING

Wilma trains alone on the track. Determined, she's wearing the brace Ed gave her. Jesse and his TEAMMATES pack up their gear at the end of football practice. Jesse lingers behind his Teammates to watch Wilma run. She's natural and beautiful. He walks toward her and she slows down to a trot.

JESSE  
Your stride's looking good.

WILMA  
Coach swears this thing is helping,  
but I don't know.

She fidgets with the brace, embarrassed. Jesse notices.

JESSE  
It's just another piece of  
equipment. No different from my  
helmet or shoulder pads.

She nods, grateful for his kind words.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I'm excited to see what y'all pull  
out in New York. I can't wait.

WILMA  
What you talking 'bout?

JESSE  
Coach asked me to help drive y'all  
up there.

Wilma tries not to look excited about the news.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I thought he was done with me after  
the other night, but he wants to  
pay me to go. But I won't take it.

WILMA  
Boy, you crazy. You coulda loaned  
me the money.

JESSE  
What I'm about to witness you doing  
on that track is priceless. Why  
take anything less?

Wilma cuts her eyes to the ground.

WILMA  
(exhales)  
I'm kinda nervous.

JESSE  
You're as good as any runner I've  
ever seen. Girl, you are fast.

A smile comes to her face.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
But you could work on your head  
games, though.

Huh? Her smile falls.

WILMA  
Head games?

JESSE  
Sports aren't just physical.  
You've gotta get your mental game  
together. Get into your opponent's  
head before the race even starts.  
Lemme see you in the blocks.

Wilma walks over to the blocks and directly settles in.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I'm not afraid of that.

WILMA

What?

JESSE

That's not gonna cut it. I'm not  
second guessing myself. Look here,  
watch me.

Jesse gets into the blocks next to her.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Get close. Take up space.

He's close to her, intimate. Their bodies just inches away.

JESSE (CONT'D)

If you stretch, make it wide. If  
you jump, make it high. Don't look  
at nobody, but make sure everyone  
can see you. Be a blind peacock.

WILMA

A blind peacock?

JESSE

(nods)

Beautiful and don't even know it.

They steal a glance at each other. Both liking what they see.  
Wilma's breaks eye contact and Jesse picks up on it... the  
intimacy's too much. He switches gears.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Runners on your marks. And... Go!

They take off running together, playfully racing, laughing.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - 4 WEEKS UNTIL NEW YORK:

-- Barbara slides through COUPLES slow grinding on the dance  
floor at the ALPHA's frat house. Wendell rolls a cigarette  
during a spades game. He sees Barbara and jumps up. Wendell  
happily leads her into the party.

-- The life of her own party, Billie's at a JUKE JOINT  
grinding and throwing back drinks.

-- Wilma shakes Yolanda's bottle while skimming the graded  
test in her hand. She got a C. Yolanda squirms in her arms.  
She holds the poor test in her mouth during feeding.

-- Late, Eleanor's in bed looking over her track notes. She  
hears LAUGHTER outside. She peeks out of her window to see  
GROUPS of GIRLS having fun. She closes her shade.

-- Wilma counts out a tiny stack of CASH. She stuffs all but \$3 in an ENVELOPE addressed to her MOTHER.

-- Wilma and Barbara come to the dorm late from practice. Stomach growling, Wilma looks at the clock. It's 10 P.M. She turns to her pile of books, sighs and sits down to start studying.

-- Ed adjusts the brace on Wilma's body. She winces as it digs further into her skin.

-- Exhausted, Wilma prepares an ice bath. She SCREAMS when she plunges into the freezing water.

-- The Tigerbelles run hard. Energy wavers. Ed YELLS from the sidelines.

COACH TEMPLE

Push!

-- Ed monitors Billie and Barbara as they struggle doing push-ups and crunches.

-- Morning sun comes through the window to find Billie's in bed still dressed from her night on the town. She snores drunkenly.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family is having a sit-down dinner. C.B. exhales as Ed talks animatedly.

COACH TEMPLE

The girls aren't giving me their all at practice. They're not focused.

C.B.

Well, all I know is that I'm happy to have us all eating *together* for a change.

(then)

How was your day at school, Edwina?

Before Edwina can answer, Ed keeps on talking.

COACH TEMPLE

They're just coasting on their raw talent. But everyone at this AAU meet is gonna have the same kind of raw talent. We're gonna be *the first* all-Black team at this event. All eyes will be on us.

C.B. sighs. She's not going to win this battle.

C.B.

They know that. No Negro who has the potential to be 'first' at something doesn't realize those stakes. But, Ed, these girls aren't professional athletes. They're college students. Beyond all of your practices, they've got the early morning classes, the late night studying...

COACH TEMPLE

...the parties, the extracurriculars, the boys.

A light bulb goes off. He suddenly grabs his jacket.

EDWINA

Daddy, where are you going?

COACH TEMPLE

I'll be back.

C.B.

Ed?

COACH TEMPLE

(to Edwina and Lloyd)

Y'all get to bed on time, you hear?

C.B. grits her teeth as the door SLAMS behind him.

EXT. HALE HALL / INT. COACH TEMPLE'S STATION WAGON - LATER

Ed stakes out in his station wagon across from the dorm. All is peaceful and quiet. He yawns and checks his watch.

Suddenly, a PACK OF SORORITY PLEDGES wearing dunce caps exit the AKA SORORITY HOUSE across the way. The AKAs, dressed in pink and green, bark orders at the Pledges as they do army crawls in the dirt.

Ed puts his glasses on to take a better look. Amongst the group, he sees BARBARA! They finish the drill and disperse. Barbara's worn-out as she stumbles to the dorm.

COACH TEMPLE

(mumbling to himself)

Pledging...

As Ed shakes his head in disappointment, a shiny CADILLAC squeals up to the dorm curb. Out climbs BILLIE!

Aghast, Ed FLASHES his headlights and HONKS. Billie, startled, squints to see who's honking. She recognizes Coach Temple's car.

BILLIE

Shit.

She makes a run for it and heads directly to the dorm.

COACH TEMPLE

(to himself)

You running faster now than you do  
in practice.

INT. HALE HALL - HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Billie comes thundering down the hall. Barbara pops her head  
out her door.

BARBARA

What's wrong? Someone chasing you?

In pajamas and an old housecoat, Eleanor pokes her head out  
her door.

ELEANOR

What's all this commotion about?

BILLIE

Coach is outside! He caught me  
sneaking in!

They bolt to the window and peer down on Coach Temple's car.

BACK OUTSIDE

Wilma and Jesse carry to a stack of books as they head for  
the dorms.

COACH TEMPLE

Not Skeeter too. These girls take  
me for a damn fool! Not tonight!

Ed speeds his car toward Wilma and Jesse. She's a deer in his  
headlights.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

What's going on here? Curfew was  
two hours ago!

WILMA

Coach... I'm sorry... I... I just--

JESSE

Coach, Skeeter wasn't--

COACH TEMPLE

--I don't need any explanation from  
you, son. This is between me and my  
runner.

Wilma takes a deep breath. This is gonna be difficult.

WILMA  
I'm failing math. School comes  
before running, right?

Ed can't argue with his own rules.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
Jesse's helping me study. He can't  
come in the dorms and the library  
just closed.

Even though they can't hear the conversation, Barbara,  
Billie, and Eleanor watch the drama unfold FROM THE DORM  
WINDOW. They might as well have popcorn.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
That's why I missed curfew. Am I  
off the team?

Jesse waits with baited breath.

COACH TEMPLE  
Goodnight, Jesse.

Cue noted. Jesse carefully places several more books into  
Wilma's arms before leaving.

FROM THE DORM WINDOW: Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor stay  
focused on Ed and Wilma. He's very animated. They turn to one  
another with a knowing look... this can't be good.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - DAY

Ed BLOWS THE WHISTLE to end practice. The Tigerbelles are  
sweat-soaked and worn.

COACH TEMPLE  
Not sure what happened, but y'all  
really pushed yourselves today.  
Good job.

Barbara and Billie exchange a glance as they all pack up.

BARBARA  
(whispers)  
He didn't say nothing.

BILLIE  
(whispers)  
I'm not gonna stick around to see  
that change.

They pack faster and begin to leave the field with Wilma and  
Eleanor.

COACH TEMPLE  
Barbara? Billie?

Shit. Barbara and Billie both stop in their tracks. Wilma and Eleanor slow their pace, listening from a distance.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Since you both like to be running  
all around town after curfew, maybe  
you'll like running a few more laps  
around the track. Fifteen laps.  
(then)  
Eleanor, stay and keep their tally.  
Make sure they aren't cutting  
corners.

BARBARA  
What about Skeeter? She was out  
past curfew too last night too.

COACH TEMPLE  
That's another eight laps for not  
minding your own business.

Billie starts to protest, but Ed BLOWS his WHISTLE.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Get to work.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - NIGHT

Wilma, Billie, Barbara, and Eleanor, all in their Tigerbelles uniforms, walk toward a handful of CARS illuminating the track with headlights. Barbara pulls at her uniform.

BARBARA  
What kinda practice is this?

BILLIE  
A mess. Probably a weigh-in to make  
sure we ain't got too big.

WILMA  
You sure about this, Eleanor?

ELEANOR  
Coach said be here at 9.

Billie scans the darkened area. She can't see if anyone is in the cars.

BILLIE  
Sending Black folks into a dark  
field can't ever end well.



As the Tigerbelles emerge closer to the track, a CAR DOOR OPENS. They hesitate until they see Ed get out of his car, with his whistle, stopwatch, and clipboard in hand.

BARBARA  
What's going on?

COACH TEMPLE  
Your next meet.

Suddenly, PEOPLE emerge from the other cars. FOUR HIGH SCHOOL BOYS, Black 14, and 4 HBCU ALUMNI WOMEN TRACK TEAM, Black 25.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Your competition.

Wilma, Eleanor, Barbara, and Billie take in the teams. Billie puts her hand on her hip.

BILLIE  
Now I don't mean no harm, but what makes you think some boys who can't grow a beard and some old women who probably growing beards, can compete with us?

Barbara stifles her laughter. Wilma and Eleanor half-grin.

BARBARA  
Coach, I don't want to question your methods--

COACH TEMPLE  
--But you can't help yourself. Go ahead, BJ.

BARBARA  
We're faster. This is a waste.

COACH TEMPLE  
The Texas girls get fifteen races a season. Y'all get one. Practice is never as good as the real deal.

ELEANOR  
I guess a dress rehearsal couldn't hurt us.

A string of 'Whatever' shrugs and unenthusiastic nods pepper Wilma, Billie, and Barbara's faces. Ed hands them their BIBS.

COACH TEMPLE  
We're doing everything by regulation like a real meet. As real I can make it anyway.

The Girls see Ed has accumulated some REFEREES. Jesse puts the final touches on the FRESH LANE LINES. Wendell holds FINISH LINE ROLLS. Ed's called all hands on deck.

Billie puts on her bib and starts for the track.

BILLIE  
Let's go 'head and beat these folks  
so I can go to bed.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - LATER

4x200: Winded, Billie PANTS as she runs full speed at the TURN. Her head slightly turns to either side. She's actually being matched by the HIGH SCHOOL RUNNER and the HBCU RUNNER! Billie is shocked as hell. Ed watches, astounded.

Pouring with sweat, Billie pushes harder and harder to find herself LAST. Eleanor anxiously awaits the baton.

ELEANOR  
Hurry up, Billie!

Billie finally sticks the handoff. Eleanor concentrates as she breathes RHYTHMICALLY to count her step count. In the turn, her habitual syncopated cadence is thrown off. She can't turn her burners on. Barbara sighs heavily as she watches Eleanor's squinted face approach.

BARBARA  
Dig it out, Eleanor!

Handoff complete. Barbara's usual slick glide is enough to catch the HBCU RUNNER, but she's a step away from the HIGH SCHOOL RUNNER.

Wilma keeps her eyes locked forward as Barbara approaches. She holds out her hand. Flat. Palm upwards... waiting to accept. As Barbara goes to deliver the baton with a single swift deliberate smack, they bobble the handoff AGAIN!

BARBARA (CONT'D)  
Damnit!

They try to stick it again, but go outside of their changeover zone! Billie and Eleanor immediately double over. Ed lays into the whistle. FWEET!!!!

COACH TEMPLE  
Disqualified!

BARBARA  
(to Wilma)  
Why can't you keep your hand still?

WILMA  
I didn't make us go out the zone!

BILLIE  
BJ, you the one who messed up.

Barbara spins around ready to unload, but Eleanor hops in.

ELEANOR  
(to Billie)  
Stay out of it. We wouldn't be here  
if you got out the blocks on time.

COACH TEMPLE  
Girls.

BARBARA  
If Skeeter'd stop showing off--

WILMA  
--I know you ain't talking!

COACH TEMPLE  
Enough!

Barbara and Wilma stop arguing.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
See, this right here is why coaches  
don't mess with girls. This is why  
I didn't want this team in the  
first place.

The Tigerbelles are stung and hurt by all this.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
How can anybody else take y'all  
seriously if you don't take  
yourselves seriously? I can't get  
y'all to focus for two seconds on  
the track cause you're always  
distracted by booze and boys!

Seething, Ed starts to walk away.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
(over his shoulder)  
Baton handoffs and conditioning at  
five a.m. sharp.

BILLIE  
That's too early.

Ed spins around, his fury and disappointment with them swirls  
on his hardened face.

COACH TEMPLE

If you can stay in a bottle of  
liquor that late, you can get up  
that early.

Ed goes over to the COACHES, REFEREES, and other RUNNERS.  
Jesse sympathetically looks at Wilma. Barbara, embarrassed,  
avoids Wendell's gaze.

Demoralized, dejected and DQ'd... they stand as the most  
separate foursome ever.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - KEAN HALL - NIGHT

The smooth, low rumble of a BARITONE SAX BLOWS while a TRIO  
OF FEMALES SINGERS snap their fingers to the beat. The R&B  
MUSIC from the LIVE BAND weaves through the elegantly dressed  
COLLEGE COUPLES dancing. Hanging sign read: HOMECOMING 1959.

AT A PHOTO BACKDROP

Wilma and Robert pose for formal portraits. Robert's suit is  
a little ill-fitting and unstylish. It's definitely more of a  
hand-me-down Sunday suit than a formal one.

Barbara and Wendell sit with Eleanor. Naturally, Barbara's  
decked out fabulously. Eleanor has done little to transform  
her look. She still clings to her infamous notebook.

BARBARA

(re: Eleanor's notebook)

You taking notes on how to have a  
good time?

ELEANOR

I'll write that one down.

BARBARA

You need to be writing down how  
Coach is playing favorites.

ELEANOR

He's a fair man.

BARBARA

Oh, really? He catches Skeeter with  
Jesse and nothing. He ran me and  
Billie for three hours after  
practice that night. That seem fair  
to you?

Barbara stops her rant to take a bite off her plate. Eleanor  
jots something down in her notebook.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Are you writing down what I'm  
eating to tell Coach?

ELEANOR  
Who do you think sent me here to  
chaperone?

BARBARA  
(aghast)  
Eleanor! Dang, can't you be one of  
us for second?!

Billie arrives, turning heads, but dressed more for a  
nightclub than a formal. She catches Wilma's eye.

WILMA  
Hey, Billie. Looking good.

Wilma gives her a warm smile, but Billie simply ignores her  
and walks on. Wilma's face falls. Then--

BARBARA  
Billie! Over here!

Billie perks up and Wilma notices, hurt. Billie walks over to  
join Barbara and Eleanor. She sizes up Eleanor's attire.

BILLIE  
No man tonight, Eleanor? Oh wait,  
that's every night.

In fun, Billie winks. Eleanor merely responds with an  
unbothered look.

BARBARA  
Billie's right, Eleanor. You keep  
dressing dowdy like that you're  
gonna end up an Old Maid.

Eleanor scans her attire.

WITH WILMA ACROSS THE ROOM

Robert notices a cloud cross Wilma's face; she's noticed the  
cold shoulder Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor are giving her.

WILMA  
I'm gonna go get some punch. I'll  
meet you back at the table.

Robert heads to join the Tigerbelles and their DATES. As  
Wilma heads for the punch, Jesse enters in his well-cut,  
stylish and sharp suit. He stops her en route.

JESSE  
You look better than mama's  
biscuits tonight, girl.

WITH ROBERT AT THE TIGERBELLES' TABLE

ROBERT  
Y'all ready for the white folks'  
track meet?

ELEANOR  
Won't be white anymore after we get  
there. We are the TSU Integrators!

Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor give each other hand-slides and self-assured nods; they proudly smile at the accomplishment.

ROBERT  
I never woulda thought Skeeter  
going to college would take her all  
the way to The Big Apple.

BARBARA  
That's where Wendell and I are  
moving once he finishes dental  
school.

Wendell looks over at Barbara, confused.

ROBERT  
You gonna be a dentist?

WENDELL  
I guess so. And a Yankee too,  
apparently.

Everyone laughs. Suddenly, the Crowd starts CHEERING. The MC of the event comes to the front of the stage.

MC  
Now bringing y'all the one, the  
only... Mr. Ray Charles!

FINGERS start to pound the piano keys, playing the opening notes of "What'd I Say." Eleanor puts her notebook down and jumps up, clapping to the beat. Billie and Barbara both join her, screaming with excitement.

BILLIE  
Ray!!!!

RAY CHARLES, 29, does his signature side rock as the TSU Crowd goes wild.

RAY CHARLES  
(singing)  
'Hey mama, don't you treat me  
wrong. Come and love me all night  
long. Oh oh, hey hey.'

As Barbara, Billie, Eleanor, and Wendell dance, Robert's on cloud nine. He searches through the Crowd. Suddenly, he looks like he got hit by a truck.

Jesse and Wilma are dancing! Jesse holds Wilma's hand as he gets into the dance. She giggles with joy.

ROBERT  
(to himself)  
What the hell?

Billie turns around to find Robert clenching his teeth. She nudges Barbara. They watch Robert, pissed, cut through the Crowd toward them.

BILLIE  
Let's see her get outta this one.

Robert comes up behind Wilma. His eyes cutting into Jesse.

ROBERT  
Who the hell is he?

Wilma spins around seeing Robert's scrunched face.

WILMA  
Oh, this is Jesse. He's in my Math class.

ROBERT  
I don't think they teaching y'all to move like that in Math class.

Jesse slides in between Wilma and Robert.

JESSE  
Just calm down, man.

ROBERT  
I don't wanna hear nothing you gotta say. You hear me?

Eleanor has now joined Barbara and Billie in looking at the brewing tension between Robert and Jesse.

ELEANOR  
Good Lord.

Eleanor grabs Barbara and Billie, quickly pulling them toward Wilma, Robert, and Jesse.

Wilma steps in between Jesse and Robert.

WILMA  
(to Robert)  
You stop this now.

ROBERT  
Is he why you don't come home to me  
and Yolan--

WILMA  
--Don't!

ROBERT  
Oh, that's right. He don't know.

WILMA  
Please, Robert. Not here.

ROBERT  
Why don't you please stop telling  
me lies?

WILMA  
I'm not lying to you.

Robert isn't convinced.

JESSE  
Go on home, Robert.

When Jesse puts his hand on Wilma's shoulder, a rage sets  
across Robert's face.

ROBERT  
Stay away from my girl!

Robert PUNCHES Jesse. The Tigerbelles SCREAM as Jesse hits  
the floor.

WILMA  
Robert!

Jesse collects himself and begins to return the punches. A  
couple of his FOOTBALL TEAMMATES run over. Wendell and his  
FRAT BROTHERS rush in to shut this down... they hold back  
Jesse and his Teammates from Robert.

Wilma looks mortified, Barbara and Eleanor are appalled, but  
Billie is smugly satisfied.

ELEANOR  
This isn't funny, Billie.

BILLIE  
Oh, I know it ain't.

Wilma looks over at Billie who makes sure to speak loud  
enough for Wilma to hear.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
Neither was running all night.



Billie's very pointed with this and Wilma can do nothing, but run out of the room.

ELEANOR  
That was Coach's call, Billie. Not Skeeter's.

There's truth in this and Billie knows it. Pride still bigger than reasoning, Billie shrugs her shoulders and walks off.

EXT. PARKING LOT - ROBERT'S PICKUP TRUCK - LATER THAT NIGHT

Solemn, Wilma and Robert lean against his truck.

WILMA  
You embarrassed me.

ROBERT  
Embarrassed you? You had me in there looking like a plum fool!

WILMA  
I told you Jesse's just a friend.

ROBERT  
I don't need no college degree to know what I saw.

Robert hops in his truck.

WILMA  
Don't leave.

Robert doesn't bother to respond. He speeds off leaving Wilma alone in the parking lot.

EXT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The Tigerbelles load their suitcases into the back of Coach Temple's station wagon. Ed kneels down in front of Edwina and Lloyd. C.B. stands behind them.

EDWINA  
Will you bring us gifts from New York, Daddy?

COACH TEMPLE  
Depends if y'all are gonna be good for your mama.

EDWINA  
We will!

He gives each of the them a kiss goodbye. When Ed goes to hug C.B., she hands him a box full of BAGGED LUNCHES. Clearly, there won't be any hugs coming his way. He peers over his shoulder to make sure The Tigerbelles can't hear.

COACH TEMPLE  
You still mad at me?

C.B. doesn't say anything.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
If I could stay to support your  
little event, I would.

She's taken aback by his phrasing.

C.B.  
'Little event?'

COACH TEMPLE  
You know what I mean, C.B.

C.B.  
I'm beginning to see that.

He checks again to make sure they aren't being overhead.

COACH TEMPLE  
Baby, I apologized.

C.B.  
You can't take your team giving  
excuses, but you're quick to give  
'em yourself, aren't you?

C.B. takes out a few bagged lunches from the box. She puts on a smile and goes over to join The Tigerbellies at the car. She hands each girl a paper bag.

C.B. (CONT'D)  
Lunch bag for the trip, ladies.  
Coach wants to limit the stops.

Wilma and Billie peer into the paper bag.

THEIR POV: There's a SANDWICH wrapped in wax paper, an APPLE, a COOKIE, and an EMPTY MASON JAR. Wilma and Billie sneak a look at each other in confusion about the empty jar.

WILMA  
Thank you, ma'am.

BILLIE  
Thanks, Mrs. Temple.

Barbara and Eleanor give C.B. a warm smile of appreciation.

C.B.  
You're welcome, girls. But if you  
wanna thank me, y'all do your best.  
And I know your best is nothing  
short of winning.

The Tigerbelles beam at C.B.'s support. Ed uses this warm moment as a nice segue into stealing a kiss goodbye. C.B. returns it, but it's not the warmest moment.

C.B. (CONT'D)  
Be careful, Ed.

He watches her put her arms around Edwina and Lloyd. Nearby, Jesse jogs up with his bag. He tosses it in the car. Wilma pulls Jesse to the side for privacy.

WILMA  
Jesse, I'm sorry about what happened at the dance.

JESSE  
It wasn't your fault. Beautiful girls make men do crazy things. Don't you worry about it. Barely a scratch.

Wilma is thankful for his playing down the severity.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Now let's get on the road.

EXT. NASHVILLE / INT. COACH TEMPLE'S STATION WAGON - DAY

Jesse drives while Ed sits shotgun, going over paperwork. Wilma gazes out the window.

HER POV: The car passes MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE, where she was treated as a child. An OLDER WOMAN with polio comes out on crutches with the aid of a NURSE.

Wilma adjusts the brace that Ed makes her wear... a constant reminder of how her childhood struggles are still with her.

I/E. COACH TEMPLE'S STATION WAGON - AFTERNOON

They're deep in countryside now. Jesse flips on the radio. "Baby You've Got What it Takes" by Brook Benton and Dinah Washington. Barbara wiggles uncomfortably in her seat.

BARBARA  
Um... Coach? I need to stop.

BILLIE  
For what? You can't be hungry, you already ate your sandwich.

ELEANOR  
And half of mine.

COACH TEMPLE  
No unscheduled stops. We'll stretch  
our legs once we get to  
Philadelphia.

Wilma watches Barbara continue to squirm in her seat.

WILMA  
Well, how far away is that?

COACH TEMPLE  
I don't know. 300 miles or so.

BARBARA  
Coach, I cannot wait that long. I  
need to use the ladies' room now.

COACH TEMPLE  
If you have to do your business, do  
your business.

The Girls are confused. Wilma fishes around her lunch sack  
and pulls out her empty jar.

WILMA  
(realizing)  
Uh...

The Tigerbelles looks vary from disgust to disbelief.

BARBARA  
What? I'm not peeing in no jar.

COACH TEMPLE  
Well, we're not stopping so figure  
it out. When I was a runner back in  
the day, we used jars when we  
traveled. There's a modesty sheet  
behind you if you need it.

They check the space behind them to see a FOLDED SHEET.

ELEANOR  
Coach, these are young ladies here.

BARBARA  
I will not, I cannot... pee in a  
jar.

JESSE  
Coach, it's fine. I can pull over.

COACH TEMPLE  
No, you can't. We're a car of  
Negroes driving through Virginia.  
I don't want any run-ins.

ELEANOR

Didn't you bring a Green Book?  
Surely it can direct us to a safe  
place to stop.

COACH TEMPLE

(holds up a Green Book)  
Yes, of course I have it! There  
are no places listed that are  
welcoming to Negroes until we get  
into Maryland. We're not stopping.  
Like I said, if you need to do your  
business, do your business.

Barbara looks disgustedly and inquisitively at the jar.

BARBARA

How? How exactly am I supposed to  
do this?

ELEANOR

Sir, she's right. The equipment and  
mechanics is a little different  
from men.

BILLIE

How would you know?

BARBARA

(indignantly)  
If I tell my Daddy that you took us  
on an eight hundred mile road trip  
and wouldn't pull over so that we  
could relieve ourselves with the  
tiniest bit of dignity, that you  
had us use mason jars while two men  
sat within arms reach in the front  
seat... he will blow his top. And  
you do *not* want my Daddy to blow  
his top.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Station Wagon pulls over to a wooded area near a dirt  
driveway that leads down to a property. The Tigerbelles climb  
out, a little triumphant. Jesse glances after them, Ed throws  
him the modesty sheet to cover his eyes.

WITH THE GIRLS IN THE BUSHES

They stride hurriedly into the bushes to pee. Barbara is  
especially vexed and struggling with her fussy coat and purse  
to hurry and relieve herself.

WILMA

BJ, why did you bring your  
pocketbook?

BARBARA  
Because it matches my shoes.

Eleanor and Billie just stare at her in disbelief.

BILLIE  
(then)  
Can you believe that man?

BARBARA  
I know. Suggesting we pee in a jar?

WILMA  
And he was serious.

ELEANOR  
The idea of treating us no  
differently than male athletes  
certainly has its limitations.

They all squat down to pee.

BACK WITH ED AND JESSE

They stretch their legs outside of the station wagon. A  
POLICE CAR approaches. Ed motions to Jesse.

COACH TEMPLE  
Pretend like you checking the tire.

Jesse does as told. A WHITE OFFICER looks out of his window,  
taking in the scene as he drives slowly. Jesse fiddles with  
the tire. Ed holds his breath. But the Officer doesn't stop,  
he drives off. Ed and Jesse exhale in relief. Then...

A FARM TRUCK

...toting a FARM DOG pulls up onto the property. It slows  
upon seeing Ed and Jesse. They tense up. The Tigerbelles  
emerge from the bushes jovial and buoyant. The DOG begins to  
BARK wildly.

The driver's door opens slowly... a SHOTGUN BARREL appears  
through the crack. The door swings open to reveal a pimple-  
faced WHITE BOY, 14, dressed in too-large overalls. The gun's  
so heavy it's awkward in his arms.

WHITE BOY  
What the hell y'all doin' on my  
property?

COACH TEMPLE  
We're just leaving. My girls were  
begging for a pit stop.

WHITE BOY

A 'piss stop?' You pulled over to  
piss on my land?

Barbara tries to maintain a straight face at his blunder.

BARBARA

Your land? You own this?

Ed throws her a death glare. Eleanor slyly hits Barbara in  
her side to shut up.

WHITE BOY

My daddy do. And he ain't gon' be  
happy 'bout a bunch of niggers  
pullin' on his land.

Everyone stiffens. Ed knows this could go badly.

COACH TEMPLE

Young man, sir, I'm sorry. We  
didn't realize. We meant no  
disrespect, sir.

The Tigerbelles watch Ed's humble plea. This is a side of  
their coach they've never seen before.

BARBARA

(under her breath)

Sir? That child's voice hasn't even  
changed yet.

Ed shoots her another look to keep quiet, as do Jesse and the  
rest of the Girls.

COACH TEMPLE

We're just driving through on our  
way to New York for the track and  
field National Championships. We  
don't want any trouble, sir. We'll  
be on our way.

The White Boy, with his gun clumsily and dangerously aimed at  
the group, steps closer to the station wagon.

WHITE BOY

I reckon that's a good idea.

COACH TEMPLE

Thank you, sir.

(to Jesse and the Girls)

Get in the car.

They hurriedly climb inside, not daring to look back.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone sits shaken by this close call. Jesse tries to lighten the mood.

JESSE  
Much as y'all have been training,  
you could've outrun his rusty old  
truck. That mangy mutt too.

Wilma and the Girls force a chuckle. But Ed's grim, still affected by the moment.

COACH TEMPLE  
Were y'all gonna outrun the  
bullets, too?

Everyone goes quiet.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
And, Barbara...

Ed turns, looks Barbara squarely in the eye.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
You might not know this, but I'm  
from Philadelphia. I understand  
Northern thought. But that Chicago  
mouth and attitude is gonna get you  
in a world of trouble down here in  
the South. Your tail best learn  
when to button that lip pretty damn  
quick if you wanna live.

Ed faces forward.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Now tell your daddy that.

Everyone sits in silence and reflection.

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - DUSK

The station wagon crosses 125th Street and into Harlem.  
STYLISH BLACK PEOPLE cruise the streets. Ed's station wagon  
pulls up outside of the HOTEL THERESA.

INT. HOTEL THERESA - MOMENTS LATER

The Tigerbelles bubble with excitement.

ELEANOR  
Coach, I think it might be a good  
idea if we stretch our legs and get  
the blood flowing before tomorrow.



COACH TEMPLE  
 Good thinking. I'll see if we can  
 run in the alley out back.

ELEANOR  
 I meant a walk, sir. There are some  
 important historical landmarks  
 nearby. And we are students first.

Ed is grumpy, but it's hard to argue with her logic.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Okay, but be back in three hours.  
 Jesse, you're bunking with me.  
 (to the Girls)  
 Don't make me regret giving you  
 some slack.

BILLIE  
 Come on, Eleanor. Introduce us to  
 this 'Apollo' fella.

Before Eleanor has a chance to protest, Billie and Barbara  
 hook her arm and whisk her away. Only Jesse and Wilma remain.

JESSE  
 I was thinking I'd find a bite to  
 eat. Wanna join me?

EXT. HARLEM - STRIVER'S ROW - LATER THAT NIGHT

The LIGHTS sparkle. Romantic. Idyllic. Wilma and Jesse walk.

WILMA  
 My mama told me I could take on  
 anything in the whole world. Didn't  
 ever think it'd take me here.

Jesse takes this in.

JESSE  
 Sounds like a wise woman.

Wilma's mind wanders...

WILMA  
 I was a really sick child.

JESSE  
 (somewhat certain)  
 Polio?

WILMA  
 Yeah. Doctors said I'd never walk  
 again. My mother said I would.  
 (beat)  
 I believed my mother.

Jesse looks at her anew; taking her in with awe.

JESSE

Never supposed to walk and now here  
you are... a college track star.  
Well, you've certainly made a  
recovery. In every way.

He sweetly compliments her figure. Wilma blushes and  
deflects, embarrassed by the attention.

WILMA

Well, what's your story?

JESSE

My people are from North Carolina.  
It's just me and my older brother  
as far as kids go. He sorta fell  
into the family business. Farming.  
He didn't finish high school and I  
decided I didn't want that life. I  
knew that college was gonna be the  
only way to get outta there.

WILMA

So, was it football that brought  
you to TSU?

JESSE

Yep. I'm trying to go pro.  
(beat)  
So, uh, after all this, you're just  
gonna go right back home? To  
Robert?

WILMA

Not back to him, but my family. I  
mean, where else am I supposed to  
go? I wish there was something like  
football for us, but there's not.  
So, I'll go back home and teach.

JESSE

You've faced so many limitations in  
life, why limit your dreams?

WILMA

I ain't think I was. Being a  
teacher is dreaming too low?

JESSE

Not at all. Thinking track has to  
stop at graduation is.

WILMA

That's a long way off. And if I  
can't pass Algebra, it won't make a  
difference anyway.

Jesse folds his arms, disagreeing.

JESSE

You built it up to an A-.

WILMA

Thanks to you.

JESSE

I'm your backup, Skeeter. You've  
always been the star.

Damn, he's too sweet. Wilma meets his eyes. Jesse takes her hand. Wilma's hesitant as hell, her uncertain eyes meeting Jesse's as he takes a step closer to her. The romantic energy is palpable. He leans in and the romantic moment overtakes Wilma's initial resistance. They kiss with the lights of the big city twinkling all around them.

E/I. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - MORNING

CIRCUS TRUCKS pack up outside with ANIMALS, JUGGLERS, ACROBATS, CARNIES, the whole nine yards. Ed leads The Tigerbelles past the spectacle.

Ahead of them lies the track. In the middle of the field are a sea of WHITE TRACK TEAMS warming up. Bodies buzz around in every direction. The Tigerbelles take in the scope of the event. The stakes could not be more visual: They are the only Black runners here.

COACH TEMPLE

Ok, girls. We have everything to  
prove today. Doing well here will  
change how TSU thinks about women's  
track. That means better equipment,  
more scholarships...

BARBARA

(under her breath)  
I'm not on scholarship.

Wilma and Billie both jab her.

COACH TEMPLE

We have to prove that we have the  
*right* to be here. I need complete  
focus and 110%. Eleanor, run 'em  
through the warm up.

Ed gets in the TEAM CHECK-IN LINE. It's long and disorganized.

He stands behind COACH ABERNATHY, 50, the white coach of the Texas team featured in the Sports Illustrated article. Ed does some small talk.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
I thought this meet would be a little more organized. I mean, when a circus prevents you from a proper warm up.

Coach Abernathy finally looks at Ed. He doesn't seem to be impressed, rather Abernathy's amused.

COACH ABERNATHY  
(matter of fact)  
You're out of your element, boy.

Ed eyes Coach Abernathy from head to toe. Ed isn't impressed by him either.

COACH TEMPLE  
The name is Temple. See you on the track... Abernathy.

Abernathy's surprised by this and takes a sudden interest in Ed, watching him closely as he walks away.

A FEW YARDS AWAY

The Tigerbelles begin to unload near the TEXAS TRACK TEAM. Barbara leans toward Wilma, Billie, and Eleanor.

BARBARA  
(whispers)  
Look. It's them. The 'cover girls.'

The Texas Team stare at The Tigerbelles who stare back... each sizing each other up. We recognize JANICE, the Sports Illustrated cover girl; a tall, immaculately groomed blonde.

WILMA  
How can they run with their hair that high?

BILLIE  
A foot tall bee hive, but no 'bee-hinds.'

Eleanor stares at them as they warm-up. They've got a military-like precision to their training.

ELEANOR  
Maybe it'll slow them down.

WILMA  
We're fast too.

BARBARA  
Yeah, but we just got beat by some  
menopausal women.

ELEANOR  
They were in their mid-twenties!

BARBARA  
Hitting too close to home?

BILLIE  
Eleanor's two weeks away from being  
asked to join the Mother Board.

Meanwhile, Janice whispers to her own Team. They glance over  
to The Tigerbelles and laugh, talking shit of their own.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
You got something to say to me?

Ed walks up, flipping through paperwork.

COACH TEMPLE  
Girls, don't talk about it, be  
about it. Save it for the track.

WILMA  
If we struggle and lose to these  
white girls...

Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor know the stakes. It  
weighs heavily on them. Ed squats down, making sure all eyes  
are on them.

COACH TEMPLE  
Blacks folks have struggle tattooed  
on our souls, yet we keep on going.

Ed hands them their numbers.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
We have eight races today. Billie,  
you're up first in the 200 heat.  
Lane seven.

Eleanor, confused, scans her notebook.

ELEANOR  
Why is she in lane seven? Her times  
have earned her a center lane!

BILLIE  
Yeah, Coach! Now I've gotta deal  
with the turn. That's not fair.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Someone's moving the goalpost on  
 us. Nothing new. But a hurdle ain't  
 nothing to a track athlete, right?  
 You just run your race.

Encouraged, the Tigerbelles nod in agreement.

ON THE TRACK - MINUTES LATER

Janice is in lane five, the best lane, shaking herself loose.  
 Billie passes directly over her blocks to mess with her.  
 Janice tries to seem unfazed.

THE STARTER readies himself on the sidelines. All RUNNERS  
 settle themselves into the blocks.

BILLIE  
 Hey, Blondie.

Janice slightly looks over at Billie.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
 You're in my lane.

BAM! The Starter FIRES the starting pistol. Janice falters  
 getting out of the blocks. Billie's off like a dart. The  
 other Runners struggle to keep stride with her. Billie  
 crosses the finish line FIRST and with panache.

The Tigerbelles all CHEER. Ed remains stoic.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Barbara, you're up next!

Ed notes the grandness of the Crowd and the arena. Barbara  
 takes off her warmup sweats.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Hey, show this city what you got.

Barbara nods and struts her way up to her starting block.  
 BAM! Barbara WINS her heat without once even looking at her  
 competition. As she crosses the finish line, her eyes are  
 caught up in all of the SPECTATORS in the stands.

Coach Abernathy YELLS at his Team. He glares at Ed, not happy  
 about how his team is doing. Ed pulls Wilma aside.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Take off the brace. You're ready.

WILMA  
 But I need it for my stride.

COACH TEMPLE  
Trust me, Wilma. You're ready to  
run without it now.

Wilma's unsure, but hands the brace over. Ed notes Abernathy talking to an OFFICIAL. The Official strides over.

OFFICIAL  
Mr. Temple, I'm going to need to  
check out your team's cleats before  
the relay.

COACH TEMPLE  
Why's that?

OFFICIAL  
We need to ensure that your spikes  
comply with indoor regulations.

A wry smile crosses Ed's lips; he recognizes this strategic attempt by Coach Abernathy.

COACH TEMPLE  
Alright, then. Cleats off, girls,  
so we can get back to work.

Ed hands the cleats over to the Official, never taking his eyes off Abernathy. The Tigerbelles stand huddled together, feeling very small in this large arena.

ELEANOR  
They're just trying to throw us off  
our game.

WILMA  
They're trying to ice us.

BILLIE  
I'm too hot to be iced.

Billie licks her finger and makes a SIZZLING SOUND as she touches her butt.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
And y'all are too, for damn sure.

She touches The Tigerbelles and makes the same sizzle sound. They all giggle, relax, and stand taller. The Official returns to Ed with the cleats.

OFFICIAL  
Looks like everything checks out.

Ed collects the Tigerbelles.

## COACH TEMPLE

Girls, they stole our lane and tried to stall us out. We don't have the tools to beat them at *their* game, but we can certainly beat them at *ours*. Show 'em what being a Tigerbelle is all about.

They put on their cleats and line up for their relay. Eleanor is the lead off. Barbara's 2nd, Billie's 3rd and Wilma's the anchor.

Wilma looks into the Crowd, slightly nervous. Jesse catches her eye, and motions for her to peacock. She does a few large stretches and huge leaps to stretch. The RUNNERS next to her watch. She is ready.

## AT THE STARTING BLOCK

Eleanor takes her place at the starting block. BAM! The pistol fires.

ELEANOR takes off, neck and neck with the Texans. There's a clean handoff to Barbara, who's charged by the Crowd. She keeps pace with the Texans and passes to Billie who...

SLIPS as she takes off. Not a huge fall but enough of a stumble to lose ground to the Texans, who begin to gain. She hands the baton to Wilma, who is now behind.

ED watches Wilma as she digs deep, and makes up all the ground that Billie just lost. Through pure determination, she crosses the line FIRST!!! It's an amazing performance. An emphatic win. The Tigerbelles CHEER.

## TIGERBELLES

(at once)

Yes! We did it! Woo-hoo!

But it's CRICKETS in the stands. WHITE SPECTATORS walk out silently without cheering. Ed clocks this, but the Tigerbelles are oblivious, caught up in their victory with hugs and cheers.

## COACH TEMPLE

Congratulations. Y'all came to New York and made a statement. And you, Wilma, you have arrived.

Wilma smiles shyly. Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor stand by waiting to receive their individual praise, but it doesn't come. The smiles stiffen on their faces. A TRACK OFFICIAL comes up to them.



TRACK OFFICIAL  
Great job out there today. You guys  
are going to give everyone a run  
for their money in Mexico City.

COACH TEMPLE  
What's in Mexico City?

TRACK OFFICIAL  
(surprised)  
Pan-American Games. Olympic trials.

Ed and the Tigerbellies stand, stunned by the revelation.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dishes clang and clatter as C.B. cleans up after dinner,  
pissed.

C.B.  
No, Ed! You said New York was last.  
That's what you promised.

COACH TEMPLE  
But baby, I had no way of knowing  
we would do this well.

C.B.  
Why is it that you're fine to break  
a commitment to me, but not to the  
team?

COACH TEMPLE  
Honey, that's not it. It's just...  
it's the *Olympic* trials.

C.B.  
And then it'll be the Olympics.

COACH TEMPLE  
Exactly. Forget kissing Walter's  
ass for a piddly job he doesn't  
want me to have when I can be an  
Olympic coach. That's what's gonna  
take me to the next level.

C.B.  
What's next after that, Ed? There's  
always gonna be something with you.

This irks Ed.

COACH TEMPLE  
That 'always something' is what  
keeps us in this house. 'Always  
something' is what putting food on  
the table.

C.B.

Oh, so doing what you're supposed to for your family makes it okay to put everybody else on the back burner? I swear you're the smartest man I know, but that is the dumbest shit I've ever heard.

COACH TEMPLE

I work this hard for *us*!

C.B.

You work this hard for *you*! When is it gonna be your turn to have *my* back like I've had yours every damn day?! When? 'Six more weeks?' Or six more after that?

Ed throws the dishrag in the sink.

COACH TEMPLE

I just need time. Why can't you get that?

C.B.

And I need a husband who's gonna let me have *my* time to succeed. A man who doesn't mind giving *his* time to make my dream come true. Now, when are you gonna get *that*?

He snatches his jacket and heads out before he snaps back.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - LIBRARY - MORNING

Wilma re-shelves books. She glances around, then pulls a thick LEATHER TOME off the cart. It's an OLYMPIC HISTORY BOOK. She flips through it.

INSERT: PHOTOS of MALE OLYMPIANS. WHITE FEMALE OLYMPIANS.

Wilma flips with purpose, then finally stops.

INSERT: A TINY PHOTO of ALICE COLEMAN, the first Black woman to win a gold medal.

Wilma traces a finger over the gold medal. A new goal.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - DAY

TRUMPETS AND TROMBONES BLARE and DRUMS POUND as the MARCHING BAND AND DRUM LINE train. Nearby the FOOTBALL TEAM push brand new shiny football sleds.

Ed leads Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor away from the track and to...

EXT. EMPTY FIELD - SAME TIME

Ed stops in an empty field where the OLD JUNKED CAR sits abandoned.

WILMA  
What's this?

COACH TEMPLE  
Your new trainer.

He can't help but to glance at the football team and their new sleds.

ELEANOR    WILMA

What?                                      You gotta be kidding me.

Billie and Barbara share in their dismay.

COACH TEMPLE  
This meet will be like no other  
meet you've ever gone to. We've  
gotta step up our training if we  
wanna be contenders.

BILLIE  
(under her breath)  
So now he wants oxes not foxes?

BARBARA  
He don't even want to coach us.

COACH TEMPLE  
I was wrong to say that to y'all.  
That wasn't right and to be honest,  
I wasn't nearby true.

BARBARA  
(under her breath)  
Lord, hell done froze over.

COACH TEMPLE  
It's not right for me to correct  
y'all when you wrong, but not call  
out myself for falling short.

The Tigerbelles all nod in agreement. Apology accepted. Ed walks toward the abandoned car.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Now, a relay team needs to work in  
sync if they wanna win.

He pats the broken down junker.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Now get her on up on the track.

MONTAGE - JUNK YARD TRAINING UNDER A DRUM LINE BEAT:

-- The Girls struggle to push the car. Half of the wheels are flat and barely turn.

-- The Girls are out of sync in their pushing of the car. Frustrated, they BARK OUT instructions at one another.

-- The car begins to move more quickly. The Girls now more in step with one another, but now the car needs steering.

-- Ed recruits a SKINNY MARCHING BAND MEMBER from a LINEUP of STUDENTS that range from a RAIL-THIN WOODWIND PLAYER to a GIGANTIC TUBA PLAYER.

-- The Skinny Marching Band Member steers the clunker as the Tigerbelles pull it around the track.

-- More MARCHING BAND MEMBERS are inside the car as the Girls continue to pull it around the track.

POV FROM INSIDE THE CAR: The Marching Band Members excitedly check out the Girls' butts as they pull the clunker around the track. Billie turns around, catching them. She hikes her shorts up a little higher to really give them a show.

-- President Davis watches skeptically from the sidelines.

-- Ed brings over the GIGANTIC TUBA PLAYER.

BARBARA

Oh no, I'm not pushing Tubby.

WILMA

C'mon, y'all. Let's just do it.

-- The Tigerbelles pull the packed car, complete with the Tuba Player. It's slow going. A CROWD, including Jesse, have gathered to watch. The Tuba Player plays his instrument out the top of the car; the SLOW TOOTS match the pace of the car being pulled.

-- As the car gains speed, Ed sends more BAND MEMBERS to jump on the car. The Tigerbelles continue to gain speed as TUBA BEAT QUICKENS. They complete their lap! They jump on the hood as the CROWD CHEERS them on.

Ed's proud, but tries to hide it. President Davis approaches with intense heat.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

Ed, this training... it's just not appropriate for young ladies!

COACH TEMPLE

They're athletes, sir. They have to be strong.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

Pulling around scrap metal? Toting around men? It doesn't look right, and you are putting their fertility in jeopardy.

Ed shakes his head at Davis.

COACH TEMPLE

My girls aren't thinking about children right now. They're focused on studying and breaking that tape.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

Exactly. And that's why I need to make sure *I* am thinking about their long term well-being.

COACH TEMPLE

You mean the university's well-being.

Taken aback by Ed's audacity, his eyes dig into Ed.

PRESIDENT DAVIS

I'm putting a stop to this.

President Davis, irritated, walks off in a huff.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CAPITOL HILL (NASHVILLE) - DAY

A CHOIR SINGS. C.B. sings along as Ed sits next to her. Wilma, Barbara, and Eleanor are by his side; they're in full on "fox" mode. Billie slides in late with sunglasses, grinning at Eleanor.

ELEANOR

(under her breath)

From the pub to the pews.

Several pews away, President Davis and his dignified wife, MARY, sing along in a very reserved manner. The choir selection ends and the PASTOR takes the pulpit.

PASTOR

Amen! Glory be to Him. Can you feel His love? For those of y'all who don't know, we got some joyful news last weekend.

(nods to Coach Temple)

Our own Brother Temple and his Tigerbelles brought home a big win. These young ladies are the first women's Negro college team to win a national championship--

COACH TEMPLE  
 (yelling from the pews)  
 --First Negro team period!

PASTOR  
 (chuckles)  
 Amen! Brother Temple, c'mon up here  
 and spread the good word?

Ed heads to the pulpit.

COACH TEMPLE  
 I truly believe God has a larger  
 purpose for these young ladies.  
 See, this here is bigger than  
 banners. Bigger than medals. Bigger  
 than the school name that's on  
 their uniforms.

Members of the Congregation nods.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 These girls are the only Black  
 faces some of these track meets  
 have ever seen. And that's why this  
 is bigger than track, cause these  
 girls represent all of us.  
 (beat)  
 I don't have to tell y'all that  
 some folks don't wanna see us.

Ed glances over at Davis. He clenches his teeth, closely  
 monitoring Ed.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 But when you have a light you don't  
 hide it in a bushel, you shine it.

The Mother Board lead the way with "Amens."

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Now there's another competition on  
 the horizon in Mexico City. It's  
 the step we need to qualify for The  
 Olympics so the world can see. But  
 we need help to shine brightly. If  
 the world is gonna see these  
 ladies, we need to make sure they  
 see that greatness.

He looks around, trying to figure out his next move. He spots  
 MRS. ENDICOTT, 60, stern looking, refined woman.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Mrs. Endicott over there has been  
 raising up women to show their  
 greatness through finer womanhood.  
 (MORE)

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
I know many of our wives came up  
through Mrs. Endicott.

The Deacons throw their hands in the air to echo this fact.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
She showed 'em grace and etiquette.

The CONGREGATION stirs in excitement.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Endicott, would you keep on  
that work and help train up our  
girls for that world stage?

Mrs. Endicott primly stands, proud.

MRS. ENDICOTT  
Yes, I will.

People APPLAUD and CHEER.

COACH TEMPLE  
Amen!

Davis shifts in his seat. A DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN rises to  
his feet.

DISTINGUISHED GENTLEMAN  
I'd be happy to assist with the  
fundraising. Y'all are gonna need  
more than another fish fry to get  
to Mexico.

PASTOR  
Hallelujah.

Feeling moved, Mary stands up. Davis stares at her, shocked.

MARY  
And Walter and I would be happy to  
help get 'em new uniforms!

Ed shoots a coy grin Davis' way. Davis looks like he could  
strangle Ed, but puts on a forced smile for the stirred up  
church.

HANDS shoot up in the air as the Congregation offers their  
services. Ed's humbled and pleased. The Choir starts SINGING  
as a collection plate is passed.

EXT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CAPITOL HILL - LATER

President Davis catches Ed as the Tigerbelles chat politely  
with fawning Congregants nearby.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
That was a tactical ambush, Ed.

COACH TEMPLE  
Had to be done.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
We are supposed to be moving our  
student body away from stereotypes.  
*Broadening* the way the world sees  
Negroes--

COACH TEMPLE  
--Walter, these girls are doing  
just that. They aren't just the  
best college runners. Not just the  
best Negro runners. They're the  
best *American* runners in the  
country. Maybe even the world.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Olympic coaches get paid in pride.  
You think you can survive on pride  
alone, Ed?

Ed reads between the lines.

COACH TEMPLE  
What are you trying to say?

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
You'd just better hope you make  
this Olympic thing happen.  
Otherwise, you won't have to worry  
about Marvin coaching the men.  
Cause you won't be coaching or  
teaching anybody else... definitely  
not at TSU.

The stakes land on him as Davis leaves with a steely gaze.

EXT. MEXICO CITY AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

Various PASSENGERS debark the Boeing 707. Ed's flanked by  
Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor. The ladies done their  
smart suits of all colors, pill box hats, gloves, and  
carrying hat boxes. They turn all heads in the airport.

EXT. MEXICO CITY AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Ed leads the Tigerbelles to the curb, where there's a SIGN  
that says: PAN-AMERICAN GAMES - COACH TEMPLE & THE  
TIGERBELLES. A suited HOSPITALITY AGENT holds it next to a  
pristine CHRYSLER IMPERIAL LIMO.

BILLIE  
Now that's what I'm talking 'bout.



BARBARA

Finally got a ride as fine as me.

The Tigerbelles are giddy with delight. Hell, Ed is too. The DRIVER opens the door for them.

COACH TEMPLE

(perfect pronunciation)

Buenas tardes. ¿Cómo está su día?

The Girls nudge each other, impressed with their coach.

DRIVER

Mi día es un gran agradecimiento,  
señor.

COACH TEMPLE

Bueno escuchar que. Gracias.

I/E. LIMO / EXT. MEXICO CITY - MOMENTS LATER

Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor are glued to the window, staring out in wonderment at the city. Modernity, colorful, Spanish style buildings, lively. Even Ed stops doing paperwork to take in the sights.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Athletes arriving in Mexico City  
today for the start of the Pan  
American Games.

EXT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - DAY

The limo pulls up to an upscale and grand hotel. As Ed and the Tigerbelles get out of the car, they can't help but to note the ATHLETES at the hotel... it's NOT SEGREGATED.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

These week-long games are Olympic  
qualifiers, and will determine the  
national teams for this summer's  
Olympics in Rome.

Cute MEXICAN GUYS pass by sharing seductive smiles at Billie and the Tigerbelles. Eleanor throws her a warning glance.

BILLIE

I know, I know Eleanor. I'm here to  
focus.

Eleanor relaxes and looks away. Billie steals a glance over her shoulder, ogling the butt of one of the GUYS. Her eyes tilt up and sees he has been doing the same to her.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

(to herself)  
Lord, gimme strength.

EXT. MEXICO CITY STREETS - DAY

-- The Tigerbelles carry shopping bags as they laugh and talk. Enjoying this adventure.

-- MEN flirt with them as they sit at a restaurant... they flirt back. Even Eleanor tucks her flashcards back in her purse, overtaken by the experience.

-- The Tigerbelles eat fresh coconut and elotes.

-- Barbara puts a few Mexican COMBS in Wilma's hair and gives her the seal of approval. Wilma buys the combs and a DOLL.

END MONTAGE

INT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Ed's at an International Coaches Gathering. The room hums with casual conversation as HOTEL WAITERS deliver drinks. Ed sits with other Coaches, socializing. He's an equal here.

INT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - BALLROOM - SAME TIME

Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor sit in room full of gorgeous YOUNG ATHLETES from all nations.

BARBARA  
That boy did not say that, Billie.

BILLIE  
Swear to God.

ELEANOR  
You can't even speak Spanish.

BILLIE  
Attraction has its own translation.

They LAUGH. Wilma peeks over at the clock in the distance.

WILMA  
Oh, dang. I forgot I've gotta make  
to phone call. I'll be back.

ELEANOR  
Okay.

As Wilma walks out, a LARGE RADIO is wheeled by her. A WORKER plugs it in. BALLROOM MUSIC begins to PLAY. Barbara sways to the music, but Billie and Eleanor aren't really feeling it.

BARBARA  
This makes me miss Jack-and-Jill.

BILLIE  
 Girl, if you brag about that stupid  
 club one more time... I'm gonna  
 tell you something. You ain't no  
 aristocrat... you a faux-ristocrat.

Eleanor almost spits out her drink in laughter, thoroughly  
 amused.

BARBARA  
 Whatever. But isn't this a blast?

BILLIE  
 'A blast?' Are you 70? You've been  
 watching too much Ed Sullivan, BJ.

Billie rolls her eyes at the ballroom music as it swells.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
 Hell, my grandmama don't even  
 listen to this music.

Billie goes to the radio and nods to the ATHLETE next to it.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
 Mind if I change the channel?

She surfs the dial until she finds "Don't Let Go" by Roy  
 Hamilton. She and Barbara start to dance.

BARBARA  
 (to other Athletes)  
 Vamanos muchachos!

Other INTERNATIONAL ATHLETES join in. It's infectious, even  
 Eleanor does a move or two.

INT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - PHONE BOOTH - SAME TIME

The combs Wilma bought gleam as brightly in her hair as does  
 the smile on her face.

WILMA  
 (into phone)  
 Hey! It's me, Charlene! How y'all  
 doing... what's wrong?

Wilma's face falls, her eyes fill with worry.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
 Did you call the doctor?

Wilma bites her lip in anticipation.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
 But I can't come home right now.  
 (exhales)  
 (MORE)

WILMA (CONT'D)  
Are you sure? Okay, well call me if  
anything changes.

Wilma hangs up and thinks. She faces a difficult decision.

INT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - BALLROOM - SAME TIME

The dancing Tigerbelles are at the center of a raucous dance party. Everyone's having the time of their life until...

COACH TEMPLE (O.S.)  
Girls. Girls! Tigerbelles!!!

Ed wades through the gyrating BODIES on the dance floor. Eleanor tugs at Barbara to show her an incoming Ed. Billie doesn't see a thing, that is until Ed pulls her to the side.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Eleanor, you're supposed to be  
watching these girls! I can't  
believe y'all are wearing out your  
legs like that the night before a  
race! In here jitterbugging like  
some jumping beans!

Wilma enters from the phone booth.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
And where have you been?

WILMA  
I... I... had to call home.

COACH TEMPLE  
I'm glad someone on this team ain't  
out here acting a fool.

Barbara and Billie glare at Wilma... as does Eleanor. Wilma's so deep in thought she doesn't even notice any of this.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Party's over. Get in your rooms.  
We have a lot on the line tomorrow.  
I need you on time, in the lobby,  
looking spick-and-span from head-to-  
toe. *Move!*

With final dirty looks to Wilma, the rest of The Tigerbelles leave the banquet hall.

INT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - ROOM - MORNING

Room service breakfast is on the table. Eleanor removes the BIG PINK CURLERS out of her hair, and piles them on the table. Barbara uses HOT CURLERS on Billie's hair.

BILLIE  
I don't care if she's faster. All I  
know is I'm sick and tired of--

Wilma enters from the bathroom, freshly showered. Billie goes quiet, but her bitter eye cutting doesn't.

WILMA  
Morning.

ELEANOR  
(a bit cold)  
Good morning, Wilma.

Wilma's hair is still undone. She looks at the curlers.

WILMA  
How long until you hand those off?  
The last thing I need today is  
Coach lecturing about my  
appearance.

BARBARA  
Oh, it shouldn't take long. I'm  
after Billie, and you know I've got  
the good stuff, so it'll curl  
quickly.

Eleanor rolls her eyes at Barbara's comment.

WILMA  
Well, maybe I should go first in  
that case?

Barbara and Billie share a secret sidelong glance.

BILLIE  
We already started. Don't worry.  
It won't be long.

WILMA  
Billie, please, you know how Coach  
gets about our hair.

BARBARA  
Anyways... did you see that cute  
Italian runner last night?

BILLIE  
Hmm-hmm. They sure don't have any  
hang-ups over here. I'd be the  
coffee to his cream any day.

Barbara finishes curling Billie's hair. She starts to curl her own hair, but at a snail's pace. Wilma pours herself a bowl of cereal and sits at the table, anxiously eyeing Barbara's hair in the curlers.

Barbara inspects a section of hair. Wilma watches hopefully.

BARBARA  
I'm sorry. It's taking longer than usual for some reason. I don't think my hair likes this Mexican weather.

Barbara and Billie sly eye each other. Wilma looks in the mirror, concerned. What's she going to do?

EXT. CAMINO REAL HOTEL - LATER

Ed stares at his watch, waiting as Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor come out of the lobby. He looks down the line of Girls, all immaculately groomed. Suddenly, Wilma steps out of the hotel wearing a HEAD SCARF. His eyes broaden. Billie and Barbara smirk with satisfaction.

COACH TEMPLE  
Skeeter! What in God's name?

WILMA  
Coach, I ran out of time.

COACH TEMPLE  
Take that mess off before someone sees you!

Wilma takes the scarf off and reveals her unkempt hair.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Lord To-day! This child trying to kill me dead.  
(huffs)  
Skeeter, hurry up and cover that head up. Folks are gonna think you haven't had one lick of home-training.

Wilma quickly re-ties the scarf under her neck a la Grace Kelly. Meanwhile, Barbara and Billie are enjoying every minute of his explosion. Some REPORTERS approach them.

ITALIAN REPORTER  
Coach Temple! Italian Press. Can we get a quick picture and ask some questions?

Barbara and Billie primp in preparation.

COACH TEMPLE  
We're about to leave, guys.

ITALIAN REPORTER  
It won't take long. We just have a couple of questions.

BARBARA  
About time.

Barbara and Billie step forward, even Eleanor has a slight smile. The Italian Reporter turns to Wilma, ignoring them.

ITALIAN REPORTER  
For Wilma.

WILMA  
(shocked)  
For me?

Embarrassed, pissed, and pushed aside, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor fall into the background.

ITALIAN REPORTER  
Yes. The Italians have been following Olympic hopefuls from around the world very closely. 'La Gazzella Nera.' That's what we call you in Italy.

WILMA  
(to Coach Temple)  
What's that mean?

ITALIAN REPORTER  
'The Black Gazelle.'

Ed hesitantly nods for her to go on. Wilma touches her scarf self-consciously as she's pulled away by Reporters. Barbara and Billie glower; Eleanor's a little bit jealous.

BARBARA  
We should change our name to 'The Wilma Rudolph Show *featuring* The Tigerbelles.'

BILLIE  
Let's see how good her solo sounds without her backup.

EXT. UNIVERSITY STADIUM - TRACK - DAY

The Tigerbelles take their places around the track for the relay.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Up next we have the highly anticipated 4x100 relays.

First Eleanor, then Barbara, followed by Billie, with Wilma running as anchor.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 The Americans are anchored by Wilma Rudolph, who took first in both the 100 and 200 meter events earlier yesterday.

They look at the competition. PANAMANIANs, ARGENTINIANs, CANADIANs, all strong-looking athletes.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B. listens to the RADIO as she organizes boxes of books.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 The stakes are high as only the top three teams will compete in Rome this summer at the Olympics...

EXT. UNIVERSITY STADIUM - TRACK - SAME TIME

Ed looks over and sees the CANADIAN and PANAMANIAN COACHES. They meet his gaze with world-class game-faces.

BANG! Eleanor bounds from the blocks.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 American Eleanor Williams, first out of the blocks, can't create any distance. Right on her heels is Carlota Gooden of Panama. And now we have the first hand off...

Eleanor hands the baton to Barbara who takes off, but not nearly as fast as we've seen her go.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Barbara! Pick up the pace! Chest up! Stride!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
 Panama's Jean Holmes-Mitchell is closing in on the Americans! It is still a battle for first between the US and Panama with the Canadians following closely behind.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B. stops organizing, drawn in by the race.

EXT. UNIVERSITY STADIUM - TRACK - SAME TIME

The Panamanians hand off the baton a split-second before the Tigerbells.



Barbara hands the baton to Billie, who also takes off at less than top speed. Ed's losing his mind as he crumpling the paper in his hands.

COACH TEMPLE

What is going on?! You're running like you're in quicksand!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And the Panamanians pull away in this third leg! In a surprising turn of events, the Americans slip into second and seem to have no answers for this Panamanian machine. With Silvia Hunte closing for the Panamanians, it would take nothing short of a miracle from 'The Black Gazelle' to save the day.

Wilma makes a valiant effort to catch up. She passes FOUR RUNNERS, but isn't able to make up enough ground to catch 1st or 2nd place. The Tigerbelles place 3rd in a PHOTO FINISH.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And there we have it! Silvia Hunte secures a place at the Olympic table for the Panamanians. In second place, we have the Canadians, and with a surprising and disappointing showing, the Americans just barely secure third place in this race.

Ed throws his notebook to the ground.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This team just did not look together today and this might not bode well for them in Rome.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B. turns the radio off and slumps in a chair.

EXT. UNIVERSITY STADIUM - STAGING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Billie nonchalantly chews gum as Barbara takes off her cleats. Eleanor wipes off sweat as Wilma sits with her head in her hands. Ed towers over them, livid.

COACH TEMPLE

What the hell was that? You looked a mess out there today. If it were not for Skeeter digging deep...

BILLIE  
Here we go again.

COACH TEMPLE  
Long as you out there taking  
strolls out there on that track,  
you deadgum right here we go again.

BARBARA  
No, here we go again with 'Skeeter  
can do no wrong.' She's 'pretty'  
and 'leggy' and 'perfect.'

COACH TEMPLE  
This is not about looks. This is  
about performance. And the two of  
you have let this team down.

BILLIE  
Team? This ain't no team!

BARBARA  
The team don't get no interviews.

BILLIE  
We need to call this what it really  
is... 'Wilma Rudolph and the three  
also-rans.'

Billie and Barbara's scowls finally click for Wilma. Her brow  
slowly furrows.

WILMA  
So that's why y'all wouldn't let me  
use the curlers this morning?

COACH TEMPLE  
*That's* why your hair was a mess?

Wilma gets closer to Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor.

WILMA  
Y'all got mad cause you ain't  
getting interviews? I didn't ask  
for any of this.

BARBARA  
But you're not turning it down  
neither. And you're definitely not  
turning down Coach's special  
treatment.

Maintaining calm, Ed tries to bring this down to a simmer.

COACH TEMPLE  
My rules are concrete, BJ. I treat  
all my runners the same.

Lips pursed, Billie and Barbara stare at Ed like he's crazy.

BARBARA  
'Tell the truth, shame the devil.'

BILLIE  
Eleanor?

Billie cuts her eyes so deep into Eleanor, that she can't help but to speak out.

ELEANOR  
You don't always treat us the same.

COACH TEMPLE  
Now, that's not tr--

BILLIE  
--Me and BJ get busted when we break the rules, but Skeeter's free to run around with her boyfriend at all hours of the night.

WILMA  
I was studying! I actually need good grades, Billie.

Ed holds up his hands to pause their back and forth.

COACH TEMPLE  
(connecting the dots)  
Eleanor, did you know about the shenanigans going on with them?

Eleanor swallows hard with her teammates' eyes on her.

ELEANOR  
The curlers, yes. But I didn't know Billie and BJ were going to throw the race.

Ed stops short... never did this even cross his mind. He turns to Billie and Barbara.

COACH TEMPLE  
Are you telling me y'all just lost that race on purpose?

They stay silent for a beat then--

BARBARA  
We were never gonna throw away our shot at the Olympics.

Ed shakes his head in disbelief.

BILLIE

But you and Skeeter needed a  
reminder that taking first place  
means y'all need us too.

Wilma's uncorked and angry. It's all coming out.

WILMA

After all the bruises and aches,  
all the sacrifices, after all the  
time we put in... y'all throw the  
race over curfew and interviews?  
This ain't a game.

ELEANOR

I'm not playing games.

WILMA

You might not be in their game,  
Eleanor, but you're on the  
sidelines letting it happen. None  
of y'all might not mind treating  
class and track like we in grade  
school, but I need this.

BILLIE

Hold up, now. I've put in so much  
sweat, I've done damn near flooded  
most of Nashville.

WILMA

And that sweat shoulda took us on  
to victory, but you let it drown us  
instead! Don't y'all see that?

Livid, Wilma rushes to pack her things.

COACH TEMPLE

Where you going?

WILMA

Home.

ELEANOR

You can't leave.

WILMA

What's the point of staying?

Wilma slings her bag across her body.

BILLIE

Ain't nothing back home but  
chiggers, fire ants, and--

Fed up, Wilma's had enough and finally lets it out.

WILMA  
--My child.

Ed, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor are gut-punched.

ELEANOR  
You have a baby?

BARBARA  
(softened)  
Skeeter?

Regret billows Billie's once stiffened demeanor.

BILLIE  
Why ain't you tell us?

WILMA  
Cause you like pouring water on a  
drowning woman. Y'all might not  
need me, but my daughter does. And  
now she's sick at home I'm here  
fighting about hair and chasing  
folks around a track.

COACH TEMPLE  
Skeeter, you shoulda come and  
talked to me--

WILMA  
--'No mothers on the track,' ain't  
that the rule?  
(trails off near tears)  
This is nonsense. I'm done.

Wilma storms off upset, leaving them with dropped jaws.

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Robert gently walks up with Yolanda. Wilma rushes to take  
Yolanda in his arms. Charlene watches Wilma feel Yolanda's  
forehead testing for a fever.

WILMA  
Is she okay?

Yolanda CRIES as Wilma holds her tightly.

CHARLENE  
It was a pretty scary fever.

ROBERT  
It was a little touch and go for a  
while, but it came down.

Wilma's touch doesn't soothe Yolanda, who reaches out for  
Charlene.

CHARLENE  
 (to Yolanda)  
 It's okay. Stay with your mama.

Wilma's heart is breaking. Her tears come pouring.  
 Comforting, Robert lovingly rubs Wilma's back.

WILMA  
 I shoulda stayed here.

Robert parts his mouth to speak, but Charlene puts her hand  
 to halt his words. She's got this.

CHARLENE  
 It wouldn't have stop nothing.

WILMA  
 But what was it all for? A child  
 who doesn't even know me? For so-  
 called teammates to stab me in the  
 back? I call myself doing what I  
 thought I had to do. And it still  
 wasn't good enough.

Wilma pulls the DOLL FROM MEXICO out and gives it to Yolanda.  
 She holds her tight and rocks her, trying to comfort both her  
 baby and herself.

EXT. WILMA'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Charlene sits next to a massive pile of laundry, scrubbing  
 clothes in a tub by hand. The YOUNG GIRLS help by creating an  
 assembly line that ends at the clothesline. Wilma enters with  
 Yolanda, eyes the laundry.

WILMA  
 Y'all didn't have to do my washing.

CHARLENE  
 I just threw it in with the rest.  
 We're all helping Mama with the  
 laundry anyway.

A silent beat off the reality of her family's work life.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)  
 Skeeter, what you doing with this  
 track business? You started out  
 running to help pay for school. Now  
 it's turned into something else.

Wilma picks up some clothes and starts folding.

WILMA  
 I don't know what I'm doing. I  
 never expected it would go this  
 far.

(MORE)

WILMA (CONT'D)

The thing is I'm good at this, Charlene. It feels nice to finally be good at something. But no team means no Olympics.

(then)

It ain't like I can make a living from running no way. Even Jesse Owens couldn't make a living off it without racing horses and dogs for white folks like he was the animal.

Wilma scoffs at the lunacy of this fact.

WILMA (CONT'D)

Sad part is to even get that kind of humiliation or to even get a fighting chance, you gotta be man.

CHARLENE

But men ain't mothers. Mothers are strong, Skeeter.

WILMA

Yeah and mothers know how to sacrifice, which I haven't been doing. Mama toted me around for years when I was sick. And it took me two days to get home to my child. Just think how I would've felt if that fever didn't break. No gold medal could've fixed that.

(beat)

'Feeling nice' is a luxury. I need to go back to school and focus on school. Graduate. Get a good job and take care of my baby.

Wilma grabs the laundry basket and goes inside leaving Charlene at a loss.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - DAY

Ed glances at his watch as he walks toward the track. Only Eleanor is there.

COACH TEMPLE

Where is everyone?

ELEANOR

Off somewhere mad at you.

COACH TEMPLE

And you're not?

Eleanor looks away, not answering.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
Take a rest day, Eleanor.

She walks away without making eye contact. Ed looks across at the men's field. President Davis approaches.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
Temple! No training today?

COACH TEMPLE  
I gave the girls the day off.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
And well deserved. I believe congratulations are due. The Olympics! You have done more with the Tigerbelles than me or anyone else could have ever expected.

It's difficult for Ed to take this as a compliment.

COACH TEMPLE  
Well, thank you, Walter.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
It pains me a little to say it, but you were right. TSU is on the lips of people all around this country.

COACH TEMPLE  
The girls worked really hard. You couldn't ask for better representatives of this school.

PRESIDENT DAVIS  
I know. And you're the reason for their success. It's because of that, that I've made a decision.

E/I. IMPOVERISHED SCHOOL - LIBRARY - EVENING

Ed stands outside of a window and gazing inside.

ED'S POV: C.B. is amongst a group of VOLUNTEER LITERACY WORKERS from her church. CHILDREN sit at tables with books. C.B. is helping one of them with their reading.

Ed comes inside, slowly crossing to C.B.

COACH TEMPLE  
It looks really good in here. I'm really proud of what you've done with these kids. A lot of elbow grease.

There's distance and tension in the air.



C.B.  
When it's what you're meant to do,  
it doesn't even feel like work.  
You know that.

He nods in response. He takes a deep breath.

COACH TEMPLE  
Can we talk?

EXT. IMPOVERISHED SCHOOL - SCHOOL YARD - MOMENTS LATER

C.B. leans against the Merry-Go-Round as Ed paces.

COACH TEMPLE  
Walter offered me the men's  
coaching job.

C.B.  
What'd you tell him?

COACH TEMPLE  
Given I've got no girls on the team  
left to coach, looks like the  
decision's been made for me.  
Everybody but Eleanor quit.

C.B.  
What?

COACH TEMPLE  
They don't know any better. But I  
can't let the girls' squander their  
opportunity.

C.B.  
You mean *your* opportunity.

COACH TEMPLE  
This isn't about me, C.B.

C.B.  
It's always about you.

COACH TEMPLE  
You just talking nonsense now.

C.B.  
You're selfish.

COACH TEMPLE  
Me? Selfish?

C.B.

I love you, so I won't lie. Yes.  
You're so focused on getting  
Marvin's job, on getting to the  
trials, on getting to the Olympics  
that you aren't focused on seeing  
on those girls.

COACH TEMPLE

I see them.

C.B.

You know every piece of food they  
eat, but you didn't even know  
Skeeter had a whole baby at home.

He takes a deep breath. There's truth in these words.

C.B. (CONT'D)

You work so hard to make up for  
what you couldn't get on that track  
years ago, that you can't see what  
or who is right in front of you.

Ed absorbs the hard blow. Something hits him. He takes a seat  
on the nearby swing.

COACH TEMPLE

I wanna see those girls get what I  
wasn't good enough to achieve.

C.B. joins him on the swing set.

C.B.

You're good enough, Ed. You always  
have been. You just let pride get  
in the way.

COACH TEMPLE

And that pride made me let you  
down. I preach excellence, but have  
given you mediocrity. You don't  
deserve nothing less than the best.

Ed grabs her hand, holds it lovingly.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

But when you know better, you do  
better, right?

She nods gently stroking his hand.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

So what time do I need to be here  
in the morning?

C.B.'s confused.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 To teach. These kids shouldn't have  
 to wait until high school to learn  
 social studies.

C.B. gives him a warm kiss. They're on track to heal.

C.B.  
 Thank you, Ed. Really.  
 (then)  
 You've worked too hard to get where  
 you are. Those girls have worked  
 too hard. They need you and you  
 need them. You've got to make this  
 right... with everyone.

C.B.'s wise words land on him.

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

The house is quiet. Wilma wakes up with her Yolanda curled up close. She takes a deep whiff of her sleeping baby's head. Wilma opens a closet. Inside are the LEG BRACES of various sizes she wore as a child. She picks up a brace and turns it over in her hands, and fingering the scuffs and scrapes.

EXT. WILMA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Wilma stares at the PARALLEL BARS her family built years ago. She walks to them. She looks over her shoulder to find Charlene watching her. They lock eyes. Wilma makes the FIGHTER FIST from their childhood. Charlene does it back.

Wilma stares out into the open field ahead of her. One step in front of the other... until she picks up speed.

EXT. FIELDS - SAME TIME

Wilma runs slowly at first, then she melds into the green scenery behind her as she pumps her arms faster and her legs carry her away. She is revived. She was born to do this!

She stops to catch her breath. She finds a familiar STATION WAGON parked up ahead. Ed sits on the hood.

COACH TEMPLE  
 We really got that stride evened  
 out, didn't we?

Surprised, Wilma self-consciously pats her hair into place and straightens her clothes.

WILMA  
 Hey, Coach. I wasn't expecting--

COACH TEMPLE

--I was in the mood for a drive and  
this is where I ended up.

Wilma smiles at his excuse. They look out onto the fields.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)

You know, I ran for TSU. Not as  
good as you girls, but I was good.  
I never really made my mark there,  
so I thought I could make it  
coaching. If I'm being honest, I  
wasn't happy when they stuck me  
with the girls' team.

WILMA

Yeah, you already told us you  
didn't want us.

Ed holds up his hand, he's not finished.

COACH TEMPLE

Like I said, I was wrong 'bout  
that. Up until this season, that's  
how it felt.

WILMA

What changed?

COACH TEMPLE

I'm starting to realize that  
sometimes what we *think* we want  
shouts so loud that it drowns out  
what we are *made* to do.

Wilma thinks over his words. She becomes fully aware of why  
he's there.

WILMA

I was made to be my baby's mother.  
There's no changing that.

COACH TEMPLE

Listen, Skeeter, I'm not  
downplaying your responsibilities  
here. Believe me, I'm not. But  
you're made to do something  
remarkable in this lifetime. Every  
time the world has tried to topple  
you over, your destiny sets you  
back upright. Don't underestimate  
the importance of what you girls  
are doing out there on that track.  
I know I'm not going to.

Wilma takes this in.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 President Davis offered me the  
 men's coaching job. But no matter  
 what you decide, my decision has  
 been made. I'm taking the  
 Tigerbelles all the way.

Ed turns to leave, but can't help himself...

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
 Your hands are passing your body  
 too low. You better get 'em up to  
 the hips if you plan to beat the  
 West Germans.

Wilma chuckles to herself. Ed hops in his car and drives off.

EXT. DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE - DAY

The BLACK LABOR DAY PARADE is in full effect. The TENNESSEE  
 STATE UNIVERSITY BAND break into a dance, amping up the  
 CROWD. CHEERLEADERS flip and twirl.

An ornate TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY FLOAT rolls by with  
 Jesse and the rest of the FOOTBALL TEAM as the main event.  
 President Davis's also aboard waving to the Crowd.

Meanwhile, a modest CONVERTIBLE carrying a PATHETIC BANNER  
 that simply reads, TIGERBELLES, is transporting Eleanor. Yet,  
 she's the only Tigerbelle in attendance.

IN THE CROWD

Barbara stands with the AKAs. She can't help but to see the  
 TIGERBELLES FLOAT. Eleanor looks downright miserable. A few  
 AKAs snicker about the poor sight. Suddenly, Barbara sprints  
 for the convertible.

AT THE CONVERTIBLE

Barbara leaps into the slow creeping car. Eleanor's shocked.

ELEANOR  
 What are you doing?

BARBARA  
 I couldn't leave you in front of  
 this crowd all by yourself.  
 (joking)  
 They expect some showmanship.

Eleanor brightens and hugs her. Barbara waves to the Crowd  
 like a beauty queen.

ELEANOR  
Well, we might as well enjoy our  
moment in the sun. This is as close  
as we're going to get to it.

WILMA (O.S.)  
Barbara! Eleanor!

They look over into the Crowd and see Wilma waving them over.

TIME CUT TO:

THE END OF THE PARADE ROUTE

Barbara and Eleanor make their way through the Crowd of  
people and floats at the end of the parade. They finally  
connect with Wilma.

WILMA  
Come help with these autographs.

BARBARA  
What autographs?

Wilma points to a bunch of cheering, enthusiastic YOUNG  
GIRLS. They're part of C.B.'s literacy group. Ed and C.B. are  
amidst the kids.

Eleanor and Barbara stand in awe reading the HANDWRITTEN  
SIGNS the Girls are holding: GO FOR GOLD! TIGERBELLES ARE  
SWELL! GO TEAM TIGERBELLES!

ELEANOR  
Does this mean what I think it  
does?

WILMA  
It's the *Olympics*. And we gotta  
real chance to win.

Barbara puts a loving hand on Wilma's arm.

BARBARA  
I'm sorry. We let our team down.

ELEANOR  
We let *you* down, Skeeter.

BARBARA  
We didn't know about your baby, but  
that still doesn't make what we did  
right. Baby or not, we had no  
business acting how we did.

WILMA  
I shoulda let you know what was  
going on.

(MORE)

WILMA (CONT'D)  
 Y'all supposed to be my sisters. I  
 shoulda told you. I let y'all down  
 too.

This warms both Barbara and Eleanor's hearts. A PACK of  
 LITERACY GIRLS holding notebooks and pens follow C.B.

C.B.  
 Girls, I couldn't keep 'em away any  
 longer.

Barbara and Eleanor are bombarded with attention.

LITERACY GIRL 1  
 Is it true that y'all are the  
 fastest runners in the world?

LITERACY GIRL 2  
 I wanna go to college just like  
 y'all when I grow up.

Barbara melts as she signs autographs for them.

BARBARA  
 You will. If you're good enough,  
 you can even get a scholarship!

Eleanor and Wilma throw Barbara a playful glance. A Literacy  
 Girl eagerly watches Eleanor as she signs her notebook.

LITERACY GIRL 3  
 What are you going to get a gold  
 medal for?

ELEANOR  
 I'm running the 200 and the relay.  
 (then)  
 But you can't run a relay with only  
 three people.

She looks up and catches the eyes of Wilma and Barbara.

INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

A LIVE BAND plays for a CROWD in their 30s and 40s. Wilma,  
 Eleanor, and Barbara take in the cool and lively Crowd.  
 Eleanor locks in on the risqué, bluesy LADY SINGER, dressed  
 in a short sleeved button up, trousers, and suspenders,  
 belting out "I Want to Walk You Home" by Fats Domino.

They spot Billie holding court at a table with a slick, good-  
 looking OLDER MAN. Billie's stunned to see them.

BILLIE  
 What the...

She shoos the Older Man from the table.

BILLIE (CONT'D)  
Did they double-book a Girl Scout  
troop meeting here tonight?

Excited by the popping energy, Barbara happily takes a seat.

BARBARA  
This place is cool.

WILMA  
Better than Jack-and-Jill?

Billie laughs at Wilma's wisecracking.

WILMA (CONT'D)  
We need you back, Billie. We wanna  
go to the Olympics and we can't win  
without you.

BILLIE  
'We?' You back? What about your  
baby?

WILMA  
If I don't do what I'm best at, how  
will she ever learn to do *her* best?  
Plus, I've got my family and Robert  
to help me.

BILLIE  
Your girl's lucky. I didn't have a  
mama like you to look up to.

BARBARA  
Where was she?

BILLIE  
She passed away when I was little.

ELEANOR  
Oh, Billie.

BILLIE  
She used to work here, but she did  
more drinking than working.  
(sips her whiskey)  
Hell, the apple don't fall far from  
the tree.

The Girls soak her words in, seeing her for the first time.

WILMA  
Well, this is your chance to prove  
'em all wrong.

BARBARA  
You belong in Rome with us.



WILMA

Listen, Billie, running's in my soul. And whether you wanna own up to it or not, it's in yours too.

ELEANOR

It's in all of us. And my legs don't have another four years in them. Don't you steal this old lady's best shot at gold.

They look to Billie, hopeful.

BILLIE

Eh, okay.

Wilma, Barbara, and Eleanor beam.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Shit, I need the exercise. My hips starting to get as big as BJ's.

BARBARA

Never heard any complaints.

Barbara chugs the rest of Billie's drink. They all, especially Eleanor, stare in shock. Barbara sticks her tongue out at Eleanor. They can't help but to laugh.

BILLIE

I was planning on that to be my last drink.

WILMA

We're gonna make sure it stays that way. You may not have no mama, but you still got family.

ELEANOR

Us.

BARBARA

Always.

Billie's eyes water. The Girls put their hands one on top of the other in solidarity.

The BLUES SINGER begins singing "Finger Poppin Time" by Hank Ballard. Eleanor focuses on the Singer... again. Billie clocks it and leans in to Eleanor.

BILLIE

You ain't no old maid after all.

The two stare at each other... a thorough but brief conversation plays out just between their eyes. Billie winks in support.

Amends have been made. The Tigerbelles are back.

MONTAGE - OLYMPIC TRAINING:

-- B&W NEWS FOOTAGE:

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

U.S. teams prepare for the Olympics now just six weeks away. Top ranked track and field team led by first time Olympic Coach Ed Temple will be on everyone's radar.

-- Ed leads the Tigerbelles through a series of TOUGH DRILLS. The pace is quick, almost militaristic.

-- The Tigerbelles do STANDING TRIPLE JUMPS. Each Girl getting distance with each leap.

-- He BARKS orders and the Girls respond with no back talk. They're all on board.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

But these races will be no cake walk for our lovely ladies. Wilma Rudolph a.k.a. 'The Black Gazelle' will face tough competition from current world champion and the Sprint Diva from West Germany, Jutta Heine...

-- B&W FOOTAGE OF JUTTA HEINE, a statuesque, serious blonde.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

A fierce competitor who holds the national record in each of her events.

-- The Tigerbelles stand in a circle with their backs to one another. They pass a MEDICINE BALL around the bend, increasing speed with each rep.

-- The Tigerbelles work on Arm Swing Mechanics: They're in a two-point stance, moving their arms as if they're running. Ed nods his approval of them keeping their shoulders back and arms at 90 degrees.

EXT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - TRACK - EVENING

Practice has wrapped. Wilma wipes the sweat from her brow. Jesse stands nearby watching.

JESSE

You looking skinny, girl. Lemme get a meal in you.

INT. NASHVILLE DINER - NIGHT

Wilma and Jesse sit at a booth across from each other.

WILMA  
Training for the Olympics is way  
more intense than I could've  
imagined.

JESSE  
Well, I'm really excited for y'all,  
but I can't wait for things to die  
down so I can see you a little more  
often. You coming back to campus  
after you get back from Rome?

WILMA  
I've gotta go home.

JESSE  
(disappointed)  
To see Robert?

Wilma takes a deep breath. She has to say tell him.

WILMA  
Jesse, I've got a baby at home. My  
family keeps her while I'm here in  
Nashville... and everywhere else.

Jesse's stunned, but tries to gather himself.

JESSE  
And Robert is her daddy?  
(Wilma nods)  
Wow. Well, that explains a lot.  
What's her name?

WILMA  
Yolanda.

JESSE  
That's a beautiful name. Sounds  
like she's gonna be somebody. Just  
like her mama.

Jesse pulls out a SMALL GIFT wrapped in tissue paper. He  
hands it to Wilma.

WILMA  
What's this?

JESSE  
Gotta open it to find out.

She opens it and inside is a beautiful GAZELLE BROOCH.

WILMA  
Jesse... this is beautiful.

JESSE  
I don't speak Italian, but they're  
calling you something like, 'La  
Gazelle Negra.'

Wilma really takes in the brooch. It gleams and seems to energize her.

WILMA  
'La Gazzella Nera.'  
(laughs to herself)  
And I thought 'Skeeter' was the  
only nickname I was ever gonna  
have.  
(then)  
I'm just a simple girl from  
Tennessee, Jesse.

JESSE  
Now the whole world knows that  
Tennessee girl. Greatness doesn't  
care about geographical boundaries.  
It spreads all over the globe.

Wilma takes this in, grateful over what feels like a fantasy.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Just don't forget us little people  
when you win gold.

WILMA  
I never forget my friends.

Wilma's clearly defined what their relationship will be, which leaves Jesse a tad disappointed. He musters an earnest smile. Relieved, Wilma responds in kind both appreciative of their friendship.

EXT. ROME - VILLAGGIO OLIMPICO - DAY

Ed and the Tigerbelles weave through the plethora of INTERNATIONAL ATHLETES in the Olympic Village. They crosses paths with the WEST GERMAN TRACK TEAM. The GERMAN COACHES and Ed each exchange polite nods. Wilma and Jutta each size each other up. Their game faces on.

INT. VILLAGGIO OLIMPICO - ATHLETES' QUARTERS - EARLY MORNING

Wilma, Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor stand together in front of a mirror doing their hair and makeup. They're completely in sync as they pass each other brow pencils, hair spray, combs. Their USA uniforms are impeccable.

Billie hands Wilma the hair curler. The Tigerbelles share tender looks in the mirror. They're in this together now.

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO - DAY

It's the 100M SEMI-FINALS. Barbara, Billie, Eleanor, and Wilma jump and stretch to keep warm on the sidelines.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)

Up next we have the qualifying heats of the Women's 100. Only the top two from each heat will advance to the final.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)

That's right. And there are high expectations for this U.S.A. team, lead by Wilma Rudolph. This is one of the three events she is running at this Olympics. She stands a good chance to set an Olympic record by taking gold in all three.

Ed tightly holds his notebook in his hands. He's got some nerves, but puts on a brave face.

COACH TEMPLE

Billie, Skeeter, you're in the first heat.

BILLIE

Okay, Coach.

COACH TEMPLE

Skeeter, lane 5. Billie, lane 3.

BILLIE

Let's get it.

Billie and Wilma slap hands as they line up for a 100 heat. BANG! They're off. Wilma has an quick step out of the blocks.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)

And Rudolph pulls ahead of the pack. Rudolph continues to create space between herself and the rest of the runners...

The LANE 2 RUNNER strains to keep up with Wilma who crosses the finish line in FIRST PLACE. The Lane 2 Runner narrowly edges Billie out.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)

And good golly, Wilma Rudolph commandingly sets an Olympic record! 11.3 Seconds!

At the finish line, Billie gives Wilma a sincere hug.

BILLIE  
Go get that gold, country gal.

NEXT HEAT

Barbara lines up next to a variety of EUROPEAN RUNNERS, including DOROTHY HYMAN from England. The gun FIRES and...

Dorothy sprints to victory.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
And Great Britain's Dorothy Hyman stakes her claim in this Olympic games!

Barbara fights to come in THIRD. She's disappointed, but Eleanor is there to give her an encouraging pat.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
Barbara Jones will not advance, which means Wilma Rudolph will be the sole U.S. competitor in the 100 finals.

CUT TO:

100 FINALS

There's a fully-packed, excited CROWD for the track finals.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
We expect that these finals will be all Wilma Rudolph, who set a World Record in the qualifying heat, but British newcomer, Dorothy Hyman has been making quite a statement at these games thus far.

ON THE TRACK

Wilma lines up in LANE 4 next to Dorothy Hyman in LANE 5. Ed and the Tigerbelles watch nervously from the sidelines. Barbara, Eleanor, and Billie join hands in solidarity.

BANG! The RUNNERS explode from the blocks. WILMA pulls ahead of the pack... she CROSSES THE FINISH LINE several strides ahead of the closest RUNNER.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
Wilma Rudolph takes the gold in the 100! This showing is certainly no disappointment for the first ever televised Olympics. I can't wait to see what happens in the 200 final!

Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor jump up and CHEER. Ed proudly claps his hands as the Crowd ROARS.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
Up next, the 200 meter semi finals.

CUT TO:

SEMIFINALS 200

The CAMERA PANS past Eleanor and Wilma at the starting line to REVEAL the intimidating JUTTA HEINE practicing her starts with fluid precision. Wilma looks on.

WILMA  
She's a machine.

Eleanor redirects Wilma's attention.

ELEANOR  
So are we.

Eleanor gives Wilma a quick high-five and walks back towards her lane to settle in the blocks.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
This should be a great race. West Germany's Jutta Heine is the best answer for stopping pure dominance from the Americans.

Wilma begins to peacock Jutta, stretching big, and doing huge jumps, but Jutta doesn't bite. Instead, Jutta jumps higher and stretches bigger! Shit! Wilma is momentarily unsettled.

Wilma settles into the blocks, takes a deep breath. The gun BANGS!

Wilma and Jutta jockey for the lead through the turn. With 50 meters to go, Wilma's long strides create some distance.

Wilma LEANS INTO THE TAPE with Jutta a few strides behind. The Crowd CHEERS uproariously.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
Incredible! Rudolph not only runs her fastest time in this event, but also sets a *second* Olympic record!

Eleanor comes in FOURTH PLACE, but Wilma is there to give her a congratulatory hug.

INT. VILLAGGIO OLIMPICO - ATHLETES' QUARTERS - DAY

Ed's laser-focused as he leans in close to Wilma.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Jutta is the one to beat. And I  
 think she was holding back for the  
 final. Don't get comfortable.

WILMA  
 I won't, Coach.

A TALL, HANDSOME BLACK U.S. ATHLETE approaches. We recognize  
 him as a young...

CASSIUS CLAY  
 Coach Temple? I just wanted to  
 introduce myself. I'm Cassius Clay,  
 future heavyweight champion of the  
 world.

Ed happily shakes his hand.

COACH TEMPLE  
 Well, you've certainly got a lot of  
 spunk. Hope your punch can back it  
 up, son.

CASSIUS CLAY  
 (holding his fists up)  
 Look at these paws!

Cassius nods to Wilma.

CASSIUS CLAY (CONT'D)  
 I've been following the  
 Tigerbelles' journey. But I really  
 don't have any choice... I always  
 have to pass by y'all in the  
 newspaper just to find any little  
 blurb about me!

Wilma chuckles.

CASSIUS CLAY (CONT'D)  
 And Wilma, you're just as pretty as  
 in your pictures. You feeling as  
 good about your odds as me?

WILMA  
 If it's an odds game, I have three  
 chances for gold. You have one.

CASSIUS CLAY  
 Oooohhhh! That's a knockout.

Ed and Wilma laugh.

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO - DAY

Wilma and Dorothy Hyman prepare at the starting line.



ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)

We are standing by to see if the  
U.S. can secure another Olympic  
Gold in this 200 Meter foot race.

Jutta confidently strides onto the track. Ed eyes her  
leader... COACH SCHWARZ.

The RUNNERS crouch down into their starting blocks. Jutta  
sneaks a peak at Wilma, but Wilma's got on blinders... she's  
focused straight ahead, looking at the finish line.

BANG! Jutta and Wilma both pull away from Dorothy and the rest  
of the pack. They are neck-and-neck. Wilma leans into the  
FINISH LINE for a close win.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)

And Rudolph picks up a second gold  
medal for the United States! There  
is simply no stopping Rudolph! She  
is one medal away from an  
unprecedented 3 track and field  
golds in a single Olympics! She  
will have her shot at history  
tomorrow with the 4x100 relay.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)

And if they win, each member of Ed  
Temple's small little Tennessee  
college team can go home with a  
gold medal. This will certainly be  
a historic race.

The Tigerbelles run to the field to congratulate Wilma. As  
they prance in celebration, Wilma's FOOT TURNS in a hidden  
HOLE in the grass.

WILMA

Aaaah!

Everyone goes SILENT. Ed turns his head quickly in horror.

EXT. VILLAGGIO OLIMPICO - MEDICAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: Wilma's heavily BRUISED and SWOLLEN ANKLE. (*NOTE TO  
READER: This injury actually happened*).

She winces in pain as an OLYMPIC DOCTOR examines it. Wilma  
watches as the Olympic Doctor speaks to Ed privately.  
Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor stand by Wilma's side. Ed  
shuffles back to Wilma as the Doctor moves off.

COACH TEMPLE

Well, the good news is it's not  
broken. And the bad news is, we're  
gonna need an alternate for the  
relay tomorrow.

Wilma fights tears as the Tigerbelles console her. Ed hangs his head in sadness.

INT. VILLAGGIO OLIMPICO - ATHLETES' QUARTERS - NIGHT

PAN ACROSS Barbara, Billie, and Eleanor... each resting peacefully in bed. Everybody's sound asleep except for Wilma, who sits up in bed, staring at her ankle.

INT. ATHLETES' QUARTERS - BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Wilma hobbles into the bathroom. She locks the door and looks at her legs in the mirror. Tears well in her eyes.

Outside the window, she glimpses an AMERICAN FLAG rustling in the pre-dawn breeze. She stares at her SWOLLEN ANKLE.

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlene, Robert, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph, Yolanda, and the rest of the Family gather around a brand new black and white TV. It's really small, but that doesn't stop them.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
The Tigerbelles are now preparing  
to take the track for the relay.

Charlene moves closer to the screen, squints.

CHARLENE  
Where's Skeeter?

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO - WARM-UP AREA - SAME TIME

Barbara, Eleanor, and Billie surround Ed. Everyone looks unsettled, out of sync, but Ed presses on.

COACH TEMPLE  
We're going to shuffle our lineup.  
Billie, you'll be running anchor--

WILMA (O.S.)  
--No, she won't.

All heads turn... it's Wilma! The Team is stunned.

BILLIE  
What are you doing? You're supposed  
to be in the bed.

WILMA  
It's not broken. I'm running.

BARBARA  
But you can't.

ELEANOR  
You shouldn't.

WILMA  
I *will*.  
(beat)  
I've spent my life listening to  
people tell me what I can't do.  
Today, I decide. And I'm running.

The Girls look to Ed... he nods his approval.

COACH TEMPLE  
Skeeter's right. And she ain't  
alone. The world's been telling *all*  
of you what you can't do. Where  
your place is and where you could  
never go.

Ed swallows hard.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
And that included me.

The Tigerbelles look up in surprise.

COACH TEMPLE (CONT'D)  
If any *one* of you had ever  
listened, *none* of us would be here  
right now. Hell, none of us are  
supposed to be here. But I've never  
been in the habit of doing what I'm  
*supposed* to do.

BILLIE	ELEANOR
Deadgum right, Coach.	Preach.

COACH TEMPLE  
So, let's get that gold and put our  
name in the history books before  
they catch on.

He puts his hands in to lead a cheer, but before he can say a  
word, the Girls take over. Building to a roar of excitement:

TIGERBELLES  
Foxes not oxes... Foxes not oxes...  
FOXES NOT OXES! GO TIGERBELLES!

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Wilma's family gathered around a TV set.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
It looks as though Rudolph's ankle  
is heavily taped. That doesn't look  
good.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
 This last minute injury could keep  
 Wilma from taking an unprecedented  
 3rd track and field gold medal in a  
 single Olympic Games.

Charlene curls Yolanda's little hand into a fighting fist.

CHARLENE  
 C'mon, Skeeter. You got this.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B., Edwina, Lloyd, and Mama Grace gather around the TV to watch the Tigerbelles take their places around the track for the relay.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - GYM - SAME TIME

The ENTIRE STUDENT BODY listens to the broadcast come through the PA system. Jesse and the FOOTBALL TEAM, the AKAs, Wendell and his FRAT BROTHERS... everybody's here. The BAND plays the TSU FIGHT SONG. President Davis and Mary are there too.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - LOCKER ROOM - SAME TIME

Texan Coach Abernathy and his TRACK TEAM anxiously listen to the RADIO.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
 No American female athlete has been  
 able to accomplish this feat.

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO - TRACK - SAME TIME

The Tigerbelles take their places around the track. They look to Ed, then at each other. They are ONE.

The START GUN GOES OFF!

BARBARA

Has a strong start of the blocks. Her head is down and strides are rhythmic. She runs and perfectly passes the baton to Eleanor. The West Germans, Polish, and Soviet Union stay neck and neck with the Tigerbelles.

ELEANOR

Eleanor's legs are flashes of lightning. Her breathing is even and she is focused on Billie up ahead. She flawlessly passes the baton to Billie; they are perfectly in sync. The West Germans and Americans gain a slight advantage over the other teams.

BILLIE

Takes off, pumping her arms furiously. Her face displays its normal nonchalance, but her body is working in overdrive. She times her pace with Wilma, whose hand is outstretched behind her, impatiently waiting for the baton. The West Germans are closing in.

WILMA

Wilma BOBBLES the baton slightly -- the pass is not clean. Jutta receives the pass with no issue and pulls ahead. Wilma regains control of the baton, and strikes hard with her taped ankle. She winces.

Jutta is ahead, but Wilma's real race is against herself and the too familiar pain in her leg.

ANNOUNCER 2 (V.O.)  
Heine and Rudolph neck and neck...  
This may come down to a photo  
finish.

Suddenly, just like when she was a child... Wilma dig deeps and lets loose a reserve burst of speed! She decidedly PULLS AHEAD of Jutta!

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
Oh my word!

WILMA LEANS INTO THE TAPE! VICTORY! The Crowd goes wild.

ANNOUNCER 1 (V.O.)  
Rudolph with a final burst of speed  
take it! The Tigerbelles have won  
gold and set yet another world  
record!

INT. WILMA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Everyone CHEERS, leaping up and down. Robert hugs Yolanda tightly.

INT. COACH TEMPLE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

C.B., Mama Grace, and the Kids parade around joyously.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - LOCKER ROOM - SAME TIME

Texan Coach Abernathy and his TRACK TEAM are caught up in celebratory upswell, and happily applaud. Two Texas Teammates high five.

INT. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CAPITOL HILL - SAME TIME

The Congregation ROARS. Mrs. Endicott claps primly.

INT. TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY - GYM - SAME TIME

The gym ERUPTS. CONFETTI and STREAMERS litter the air. It's sheer pandemonium.

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO - TRACK - SAME TIME

The Tigerbelles, tears of joy streaming down their faces, embrace. Ed stares at them, tears on the brink.

To Ed's surprise, the Tigerbelles pull him into a hug. He celebrates with The Girls... they are truly one!

FREEZE FRAME on the Tigerbelles and Ed in triumph.

FADE OUT.

PHOTO MONTAGE OF REAL LIFE TIGERBELLES OVER POST SCRIPT:

**Billie White** went on to become a storied track and field athlete, becoming the first athlete from the U.S. to participate in 5 Olympic games. After her Olympic retirement, she founded an organization for helping inner-city children build self-esteem. She died at age 67 in 2007.

**Barbara Jones** had a successful track and field career that spanned 8 years, earning 335 medals and 56 trophies. She married and had two children with Wendell, and went on to become a Physical Education teacher.

**Eleanor Williams** retired from running after the 1960 Olympics, but stayed on as a chaperone as the U.S. Team toured Europe through 1963. She earned a master's degree in Physical Education, and was inducted into the Savannah, GA Hall of Fame in 1968, and the TSU Hall of Fame in 1983.

**Wilma Rudolph** was the first American woman to win three gold medals in track and field at a single Olympics. This record has still not been surpassed.

Wilma retired from Track and Field in 1962, became an elementary school teacher, and eventually married and had three more children with Robert. In 2004, her legacy was honored with a U.S. Postage Stamp. She died of brain cancer at the age of 54 in 1994.

**Ed Temple** coached at Tennessee State University for 41 years. He was the head coach of the US Olympic Women's Track team in 1960 and 1964, and was the assistant coach in 1980. In his time as a coach, his Tigerbelles earned 34 National titles, and 23 Olympic medals -- 13 of them Gold. However, he was always more impressed with his record of 39 of his 40 Olympians earning one or more college degrees. He died in 2016.

FADE OUT.