

FLEX

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Starra Jones	17 years old, African American girl, point guard
Sidney Brown	17 years old, African American girl, shooting guard
Cherise Howard	17 years old, African American girl, power forward
April Jenkin	17 years old, African American girl, shooting guard
Donna Cunningham	17 years old, African American girl, center
Coach Francine Pace	42 years old, African American woman, coach

Setting: Plainnole, Arkansas, late February 1998 - mid March

Notes:

-Ideally, *FLEX*, will be set in the round with the basketball court transforming into the different spaces the Lady Train occupies. Of course the gym, Donna's family's van, and Sidney's bedroom.

-The forward slash (/) shows up when an outcome is uncertain. Actions should be carried out as detailed in the text.

## 1st Quarter

*It's 1997, Thursday evening, late February inside the dimly lit Plainnole High School gym. There is a representation of half a basketball court. Upstage left, there is a bench. Upstage center, there are two brackets. One for conference play, it is complete with the Lady Train as the winning team; one for regional, it is almost complete except for the winning team. A radio quietly plays TLC'S "What About Yo Friends?" or something like it: A bouncy beat from a Black 90's girls' group expressing the brand of shiny candy-coated wet tomboy teen girl power common in those days: something that celebrates unbreakable friendships bound by likeness for oversized overalls, Nike earrings, thick black lip-liner, the tendency to laugh high and loud, love for Tupac and innocent unchecked fascination with R. Kelly. None of these girls in Plainnole, AR would describe themselves as feminist. They are just being themselves. Some would wear condoms on their eye glasses, some would wear Timberlands, and critique the worthiness of Rebecca Lobo, Lisa Leslie, and Sheryl Swoopes.*

*Five high school seniors, Starra, Sidney, Cherise, Donna, and April are having a secluded practice. The banter between the girls is quick paced; one line beats against the other. The words placed on the same line are not meant to be spoken all at once, but rather quickly as the players are all using conversation in attempts to score, take opportunities to defend themselves, pass thoughts to one another, and rebound off one another. When someone calls timeout, the discourse does not stop; rather it slows in pace so the team can collectively process and regain momentum.*

*They are a team, but they're also in competition. Starra and Sidney bumping heads more than any of the others. For the most part, they are intense. Throughout the play, each one slips into her own language that binds basketball with her life outside the court. As they are in season, the language of the game never fully leaves their lips. Starra has been the leader of this group since 7th grade. She is viewed as and sees herself as their leader. All the girls are practicing the defensive step-and-slide. They move from one line to the other never leaving "the paint". Each time they reach a line on either side they touch the floor. Starra looks in one direction, leading her teammates, Sidney, Cherise, April, and Donna, who face her.*

*They all wear practice uniforms, thin mesh shorts with their team numbers. Sidney, Donna, and Starra wear shiny black Nike shorts, Cherise wears Starter shorts, April wears form fitting cotton shorts/biker shorts. The sounds of tennis shoes and a basketball fill the space. Starra bounces the ball at the top of the key urging her teammates. They all appear to be pregnant.*

Starra (setting up for the shot) Go hard in the paint! I know ya'll ain't already tired!	All except Sidney and Starra (waiting on the next option) Yesssssssss!!!
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Starra (going for it) Cherise?	Cherise (sitting out) Yes.	Starra (sitting out) April.	April (sitting out) I am.	Sidney (staying with the team) I don't get tired!
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Starra  
 (settling up an assist)  
 Donna?

Donna  
 (denying the assist)  
 I gotta piss like a racehorse.

Starra  
 (going for the next option)  
 Alright! Break. Coach taking forever anyway.

*Everyone except Starra lets out a pregnant sigh.*

Cherise  
 (positioning for defense)  
 I just need some water.      *They all waddle complaining pregnancy as they do.*

Donna  
 Man! Pregnancy is a muthafucka.      *The other girls agree.*

*Starra begins to test her own agility with her pregnant stomach. She handles the ball doing one move after another. She makes each one more tricky, more complex than the next, making the sound affects to go with it.*

Starra  
 (Globetrotting/Hot-Saucing/Showing-off; she's having fun with her "pregnant" belly)  
 Uh-oh! Uh-oh! Gon' Starra! Whatcha' gon' do? Whatcha' gon' do? Whatcha' gon' do? This belly can't hold me! This belly can't hold me! (Does a move to left) What you gonna do baby girl? (Does a move to the right) What you gonna do baby boy? Uh! Shoulda seen me last night. (looks to the sky) Daddy! Daddy! Your lil Starra was so hot last night! Did you see it? (Sees the crowd only) 3.8 seconds on the clock! I snatched the ball from that girl! I was like "Uh! Give me my cheese!" She tried to take it back! I was moving too fast. Had to tell her—You can't hold me! I wanted to get it inside to Cherise. She was right under the basket. And I ain't no ball hog. But, you know, they double-teamed me. I had no choice. All could see was the goal. My shot was a rainbow. SWOOSH! (looks to the sky) Nothing but the bottom of the net. You shoulda heard em' screaming my name. My first buzzer beater ever! I finally know I'm good enough! No more Plainnole, Arkansas dirt courts for me Daddy! No more dust in my eyes, my ankles, my fingernails. I'm gonna win regionals, then state. Scouts are coming here, to Plainnole. Can you believe it? You said by the time I got older. There'd be a girls' NBA. You were right. I'm going to the *WNBA*. Shamon ain't the only one who can make it. Folks call us Double Dribble. Get it? Cause we twins and both of us can dribble. Get it? One other thing, Daddy, I been saving money. I'm about to get that car you promised me. Yeah, I found a little red car my favorite color.

See, I remember everything you said. Ima do whatever it takes to make it. (*Cherise checks in.*)  
And after I get recruited every dream we had is gonna come true.

Cherise

(defending)

The scout -came here for Sidney, not you.

Starra

(controlling the court)

They staying for the Starra of the show. She looked at me like I was the future of the WNBA.

Cherise

(defending)

How you know?

Starra

(seeing the periphery)

Last night, I saw that gleam in her eye.

Cherise

(defending)

Gleam?

Starra

(dribbling)

Yeah.

Cherise

(step-slide)

Starra, what God has for you is for you.

Starra

(dribbling away)

Nah. We gotta take what you can get.

Cherise

(playing tight defense)

I shoulda told Aunt Lisa about what you did.

Starra

(step-back)

I shoulda told Aunt Carol.

Cherise

(going for the reach)

About what?

Starra

(crossover)

About Donna.

Cherise

(loses positioning)

Oh. It's like that?

Starra

(scores, keeps ball)

Ain't no fun when the rabbit the gun.

Cherise

(checks the ball)

Whatever. Where's Coach?

Starra

(allows the check)

Dang Cherise. She coming.

Cherise

(attempts a double-check)

She know why we here?

Starra

(dribbles)

It's a surprise.

Cherise

(step-slide)

She's had enough surprises.

Starra

(goes for a shot)

I still can't believe April betrayed us.

Cherise

(defends)

You crying over spilled milk, Starra.

Starra

(blocks out)

We made a pact. She broke it.

Cherise

(blocks out)

I know.

Starra (blocks out)	Cherise (blocks out)
No drinking, no smoking, no sex.	Nothing's gonna change what's happened.

Starra (offensive rebound)	Cherise (defense)
I wish to God we didn't need her to win State.	How you know we need her?

Starra (shot attempt)	Cherise (rebound)
In that level of competition, we need our full squad.	What we need to do is cleanse.

Starra (checks ball)	Cherise (allows the check)	Starra (defends)
Here you go.	I can do it.	What?

Cherise (posts-up)	Starra (defends)
I just got my youth minister's license.	The baby preacher license?

Cherise  
(faces the goal)  
Something happens when people are connected. You know seen it in church too.

Starra (defends)	Cherise (attempts the shot)	Starra (blocks out)
It's not the time.	You catch a contact off one another.	We need to get started.

Cherise (rebounds)	Starra (defends)
You become one with the element.	We need our heads in the game, not the water.

Cherise (attempts shot)	Starra (snatches rebound)
At least all the seniors should. Me, you, Donna, and Sidney.	Man forget Sidney.

Cherise (step-slide)	Starra (dribbles)	Cherise (defends)
This was her plan.	I'm the one who called Coach and told her to come.	Really, Starra?

Starra (dribbles)	Cherise (defends)
Really.	You wouldn't give Sidney Coach's number and told everybody else not to.

Starra (protective dribble) It's private. She don't want everybody having it.	Cherise (defends) You could let Sidney.	Starra (dribbles) I'm captain.
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Cherise (goes for a steal) You're jealous.	Starra (protective dribble) Of that summer camp all-star?	Cherise (regains defensive position) She can ball.
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Starra (protective dribble) She just moved here!	Cherise (defends ruthlessly) That's why you fouling on and off the court.
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Stare  
(resets the play)  
—Alright! Alright! Come on Lady Train! Out the locker room!

Cherise (defends ruthlessly) You really think you deserve a scholarship after what you did?	Starra (uses her peripheral) Come on ladies!!!
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*Sidney, April, and Donna jog in. They set up in the positions for the FLEX offense.*

Donna (processing) Ya'll ready?	April (confirming) I'm so ready!	Cherise (questioning) Shouldn't we wait?	Sidney (challenging) Let's go Lady Train!
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Starra  
(catalyzing the team)  
We gon' run FLEX. Off the rebound fall into the 3 on 2 drill depending on who gets the rebound.  
FLEX!

*On her call, the rest of the team, Sidney, Donna, April, and Cherise go into motion. Starra eyes them. She notices Cherise makes a wrong move. She has gone to the right side free throw elbow when she should have gone to the right side corner.*

Starra (coaching her team) Cherise you ain't sposed' to be there—	Cherise (rebounding) —My bad.	Starra (viewing the options) This plan ain't the best.
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*Cherise walks to left side free throw elbow.*

April (asking for a pass) Starra you ain't gotta be here.	Starra (controlling the ball) No. <i>I</i> keep my word.	Donna (staying in motion) Let's keep it together ya'll.
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Sidney (staying in motion) Starra, what time Coach comin'?—	April (rushing the play) —She need to come on.	<i>Sidney eyes Cherise.</i>
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Starra (calling the team to order) —She said just wait. —	Sidney (surveying the court) —Cherise, you, went to the wrong spot. Again.
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Starra (handling the position) Show her where to go.	Cherise (securing her space) Where I'm posed' to go?	Sidney (trying to take the ball) The play ain't that hard.
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Starra (giving Sidney the triple threat) You been running it for years. We ain't.	Sidney (challenging Starra's shot, dribble, and pass) It's better than that old school play, 13.
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Donna Cherise, you go to the corner.	Cherise Where?	Donna Let me show you.	Cherise Sidney knows better.
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<i>Donna shrugs.</i>	Starra (threatening to drive) The old school plays got us here.	Sidney (levels low with Starra's ball) Scared of change? Captain.
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*Sidney starts toward Cherise, but is interrupted by Starra.*

Starra (one move to the basket) That's what you wanna be ain't it?	Sidney (counters the move) I was Captain of my old team.	April (bringing them back) Can ya'll stop?
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Cherise (ask for an assist) Where I'm posed' to go?	Donna (makes no-look pass) I'll show you.	Cherise (catches it) Thank you, Donna.
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Sidney (assist Cherise) Go to the corner—	<i>Sidney carefully instructs Cherise.</i>	Donna (calling Starra back to the game) —Yo Captain!
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(planting her feet) It's a team effort.	(going to the weak side) Coach ain't gonna like it.	(planting her feet) It's not like we're really pregnant.
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April (planting her feet) <i>Ya'll</i> ain't really pregnant.	Donna (resetting the play) We right here with you.	April (stepping out of bounds) It hurt—
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Cherise (going with her) —You hurt?—	Sidney (going with her) —You ain't gotta wear this.	Starra (going with her) —Take it off.
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April (pushing it) This don't hurt.	Donna (staying in the lines) Then, why you scaring us?	April (checking out the game) Watching ya'll play without me hurt.
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Sidney (bringing April back in) Baby vibes?	Donna (bringing April back in) You pregnant enough to have baby vibes?
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April (staying out of bounds) I felt somethin'.	Starra (going back in) You just two months.	Cherise (checking out with April) Vibes are spiritual.
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Donna (checking out with April) You having any other feelings?	April (staying out) Like what?	Sidney (staying out with April) Morning sickness?
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April (looking at the play) A little.	Cherise (staying out of bounds) What else?	Starra (calling the play) Come on ya'll!
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Donna (staying out of bounds) Milk coming out ya mammaries?	April (checking-in) It ain't time yet.
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Donna (staying out of bounds) I bet we could make a cake with that shit!	Sidney (staying out of bounds) OH! Baaby cakes!
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Starra  
(pausing the pace)

Timeout. Ladies! Let's get serious. We need a huddle real quick.

Sidney  
(checking-in)  
We ain't got time.

Starra  
(taking the timeout)  
Ya'll was just baking cakes with breast milk. We bringin' it in. Right now.

*The girls jog to Starra. If the song continues to play, Donna should turn the music off.*

Starra (looking to April to pass the assist) April, do you want to be here?	April (catching the ball) Yeah, but Coach was so cold when I talked to her.
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Cherise (staying in her lane) Coach just wanna protect us.	Donna (confirming the play) It's gon' be alright.	Sidney (confirming the play) Coach know we need you.
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Starra (asking for an assist) Cherise, we need a word?	<i>Dramatic pause as Cherise contemplates.</i>	Cherise (contemplating) A word?
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Starra (going for the same option) Pray for Coach to let April play.	Cherise (ignoring again) I don't know.	April (seeing a second option) —If you don't feel right, don't.
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Cherise (going for the third option) I just think if we really want to be cleansed we need to—	All but Cherise —Get baptized.
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Cherise (going back to the first option) But, I see my team doesn't want that.	Starra (reserving the third option) We don't have time for holy water today.
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Cherise (confirming the first option) Ok. Then, I'll pray for God's will.	April (helping out with the first option) That's what I want. What's right by God.
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Starra  
(detailing a vital play)

We can't lose another player ya'll. Last year we lost all our seniors, Kenyetta, Toy, and Angie all came in here. Pregnant. It was sad as fuck. Coach cried. I cried. They cried. We cried together. That's when I knew, as seniors, we could not go down like that. The whole town expects our team to go down. Cause it happens almost every year.

Sidney

(seeing the Plainnole's full floor for the first time)

Damn. I didn't know it was like that.

Donna

(looking at the time)

Like clockwork.

Starra

(using *her* peripheral vision)

Every year we lose teammates to a baby.

Cherise

(using *her* peripheral vision)

We shouldn't look at it like that ya'll.

Donna

(Using *her* peripheral vision)

Girls on other teams play pregnant all the time.

April

(refocusing on defense)

Not on this team. Coach don't allow pregnant girls to play.

Cherise

(seeing the possibilities)

Some folks hide it.

April

(reflecting on a previous attempt)

And my mama told Coach before I could.

Sidney

(seeing a sixth option)

But the doctor said you could play.

Starra  
(re-focusing on the defense)  
Coach don't care.

Sidney  
(still seeing the sixth option)  
Why?

Donna  
(evaluating the defense)  
Long story.

Starra  
(positioning them in triple threat)  
We gonna change her mind today. *We* started from the bottom of the regional bracket. Friday, we playing in the Regional Championship. After that we got the State tournament. The first girls' team in years. April, the bottom line is we need you to win State.

Sidney  
(establishing her space)  
That's where the scouts are.

Cherise  
(longing for a shot)  
You already got scouts looking at you, Sidney.

Donna  
(longing for a shot)  
From Tennessee! Everybody in Plainnole know everybody. Then a woman shows up to our game last week that don't nobody know with a Tennessee wind suit on. Then one came with the blue, and white and red Louisiana Tech Bulldog. That was so tight!

Starra  
(taking her shot)  
Damn Donna, it ain't yo scout. But, here's what's up-after we go to state, scouts gonna be looking at all of us.

April  
(seeing the full periphery)  
That's sounds like a dream.

Starra  
(taking her shot)

It don't have to be. I know I ain't the only one tired of living in this dusty ass town.

Donna

(seeing the full periphery)

-Hell, nawl.-

Sidney

(knowing the full periphery)

-Can't wait to get the fuck out-

April

(focusing on the full periphery)

-Right-

Starra

(challenging the rules)

How many of ya'll trying to be Plainnole Morris Booker street-ball all-stars with the rest of the dead beats?

Donna

(challenging the rules)

Or a Dotley Spice factory worker?

Starra

(rebuking the rules)

Listen, my mama make good money at the prison, but I don't wanna be there with her.

*All the girls give words of agreement.*

Starra

(calling the play)

Then ladies, our futures are riding on whether or not we can take this train to state together as a unit. April, we got this far with you. We need you.

Sidney

(looking at all options)

We gotta get Coach to say yes.

April

(moving well without the ball)

I hope to God she does.

Starra

(looking for the first option)

You go ahead and pray for what's best, Cherise. God want us to win. I put money on that.

Cherise

(slowly opening up for a pass)

You ain't supposed to talk about God and gambling-

Starra

(chest pass to Cherise)

-Just pray. Then we gon' break it out.

Cherise

(catching the ball)

All right everybody. Hands on the ball.

*The girls place their hands on the ball. Cherise begins to pray.*

Cherise

(shooting the shot)

Dear God. It's me Cherise. I'm here with my teammates Starra Jones, Sidney Brown, Donna Cunningham, and last but not least April Jenkins. God, we come to you as your humble servants knowing that none of us are perfect. I open the truth to you. That truth in which your omniscience has no doubt made you aware. God, we need water wide and forceful as a train to push us through today. We pray that any seed spilled into our streams be fruitful as you see fit. Be our referee in victory. We are not perfect, so let no flagrant foul go unchecked. As we contour our bodies in pursuit of basketball, you contour our journeys in the righteous path you direct. So we acknowledge in this prayer believing the new life April carries should not put an end to her life, but fuel a new flame of hope that burns within. Coach didn't put April off the team cause she had sex. She put her off the team cause she's pregnant. In our hearts of hearts, we question this choice. For a woman's body can move mountains even while with child. In the end, Lord, it is your will that shall be done. Let the team say - Amen.

The team

(game plan is laid out)

-Amen.

*Donna and Sidney release their hands from the ball and run toward the gym floor.*

Sidney

(calling the play)

Come on ya'll let's get moving.

*Starra slightly removes her hand but notices Cherise and April remain silent, praying. She does the same.*

Donna  
(checking out)  
Wait. Cherise ain't done. Go back.

*April opens her eyes and moves away from the ball. Cherise opens her eyes as well.*

Cherise  
(shooting the shot)  
Amen.

*Following Cherise's lead, they all move away from the ball.*

Starra  
(calling the play)  
Ya'll ready to do this?

*They break out once again.*

Donna, Cherise, and April  
(scattered)  
Yes. Let's do it.

Sidney  
(creating an option)  
One more thing before Coach gets here.

Starra  
(questioning a second guard)  
What you want?

Sidney  
(exploring the option)  
Who all comin' to the sleepover after the game? We gonna celebrate our Regional win.

Donna  
(moving toward the option)  
You know I'll be there.

Sidney

(exploring the option)  
Cherise?

Cherise  
(exploring the option)  
Gotta ask my mama.

Sidney  
(exploring the option)  
April, what about you?

April  
(moving toward the option)  
I am there. My mama letting me go somewhere for fist time since she found out I was pregnant.

Donna  
(opening the option)  
Starra you coming?

Starra  
(ignoring the option)  
Ya'll know I work on Saturday mornings.

April  
(opening the option)  
Girl, you'll get to Piggly Wiggly on time.

Sidney  
(denying the option)  
I forgot you work at Piggly Wiggly! Ha.

Starra  
(ignoring the option)  
What's so funny?

Donna  
(keeping the option open)  
Starra you need to stop stuntin' and come on.

Starra  
(hogging the ball)  
Ima think about it.

Sidney  
 (keeping the option open)  
 Starra, I didn't mean to—

Starra  
 (resetting the play)  
 —Alright. Time In. Lady Train. We runnin' FLEX. The ball comes back to me on the fifth pass. On the rebound fall in to a 3 on 2. Rebounder's on offense. Sidney and the shooter on defense.

Sidney  
 (challenging the offense)  
 Put me on defense? Aw. Ok.

Starra  
 (talking shit)  
 Let's see if you can hold me.

Sidney  
 (challenging her shit)  
 We already know—

Starra  
 (refocusing the team)  
 You can't. Alright ladies, (calls the play) FLEX!

*The girls begin to run the play, FLEX. They count each time the ball is passed. Starra and Sidney encourage all to set solid screens and move the ball around. Sidney out of knowledge of the play. Starra out of her will to lead. Alternately, they tell the other girls to “get your feet planted on the screen,” “move the ball quick,” and to “look for the ball when crossing the lane.” The girls, at first, are rugged as a cold wheel on rails, but soon, the girls warm up to one another. The play has shine, they are smooth as a hot silver rail, the ball is precious cargo. Starra calls for the ball after the fourth pass.*

Starra  
 (calling for the ball from whoever has it)  
 Ball!

*The ball is thrown to Starra. Starra executes the ball to April (wherever she may be).*

Starra  
(commanding April)  
Shot!

*Hit/miss. Donna gets the ball and passes it to Cherise who passes it to Starra. Starra dribbles to the top of the key. Sidney plays defense on her while April plays defense in the paint. It's clear every competition between Starra and Sidney is like their last. Starra attempts to drive pass Sidney, but Sidney's defense is ruthless. She eventually passes it to Donna who shoots. Hit/Miss. April has fallen. Everyone runs to April's aid.*

April  
(getting back on defense)  
I'm alright. I'm alright. My bad Starra. I played too much to the middle. (to herself) I need to be perfect.

Starra  
(regrouping)  
It's all good. Set it up again.

Sidney  
(regrouping)  
Five passes?

Starra  
(regrouping)  
Three Still getting it to April. FLEX!

April  
(motivating)  
I need some motivation.

Sidney  
(leading)  
Girl, I got you!

*The play is on fire this time. They are the Lady Train. Sidney leads their team chant.*

Sidney  
(taking control of the ball)

Starra  
(taking the ball back)

What do you do to every Train that you meet?  
You get down on your knees you cannot pray  
on your feet!

Nah! That's your old team's, not ours.  
(With a bounce of the ball, begins her  
team their traditional team chant)  
Come on ladies! We got the baddest  
team in the city!

*The team, everyone but Sidney, follows Starra's lead.*

Team  
(running the play)  
Right on!

Starra  
(running the play)  
We down to the real nitty gritty!

Team  
(running the play)  
Right on!

Starra  
(running the play)  
And if we win!

Team  
(running the play)  
Right on!

Starra  
(running the play)  
We'll do it again!

Team  
(running the play)  
Right on!

Starra (running the play) And, if we lose!	Team (running the play) Right on!	Starra (running the play) We keep our cool!	Team (running the play) Right on!
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Starra (running the play) Right on! Right on!	Team (running the play) Right on!	Starra (running the play) Right on! Right on!	Team (running the play) Right on!
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Starra  
(running the play)  
Cause we're BIIIG! B-I-G! And we're BAAAD BAD! And we're BOSS! B-O-S-S, B-O-S-S  
BOSS!!!

Team  
(running the play)  
Cause we're BIIIG! B-I-G! And we're BAAAD BAD! And we're BOSS! B-O-S-S, B-O-S-S  
BOSS!!!

Starra  
(calling to whomever has the ball)  
Ball!

*The ball is passed to Starra. Starra executes it to. April shoots. Hit/Miss.*

April (misses the shot) Damn! Rebound!	/	April (scores) In there!
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*Either way, Donna gets the ball and hands it off to Sidney. Sidney takes it to the top of the key. Sidney and Starra go at it once again. This time, Sidney gets around Starra, but dishes off to Cherise who is playing out. Cherise looks toward the basket for a lay-in. April picks Cherise up on defense but Cherise backs away.*

April  
(pushing)  
Come on! Don't be scared!

*Cherise goes toward the basket. April plays defense then backs away to plant her feet and take a charge. Coach Francine Pace enters. Cherise goes for the lay-in pushing her body into April. April falls back perfectly taking a charge. The shot is attempted. The girls are silent for a minute. Cherise rushes to help April up.*

April  
 (refusing the assist)  
 You alright? I'm good.

Sidney  
 (calling it)  
 Uh! That's how you take a charge!

Cherise  
 (helping her up while calling her shot)  
 Hold on now. I'm going to the line on that one.

*Coach Pace examines the scene.*

April  
 (talking shit)  
 Nawl, you fouled me.

Donna  
 (talking shit)  
 Look like a foul to me!

Starra  
 (talking shit)  
 No! April's feet were planted.

Sidney  
 (refereeing)  
 Cherise going to the line.

Starra  
 (refereeing)  
 April get the ball.

Coach Pace  
 (benching April)  
 April. Get off the court

April  
 (staying in the game)  
 Didn't you just see me take a charge?

Coach Pace  
 (benching the whole damn team)  
 Bench. All of you. (Begins her mantra) A train

*The team sits on the bench.*

Team  
 (going to the bench)  
 A train

Coach Pace  
 (changing the game plan)  
 ...is only as strong

Team  
 (going to the bench)  
 ...is only as strong

Coach

(changing the game plan)  
...as its weakest link

Team  
(going to the bench)  
...as its weakest link

*The girls sit on the bench. Starra continues to play with the ball.*

Coach Pace  
(reflecting on her team)  
—April, I’ma tell you the same thing I told Kenyetta, Toy, and Angie. This team can’t function if we’re not on one accord. That’s just it. Your hearts are connected to each other, are connected to the ball, and most importantly are connected to that clock. In ten days, we go to the state tournament. With this baby in you, you are the wink link-

*Starra handles the ball.*

April  
(going for a shot)  
—But Coach Pace—

*Starra handles the ball.*

Coach Pace  
(blocking April’s shot)  
-Take deep breaths. All of you. Put your hands over your hearts. Feel em’ beatin’. If I timed all ya heartbeats right now, at this moment, I should get one rhythm. One heartbeat. We went through so much last season. I didn’t want to let those girls go, but I had to.

Donna  
(posing the triple threat)  
We wouldn’tve made it here without April, Coach.

Coach  
(surveying the offense)  
I know that.

Starra  
(posing the triple threat)  
So, she deserves to play.

Coach  
(surveying the offense)  
April we need your spirit.

Starra  
(still handling the ball)  
We need her on the court to win.

Sidney  
(creating another option)  
Last game wasn’t the same without her.

April

Coach

Donna

(sets up for the shot)  
I can be careful, Coach.

(gets in defense)  
You say that now.

(offers April an assist)  
She got ten in her last game.

Cherise  
(offers April an assist)  
And five steals.

Sidney  
(offers April an assist)  
We need her Friday night, Coach.

April  
(shoots)  
Coach, you know it's true.

Coach Pace  
(blocks the shot)  
April, you throw yourself out there every time the ball hits the floor. Loose ball? If nobody goes after it April will. You on the floor. You in the bleachers. You run after the ball like you a hedgehog. I can't risk you coming out on the court. You'll kill yourself and your baby.

April  
(gets ready to shoot again)  
But, what if I slow it down, Coach?

Coach  
(defends)  
We need you at a hundred percent or nothing.

April  
(maneuvers for a better look)  
I can play hard and not get hurt.

Coach  
(defending)  
I can't take that risk.

April  
(shoots)  
I deserve to be here.

Coach  
(blocks)  
You can travel and sit on the bench.

April  
(rebounds)  
I ain't no bench-warmer.

Coach  
(defends)  
Nobody ever said you were.

April  
(shoots agains)  
So let me play.

Coach  
(fights for rebound)  
Your body has limits now April. You may as well be sick.

April  
(gets the rebound, goes for the score)  
I'm not sick. I'm pregnant.

Coach  
(blocks the shot)

Damn right you are. You laid down like a woman, now deal with the consequences of being one.

Starra

(goes for the rebound behind the back)

But, Coach—

Coach

(snatches the rebound and spread forearms)

The answer is no. You should have thought about that when you spread your legs.

April

(sees the ball is no longer in reach)

Everybody else wants me on the court.

Coach

(covers the ball with her body)

I gotta admit. I have never seen a team stick together like this. Ya'll come in here with these Home Economics bellies on acting like I ain't never seen a pregnant woman run before. April, we want you out there, but if I got to go out there and coach only four seniors, that's what's gonna happen. I've done it before.

*Sighs of expectation are released from the team. They know they are about to get the "1981 Speech".*

Coach

(dribbles into a memory)

In 1981, *I went* to the State tournament. It was my second year coaching. I didn't have but six girls. Carlotta Spencer had hurt her ankle. Then with two minutes left in the fourth quarter her sister, Annetta Spencer, fouled out. The ref asked me if I wanted to forfeit. I told him-

Starra, Sidney, Cherise, Donna, and April

(stare at the old playbook)

Can't stop a moving train-

Coach

(resurrects players from the past)

I looked your mother in the eye Starra. And, I knew I had a point guard who could take that two minutes, her three teammates, and give me victory. And, that's just what happened. We won. So, don't you come here and tell me what or who the Lady Train can't play without. (beat) Donna, your mama know you got those suits out of her classroom?

Donna

(sees the ball is no longer in reach)  
No ma'am.

Coach  
(benches the play)  
Well, I suggest you get em' back in there before I tell her.

Donna  
(walks the play to the bench)  
Yes ma'am.

*Silence as they all get up and remove the empathy suits. Cherise has trouble with hers. Donna tries to help her, but she quickly moves away.*

Coach  
(attempts to gather her players to the center of the floor)  
April, it's just not safe. Understand that?

April  
(checks out the game)  
Yes ma'am, Coach Pace.

Coach  
(gathering her players)  
Alright. Are you ok?

April  
(walks to the bench)  
Yes, Coach.

Coach  
(gathering her players)  
Do you need anything?

April  
(looks for a seat on the bench)  
No, coach.

Coach  
(releasing her players)  
Alright. Go home. Rest up for tomorrow, ladies. Regionals won't get any easier from here. Now, if ya'll excuse me, I got two boys and a husband to get home to.

*Coach checks out. April holds on to the ball. The rest of the team looks on.*

April

(looks for a seat on the bench)

I bet ya'll think I suck huh?

Sidney

(looking at the next option)

April, you good.

April

(refusing the bench)

Before we came up with this plan, Starra, you had stopped talking to me.

Starra

(looking for the next option)

Cause we know what happened.

April

(refusing the bench)

You don't know what happened. You ain't even bothered to ask.

Starra

(calling a foul)

You betrayed us. You let Paul's penis cum inside your vagina. But, it's cool.

April

(refusing the bench)

Ya'll think it's that simple. Donna, Cherise, Sidney?

Cherise

(refereeing April)

I didn't think you wanted to talk about it.

April

(refusing the bench)

What if I need to talk about it though?

Starra

(refereeing April)

I can't speak for everybody April, but why didn't you think of us? We put our hand on a ball right before the season started and made a promise to each other. No drinkin, no smokin, no sex. Remember?

April

(refusing the bench)

I been thinkin' about how to tell ya'll this. I ain't staying pregnant.

Cherise

(refereeing April)

What you mean?

April

(refusing the bench)

I'm gettin' rid of it.

Cherise

(calling a foul)

You can't do that.

April

(refusing the bench)

Yes, I can.

Cherise

(calling a foul)

Yo mama gonna let you?

April

(looking at options)

We already made the appointment. My mama got ahold to some funds, and next Monday, Ima go to the clinic in Greenville. I thought about this real hard. I won't be able to play in the Regional tournament, but, once I get this abortion, I'll be good to go for State.

Cherise

(calling another foul)

Is this just so you can play ball?

Donna

(refereeing Cherise)

Let her talk.

April

(seeing her options)

This ain't just about basketball. I can't have no baby. I need to get away from Plainnole. My grades are good, I'm balling. I'm getting out of this town. I can't say a scout looking at me, but like Starra said, who knows what will happen when we go to State. Come hell or high water, I'm leaving.

Cherise

(holding on to the foul call)

Remember the sins of the body April.

Donna

(refereeing Cherise)

Cherise, she knows.

April

(contesting the foul)

You ain't the only one who got religion Cherise.

Starra

(still going for the foul)

We wouldn't be having this conversation if you had kept your word.

Cherise

Now, you wanna kill your baby.

April

(defending her position)

I ain't killing nothing Cherise. It's called abortion.

Sidney

(seeing the option)

I don't think it's killing.

Donna

(seeing the option)

Ain't nobody on this team perfect.

April

(defending her position)

Listen, I really need ya'll to stand by me in this.

Donna

(opening an option)

We stood by you today. We can keep standing by you.

April

(taking the option)

Everybody in Plainnole know I'm pregnant. When I get back on the court, everybody gonna be asking questions. I hate to ask ya'll to do this but—

Starra

(setting her team up)

—What you want us to do?

April

(creating the option)

If folks ask, tell em I had a miscarriage.

Cherise

(denying the option)

So you want us to lie—

Sidney

(doubting the option)

Why can't you tell them it's not any of their business?

April

(defending her position)

It don't work like that down here Sidney.

Donna

(seeing the option)

It's like they get mad if you make the baby cause the babies cause so many problems, but they get even madder if you say you don't want the baby.

April

(seeing the option)

Bottom line is when a girl has an abortion around here it's hard, and the girl get called everything but a child of a God.

Sidney  
(seeing the option)  
I see. I can keep a secret.

April  
(opening the option)  
What about the rest of ya'll?

Starra  
(giving April the assist)  
—Whatever. Folks gonna talk regardless.

Sidney  
(giving April the assist)  
Girl, April, we got you.

April  
(catching the pass)  
Thanks Sidney.

Starra  
(setting up for the next play)  
Come on, ladies, bring it in.

*Sidney goes to April and hugs her. Starra joins, Donna joins. Cherise is reluctant, but she joins as well. The team embraces.*

Starra  
(staying in the game)  
Ima stay behind.

Cherise  
(staying in the game)  
Me too.

Donna  
(letting the clock wind down)  
I got homework.

Sidney  
(checking out)  
April, you wanna ride?

April  
(checking out)  
Yeah, girl thank you.

*Sidney and April check out.*

Cherise  
(staying in the game)  
Donna, I'll catch up with you later?

Donna  
(checking out)  
Cool.

*Donna checks out.*

Starra  
(staying in the game)  
I told you. Leave me alone.

Cherise  
(staying in the game)  
I meant what I said Starra. If don't admit what you did, you don't deserve what Sidney has.

Starra  
(staying in the game)  
Go home, Cherise.

Cherise  
(opening an option)  
If you won't listen, maybe you'll read.

Starra  
(ignoring the option)  
I don't want that.

Cherise  
(forcing the option)  
Take it anyway.

*Cherise attempts to hand a letter to Starra. Starra allows the letter to fall to the floor. Cherise checks out. Starra gets the letter, puts it inside her tennis sho, and begins to shoot around.*

## 1st Quarter Break

*Starra moves freely around the court, speaking to the audience as she does.*

Starra

So, Cherise don't think I deserve a scout cause I did something she think is so wrong. And, maybe what I did is kinda fucked-up, hind sight 20/20, but I still deserve to make it. Let me say this, everybody on this team got something to hide. April wants us to lie for her. And, Cherise? She lie everyday. Sidney think she better than everybody just cause her mama a engineer. You know that's a lie cause she ain't better than nobody. Donna real with herself, but she let Cherise play fake. The point is ain't nobody perfect, not my teammates and especially not the pros. Everybody play a lil' foul. Everybody play a lil' dirty. Basketball is a contact sport. That's just the way it is.

*Cherise, Donna, April, and Sidney enter. They are props.*

Like Diana Rodman. (*Cherise stands beneath the basket in a defensive post player position; Donna stands in front of her in triple threat, ready to drive.*) Arms like Stretch Armstrong. Waiting on you to come in the lane. (*Donna begins to dribble, poising herself as if she is about to drive in for a lay-up.*) Diana lets you shoot the shot (*Donna drives in, attempts the lay-up*) and, on the way down, BAM (*Donna lands making bodily contact with Cherise*) your tiddy lands on her shoulder. (*Donna balls up in pain holding her breast; Cherise has fallen during the collision as well.*) Now, when a guy does it, he gets the ribs. But, when a girl does it, it's the tiddy. It's worse than kneeling a dude in his nuts. I could never be *that* sneaky.

*Donna and Cherise remain on the floor frozen. Donna faces one direction. Cherise faces the other. Starra walks toward Sidney. Sidney is standing at the perimeter in triple threat. April stands before her in a defensive position.*

Starra

Folks play dirty all the time. But, it ain't a foul unless the refs call it, right? Look at Micah Cooper. Got all the flash in the world and the shoe deal to go with it. She got more shit talk than a sewer.

Sidney

*(as Cherise (Cooper), begins to dribble)*

Yo pappy so fat his dick got rolls.

Starra

*(Sidney does a cross over, bumping April's knee, then shoots a fade away jump shot)*

Then bumps her knee on yours, crosses you over, then fades away.

*Shoots the shot. Hit/Miss.*

Starra

If she hit, she all in your face.

Sidney

Lil' scrub. I'll make this ball your face!

Starra

If she miss, she calling foul.

Sidney

(flops to the floor)

My neck! My back! My neck and my back!

Starra

Then, there are the point guards. Without us the team falls apart. So, when we foul, we gotta be smart. There is no jersey pulled, no knee knocked in a ref's sight. A point guard can drive an opponent insane *and to the hole* if its done right. I be watching guards who get the job done. They never get shook, they stay on the ones. A smart point keeps her team on the hook. Giving em too much information might make em shook. If I make a bad foul, I change the flow. I play real slick, my foul stays invisible. A foul don't exist if a whistle don't blow. And, mind over matter I'm the Starra of the show.

Voiceover

(heard but not seen)

Starra.

Starra.

Starra.

Starra.

Starra.

Starra.

Starra

Hear that? The crowd sees me. They call my name like I'm already in the league. Ain't no foul if the whistle don't blow. And like I said, I'm the Starra of the show.

*The voiceover continues to say Starra's name. She basques in the glory. Unable to be the invisible presence she aspires to be. She doesn't exit until they stop saying her name. Lights focus on Donna and Cherise who, now sit in a car. "Weak" by SWV softly plays from the radio. Cherise playfully sings along. She playfully kisses Donna softly on the cheek. Donna is receptive but unmoved.*

Donna  
What was that for?

Cherise  
Cause I wanted to.

Donna  
I'm not your practice dummy Cherise.

Cherise  
It was just—

Donna  
—a kiss? You still trying to see if it's real?

Cherise  
Yes. No. I don't know. We need to talk.

*Donna turns the music off.*

Donna  
Talk then.

Cherise  
Are you really going to New Orleans after graduation?

Donna  
Yes. Hell yes. I got a full scholarship to Xavier for pre-med.

Cherise  
Well my mama said it's dirty. She said she walked down Bourbon and felt the seven deadly sins on her skin.

Donna  
That's why I'm not doing no fake ass baptism with you.

Cherise  
Why not?

Donna  
You just got that youth minister license, now you turning into every ole' church biddy around here.

Cherise

That's how you see me?

Donna

How do you see you, Cherise?

Cherise

A child of God.

Donna

See there. Tell me you don't think the that baptism isn't gonna wash the gay away.

Cherise

That's not why I wanna do this.

Donna

You been baptized twice.

Cherise

I'll do it again. Donna, it can be so beautiful. I have seen whole families go to the water before. And, one after one, they catch a contact from each other. That only happens when people are truly spiritually connected. They are bound by, love, water, spirit. I've never witnessed anything more miraculous.

Donna

Everybody doesn't feel the way you do.

Cherise

What if your folks came?

Donna

My daddy? Who won't sit beside me at church? Or come to my games?

Cherise

This needs to happen. April talking about abortion.

Donna

That's between April and Jesus.

Cherise

And, Starra. That's who I really want to talk about about.

Donna  
Starra will be cool if she stop letting Sidney get to her.

Cherise  
Too late for that.

Donna  
At this point, as good as Sidney playing and as bad Starra wanna win, Starra not gonna do anything to fuck up.

Cherise  
I wouldn't say that.

Donna  
Ok. So say something. You wanna talk. Talk.

Cherise  
Donna, Starra tried to get Sidney pregnant.

Donna  
What?

Cherise  
Starra tried to get Sidney pregnant.

Donna  
How the fuck she gonna do that?

Cherise  
She poked a hole in one of Sidney's condoms.

Donna  
Nooooooooo.

Cherise  
Yes. I saw it with my own eyes.

Donna  
Damn. How did she even get em? And when?

Cherise  
She went in her locker. It ain't like we got locks on em. It was that Wednesday after we played the Lions.

Donna

Yeah we beat the hell out of them.

Cherise

You remember Sidney scored like

Donna and Cherise

26 points.

Donna

That's when the second scout showed up too. Coach started saying she had two captains now. Starra didn't like that shit.

Cherise

Sidney came in there talking shit about the pact. She was saying something like, "If you knew about these Trojan horses, you wouldn't have to be on (*strains Cherise to say this*) pussy patrol."

Donna

For real Sidney, like we ain't heard of spermicide before?

Cherise

Anyway. What I saw next I can't not see. My cousin, took the safety pin from that necklace Uncle Jermaine gave her and took those condoms out of Sidney's locker. Then, she did not just poke, she stabbed the condom with all her might. It was like she was trying to kill something.

Donna

Yeah! Sidney's career. Why didn't you take em?

Cherise

Coach came in rushing us out to the floor. By the time I went back for em' they were gone. A couple of days later April's mama told Coach April was pregnant. Now Starra looking crazy—

Donna

Cause we might be about to lose two players.

Cherise

I think Starra is keeping quiet cause she wants what she did to go away. She won't talk about it.

Donna

Starra keeping quiet cause she shamed. Why didn't you just saying something?

Cherise

I been praying about it.

Donna

Praying?

Cherise

What was I supposed to do? Tell on my cousin? Let Starra get put off the team. To tell the truth, if Sidney keeps the pact, like she supposed to, it won't matter.

Donna

It mattered with April.

Cherise

I'm worried about Sidney and Starra. I wrote her a letter.

*Sidney enters the space where Starra was shooting around at the end of First Quarter. She notices a letter on the floor and picks it up.*

Donna

What it say?

Cherise

I basically told her nothing good would come from poking a hole in that condom?

Donna

You put the words "poke," "hole," and "condom" in the letter, just like that?

Cherise

No. I'm not that crazy. It said...

Sidney

(reading)

Dear Starra, I want D-R-O-P a few lines to you. (recollecting) Heeey! We used to do that in Cali. (continues to read) What you did was wrong. If basketball does this to you, then you may need to step away from the game. Starra, remember, what God has for you is for you. There is nothing you can do to steal Sidney's scout away from her...(stops reading) What? Steal my scout away from me?

*Cherise and Sidney say the following simultaneously.*

Cherise

But, you can cleanse yourself of the foul.

Sidney

But, you can cleanse yourself of the foul?

Donna

Damn. I had another dream the other night.

Cherise

Don't tell me it had fish in it.

Donna

It wasn't a whole school of fish like with April. It was just one. I was swimming in Lake Chicot. The mud in the water surrounded me, started to get in my body, but my eyes could see forward. It was a fish. Just like before April told us she was pregnant, I saw a fish. I saw one in my dream last night, Cherise. I could tell by the lips it was a catfish. But, seem like the closer it got, the more it became a girl. She had a face. Like I said, it wasn't the same-

Cherise

-but it's still a dream with a fish. And, one of your dreams already came true.

Donna

That ain't all. You know who Shamon been hollerin at?

Cherise

Sidney.

*Lights dim on, Sidney, Donna, and Cherise. Donna and Cherise drive off.*

Sidney

I ain't gonna act like I didn't know. I knew Starra Jones was a D1 scout hoe. But she know she can't outshine my flame, so she trying some backdoor shit outside the game. Should I play it cool cause I know Plainnole is a shit hole and ain't nothing here but dirt and tornadoes? There is no doubt, if I was born here I'd so anything to get out. I just need to know what she did that Cherise is scared to write with her pen. Not even the chick who thinks God is convenience and prayer is a scheme can justify what her cuz has tried to do to our team? If I was in Oakland I wouldn't have these problems, but Mama made me come. Grandma was sick and she didn't want leave home. Now I'm on a team full of mosquitoes, my skills are Starra's pawn. I just need to know what Starra did, so I'll know how to play this smart. The best thing to do is be stable on defense, fall back, and take a charge.

2nd Quarter

*Without a ball, Starra mimics shooting a shot, peddles backward, then assumes a defensive position. Coach Pace listens off-court. The regional bracket that was once incomplete, now shows Plainnole in the #2 spot. There is now a State bracket on top of the Regional bracket that shows them at the bottom.*

Starra  
21!

Coach  
(off-court)  
Keep going.

*From where she stands, Starra mimics a shot again, peddles backward, then assumes a defensive position.*

Starra  
22!

Coach  
(from off-court)  
Again!

Starra  
How many coach?

Coach  
(from off-court)  
Ummmmm..maybe till I find somebody who can hold you.

Starra  
(mumbles)  
I made the shot.

Coach  
What?

Starra  
23! I wanna go home tonight at some point Coach!

Coach  
Your mama saw the game. She knows why you're here.

*Stops and faces the audience.*

Starra

(reflecting on the game)

How the fuck did what happened tonight? Happen tonight. I hit the shot! I stood at the three point line and it was swoosh! Nothing but the bottom of the net! I won that game! Listen. It was fourth, quarter nineteen point eight seconds left on the clock. The crowd was so loud. (*Sounds of a crowd erupt, saying "Defense! Defense!" repetitively.*) I could hear em every step of the way. Coach was really coaching her ass off. April was there for us. (*One by one, the players and Coach check in. Coach stands out-of-bounds pacing back and forth. April sits on the bench out of bounds as well. Sidney, Starra, Donna, and Cherise assume a defensive position.*) Clutch as fuck. Like I said, I was in my zone. The score was 52-53. We were down, but I knew all I had to do was get the ball in my hands. The other team had the ball. Coach kept saying-

Coach

-When they shoot, get that rebound! Get the ball up the floor like your life depends on it! Starra! Be the slow bird!

April

Come on ya'll. Let's go. We got this.

Starra

It's the regional finals.

Sidney

Finals.

Donna

The score is 52-53.

Sidney

52-53.

Starra

We're down.

Cherise

There's not much time on the clock. 19 seconds.

Sidney

There's 19.8 seconds on the clock. Anything can happen.

April  
She's gonna shoot it!

Starra  
Shot!

*All except Starra get in the position to block out. Starra begins to run in place. Donna and Cherise both jump struggling for the ball.*

Coach, Cherise and Donna  
Rebound!

*Cherise runs in place like her life depends on it.*

Donna  
I got it!

Sidney  
Ball!

Coach and Sidney  
Outlet!

Sidney  
I got it!

*Sidney begins dribbling motions.*

April  
There's Starra! There's Starra!

Starra  
Ball! Ball! Ball! Ball!!!!

Coach  
We either gotta tie the game or get ahead.

Starra  
Donna!

Cherise  
I got ya rebound!

Sidney  
Watch the defense!

Starra  
(shoots the ball)  
Shot!

Starra  
Uh! She can't hold me!

Coach  
Get back!

Sidney  
Man up! Man up!

April  
It's 55-53! Defense, ladies! Defense!

*Starra stares at the goal. For her, the game is over.*

Coach and Sidney  
Get back!

Sidney  
3 seconds left! They're already up the floor! What the fuck is she doing!

Coach  
Get back Starra Jones!

April  
2 seconds!

Cherise and April  
Starra!

Donna  
Starra check your man!

Donna and Cherise  
Shot!

Coach  
No, Starra!

Starra  
Foul!?

Coach  
Foul.

Starra  
I ain't touch her!

*Starra tries to go to the bench.*

Coach  
Was she at the three point line? Shit, Starra. Is that 23's fifth foul? Her fourth one. Stay your ass back in there and block out.

*Lights go dim on all except Starra.*

Starra  
(reflecting on the game)  
Here's the thing about free throws. Either a player can shoot them or they can't. I had put Keshia Smith on the free throw line. They say she hit twelve free throws in one quarter. Did not miss one. So, on the first one I held my breath. She held hers too, then exhaled on the release.

April  
54-55, still us yall! Missssss iiiittttt!!!

Starra  
The second shot was just a ripple from the first.

April  
55-55! It's alright! We going to overtime ladies!

Starra  
And the last one? She stepped away from the line and took a deep breath. You get 10 seconds for every free-throw. I think she took all ten.

Sidney  
Come on ladies! Get ready to rebound.

Cherise  
Block out!

Donna  
Shot!

April  
55-56.

Sidney  
Game over. We lost.

*Lights go black. Spotlight shines on Starra. All check-out except Coach. Starra resumes the back peddling drill. She takes a shot then back peddles.*

Starra  
(reflecting on the game)  
I lost the game.

*Starra shoots, then begins to back peddle again, but is stopped by Coach who is now behind her.*

Coach  
(checks the ball)  
Stop for a minute.

Starra  
(denies)  
Coach, I didn't foul her.

Coach  
(checking the ball)  
It's done. That game is over. Before we go to State, Starra, I need to know what's going on with you.

Starra  
(gives the check)  
I'm good Coach.

Coach  
(gets in defensive position)  
You almost fouling out every game. You not making smart choices.

Starra  
(dribbles)  
Cause we running Sidney's play.

Coach  
(plays hard defense)  
Flex is not about Sidney. It's about the entire team. It's the first time in a long time, I've had enough talent on one team to efficiently run it. Every one of you can make a play with or without the ball in your hands.

Starra  
(dribbles)  
We ran it better with April on the court.

Coach  
(step and slide)  
Don't start.

Starra  
(dribbles)  
She ain't doing us no good on the sidelines.

Coach  
(step and slide)  
I said it once and I'll say it again. The basketball court-the State Tournament- is no place for a girl with a baby in her belly.

Starra  
(dribbles fancy)  
She ain't even *that* pregnant Coach.

Coach  
(step and slide)  
How pregnant is *that pregnant*? For the sake of this season, you're gonna have to forgive April and move on.

Starra  
(dribbles back)  
Did your teammate who lost the baby forgive you?

Coach  
(loses a step)  
Now, hold on.

Starra

(crossover)

That's the whole reason why April can't play.

Coach

(lags a step behind)

Little girl—

Starra

(hard step to the basket)

—I understand your teammate was pregnant, and you feel responsible because you were the captain and didn't tell anyone. But why we gotta suffer for your mistakes?

Captain

(recovers on defense)

The mistake is you stood in one spot and didn't get back on defense tonight. You won the crowd's attention, but you lost the game. I've had to tell you this before, you play for the love of the crowd, not the love of the game.

Starra

(dribbles to the top of the key)

Coach I love ball on a gym floor. But, I loved it first on the dirt court. And wasn't no crowds out there cheering. It was just us- me, Daddy, and Shamon. Daddy put up a goal he got us one Christmas. We took every basketball he we had in the house. And we started beating the grass like it stole something. Dribbling so hard we turned grass into dust. We rubbed our tennis shoes in it. When we got done it was our court. Every kid who lived around us came and played and got served, dirty. Daddy said even though he never recruited mine and Shamon's journey would start right where his did, in the dirt.

Captain

(maintains defensive positioning)

He said he never got recruited?

Starra

(analyzes the court)

No, Coach. And, that's why I gotta go so hard. Daddy put me on the dirt court, then the summer after he died Mama started taking me to the Booker court. She said if I wanted to be hard, I had to learn to play on concrete. But put me on dirt, the concrete, or this wax floor I'm balling. That's why I know it's only a matter of time before I get some attention.

Coach  
(sets up the play)  
Starra, you're already getting attention.

Starra  
(sets up to pass)  
I knew it!

Coach  
(runs the 1st option)  
A Junior College in Mississippi wants you.

Starra  
(ignores the 1st option)  
What?

Coach  
(runs the 1st option again)  
It's a feeder school.

Starra  
(ignores the option)  
Mississippi? That's just deeper in the dirt. Who wanna go to Mississippi?

Coach  
(runs the 1st option again)  
Somebody who needs to mature on and off the court.

Starra  
(sees another option)  
But Sidney got all these schools—

Coach  
(runs the 1st option)  
I'm talking about Starra Jones. Not Sidney.

Starra  
(denies the 1st option)  
No. I ain't going-there

Coach  
(runs the 1st option again)  
-Starra it might be your best option.

Starra

(denies the 1st option)

No. Coach, I might not be a summer camp all-star, but that don't mean I can't ball. Put me up against any of em in AAU, can't none of em hold me! I'm putting up the stats. They do two-a-days, I do two-a-days. They shoot 200 shots a day, I shoot 200 shots a day. You can't tell me I can't do what she can when I got out there every Tuesday and Friday night and do exactly what she do.

Coach

(sets up play again)

Listen, Starra.

Starra

(denies the first option))

Coach, tell me, *me*, a girl you done coached all these years can't make it? You know when it comes to making plays, the only thing that separates me from Sidney Brown is that Sidney Brown is the golden girl from California and Starra Jones is from the dirt courts of Plainnole, Arkansas.

Coach

(starts the motion)

I can't believe I'm the one telling you this. But, your father got recruited.

Starra

(stands in place)

That's not what he told me and Shamon.

Coach

(runs the play)

Jermaine didn't get the type of attention he wanted. So, he walked away from it all.

Starra

(stands in place)

He told us nobody recruits ballplayers in Plainnole.

Coach

(reveals the first option again)

That's just not true. Nobody *he* wanted came to Plainnole. But, they came for him. He chose the army instead.

Starra

(stands in place)

No. He told me and Shamon that scouts never came here.

Coach

(reveals the 1st option)

A Division Three scout came here and offered him an education. He was on some all or nothing stuff. You can't do that. Especially with this game of basketball, it's a mixture of your talent, your hard work, and the circumstances life has given you. I need you to think about that before you decide you're too good for a JUCO. (Pause) I'm going in my office. But, I'll be leaving the gym in a minute. I'll give you a ride home.

Starra

(stands in place)

Ok, Coach. (*Coach checks out. Starra looks to the sky.*) Ok, Coach. (*Coach checks out. Starra looks to the sky.*) Daddy, is Coach telling the truth? Did you have the chance to go to school and throw it away? Could you still be alive showing me and Shamon the rules of the game? Were you really that desperate to get away from these train tracks and dust, you threw away the choice that would've kept you home with us? All this time, I thought it was my destiny to keep your dream alive through me. You said you gave your all to the court, but you gave up the game when life came up short. Then you tell me and Shamon we gotta be ruthless. If we not, that means our hearts ain't in it. I set up a teammate for failure cause I thought her destiny was mine. I thought to really be a star, I had to steal her shine. How do I get past doing something so selfish, something so foolish, something so hellish? And, Cherise' question keeps playing in my mind over and over again. If I don't make this better, do I deserve to win?

## Halftime

*The same night as before. Tensions are high as The Lady Train have just suffered a defeat. The defeat is not tragic, but it places them in the lower division of the Arkansas State Tournament bracket. The sleepover, which was intended to be a celebration, has become a time for serious contemplation. On Sidney's television, the 1994 NCAA Women's Championship game, in which North Carolina Lady Tarheels beat Louisiana Tech's Lady Bulldogs with a buzzer-beater, plays. Sidney is in her living room alone holding on to a basketball watching a recorded game. April is there, but her mind is clearly not on the game tonight.*

Sidney

(talking to herself with remote in her hand)

I'm so pissed at Starra. It's just like this game right here. I've watched it a trillion times cause I'll be damned if I make the same mistake.

*April checks in and sits. There's a moment. Sidney attempts to relinquish her anger about the game due to April's presence. She pauses the game, turns her attention to April.*

Sidney

She just told you?

April

Yeah, I went home after the game and she had this long speech.

Sidney

I'm sorry your mama changed her mind.

April

It's ok. I'm 18. I can figure it out.

Sidney

Let me know if you need anything.

April

I will.

Sidney

This gotta be hard.

April

(absent-minded)

Yeah. (a bit more present) Were those your birth control pills in the bathroom?

Sidney

Yeah, girl. I got the house to myself, I can just lay stuff around. My mama know what's up, but if my grandma saw those, she would throw a fit.

*The phone rings. Sidney answers it.*

Sidney

Hello. Hey Ms. Jenkins. I'm good. *(Pause.)* Yeah we lost, the last regional game, but we still going to State. We just gotta make a few changes in leadership. *(Pause.)* Yes ma'am. She's here. Here April.

*Sidney hands the phone to April.*

April

(whispers)

Hey, mama. (Pause) You don't have to check up on me. (Pause) No, I'm not sneaking to Paul's house again.

Sidney

Everything ok?

April

Yeah. Just family business. Ima take this to another room.

*Sidney nods. April checks out. Sidney resumes watching the game. There's a knock at the door. Sidneyn opens the door. Starra stands there.*

Sidney

Hmph. I thought you weren't coming.

Starra

I told ya'll I was coming.

Sidney

I didn't hear you.

Starra

You not gon' let me in?

*Sidney returns to the couch, unpauses the VCR. She and Starra both Starra at it. Sidney looks at Starra then looks at the couch. Starra sits as far away from Sidney as possible.*

Starra

94' NCAA Women's Championship?

Sidney

Yeah.

Starra

North Carolina and Louisiana Tech?

Sidney

I was going for my future team.

Starra

Who?

Sidney

Don't play. Everybody knows about MY scout.

Starra

You brag about it enough.

Sidney

She's been looking at me since I got here.

Starra

If she looking at you, she looking at me.

*Sidney ignores Starra, looks at the game.*

Sidney

Louisiana Tech had fourteen turnovers.

Starra

Pam Thomas still a cold point.

Sidney

A cold point who let her team down.

Starra

I can leave.

Sidney

What? Can't watch this game?

Starra

I know what happened. Tech lost.

Sidney  
I watched in person. It was depressing.

Starra  
What? Ya mommy bought you tickets?

*Sidney goes back to the game.*

Sidney  
Zero. Point. Zero. Seven Seconds left on the clock.

Starra  
You ain't gotta walk me through it.

Sidney  
Charlotte Smith was bangin.  
Tech thought they had it won.  
Smith had been killin it all game.  
Thomas put her life on that floor-  
-She lost this one.  
Tech thought they had it.  
But, they didn't. You know why?  
They forgot about time, Starra.  
It was enough time.

Starra  
Tech was tired.  
They defended the inside.  
From the inside she wasn't shootin no tre's.  
-And, she made it to the WNBA.-  
Players make mistakes.  
They almost did.  
They didn't make the right clutch decision.  
It wasn't no time!  
Less than a second!

Sidney  
They turned they backs on time. Just like you did tonight! You got so excited you forgot to get back on defense! We needed you to get back!

Starra  
I got back!

Sidney  
After you reveled in glory for ten minutes.

*Donna and Cherise check-in.*

Sidney  
Just goes to show, we need a new captain. (to Donna and Cherise) Don't we?

Donna  
We just got here.

Starra  
Ya'll know who been leading ya'll since 9th grade. Who put up a triple tonight.

Cherise  
Ain't no need in quoting stats, Starra. We lost. Anyway, I gotta do my business. Sidney where's your bathroom?

Sidney

Starra

Starra you still leaving?

My team's here. I'm here.

April

(a loud whisper, off-court)

Mama that's what you think.

Cherise

April here?

Sidney

Yeah. The bathroom's down the hall to the right Cherise.

Donna

Yo. Ya'll act like ya'll don't smell this fish and spaghetti? Sidney you act like you don't see these aluminum foil pans in my hands?

Sidney

My bad, girl. Put those in the kitchen over there.

*Donna goes into the kitchen.*

Sidney

That's much better than rotating pizza I got from the Pig.

Donna

(from off-court)

Sidney this house is gorgeous. Ima live like ya'll one day.

*April checks in. She sits down.*

April

Hey, everybody.

Sidney

You ok?

*Donna checks in. Quickly observes the mood and has a seat. At the same time, Cherise checks in. She has a magazine in her hands.*

April

My mama. Family stuff. It's nerve wrecking.

Cherise

Is your mother changing her mind about the abortion?

Starra  
Cherise!

April  
Annnnd Hi, Cherise. How are you?

Cherise  
My bad. Sidney, you know you got birth control pills just laying on your bathroom counter?

Sidney  
Yessss. I started em before I moved here. And, once you start, you can't flip-flop. Whether you having sex or not.

Cherise  
Annnnd, I saw this Ebony spice Magazine too. Aunt Lisa read these? Don't she Starra?

Donna  
Why you being so nosey?

*Donna snatches the magazine from Cherise and starts flipping through the pages.*

Starra  
(a little annoyed)  
She loves it.

Sidney  
That's my mama's, but sometimes I read it too.

Donna  
Ms. Lisa might read em' but Starra better not.

Sidney  
Yo mama strict on you?

Donna  
Girl, yeah!

Sidney  
And, your brother?

Donna  
She make em' both watch labor videos.

Cherise  
Yeep.

Donna  
And, she say if one of em make a baby while they living in her house, she gonna cut em.

Sidney  
Dang.

Donna  
Knife in hand and all.

Cherise  
Aunt Lisa don't play.

Starra  
She work around people picking cotton and soybeans everyday cause of mistakes they made. She don't want us doing the same thing.

Donna  
What's this one? "I Was His Nanny and His Freak." Look at his! Oh!

Sidney  
I can tell ya'll about that one. It's so good. It was so real. The author said she was babysitting for a woman named Anita and her husband Michael Jordan--

Starra  
That wasn't his name!

Sidney  
Yes, it was! Anita, was going somewhere on business. So, she had to stay and take care of their sons cause Michael worked all the time and wouldn't have time to cook and clean and do all the things his wife usually did. The job was cool. And, the husband was fine as hell! Sometimes, she thought, when Anita wasn't looking, he would hang his tongue out at her.

Starra  
Hell nawl!

Cherise  
For real?

Donna

Maybe, it's true.

Cherise

You never know.

Sidney

So, she stayed there for three whole days and three whole nights. She even had to use the washing machine to wash their clothes. One day, while the kids was gone to afternoon Bible study, she was doing laundry and decided to sit on the washer for a few minutes. You know? To feel the vibrations. When the washer was done, she pulled out these red Hanes underwear.

Donna

Boxers or briefs?

Cherise

Briefs!

Sidney

Yes! She knew she hadn't put them in the washer, so he must have done it! She put them in the dryer for him. He must have needed them before he went to work. She didn't want him to go out in the world free-balling. That would be too much for the workplace to handle. So, once she heard the dryer turn off, she retrieved the red briefs. She went to the bathroom door where he was showering. She knocked. He said.

*Sidney pauses.*

Donna

What did he say?

Sidney

He said, "Do you have something for me?"

Starra

This story so fake.

Cherise

He knew she was coming.

Donna

Coming! Ha!

Sidney

So, she said, "Wait till we get your Hanes on you." And he said, (*Dramatic pause, the girls say nothing.*) "Wait till I get my hands on you."

*Donna and Cherise erupt with curiosity and passion.*

Starra

Jordan don't even talk like that!

Sidney

There was steam everywhere rising from the mirrors and his body. He liked to listen to music while he showered, so Silk's "Lose Control" steamrolled through the hard wood floors of the mansion, the harmonies melting her vagina like the sun melts chocolate. He stood there tongue wagging, looking like a whole other extension. He beckoned her to him. She could do nothing but walk forward with those warm red briefs in her tiny hand. Then, he leaned over and kissed her on her nipple that stood erect through her white t-shirt moistened by the steam. She knew there was no turning back. He'd made her love come down. She tried to give him the underwear, but at that point they could only serve as a cape for his raging bull horn.

Starra

She lying!

Sidney

How you know?

Starra

Cause. He Michael Jordan. He ain't gotta screw no nanny.

Donna

Dang Starra. Nannies need love too.

Starra

If they so desperate they gotta lie on Jordan dick, let em.

Sidney

Well I don't know if it's true or not. All I know is it got me hot.

Cherise

It almost got me hot.

Sidney

It did? (Pause) April you real quiet. You good?

April

Yeah. I'm fine. Why our mamas try to make sex seem like it's the worst thing in the world, then have magazines laying around the house with nannies fucking Michael Jordan?

Sidney

My mama talks to me about stuff. She bought the condoms I showed ya'll.

Starra

What condoms?

Sidney

Starra you don't remember me showing you those?

Starra

I don't remember nothing.

Cherise

We ain't learned about that in nowhere but health class.

April

When that 80 year old paper bag did a condom demonstration.

Cherise

I didn't watch. It was weird. His hands were shaking.

Sidney

Why don't we do it now? Who knows Cherise? You may need to one day. Especially if you plan on having sex-

Sidney

*-with boys—*

Cherise

—Of course of course I plan on having sex with boys. Come on. I just don't feel like talking about this.

Sidney

Well, I can show ya'll. Cherise, you can go get the penises?

Cherise

What penises?

Sidney

Look in the kitchen. It's right over there. There's some cucumbers and squash at the bottom of the refrigerator.

Starra

Cherise you ain't got to.

April

It's not a big deal. I'll go get the penises.

*April goes to the kitchen.*

Sidney

I'll just go get my stash.

*Sidney goes to her bedroom*

Donna

Cherise, you good?

Cherise

(to Donna)

What if one of those condom's is *the* condom?

*Sidney checks back in.*

Sidney

I must've left em in my car.

*Sidney goes out to her car. April checks-in, arms filled with cucumbers and butternut squash.*

April

There you go.

Cherise

What you giving it to me for?

April

Putting a condom on a vegetable ain't gonna hurt.

Cherise

Maybe you should put a condom on some meat a month ago.

April

For real Cherise?

Donna

Why would you say that?

Cherise

I'm sorry April. I just blurted it out.

Starra

Cherise just watch what you say.

*Now in a lighthearted mood, Sidney checks in carrying condoms. Everyone except Starra should be sitting on the couch or very close to it.*

Sidney

Look at our garden of growth.

*April gets up to go the bathroom.*

Sidney

Where you going?

April

The bathroom.

*April goes to the bathroom.*

Sidney

Whose participating?

Starra

You are.

Sidney

Cherise?

*Silence.*

Sidney

We can make a game out of it. Come on, everybody take one. (*Sidney passes out one condom to everyone.*) Seriously, ya'll don't want to play?

Donna

I'm good.

Sidney

Ok. More fun and education for me. (*She picks hers up, feels it then makes a face.*) Open your package. (*Everybody is still.*) Come on ya'll. This is innocent fun, and, like you said Donna, we need to take our mind off the game. Me and my old teammates would do silly stuff like this all the time. (*Attempts to open it with her fingers.*) I usually have to use my teeth to tear it open.

*(Sidney opens the condom with her teeth.)* At least we know it got a tight seal. *(Sidney picks up the butternut squash)* Tooouoo big. *(Sidney picks up cucumber.)* Juuuust right. I feel like Goldilocks. You make sure you got it on the right side. Then you put it on the tip like this.

Cherise

I'm going to the bathroom.

*Cherise stands but watches intently.*

Sidney

And, just rooIIlll it down. Real slow and sexy. Liiike thiiiiissss. *(to Cherise)* Cherise I thought you said you had to got the bathroom? *(Cherise goes to the bathroom. Sidney resumes her task.)* Just keep rolling. See the lubricant helps it glide on real nice and easy. *(Looks at the side, notices something is wrong.)* Hold on.

Donna

Didn't April go in the bathroom? -Cherise April's in there!

Cherise

-April what are you doing?

April

-Would you get out!-

Donna

What ya'll doing?

*Donna gets up to see what's going on in the bathroom. By now, there is a wide hole in the condom.*

Sidney

-Why is a hole in this condom- *(whispers at Starra)* That's what you-did.

*Only Starra witnesses what Sidney now knows. Sidney and Starra stay suspended in a stare.*

Cherise

Give me those pills!

Sidney  
Pills?

*Sidney and Starra go to the bathroom. Shortly after, April returns to the living room.*

April  
I was just thinking about it.

*The girls return to the living room. Sidney has a birth control pill compact and nine loose pills in her hand.*

Cherise  
You had them pills in your hand.

Donna  
What were you trying to do?

Sidney  
She's trying to give herself an abortion.

Starra  
For real April?

Donna  
April, that's not safe.

April  
I didn't swallow any.

Cherise  
You were about to.

April  
Shut up Cherise.

Cherise

Your mother changed her mind didn't she?

April

It ain't ya business.

Starra

Did she?

Cherise

Thank god.

April

It's not even what you think. It didn't happen that way.

Starra

What happened?

April

The money ran out. She don't have the money. Everything happened all at one time. The light bill came. It was high as hell. Then the gas. Then the dude who was supposed to buy food stamps from us. He didn't come through. Now, mama is saying it's not meant to be.

Sidney

What about Paul?

April

He asked. His folks ain't got no money. And, even if they did, his mama wouldn't give it.

Cherise

You trying to take the fast way out. You not thinking right.

April

That's what you say. Fuck what you say, Cherise. How you know I haven't been thinking about it? So, what's gonna happen? I have a baby. I bring my baby home to be around all the other people in the world who say they give a fuck about em. And, next thing I know my child is

telling me, just like I had to tell my mama that a cousin, a uncle, or auntie forced em to do things sexual things that they knew was wrong. Cause that's what happened to me.

Cherise

I'm sorry April I didn't know.

April

What else you need to know Cherise? My cousin, the one who raped me. He was molested. Who knows? Maybe our cousin who molested him was molested too. And maybe somebody did it to him. And, somebody did it to her or him. And that person, and that person, and that person. And, it just goes and goes and goes and goes. And, the worst part is don't nobody in my family talk about it. Gotta watch Oprah if you ever wanna see somebody actually saying how fucked up this shit is. How fucked up these families are. Well not my child. Not my baby. I'll be damned if I bring a child into this world for that shit. I'm getting as far away as I can from the big fat Plainnole family lie. This lie that family got your back. Everything they tell you is the truth and all you have to do is lean on them in times of trouble. I tried to lean on mine and all I got was silence and blank stares. You understand yet Cherise? When I'm in a place where I think a child can be safe, that's when I'll have a baby. But, by hell or high water I'm getting rid of this one. *(She looks around at them)* Look at ya'll. Don't know what to say. Do you, Cherise? Sidney, I don't want to go home. Can I go in your room?

Sidney

I don't think you need to be alone.

April

Sidney, I promise, I'm good.

Sidney

I'll back there in a minute to check on you.

*Sidney lays the pills on the table. April goes to Sidney's bedroom.*

Cherise

Did ya'll know all that about April?

Sidney

She told me a few weeks ago.

Starra

She told me a while back.

Sidney

Mmmm...She told you?

Donna

I had no idea.

Cherise

I can't imagine something like that happening to me.

Starra

I just didn't realize it still affected her like that.

Sidney

(Not wanting to agree with Starra)

Me either.

Sidney

She told me she learned to handle it.

Starra

Obviously not, she still dealing with it.

Donna

What's she gonna do about the abortion?

Cherise

Her mother doesn't want her to.

Donna

Did you hear what she said? By hell or high water? She's gonna do it. And, she may not care if she's safe or not.

Starra

You can't tell me she wasn't about to take those pills.

Sidney

April never said she changed her mind. She said her mama changed her mind.

Donna

And, there's that lady who does em' for cheap.

Starra

I heard about her. She ain't safe.

Sidney

So what's up?

Donna

Yeah ya'll. What's up? Do we want a dead teammate on our conscious?

Cherise

I know ya'll ain't?

Sidney

An abortion is \$250.

Donna

Greenville ain't that far away.

Sidney

My mama just gave me some money for another pair of J's.

Donna

I got my Dollar General money I was holding onto.

Sidney

Starra?

Starra

I'm sitting on it.

Sidney

I really, really think you should help out on this one. Captain.

Donna

Starra, what about the money you saving up?

Starra

That money is for a car, for me.

Donna

I'm putting in seventy-five.

Sidney

My mama just gave me some money for some new J's. That's a hundred. (*stares Starra down*)

Starra, you sure you can't?

Starra

I got fifty. Cherise?

Cherise

What? I ain't got it on me.

Donna

Cherise, April go to church just as much as you. You gotta understand this ain't easy for her.

Cherise

I'll go.

Donna

Good.

Cherise

But, I'm not giving any money.

Sidney

Captain, think of it as payment toward the pussy control pact.

Starra

Whatever. I got the other twenty-five.

Donna

That's two-fifty right there.

Sidney

So we have to go all the way to Mississippi?

Donna

That's where they made the appointment anyway. Monday morning, we all meet up at school, then we going to Greenville. We'll be back by practice.

*Lights fade.*

## 3rd Quarter

*It's Monday morning. All the girls are in Donna's car riding toward Greenville, Mississippi. Donna drives. Cherise sits in the front seat with a Bible she holds tightly. Donna leads the girls in singing TLC's "What about Yo Friends" trying to keep a light mood, Donna sings Chili's high parts. Sidney sings along. Starra and April are quiet.*

Donna and Sidney  
(centering the zone)

What about yo' frieends will they stand their ground? Will they let you down again?

Donna  
(centering the zone)  
Whoa-ooo-oooooooooooo

Donna and Sidney  
(centering the zone)  
What about yo' friends?

Donna  
(centering the zone)  
A-what about yo' friends?

Donna and Sidney (*Donna sings words in parenthesis*)  
(keeping the zone tight)  
Are they gonna be low down? (Be low down? )Will they ever be around? (Be around! Oh!) Or will they turn their back on you!?

*Donna swerves.*

Cherise  
(seeing the periphery)  
Donna watch out!

Donna  
(defending the middle)  
I got this. You good April?

April  
(staying in her zone)  
Yeah, I'm ok.

Donna  
(defending the middle)  
Starra, you can get in on this song whenever you feel it.

Starra  
(stalling the play)  
I know.

Sidney  
 (stepping out of the zone)  
 Why you so quiet Starra?

Starra  
 (stalling the play)  
 Thinking to myself

Donna  
 (playing to the middle)  
 Are we bothering you by singing, April?

April  
 (staying in her zone)  
 No. I'm just nervous. It helps that ya'll came through for me in a way I never imagined my team would. I'm glad I'm not alone today.

Cherise  
 (helping out the weak side)  
 I'm here for moral support.

April  
 (playing in the middle)  
 I know you helped out with gas.

Cherise  
 (helping out the weak side)  
 I just want you to be safe.

April  
 (adjusting to the strong side)  
 And, I'm not doing this just to play ball, but I promise Ima make it up to ya'll when I get back on the court.

Donna  
 (playing to the middle)  
 Don't worry about that right now April.

*Donna swerves.*

Cherise  
 (seeing the periphery)  
 Donna, I promise Ima pray for you not to swerve.

April  
 (defending the strong side)

I gotta say this. We made the pact. I broke it. Ya'll could've abandoned me, called me a traitor. But, ya'll been with me every step of the way. Even put on pregnancy suits.

Sidney  
(defending the strong side)  
And we would do it again.

April  
(defending the strong side)  
Starra, I know you were mad at me.

Sidney  
(watching the backdoor)  
Girl, that ain't no big deal.

Starra  
(stalling the play)  
We all make mistakes, April.

April  
(defending the strong side)  
But, you been playing with us since the dirt courts. Since 9th grade you been the leader of this group. You dreamed when nobody else did. Before Sidney ever showed up.

Sidney  
(watching the backdoor)  
This was actually mine and Donna's idea.

April  
(defending the strong side)  
Sidney, I'm not trying to put you down. I'm just trying to say to Starra —your determination has taught me a lot.

Starra  
(stalling the play)  
I ain't perfect April.

April  
(defending the strong side)  
No, but you go so hard.

Sidney  
(watching the backdoor)  
Yeah, she go real hard.

April  
(defending the strong side)  
Sidney, you don't understand.

Sidney  
(watching the backdoor)  
I understand what it means to go hard.

April  
(playing hard to the strong side)  
See. That's not what I'm talking about. Living here, we hear about folks stabbing each other in the back all time. It's like we got so little we think we gotta be crumb snatchers. Starra, all you ever tried to do was make us see the future we couldn't.

Sidney  
(watching the backdoor)  
She's done more than that.

Cherise  
(seeing the periphery)  
Donna Ima pray for you not to swerve again.

April  
(playing to the strong side)  
And, I appreciate everything.

Cherise  
(keeping the zone tight)  
Maybe we should all just chill. We're almost at the bridge. Crossing over all that muddy water always gets under my skin.

Sidney  
(keeping the zone tight)  
I'm cool with that.

*They ride in silence.*

Donna  
(keeping the zone tight)

Let's sing another song. Oh! I know! (*Begins to sing the chorus to Just Kickin' It*) "Kick off ya' shoes and relax ya feet. Party on down to the XScape feet just kicking it."

*Cherise joins Donna singing.*

Cherise and Donna

(keeping the zone tight)

"Just kicking it. Just kicking it."

Sidney

(seeing the periphery)

Look at that dirt court. It looks just like the one my granddaddy had in his backyard.

Starra

(seeing all options)

Ya'll made dirt courts in California?

Sidney

(watching the backdoor)

I didn't make anything. My grandparents lived in Haley forever. I used to visit in the summers.

Donna

(centering the zone)

That's why I don't remember you. Haley is waaay in the boonies.

April

(centering the zone)

We used to play together.

Cherise

(centering the zone)

So, that's how ya'll got so cool so quick.

Donna

(playing to the strong side)

Wasn't nothing better than playing at Starra's house. Starra used to murder boys everyday in the summer.

Starra

(hearing the crowd)

It would be so crunk.

Sidney  
 (watching the backdoor)  
 Oh really.

April  
 (stepping toward the strong side)  
 I told you Starra always been the one.

Sidney  
 (stepping toward the backdoor)  
 It's funny that the one gotta foul on and off the court to keep her position.

April  
 (looking at the backdoor)  
 What you talking about, Sidney?

Sidney  
 (watching the backdoor)  
 Starra knows.

Starra  
 (stalling the play)  
 Nothing.

Sidney  
 (calling the backdoor)  
 Are you that scared of me?

Starra  
 (looking for other options)  
 Shut up.

Starra  
 (looking for other options)  
 Shut up.

Sidney  
 (calling out the backdoor)  
 Maybe you know I'm better than you.

Starra  
 (dribbling around the perimeter)  
 Not in a million years.

Sidney  
 (watching the backdoor)  
 You must think so.

Starra  
 (hearing the crowd)  
 We can prove that on the court anytime you want.

Sidney  
 (watching the back door)  
 We can go to your house.

Starra  
 (hearing the crowd)  
 Cool.

Sidney  
 (setting up for the steal)  
 I already know where you live. My baby daddy showed me.

Starra  
 (seeing the option)  
 You can stop that right now.

Sidney  
 (staying low for the steal)  
 But, that's what you want. Ain't it?

Cherise  
(seeing the periphery)  
*Donna looks back, swerves.* Donna, keep your eyes on the road!

Sidney  
(intercepting the pass)  
Yeah, because maybe I betrayed my team just like you did.

Starra  
(attempting to recover)  
Oh my God. Shut up.

Donna  
(playing to the weak side)  
I knew this was gonna happen.

Sidney  
(dribbling)  
You are such a traitor.

Cherise  
(playing to the weak side)  
Now is not the time.

April  
(looking at the scoreboard)  
What is going on? Starra did you break the pact?

Sidney  
(dribbling)  
You sitting here looking all innocent, and angelic and shit. I can't believe you.

Cherise  
(attempting to recover)  
I told you to deal with this, Starra.

Starra  
(going for the steal)  
As long as you stayed on your p's and q's you ain't have nothing to worry about.

Sidney  
(protecting the ball)  
But, what if I hadn't Starra?

Starra  
(step-slide)  
Then you got a whole "mother approved" baby prevention factory in your house. You got the pills, the condoms, you probably got a Depo shot in your arm right now.

April  
(looking at the scoreboard)  
Can somebody please tell me what's going on?

Sidney

(protecting the ball)

I can't sit here and listen to "Starra did this for us" and "Starra did that for us". Cherise, I don't know how you can either.

*Cherise is silent.*

April

(looking at the clock)

Sidney I didn't know you and Shamon been getting down?

Sidney

(protecting the ball)

No, Starra just want us to.

Starra

(step-slide)

No, I really didn't.

Sidney

(dribbling)

Thank god I can keep my word. Otherwise, Starra's mother would be cutting us all the fuck up. Me, her, Shamon, and our baby. That's right our baby cause we all woulda made it.

April

(looking at the scoreboard)

What?

Starra

(step-slide)

Sidney, you really can stop.

Sidney

(goes for the fade-away jump shot)

You coulda asked for a scout. I woulda gave you one. Like what kinda backstabbing ya'll do down here that make you wanna put holes in condoms and shit?

Donna

(prepares to block out)

There it is.

April  
 (sees the foul)  
 Sidney, what did you just say Starra did?

Sidney  
 (scores)  
 Captain tried to ruin my life. She tried to set me up to get pregnant.

April  
 (sees the number on the foul)  
 She's lying right? Cherise, is Sidney lying? (*Cherise is silent.*) Starra is she lying?

*Donna turns around.*

Donna  
 (goes over-the back for the rebound)  
 April, you don't need to be worried.

Cherise  
 (goes harder for the rebound)  
 Donna turnaround! Look at the road!

*Lights go black.*

*The girls are on the side of the road outside of Donna's car. Starra and Sidney stand as far apart from one another as possible. April stands over a vulture staring at it. Cherise is between Starra and Sidney. Donna attempts to tell the story of the vulture in a miraculous way. Coach has entered. She surveys the scene.*

Donna  
 (dribbling recklessly)  
 And, the vulture, Coach, the vulture. It just came out of nowhere. It's wings were enormous. It wrapped around us and hugged the windshield. It was so big. It came straight at us head first. It looked like the wings were gonna wrap around the windshield.

Coach  
 (surveying the offense)  
 And, that wonderful story is supposed to make all this better?

Donna  
 (dribbling)  
 You know what that means Coach?

Coach

(playing man to man)

It means a bird saw it's own reflection and flew head first into it cause it didn't know when to stop.

Donna

(passing the ball)

I thought it was miraculous.

Coach

(adjusting to the offense)

The fact that you skipped school the week before State? Is that miraculous?

Starra, Sidney, Cherise, and Donna

(resetting the play)

No ma'am.

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

The fact that none of your parents knew where you were today?

Cherise

(staying in motion)

Do my mama know where I am?

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

All ya mamas know where you are.

Cherise

(staying in motion)

How did you find us?

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

Somebody told me four of my starters and the pregnant girl were stranded on Highway 65 going toward Greenville, Mississippi. You better be glad the principal is sooo excited about you going to State. Otherwise, you'd all be suspended.

Cherise

(staying in motion)

Thank you Coach.

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

Now, this one, I'll have to process this till kingdom come. Starra, you put a hole in one of her condoms?

Sidney

(calling for the ball)

She did.

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

How, you gonna lead the team doing something like that? As much as I hate to do this, I'm taking you off the starting line-up for the first game in the State tournament.

*April looks up.*

Starra

(stalling the pass)

What?

Coach

(picking the offense apart)

That's the only way you'll see the gravity of what you did.

Starra

(stalling the change in offense)

Coach you can't put me on the bench.

April

(seeing another option)

Why not, Starra? I was put on the bench when I "broke the pact" "betrayed the team." "put the season in jeopardy." And, all the time, you ruining Sidney and your brother's lives.

Starra

(passing the ball to Sidney)

I didn't know about Sidney and Shamon.

April

(seeing another option)

That don't make it better. You never believed in that pact or us. How could you try to hurt Sidney like that, then act like it never happened?

Starra

(checking out the game)

Cause I didn't think nobody would find out! Cause I thought I was supposed to be ruthless. Cause of all the stuff you just said about Plainnole.

Coach

(adjusting to the new offense)

You all certainly had me fooled. I'm thinking ya'll are the most solid team I've had, but you're tearing each other to pieces. Donna, and the rest of you get back in the car. (*They all return to the car.*) April, you are eighteen. That means you can go to that clinic and do whatever it is you want to do. You sure about this?

April

(seeing another option)

Coach, I thought I was so ready to make this hard choice. But look at that. Look at the wings. They carry things in their wings for miles. Food for themselves. Food for their babies. I won't even carry mine inside me.

Coach

(adjusting to the new offense)

April, it's not the same.

April

(seeing another option)

I feel like I been carrying stuff for a long time Coach, and I just want to release something. I had made up my mind. I was gonna do what I had to do then move on with my life. But this. How do you explain what just happened?

Coach

(maintaining defensive positioning)

I can't. But, if you keep searching for signs in every little thing to give you an answer, you'll drive yourself mad.

April

(seeing another option)

I'm just trying to figure this out. Every time I think I've made my mind up, something happens.

Coach

(maintaining defense positioning)

Are you talking to anybody about this, April, besides your teammates?

April

(staying in motion)

I try, but can't nobody seem to help. My mama is saying give it to God.

Coach

(maintaining defensive positioning)

Your mother is right. Give it to God. You can also seek sound counsel from others who can help guide you in the right direction. I don't mind helping you with that.

April

(staying in motion)

Thanks, Coach. (*April goes toward the car.*) Cherise.

Cherise

(seeing another option)

Yeah?

April

(staying in motion)

You still wanna take us to the water. Cause I'm ready. I am so ready.

Cherise

(staying in motion)

Amen.

*Lights fade.*

## 3rd Quarter Break

*Donna, Cherise, Sidney, and April stand in a line preparing to be baptized. In this ritual, three girls, aid another in falling back into a tub/pool of water. Starra clasps her hands together as if she is praying. She speaks to her father. Cherise sings Sister Rosetta Thorpe's "This Train is Bound for Glory," sultry and toughened. It is breathtakingly beautiful.*

Starra

Daddy,

Now you know what everybody else knows.

I'm not perfect.

But, the baptism is gonna cleanse me. Even if Sidney don't forgive me, God will.

Right?

I got baptized when I was little cause I didn't want to spend eternal life hell.

I'm getting baptized now cause I don't wanna live my present life in guilt.

Sidney is going first.

I'm so sorry for what I did.

It was so stupid.

For a minute I really thought she was better than me.

But, that don't mean that Coach is right.

I want everything I worked for.

I'm good enough for a D1 school.

*Sidney goes first. With Cherise, Donna, and April behind her, Sidney leans back. Cherise lays her fingertips on Sidney, softly pressing onto her forehead. Cherise, Donna, and April aid in cradling her; once she is laid halfway back, Cherise pronounces—*

Cherise

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Starra

I'm scared it I won't get clean

I'm scared my body will turn to stone

*Cherise, Donna, and April then help Sidney stand. Sidney gets her grounding walks around for a moment. She and April hug. Donna and Cherise join the hug. Starra looks on. She steps forward to help April. Donna, Cherise, and Starra prepare to dip April in the same way Sidney was dipped.*

Cherise

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the name of the son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Once they've dipped, April gets her grounding. She looks to the sky as if expecting something, but not quite finding what she wants.*

April

Do it again, Cherise.

Cherise

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Donna, Cherise, and Starra dip April again. This time she begins to cry and shake a bit. She goes to Sidney, who holds her. Donna moves forward. Starra, Cherise, and April prepare to dip her.*

Cherise

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*They dip Donna. Donna gets her grounding and begins to breathe deeply. She walks in small circles. Cherise begins to do the same. She attempts to go back to dip Starra, but finds herself failing to. She goes to Donna, clings to her, then quickly pulls away.*

Sidney

Cherise you ok?

*Cherise can't respond.*

Starra

She's feeling the real and beautiful contact she talked about.

April

Starra, it's your turn.

Starra

I don't know if I'm ready. I feel myself holding back.

Donna

Starra you going?

April

Starra, are you gonna go up?

Starra

I can't make myself move forward.

April

You want me to help you?

Starra

I was wrong for what I did ya'll.

Donna

That's what we're here for.

Starra

Sidney I was wrong for what I tried to do to you.

*Sidney turns away.*

April

We all make mistakes. You can't let them hold you back. Remember? Can't nobody hold you. Not even yourself. But, right now, let us help you. Give me your hands.

*April goes toward Starra and grabs her hands, attempting to pull her forward. Donna and Cherise, after getting her grounding, joins.*

Cherise

I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*Starra gets her grounding. Donna, Cherise, and April grab her in a huddle/embrace. Sidney watches. Starra clasps her hands as if in prayer.*

Starra

So I get dipped in water, Daddy, and I let my teammates lay hands on me as I do, but I feel nothing.

4th Quarter

*Coach Pace and April sit on the bench, Starra sits outside on her dirt court, ball cradled against her body. Donna and Cherise sit in Donna's Car.*

*A light shines on Starra.*

Starra

(calling the play)

Daddy, I figured out what I need to do. Some people need the water, but I told Sidney to meet me in the dust. I needed to face her one on one. This has been a long time coming. This is the only way I know how to get what I did out of my system.

*Sidney checks into Starra's space.*

*A light shines on Coach and April on in a public counseling office.*

Coach

(reviewing the play)

April, are you ok with this?

April

(reviewing the play)

I don't want nobody to see me in here.

Coach

(reviewing the play)

Why?

April

(questioning the options)

Public counseling? Folks gon' think I'm crazy.

Coach

(breaking down the options)

If you don't do this, your own thoughts could drive you crazy. After my friend had her miscarriage, I had to do this. I needed to talk to someone who could help me through a hard time that still affects me today.

*Light shines on Sidney and Starra.*

Sidney  
 (triple threat)  
 You ready to take this ass whoopin like a real woman?

Starra  
 (defensive positioning)  
 I got the belt.

*Starra throws Sidney the dirt court ball.*

Sidney  
 (triple threat)  
 I ain't playing with that. It ain't got no grip.

*A light shines on Donna and Cherise in Donna's car.*

Cherise  
 (reviewing the options)  
 This wind is blowing so strong.

Donna  
 (seeing the 1st option)  
 I just wanted to talk since you wouldn't answer the phone. I'll take you back to Starra's in a minute.

Cherise  
 (reviewing the options)  
 Donna, I'm sorry I can't-

Donna  
 (seeing the 1st option)  
 —I figured out who the catfish in my dream was.

Cherise  
 (reviewing the options)  
 Obviously, not Sidney.

Donna  
 (seeing the first option)  
 No, it was you.

Starra  
(taking over the defense)  
Check. I'll let you have first ball.

Sidney  
(running offense)  
What? Don't want dirt court advantage?

Starra  
(checking her man)  
Nah, I'm good.

April  
(running the motion offense)  
Coach, I promise you when I play, I won't get hurt, I won't take no charges.

Coach  
(watching the play)  
I'm praying about that.

April  
(seeing the 1st option)  
When you called me to say I could play in State, I got so excited, I even bother didn't to ask why, cause I didn't want you to change your mind. But, why you letting me play even though I'm still pregnant?

Coach  
(watching the play)  
I talked to my friend, the one I told ya'll about. She coaches too. For years, when I've told her about my "no playing while pregnant" policy, she would tell me to let it go. I wasn't trying to hear that. But, I never thought about all the girls who might have rushed the decision to have an abortion or not, because of my policy, until you. I just want all my girls to have the freedom to make a clear-headed decision.

April  
(seeing the all options)  
They're calling my name.

Coach  
(guiding the play)  
I'll be right here when you get back.

Starra  
 (checking her man)  
 What we going to?

Sidney  
 (calling the play)  
 First woman who scores wins.

Starra  
 (checking her man)  
 That's all I need.

*Starra and Sidney play.*

*Sidney shoots. Miss. Starra wins the struggle for the rebound ball. Starra takes the ball to the top of the key. Starra talks shit (something about a summer camp). Sidney talks back (something about Shamon liking it). Starra has the ball. She protects it with her whole body. She dribbles with more aggression than flair. Starra drives in, goes up for the lay-up. Sidney goes up with her. Sidney blocks Starra's shot.*

Cherise  
 (seeing the 1st option)  
 How am I the fish?

Donna  
 (offering the assist)  
 In dreams, catfish run away. They get real close to you, just close enough to touch em' then when you think they're yours, they disappear.

Cherise  
 (missing the pass)  
 You're the one leaving.

Donna  
 (recovering the ball)  
 I'm never ran away from you.

Cherise  
 (staying in position)  
 You're going to New Orleans.

Donna

(seeing the 2nd option)

But, I'm not running. I getting what's mines. I wish I could be mad at you, but I understand. I can be super smart, good in basketball, win all the awards, go to church every Sunday, and my daddy will still look at me like I'm a horrible child.

Cherise

(staying in position)

You're not horrible, Donna.

Donna

(seeing the periphery)

All I'm saying is I know you have to figure out what you want to do, and I can't rush you.

Cherise

(staying in position)

Donna, can I kiss you?

Donna

(seeing the periphery)

It'll be the last one.

*Cherise kisses Donna. It is slow and it is sweet. Lights go completely black on all, but Starra and Sidney.*

*Ball is at the top of the key in Starra's possession. Sidney talks shit (something about a prison). Starra talks shit (something about an engineer). Starra stops dribbling. Sidney snatches the ball out her hand. Starra goes after Sidney. Sidney attempts a lay up. Starra blocks Sidney's shot. Sidney gets her rebound.*

Starra

Ugh! Big block!

Sidney

Keep the foul.

Starra

Wasn't no foul.

*Sidney crosses Starra over real quick. Almost, leaves her one step behind, but Starra regains her defensive positioning. Sidney drives in for a lay-up. She runs Starra over. Miss. Rebound. Mid-play Starra looks as if a crowd is there to watch.*

Starra  
(calling a foul)  
That's a charge. I can't get a foul?

Sidney  
Ain't no ref, bitch.

Sidney  
(thrusting the ball to Starra)  
Gone, take it.

Starra  
You good in all this wind?

Sidney  
This wind can't hold me.

*Starra's possession.*

Starra  
You can't hold me.

*Obviously wanting more than a point, she wants to prove a point. She's giving showtime. Sidney becomes settled, the wind picks up a bit more causing the dirt to rise. Starra becomes settled as well. She drives in hard, no flair just pure determination. She goes in toward Sidney, drops her shoulder, makes contact. Sidney falls back as if taking a charge. Starra shoots a lay-up. She and Sidney, entangled, fall to the ground. They lay on the ground. The wind whirls the dust around them.*

Starra  
I'm going to the line on that one!

Sidney  
I took that charge!

Starra  
Nah!

Sidney  
This fucking dust is getting my eyes.

Starra

You wanna forfeit? Nah. Come on then.

*Sidney starts at the top of the key. She goes toward the goal, then steps back, crosses over, attempts a fade away jumper. Starra legitimately blocks her shot. Goes to the top of the key, dribbles.*

Sidney

Come on! Do something with it!

*Starra dribbles up step back and shoots a jump shot. Sidney fouls her hard. Sending Starra to the ground. Starra gets up as if about to face Sidney.*

Starra

Foul!

Sidney

I'll let you have that one.

Starra

Two-free throws.

Sidney

One. We going by ones.

Starra

That's cool. You know this shot determines who wins.

Sidney

Shoot like your life depends on it then.

*Starra goes to the line, prepares to shoot the free-throw. She shoots one, hit/miss.*

*Lights go black.*

Starra

(if Starra misses)

I want a rematch. But, you know what Daddy, I'm proud of myself. I faced her, one on one. On my turf, my dirt. And, she can't say I didn't put fear in her eyes. I saw it. She wanted to forfeit the game, but something in her wouldn't let her. Just like it wouldn't let me. And, she might be able to say she won, but it don't stop here. This just gives me more a reason to prove myself in State. I'll be coming off the bench with fire in my eyes. Just wait and see. I don't what it is about this Daddy, but for the first time, in a long time, I feel clean.

Starra

(if Starra hits)

Ugh! Daddy, did you see that? She can't hold me. Oh, my God, Daddy. The feeling of it. I know I'm good enough. I told Coach I could match up! Coach can keep me on the bench if want to. That's just gonna light my fire even more. Sidney say she want a rematch now. That's cool. She can come get some of this any day of the week. I don't what it is about this Daddy, but for the first time, in a long time, I feel clean.

Overtime

*The girls stand at the center of the floor looking at the audience. The State bracket is filled with Plainnole as the vying team against Delta, Arkansas' Lady Pirates.*

April

Is that her?

Sidney

No. The woman with the black sweatshirt.

Donna

And that's one with the Tech logo.

April

Is that one for UConn?

Sidney

They probably was cold back in the day.

Cherise

They could have made it to the league.

Donna

But, they didn't have one.

Starra

They probably played overseas.

April

Let's finish warm-ups.

Sidney

Alright Ladies, let's get this song in!

Lady Train

What do you do to every Train that you meet?

You get dooowwn on your knees  
 You cannot play on your feet  
 You ask the Lady Train for the mercy to live  
 And, maybe, just maybe (4 claps) They let you live.

*A whistle sounds. The girls run to the middle of the floor for tip-off.*

Sidney

Alright ladies. We made it to the State Championship. Let's get this win.

*A referee (Coach) throws up the ball for the tip-off. They go to the center of the floor. Donna taps the ball to Sidney. Sidney calls the offense.*

Starra

Flex!

*Sidney and Cherise are up top with Starra in the corner. Donna and Cherise battle in the post. They run the play. It is clear defenders are matching up with them tightly. Eventually the ball is passed to Starra. Starra kicks it back to Sidney. Sidney kicks it back to Starra. Starra shoots. Starra hits/misses. Lights go black.*

*Lights come back up. Sidney has a trophy in her hands. Coach slaps a strip on the bracket showcasing the Plainnole Lady Train as the State champions.*

Announcer: (voiceover) And, now the 96-97 4AA Arkansas Girls' Basketball Champions, Plaaaaaaiiiiiinnnoooooole Laaaaady Traaaaaain! The Game MVP, Sidney Brown with a total of twenty-five points.

April

We were linked,  
 beautifully linked.

Donna

Like we'd never been linked before  
 I could tell Sidney didn't want to pass Starra the ball.

Cherise  
But she wanted to win

Donna  
and Starra was on fire like never before.

April  
Starra didn't start the first game of State  
But, it didn't take Coach long to change her mind

Donna  
Starra played so hard

Cherise  
She was a beast every second of every game

April  
Right until the final second of the last game

Starra  
No way in hell I was gonna let my team down this game  
The other team was tough.  
They could shoot threes like rainbows.

Sidney  
But, with Donna at the top on the Diamond 1,  
they couldn't get the ball up the court enough times.  
We trapped them on every play.  
We pressed on every other inbound.

Donna  
Sidney was lit too.  
But, April, oh my god.  
I could tell before the game.  
She didn't say one word.  
Only--

April

--A train is only as strong as it's weakest link.

Donna

Before the game somebody asked, "If the game comes down to one point, who will get the winning shot?"

Cherise

I said, "The best player."

Sidney

I said, "Me"

April

Me

Donna

Me

Starra

Who you think? Me

April

And, that's what happened. We got down to the end. The score was 58-58 with thirty seconds left on the clock.

Sidney

Starra had four fouls. She took the most risks on defense.

Donna

But, April had the most steals.

Cherise

The crowd was so loud

Starra

I couldn't hear a thing.

Sidney

Cherise fouled her man

April

She shot the ball the first time.

Cherise

Bucket. 58-59.

Starra

The second time though. Her arm was too strong. Too stiff. Too straight. Too scared.

Donna

The ball came off the front of the rim like a bullet in reverse. It was anybody's ball.

Cherise

Everybody dove. April threw herself on top of the ball like she'd always done.

April

My body was in a clutch. I have no idea how, but I dribbled out that tunnel. I stopped at the three point line.

Donna

Shot!

Cherise

We won. 61-59.

Starra

April went for it

April

Coach said the shot wasn't the best decision

Sidney

But, she didn't gripe too much since it went in.

Cherise

The scout didn't say anything to anyone  
But I saw her looking at Sidney real hard.  
Like she saw the future in her.  
Then she looked at Starra the same way

Cherise

Right after the game  
the one from Oklahoma  
came and shook Starra's hand!

Sidney

I saw her look at April too  
It wasn't a look of promise

April

But, it was respect for the hustle.  
Maybe I won't go to pro.  
But I'm going somewhere.

*Lights go black.*

*End of game.*









