

RUNNING ON GLASS

by Cynthia L. Cooper

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CHARACTERS

The play is written for two performers, ACTOR ONE (A-A) and ACTOR TWO (w). With permission, it may be performed by eight actors.

ANNA (ACTOR ONE): A college professor who specializes in sports studies, she is a historian, storyteller and runner. Calm and determined.

ELLIE (ACTOR TWO): A designer and sports enthusiast who is friends with ANNA and a running companion.

ALTHEA GIBSON (ACTOR ONE) (1927-2003) is the first African-American athlete to break through the barriers of top tennis competition. Although she grew up on the streets of New York, she makes a long transition to a different world of world class tennis. We catch up with her on the day she is about to win the Wimbledon tennis match.

GERTRUDE EDERLE (ACTOR TWO) (1905-2003) is the first woman to swim the English Channel, breaking the records of the five men before her. After her highly publicized Channel swim in 1926, Ederle seems to disappear from the public spotlight. We see her forty years after the famous swim, when life has evolved in a different direction.

WILMA RUDOLPH (ACTOR ONE) (1940-1994) is a track star, teacher and motivational leader from Tennessee. Rudolph won international acclaim as the first American woman and first African-American woman to win three gold medals in track and field at the Olympics. A native of Tennessee, she uses her post-athletic career to advance civil rights, women's rights, teach and coach.

GRETEL BERGMANN (ACTOR TWO) (1914-2017) has the misfortune to be Jewish in Germany at a time when Jews are not welcome. A high jumper, Gretel is added to the German Olympic team of 1936, but when the time to compete comes around, Gretel is not in the arena. She must overcome the feelings of all who find their abilities unfulfilled for reasons beyond themselves.

BABE DIDRIKSON (ACTOR TWO) (1911-1956) becomes famous mostly for her unbelievable skill at golf, but she has a perhaps more extraordinary career in track and field ... and tennis ... and baseball ... and basketball ... andIt is no exaggeration to say few athletes ever -- male or female -- possess the abilities of Babe Didrikson. While naively rushing forward against the societal forces that want women to be everything that she is not, Babe exudes a down-home confidence that pushes her to become a star.

MAMIE "PEANUT" JOHNSON (ACTOR ONE) (1935-2017) is a lively and spirited African-American woman, willing to tell a good story and have a good laugh. In 1953, she is the first (and only) woman pitcher in the history of Negro League Baseball, and one of three women to play in this professional league. Small in stature, she amasses a win-loss record of 33-8. Later, she becomes a nurse, and, upon retirement, runs a Negro League memorabilia shop.

ACTOR 1 – ANNA, a woman sports scholar and runner, fictional; ALTHEA GIBSON, WILMA RUDOLPH, MAMIE "PEANUT" JOHNSON, all based on real persons; OTHER voices

ACTOR 2 – ELLIE, a designer and runner, fictional; GERTRUDE EDERLE, GRETEL BERGMANN, BABE DIDRIKSON, all based on real persons; OTHER voices

Additional Notes:

Scenic designers are encouraged to use their imagination in creating the space. With permission, a phrase or line may be added in Ellie's dialogue in Scene One to reflect the designer's vision.

Audio designers are encouraged to interpret music to match musical selections and musical bridges suggested throughout the play. The exact music is not designated in the script.

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Scene One

(ANNA enters with boxes, drops them, and walks in circles, looking at the space. The space may be the entire space that includes the audience, or it may be a stage space, a room. This is Cosmos, a disused gym, dusty and rundown, and in the middle of a ghost mall. Abandoned and broken sporting equipment lies in various states of disrepair. A chipped 'Work It Out' sign sits in the corner. The walls are caked with dirt and ripped posters. ANNA studies the area, sometimes holding an item or paper from a box up to the wall, and then dropping it back the box.)

(Throughout the play, ANNA and ELLIE leaf through the boxes, examining items when they are not in the performing spotlight.)

(Pre-show music fades out.)

ELLIE
(Enters)

This is where you wanted me to meet you? The old Cosmos Gym?

ANNA

I know, I know.

ELLIE

This mall is a ghost town. What's so urgent?

ANNA

(SHE holds her arms out to the space.)

They offered it to me. Cosmos. The old Cosmos. To fix up a display. About women. In conjunction with the U.S. Open* coming up.

(*Fill in with something going on at the time: the Olympics, basketball championship, March

Madness, skating tournament, Little League, World Cup, marathon, or so on.)

ELLIE

(SHE begins removing sheets that are covering equipment, occasionally testing a piece.)

This is a wreck. Tell them, 'no thanks.'

ANNA

My lifelong dream has been to have a space of our own. To share our stories, our history.

ELLIE

This is not exactly the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame.

ANNA

No. And it's not Cooperstown -- that famous baseball museum. Or the Swimming Hall of Fame in Florida. But it's a space and you're a designer ... can't you help me figure something out? Surely, you must have some ideas about what I can do with it.

ELLIE

My main idea is to wait for something better.

ANNA

'Grab onto opportunities.' Isn't that what you're always telling me when we go running in the mornings, even on those wet, rainy, miserable days when we're bundled in our waterproofs and our shoes are soggy?

ELLIE

Yeah. But, look around! This is an out-of-date, crumbling down, crashed out Cosmos that still looks and smells like dirty socks. It is not an 'opportunity.' It's a disaster zone.

ANNA

I've spent years collecting research. I have it all in these boxes. Winters, I teach in kinesiology at the college; summers I research and run. I don't want to wait for the 'right' time and place. I have clippings, I have photos, I have documents.

(SHE pulls an article from a box.)

(Like this):

"Whereas it has been brought to the attention of the Burlingame Mothers Club during this polo season that Miss Eleonora Randolph Sears, a so-called 'sporting woman' from the city of Boston, has been parading through our city in the unconventional trousers and clothes of the masculine sex, having bad effects on the sensibilities of our boys and girls." 1912.

ELLIE

Interesting. But that stuff is old. It is definitely not going to attract crowds to Cosmos.

Or read this one. Or this one ...

ANNA
(ANNA pushes some articles into ELLIE's hand.)

Honestly, it's just not for me.

ELLIE
(Holds her hands up.)

I don't have anyone else I can ask!

ANNA
(Shoves article over to ELLIE.)

ELLIE
(SHE takes an article, reads it.)
"The National American Athletic Association unequivocally opposes girls entering the realm of competition, as it will surely harm their nervous systems, encourage rowdiness, and lead to injury and exploitation." 1922.
(ELLIE both shakes her head and laughs.)

ANNA
Don't you think that people should know about this? What we've been through? The exclusion, the elimination, the erasure?

ELLIE
Yes, but ...

ANNA
I could probably make copies of these clippings, mount them on the walls. Here, there.
(SHE points.)

ELLIE
Images always work better.

ANNA
You're right. It's not my area of expertise.

ELLIE
If you must do something -- big pictures, three walls. Serena, that swimmer Katie Ledecky, Lindsay Vonn. Or maybe Simone Biles. The famous ones, different sports, a few stats. And let people Google the rest. That's my best suggestion.

ANNA
Okay. But people can't Google their spirit! That's three-dimensional, that's from some inner fire.
(Pulls out a clipping.)
Kathrine Switzer -- remember her? They tried to yank her out of the Boston Marathon, 1967, for 'running while female.' But she kept going. We are running on her grit, her persistence.

ELLIE

You could mount some items. Ribbons and medals. A runner's baton; a racquet here and there. A hat, a uniform. Things like that stick in people's minds.

ANNA

And the stories? There are so many through the years.

(Looking at a document.)

Like: Eleonora Randolph Sears -- the one with the 'unsightly mannish garb'? She became the first woman to play polo on the men's team. She was a squash champion; she established the speed walking record. And she wrote letters of support to other athletes for her entire life.

ELLIE

You could do some projections. You can probably wire this for sound. Have voices on tape. Crowd cheers. Or, you know, an iconic, 'On your mark, get set ...' Or! We could fix up lockers that people can open and see life stories inside. Maybe build a cut-out athlete where people can take selfies.*

(*A word or phrase may be added, with permission, to reflect an actual set.)

ANNA

Yes! Make it come alive! I knew you would have ideas! We can definitely do this.

(Looking in the box.)

ELLIE

Whoa, wait, wait a minute ...

ANNA

(Ignoring her. Looking through her materials.)

The real question is: Where do we begin?

(ANNA finds something that intrigues her, holds it up to the wall.)

Thank you so much!

(SHE grabs ELLIE'S hand.)

ELLIE

(ELLIE takes off her jacket.)

Okay. Where DO we begin?

(ELLIE turns to the box, and begins to dig in, pulling out items and reading documents throughout the next scene.)

(A musical bridge.)

End of Scene One

Scene Two
ALTHEA GIBSON

(ANNA grabs something of rapt interest from a box, and now, ACTOR 1 takes on the character of ALTHEA GIBSON. ALTHEA GIBSON dresses in tennis whites, her hair neatly coifed. SHE is strong and tough and carries a tennis racquet with a grip that lets everyone know she intends to use it mercilessly.

It is July, 1957, and ALTHEA GIBSON is about to become the first black person -- male or female -- to win the Wimbledon championship. When SHE speaks, SHE talks to an off-stage character, Darlene Hard, another tennis player.

While ALTHEA emerges, ELLIE, in muted light and standing at the side of the stage, continues leafing through a box of memorabilia.

ALTHEA opens her locker, finds a letter, reads it. The musical bridge fades.)

ALTHEA

"Dear Miss Gibson: Old as I am, I can hardly remember a time when I've been so incensed as I am at the way you've been treated at these so-called tennis tournaments. Being the first person - male or female -- to break the color barrier is a mighty task. I just want you to know you can count on me rooting my heart out for you whenever you play.

Sincerely: Eleonora Randolph Sears, July, 1957."

That's nice. That's real nice.

(ALTHEA puts the note down. SHE looks up as if someone is signaling her. ELLIE has discovered a crested navy blazer and visor in her collection. She tries them on and briefly becomes a ballgirl.)

ACTOR 2 (Ballgirl)

15 minutes!

ALTHEA

What?

ACTOR 2 (Ballgirl)

15 minutes.

(ELLIE continues to look slowly look through her collection. The movement is muted to the point where it garners no notice. Each time Actor 2/Ellie interrupts, she can look to ALTHEA or look through her box – she is in effect playing the ballgirl in her head while wearing the blazer.)

(ALTHEA cont'd)

Hey there! Fifteen minutes to go, Darlene. The ballgirl just came by. You hear me? The match begins in fifteen minutes!

(ALTHEA fiddles with the tennis racquet.)

It's hot out there, Darlene, honey. Real hot. Nearly a hundred degrees of hot. Folks falling out in the stands. It's so hot they ran out and got blocks of ice to keep the Queen cool. To ... keep ... the ... Queen ... cool. Isn't that something?

So you take care to splash some cold water on your face before we head out to the court, all right, sugar? I don't want anything happening to you out there today. We got a show to put on for the Queen. Althea Gibson, Darlene Hard ... two Americans on the grass courts of England.

Me ... I don't need any cold water. Don't need any ice either. Not today. I'm cool like I've never been. This is the kind of hot we had in Harlem.

(Describing this scene, she drops back in time.)

Days like today, all of Harlem floats through my memories, pushes out from under my skin like something I can't contain any more. (Music rises, low.) If I listen real close, I can hear the music of Buddy Walker's Harlem Society Orchestra. Us kids are racing around on 143rd street for the Police Athletic League tournament.

(SHE acts out the next scene.)

"We won! We won! The 143rd Street Club won the 1939 CHAMPIONSHIP!"

"Mr. Walker! Mr. Buddy Walker! Did you see the game? ... We took the paddle tennis tournament again!

"Phenomenal? You really thought I played phenomenal? Thanks, Buddy. Will you dedicate a song to us tonight? Right on stage?"

"Why do you ask me a question like that? I didn't fight no-body. I didn't have to. I was winning! And the fact is, the story going 'round about me beating up that one boy on the other team isn't true. I only did it because he stole my uncle's five dollars."

"Shoot, Buddy. I don't 'xactly know how I learned to play. I just did. They didn't teach us none in school. That's why I had to quit. And my folks don't care none. That's why I had to run away. Now I just play."

"Would I? Yessir, I would love to play at the Harlem River Tennis Courts Club!"

(ALTHEA cont'd)

"Yes, sir, I surely do promise."

"Okay, Buddy. I'll say it all the way through. 'If you take me to play at the Harlem River Tennis Courts Club, I ... promise ... not to get into any fights.' ... That aren't absolutely necessary."

(Music drops out.)

I went to the Harlem River Tennis Club, where the fancy Afro American society played. It was different. Everybody is all dressed up in immaculate white and acts so strange, like it's a church meeting or something. I just walk out on the court and play. Pretty soon all the other players stop their games and are watching me. I feel grand. I play hard, just like I am on 143rd St. But, I guess I kind of have a little slipping in my promise to Buddy.

"What do you mean 'out'? That ball was right on the line! Don't tell me that was out! You tell me to my face that was out!"

(ALTHEA drops her racquet and rushes forward to fight.)

Buddy calls me over to the sidelines.

"I can't help it, Buddy! The one thing my daddy taught me was how to box. Every time I start to losing, I got to fight the other player."

"I understand," he says. "But you don't really know how to fight. Folks have a different way at the Club. Everyone acts polite. They shake hands. And then they go out and play like tigers and beat the liver and lights -- out of the ball."

(Repeating that, gently, as if remembering one of the Ten Commandments.)

"Shake hands and beat the liver and lights out of the ball."

Not too long after that the two Black doctors saw me play. They thought I was the Black tennis player who could play in the white tournaments and win. So, they arranged to take me South, where they were from. I went back to high school. Finished, too. At age twenty-one. Went on to college. And all the while I practiced and worked my tennis game like nobody's business.

(Looks out as if someone's signaling her.)

ACTOR 2 (Ballgirl)

Five minutes.

ALTHEA

What's that? Five more minutes? All right.

Hear that, Darlene? Only five more minutes. Put a washrag to your head. That'll cool you down, doll.

(ALTHEA cont'd)

I want to know if you can hear, Darlene? You see, you're white. Harlem's just a name to you. You're still young. About the age I was when I took up tennis. Well, I'm thirty years old, Darlene. That makes me an old lady for tennis.

(As if playing the game.)

Last year, the crowd here at Wimbledon booed me, and it threw my game. This year, I'm going to serve hard, let the ball jump off the grass. I'm going to rush to the net, cut away the volley. And I won't even notice the heat.

Reason I've been telling you all this, sugar, is, you see, the heat makes me feel right at home. I'm going to win. At last. I've got to, hon. See, I always wanted to be somebody. So what I'm saying,

Darlene, is I'm going out there in front of that Queen today, and I'm going to beat the liver and lights out of you. You can understand that, now, can't you, doll?

(Calling.)

ACTOR 2 (Ballgirl)

Time.

ALTHEA

Yeah. We're ready.

It'll be over soon, hon. Then we'll go back and win the doubles together -- you and me. When we go out there, Darlene, I want you to shake my hand. All right, hon?

(SHE grabs the note, sticks it in her bag, and turns, with racquet, as if exiting.)

Yeah. We're ready. We're ready.

End of Scene Two

Scene Three
GERTRUDE EDERLE

(ACTOR TWO has removed the blazer, found goggles and a nose plug. She takes on the character of GERTRUDE EDERLE, first woman to swim the English Channel in 1926. It is 1969 now, and she is 62. GERTRUDE EDERLE is a matronly woman and hardly seems athletic. She is pleasant, and a bit shy. Everything about her seems straight-forward, reflecting perhaps her parents' New York-German heritage. She is extremely hard of hearing and wears swimming gear.

In the meantime, Actor 1 – now back to ANNA - has started to look through a stack of scrapbooks. Without looking up, she hands one to EDERLE. ANNA stays the background, a muted world of reviewing materials and slowly coming up with exhibit ideas.

EDERLE looks up as if seeing someone across the stage. When SHE first starts speaking, SHE shouts.)

GERTRUDE

HEY! I REMEMBERED THE SCRAPBOOK FOR THE CHILDREN.
 WHAT?

(As if someone has pointed to her ear. SHE quickly reaches into a pocket and puts in a hearing aid.)

I don't mean to blast you out. I take off this silly hearing aid before the swimming class with the deaf children.

(Finishes adjusting hearing aid.)

I'm always afraid of scaring folks off when they find out I'm practically deaf. I told my fiancée back -- oh, 40 years ago -- back in 1929 -- I said, "Now that all this channel swimming's made me deaf, sweetheart, I bet you don't want to marry me." 'Course I was just joking. And he looks at me and moves his lips very slowly, so I could read what he is saying. 'I do believe that's the case, Trudy,' he said. And you know, I never saw the man again.

(SHE laughs at this.)

Now, then. Here's the goggles. My Olympic medals. Letters.

(A letter falls out.)

(GERTRUDE cont'd)

Oh, yes, I remember this one.

(SHE half recites the letter.)

"What a bully accomplishment to be the first woman to swim the English Channel! And to beat the records of the five men before you by over two hours! Gertrude Ederle, believe me, I write with my best wishes for your speedy recovery and my hope that you will not have any regrets. Yours from Boston, Eleo Sears."

Ach! Regrets? Can you imagine? (SHE laughs.) Do I have regrets?

(TRUDY pulls off her hearing aid, puts on a red swimming cap. SHE speaks dreamily, as if stepping into a completely different world.)

I wear a red bathing cap. And a black swimsuit, with a silk flag of the United States right on it. It was the same suit I wore at the Olympics in 1924.

(It is the day of the Channel swim. TRUDY talks to William Burgess, her European trainer.)

"Before I start off, I want to thank you for serving as my trainer on the Channel swim, Mr. Burgess. Having somebody who's made the swim gives me courage."

(SHE starts rubbing on jellies.)

"Olive oil, first. Lanolin second. Then, the special blend of petro-latum and lard."

"But I got something to say, Mr. Burgess. You know, I tried last year and the people in the boat pulled me out before I got across."

"Yes, sir, I know it's bad weather conditions and there's powerful currents ... and jellyfish ... and that the water temperature is only 57 degrees."

"I know it took you nineteen tries before you made it yourself. But Mr. Burgess ... my father's a fruit merchant. I couldn't afford coming over on the steamer, or training, or paying for the escort boat. I had to take on a commercial sponsor. You know, that means I won't be able to go to the Olympics again. That's a lot to give up, Mr. Burgess. That's how much I want to swim the Channel."

"I know the people in the boat think they're looking out for the swimmer. But, Mr. Burgess, you're not a member of the Women's Swimming Association we have in New York City. You saw the Victrola they installed in the boat? With my favorites – 'Yes, We Have No Bananas' -- and 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart'? They want me to make it!"

"There. I think I'm all greased up."

(GERTRUDE cont'd)
 (SHE starts shaking out limbs, making final adjustments.)

“The point is, Mr. Burgess, you're going to be in the boat with the reporters and photographers and I want you to know I am not coming out until I walk on the beach in England. Don't try to pull me out. The Women's Swimming Association is counting on me.”

Once you're in the ocean everything else disappears. All of a sudden, there's nothing but what's inside yourself. The water washes over you. The waves crash from the right and the left and from

the front and the back. Some of them are eighteen feet high, seem like they're going to swallow you. And all you can hear is the roar of the water, in every direction, until it feels like it's in you and not that you're in it. You know then that you're all alone with the ocean ... just you and it.

Three miles to go. I hear a call over the rush of the water from the boat. Mr. Burgess.

ACTOR 1 (Mr. Burgess)

“You've got to give up.”

GERTRUDE

I can hardly believe what he is saying. I let his words roll off me like the waves and I throw myself into the water for more of it.

At 9:40 p.m., on August 6, 1926, I walk out of the ocean in Kingsdown, England with the English Channel swim record.

(SHE laughs.)

They were so sure I wouldn't make it that they had already printed an editorial. "In contests on physical skill, speed, and endurance, women must forever remain the weaker sex." Ach!

(TRUDY laughs, shakes her head, steps back out, puts on her hearing aid. SHE picks up the scrapbook again.)

Oh, there were hard times afterwards. The nervous breakdown. The slip ... my back is in a cast for four and a half years. And I suppose it's true, Gertrude Ederle is not exactly a household name.

(Looks at letter.)

But do I regret it?

Have you ever heard that song ... “Let Me Call You Sweetheart”?

(SHE hums, sings it a bit. Music.)

(GERTRUDE cont'd)

You see, I came back home, and I was the sweetheart of all of New York City. They had the biggest ticker tape parade ever for me ... Gertrude Ederle, the daughter of a common German immigrant. Two million people filling the streets, flooding it until it looks like the ocean, and cheering for me until it sounds like the roar of the waves. They were throwing confetti from the buildings, and I rode down the street in a brand new car and held my arms out to them. Oh, I suppose it's true they have forgotten me now ... all those people. But, you see ... I shall never forget them.

(Music out.)

Ach. I have to go and start the lessons. You see, once I teach the deaf children how to swim like champions in the ocean ... they shall not forget me.

(SHE folds the letter in half, snaps the book shut, takes off her hearing aid, humming and singing slightly.)

"Let Me Call You Sweetheart ..."

(Music. SHE listens for a second. Hums. Walks away.)

End of Scene Three

Scene Four
WILMA RUDOLPH

(ACTOR 1, finding new inspiration in one of the boxes, grabs a baton, and slaps it back and forth, then shows it to ELLIE, Actor 2. ELLIE looks at it, as ACTOR 1 takes on the role of WILMA RUDOLPH, and leans at an angle toward the ground, hands down, as if in race blocks in a pre-race position. It's approximately 1972, and WILMA is about 32.

(ACTOR 2, as ELLIE, moves to the background and begins looking through material, occasionally holding up an item, as if measuring it. From time to time, ELLIE studies WILMA, and makes notes on a pad. ELLIE rolls up a piece of paper and places it on the floor.

WILMA, demonstrating pre-race positioning, talks to a young trainee.)

WILMA

For “on your mark,” you have to spread your fingers in front of the line, keeping them light and relaxed -- like this. Your feet are angled back in the blocks, head close to the ground.

At “get set,” you straighten your one leg, swing your hips up. Your fingers are like springs, ready to go. And then – “pow”: the gun.

(SHE stands up now.)

There's more to running than running. I tried to tell those reporters when they came scrambling after me – “What's it feel like, Miss Rudolph, to be the fastest woman in the world?”

All systems go. Mind, legs, lungs. Breathe in, breathe out. Your hands are like ribbons, surfing the air. When you're running, you can never ball up your hands, you can never make a fist. Coach Temple was very specific on that.

(SHE grabs the rolled up paper on the floor and slaps it behind her back from one hand to the next.)

The relays are different, of course, because of the baton.

When it's being passed from one runner to the next, the baton is snapped into your hand and you have to grab it the instant you feel it.

(WILMA cont'd)

Once when I was 14 – about 1954 -- my mother came up behind me on our porch in Clarksville, Tennessee.

“Don’t look,” she says. She slaps a rolled up piece of paper in my hand. “What does that feel like, Wilma Rudolph?”

“The baton,” I say.

“It’s what a graduation paper feels like. A diploma. Coach Temple says if you keep running, you might get a college scholarship. You’ve got to grab it.”

That became my secret. When I’m running, I hold my head high. Deep breaths. Letting the air in, letting the air out. I always told Yolanda – she’s my oldest -- ‘wherever you go, whatever you do, you hold your head high.’

(SHE does stretches, and then a circle walk.)

We didn’t exactly tell the Olympics people about Yolanda when the 1960 Games were coming around. But the Tennessee Tigerbelles knew all about her. I carried a picture in my wallet.

(SHE enters a space that is the Olympics track training center.)

I only found out about her myself from the team physician, Dr. Coleman. After our fitness exams in 1957, he posted a notice on the bulletin board:

(ACTOR 2, ELLIE, standing at the side of the stage, looks up, as if she’s found something interesting in the box.)

ACTOR 2 (Team Doctor)

“Wilma Rudolph: Return appointment - 9 a.m.”

WILMA

I sat up half the night, worried he was going to get on me about my bad leg.

(WILMA turns to an area that is the Meharry Medical Center.)

I still remember when, four years old, my mother first boarded me onto a Greyhound Bus from Clarksville to the Meharry Medical Center in Nashville, 40 miles away. Meharry was a hospital started by black doctors and it was the only one (that) would see black children. It was 1944 when the doctor looked over my leg.

ACTOR 2 (Meharry Doctor)

Mrs. Rudolph, little Wilma’s health is very fragile. And this problem with her right leg – loss of sensation, turned in. I’m afraid we’re talking about polio, Mrs. Rudolph. We can work with her, but, you should know, little Wilma may never be able to walk.

(WILMA cont'd)

My mother looked at him, and my mother looked at me.

“Doctor,” she said, “Wilma will walk.”

Between the doctor on one side and Mother on the other, I chose to believe my mother.

The Meharry doctors put me through all kinds of treatments. My mother made up potions in the kitchen and spooned them into me. At first, I had my lessons at home because the school system wouldn't allow a “crippled” child.

After about five years, I was strong enough to be fitted with a walking brace, so the school let me in. (But) it didn't exactly turn out to be what I wanted. I was so happy to be there with the other children. (beat) The other children just made fun of me and my brace.

I started taking the brace off secretly at night and doing exercises with my leg. Finally, on my 12th birthday, I could walk. On my own. Without the brace. And when I could walk, I only wanted to run.

I decided I wanted to be the American woman who did what Jesse Owens did in the Olympics in 1936. I wanted to win the 100 meters, the 200 meters and the 400-meter relay.

(SHE turns back to the track training center.)

So in 1957 when Dr. Coleman, the team doctor, called me back, I just knew he was going to tell me my right leg was funny again. Instead, he told me I needed to give Coach Temple the results of my pregnancy test.

Coach Temple, soon as he read the paper, told me to pack up and go home. Then I had to tell my parents. Father blamed Robert and banned him from coming around – it was years before he let us marry.

About a week later, Coach Temple drove to Clarksville. He always wore a tie and a jacket when he had an important meeting. And he came in his tie and jacket.

(Speaking as Coach Temple.)

“I'm proud to have been named as the Women's Olympics Coach – a real honor for a black man from Tennessee,” he told my parents. “Wilma works hard. She was a real possibility for the Olympics in 1960. But she's about to become a mother, and I have a strict rule -- no mothers on the team.”

My mother just looked at him. Hard.

Coach Temple tightened his tie.

“Well, now I'm here, I'm reconsidering that rule. If something can be worked out for care of the child, I ... I ... can let Wilma come back.”

We worked something out. As soon as I was back on my feet, I was running. I was running better than ever.

(WILMA cont'd)

September 1960, there I was in Rome. At the Olympics. I was the only black runner for the sprints. On the field, I walked about slowly, my hands on my hips.

Eleven seconds. That's what I wanted. Eleven flat. It would be a record. Not 11.1. Or 11.2 or 11.3. When you're running a sprint, a fraction of a second is a lifetime. One-one thousand. Two-one thousand. Three-one thousand. A lifetime of work. Four-one thousand. Five-one thousand. Six-one thousand. Years of dreams. Seven-one thousand. Eight-one thousand. Nine-one thousand. A future of hopes. Ten-one thousand. Eleven-one thousand. Point -- Zero. 11 point 0.

I did it. I broke the tape on the 100 at 11 point zero. And I came back for the 200 and broke the tape for that. Two golds.

Then comes the 400 relay. Four of us Tennessee Tigerbelle are running for the U.S.A. I'm the anchor – the fourth and final leg.

In the first two legs, we're dead ahead. When the third Tigerbelle comes up behind me to pass the baton, it misses. She slaps it a second time and I grab it.

In those split seconds, Germany and Russia pass us up. I pour on everything I have. Forty meters in, I'm catching up, but the Russian sprinter still has two meters on me. People are yelling, "Vil-ma! Vil-ma!" I keep leaning into the race the way Coach Temple taught me. Breathe in, breathe out. We win by three-tenths of a second -- a new record.

The first American woman to earn three golds in track and field. The first African American woman to earn three golds in track and field. I hold my head high.

Back in Tennessee, Coach Temple told me the governor wanted to give me a parade. Well, the governor was a segregationist. I said I would only participate if the black people and the white people were all invited. So at age two, Yolanda attended the first integrated parade in Clarksville.

Two years later, Mother sits Yolanda on her lap when I collect my college diploma. They hold their heads high.

(SHE holds up the rolled paper and elaborately wraps a ribbon around it.)

Now, let's get back to work here. All systems go. Come on. Deep breaths. Deep.

(A musical bridge begins.)

End of Scene Four

Scene Five
GRETEL BERGMANN

(ACTOR 2 takes on the character of MARGARETHE "GRETEL" BERGMANN. She is rather ordinary-looking, with dark hair and eyes, strong legs, and a solemn, but not strident, appearance. She is 70 years old now.)

ACTOR 1 quietly begins to look through the box.)

GRETEL puts on a windbreaker. SHE speaks with a slight German accent. SHE talks to a small group of people from her community who know her, but nothing of her story.)

GRETEL

Sometimes, I think the hardest thing to be an athlete is not to be an athlete. We do not so much choose to be an athlete. It is just what we are. And the times when we are what we are -- an athlete -- everything comes together -- the body and the soul, the heart and the mind -- as we race across the dirt of a track, blood rushing, feet flying. And the times when we are not an athlete, when we cannot be an athlete ... it ... what shall I say? ... it bristles against the bones.

There is no other way to explain. It is like the other things that we are. We are born with blue eyes or brown. We are born favoring the left -- or the right (gestures with hand). We are born a Gentile or a Jew.

As for me -- I am always crazy for sports! When I am growing up in Laupheim, I played on all the boys' teams. In 1930, I won six track and field ribbons. High jump is my best event. I am determined to be a World Class Athlete.

I set my sights on the university in Berlin ... to become a teacher of physical education.

(In the next scene, GRETEL speaks to an unseen school administrator.)

"Guten dag. I am Fraulein Gretel Bergmann. I have looked over the list of registrants for the university, but I do not find my name."

"Yah. I have my acceptance letter right here."

"I do not understand when you tell me something has changed. My record is good."

"Chancellor Hitler has said not to admit Jews?"

"How long must I wait for the 'climate' to change? I wish to continue sports. Now. In my best years."

(GRETEL cont'd)

"Yah. Yah. I understand there is nothing you can do."

I would not give up athletics so easily. I go to England. The London Polytechnic! It is a very good thing: I win the blue ribbon in the high jump, 1934! I am the champion in all of Britain ... I am a World Class Athlete!

(ANNA, in the background, muted, pulls out a blue ribbon and puzzles over it.)

(GRETEL cont'd)

It's soon after that that my father comes to England ... on a business trip, he says.

His eyebrows are tight on his forehead, even as he greets me.

(The next sequence reflects a dialogue between Gretel and her father.)

"Papa ... why must you be so serious? Look -- my new ribbon!"

"Well, yes, I have heard that Hitler is bent on having a fanfare for the Olympics of 1936. It is of no concern to me."

"So, if the Americans say they will not come because of discrimination against the Jews ... it's a true thing. A Jew cannot so much as join a track club."

"Come back? It doesn't interest me. I have a future here."

"I don't care if Hitler wants all the German Jewish athletes to try out."

"I don't care if I am the best athlete."

"What? No ... Papa ... stop ... what is it?"

"Threats? They are making threats against me? Whom do they threaten?"

"Oh, I see. They make threats against the Jews. And against the families."

"Yah, papa. I understand. I understand how it is."

I went back to Germany. Twenty-one Jews are "invited" to try-out for the Olympics. Of course, we cannot train in the same way as the Aryan athletes ... but we work hard all the same. In 1935, only two of us are left on the Olympic team. I am one. The other is Helene Mayer, the fencer, whose grandfather was a Jew. It is so funny that by the religion a Jew is one with a Jewish mother. To the Nazis, anyone with Jewish blood was a Jew.

(As if reading newspaper headlines.)

(Music rises.)

"Miss Bergmann, Jewish high jumper on German team" "Change in Nazi philosophy to admit Jews!" "U.S. votes to join Olympics!" "American boys will have their 'birthright of competition.'" And so on and so on.

(GRETEL cont'd)

But I am busy ... working out, running, jumping. In June -- only two months before the Olympics -- I equal the high jump records! Five feet -- three inches! Everybody on the team is buzzing that I will win a silver or a gold.

There is an air of excitement everywhere in Germany about the Olympics this summer. Even the Jewish shop owners are allowed to fly the flag for the Olympics! A big parade is scheduled; the very first Olympic torch is going to be lit. All of Berlin has a spit-polish shine. Soon, the word comes: the Americans set sail! The big Games are practically on!

(Music ends.)

In July -- July 16, it was -- two weeks before the Olympic Games -- I receive the letter from the German sports authorities. "Fraulein Bergmann. This letter is to advise you that your achievements have been inadequate, and we have found it necessary to remove you from the German Olympic team. Please depart from the Olympic training grounds immediately."

(ANNA, in background, takes items out of the box, then puts them back in, then removes them again and sets them aside.)

(GRETEL cont'd)

I am an athlete with no place to compete ... no "birthright of competition." I leave Germany not long after with ten dollars in my pocket.

So. I have said it is hard to be an athlete and not to be an athlete. But sometimes one must live by another thought, as well. At the medal ceremony in Berlin, all of the German athletes are required to wear a swastika and raise their arms in a Nazi salute. They even say the words, 'Heil Hitler.' It bristles against the bones. That I could not do. And so, I say to myself, "Margarethe. Perhaps sometimes it is easier on the conscience not to be an athlete, after all."

(GRETEL turns away slowly and ACTOR 2 looks briefly at materials set aside from one of the boxes.)

(Musical bridge.)

End of Scene Five

Scene Six
BABE DIDRIKSON

(ACTOR 2 sees something set aside from one of the boxes, and picks it up. SHE takes on the character of BABE DIDRIKSON (also known as Babe Didrikson Zaharias). BABE DIDRIKSON seems tall, although she is only 5'6". She is angular and has a magnificent body.

ANNA, Actor 1, continues reading materials, to the side.

BABE'S Texas roots show in her voice, as does her homegrown education and a certain kind of naivety mixed with egotism. SHE puts on a bathrobe, picks up a letter, and glances at it.)

BABE

What the hell is this one? From Boston. To "Mildred Didrikson."

(Tears it in half.)

Don't call me Mildred! It's Babe. Or any of them other names the reporters dreamed up. Like 'Muscle Moll.' That was one. Or 'Texas Tornado.' 'Terrific Tomboy.' Or 'Whatta Gal.' They got to liking that one. Far as I'm concerned, it's just Babe. Named me Babe right in Beaumont, Texas.

See, this one day -- in 1920 I reckon when I was about nine -- I walked out to the baseball diamond where the boys was playing.

(Acting out the next scene, as if walking onto a baseball field, grabbing a bat.)

I picked up one of them bats and signaled the fella that was pitching to throw me a few. He didn't really want to and twisted all around on the mound. Well, I whacked that ball good. He pitched the next. I whacked that ball even harder. Now he winds up and throws me the best pitch he's got, and I whacked that ball the hardest anyone ever had on that field.

(ANNA looks up, as if watching a ball fly into the distance.)

ACTOR 1 (A boy on the team)

She hits like Babe Ruth.

BABE (cont'd)

(Signals for more pitches.)

“I might hit like Babe Ruth,” (I said.) “But, I might hit a whole lot better, too.”

Gals in Beaumont weren't supposed to be nothing like that. In high school, the girls were mostly in the Miss Purple Club which was something organized to 'encourage our boys in athletics to victory.' Shoot. I wasn't any Miss Purple, and no Miss Purple was 'encouraging' me when I scored 106 points my very self for the girls' basketball championship.

It was about then that I knew Beaumont wasn't enough to hold me. So I went off to Dallas to play basketball for the Golden Cyclones of the Employers Casualty Company. And that's when I found out about track and field.

1932 was about the biggest year for track and field because of the Olympics coming to Los Angeles. The competitors were to be selected at the AAU meet in Illinois. I couldn't hardly sleep the night before. Mrs. Hall, the escort, had to call a doctor out because I had stomach cramps so bad. But in the morning, it was one of those days in an athlete's life when you feel you could fly, you feel you're a feather floating in the air.

At the stadium, I went right up to the man in charge.

(In this sequence, BABE speaks as if she is carrying on a conversation with an invisible person.)

“I'm here to represent the team from Dallas.”

“No, sir, there's just me to represent the Dallas team.”

“What event do I want to enter? All the events.”

“Well, if the most anyone could possibly do is eight, then that's what I'll do. And the name's Babe, sir. Don't call me Mildred.”

I walked out to the stands and Mrs. Hall was the only one I knew. “Cheer for me,” I said to her. And while I was warming up, I could hear her: (ACTOR 1 joins.) “Go, team, go.” “Go, team, go. Go team go. Go team go. Go team go.”

(ACTOR 1 joins in: Go, team, go.)

(BABE tries to get the audience to join in a cheer. BABE does stretches, warm-ups, and then demonstrates each event as she announces the winner.)

The rest of the day went pretty fast. They announced the results over the loudspeaker after each event.

(BABE cont'd)

“The hundred yard dash -- all winners from the Illinois team. The discus throw, fourth place goes to the Dallas team.”

And then finally:

“Winner of the shot put: The Dallas team, that is, Mildred -- or Babe -- Didrikson.”

Well, pretty soon, that feeling I had in the morning that nothing could go wrong started a-growing. “Cheer for me Mrs. Hall,” I called.

“The broad jump winner is ... Babe Didrikson. First place in the baseball throw with a world's record, Babe Didrikson.”

“A new world's record in the javelin with a throw of 139 feet, 3 inches, by Babe Didrikson. Jean Shiley has established a new world's record in the high jump and that's been matched by Babe Didrikson! Winner of the 80 meter hurdles in 11.9 seconds, a new world's record by ... Babe Didrikson.”

By the end there I didn't need to be asking anybody to cheer for me ... they just did.

“Go Babe Go.”

ACTOR 1 and BABE

“Go Babe Go. Go Babe Go.”

(Trying to get the audience to cheer.)

BABE

I only had me three hours there at the AAU national meet, but when I left, they gave me six gold medals. I broke four world records. And I whupped the other team of twenty-two women by thirty points to 16.

After I won me three medals at the Olympics, I went back to Beaumont. They had a big parade there for me. And all of the Miss Purple Club was out there a-cheering for me.

You know, folks say I go about winning these athletic games because I have the cooperation thing that has to do with eye, mind and muscle. That sure is a powerful lot of language to use about a gal from Texas. All I know is that I can run and I can jump and I can toss things and when they fire a gun or tell me to get busy I just say to myself, “Well, kid, here's where you've got to win another.” And I usually do.

I say that even today. To George, my husband. And to Betty, my good friend. Even to the doctors. You see, I done all kinds of sporting events. I won every golf competition they had for women. I was going to enter the U.S. Open, which no woman had ever done, but soon as the papers printed that, they pretty quick passed a new rule that no woman could enter. One time a reporter asked me if there was anything I didn't play. “Yeah,” I said. “I don't play dolls.”

(BABE cont'd)

I guess it was around my forty-second birthday when the doctors come to diagnosing me with cancer or some such thing. But I told those doctors three things: I don't care what it is you call cancer, you just make sure my golf clubs sit over there in the corner of the hospital room as long as I'm here to see them.

And don't be calling me Mildred. The name's Babe.

(Musical bridge rises.)

And you cheer for me, you hear?

(BABE slowly moves to the side of the stage.)

End of Scene Six

Scene Seven**MAMIE ‘PEANUT’ JOHNSON**

(ACTOR 1 picks up a box, heartily, and brings it center stage, as she takes on the character of MAMIE “PEANUT” JOHNSON. She is stacking away baseball paraphernalia, removed from shelves and countertops of a small, eccentric shop. The year is 2014, and MAMIE is a mature woman, about 79 years of age.

MUSIC bridge fades. ACTOR 2, ELLIE, also finds baseball memorabilia in a box by the side of the stage.

MAMIE is quick to laugh and willing to weave a tale. Throughout the scene, SHE picks up paraphernalia, inspecting, handling, putting things in one box and then taking them out again, as if giving up great friends and clinging to them at the same time.

SHE picks up a baseball, inspects it, twists it around.)

MAMIE

One little three-inch ball! “Fire it in there!” “Show ‘em what you have!”

(The sound of a tinkling bell, triggered by ELLIE to the side, is heard as someone enters a door. This someone is unseen, and MAMIE straightens up and speaks to the visitor. ELLIE, without taking center stage, mirrors actions of the visitor.)

(MAMIE cont’d)

Oh, hey, come in. Look around fast if you want to know about the Negro Leagues! Closing up our little memento shop – rent’s too high; you know how it is.

(MAMIE studies the item – a photo in a frame.)

Let me grab this photo. 1954. Antique! Maybe I can convince Cooperstown to take this one for that fancy Baseball Hall of Fame.

I know that’s not the preferred “lingo” today, but “Negro” Leagues meant something special. Top-of-the-line! Of course, there aren’t many of us old-timers left.

(MAMIE pulls out items from a display case – jerseys, balls, photos, a baseball.)

Yes, I'm an old-timer, honey. (*Twisting the ball.*) 108 stitches. That's your pro ball.

(SHE pulls out a baseball card.)

This here is my trading card ...

Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, Indianapolis, Negro Leagues. 1953-1955.

(SHE takes off an overshirt and has jersey marked 20 underneath.)

Those days, I was just like Mo'Ne -- the girl on TV in the Little League. Living and breathing one thing: baseball.

(SHE picks up a mitt, bends and softens it, and then holds it to her chest with the open part turned inward and holding a ball in the pocket, the way a (MAMIE cont'd) pitcher stands before throwing to a batter. SHE eyes an imaginary sightline as if looking toward the catcher.)

Wherever they put down a base and patch together some dirt for a mound, I'm there. Boys – girls, white, black. I'm good. A "10" – that's what I am.

(Puts the mitt under her arm and twists the ball around.)

On grandma's farm down South, we take a nice size rock – the kind you throw at crows on the fence – and wrap it round and round with twine and tape.

(Models wrapping and throwing)

My uncle Bones shows me a few pitching tricks.

(At first, SHE speaks as Bones, but does the action.)

"Shake out your arms by your side. Loosen your shoulders. Fix the strike zone in your mind – narrow as the plate, from the batter's armpits to the knees. Then -- follow through."

(Now SHE switches to a first-person rendition, figuring this out.)

I stretch up tall as I can, kick up my leg, pull my arm back.

"Fire it in!"

I sling 'em fast. 80-85 miles. Whoosh!

Then the sound of the ball hitting the catcher's mitt! No more sensational sound to a pitcher than – "THUD!"

ACTOR 2 (Umpire)

"STRIIKKE!"

MAMIE
(SHE laughs.)

I definitely know how to close out an inning, honey.

After grandma dies, I move north, but I keep playing. Grandma always said if I want to play ball, I should play ball, and when I'm living with my mama in D.C., she's the same. In 1953, a couple years out of high school, I'm playing over on the sandlot with the St. Cyprian Nine men's team when some fella eyes us from the sidelines. He grabs me after, looks at my hand.

ACTOR 2 (Recruiter)

You know what you're doing out there.

MAMIE

Eight fellas backing me up. You can't play ball on your own.

ACTOR 2 (Recruiter)

I've done my time on the diamond. I want to set you up to try out for a Negro Leagues team, coming to town.

MAMIE

A pro team? A paying team?

ACTOR 2 (Recruiter)

I know a pitcher when I see one. And I just saw one.

MAMIE

A week later, I'm in the front row of a bus heading to the spring training camp with the men on the champion Indianapolis team. I told Mama, "I gotta go. This is my dream!" And, she can't really argue with that, honey.

Me, the first lady pitcher on a professional team. Fact is, three of us ladies play in the Negro Leagues.

(SHE does different enactments for each of these; the first, Toni is very solid, a fielder, intense, focused, but always on the alert, leaning forward in a crouch.)

Toni Stone, second base, is the first lady player. She's played in traveling semi-pro leagues all over, and works on the docks in California off-season. I think she's about 10 years older than the 22 it says in the publicity. She's joined the Indianapolis team earlier that year and is the main gate attraction.

First time I'm on the roster to pitch, Toni sees me fiddling with my uniform and puts her arm on my shoulder.

(SHE leans forward as if imitating Toni.)

"You look fine. Now go out and show them what you have."

So I do.

(MAMIE cont'd)

(CONNIE, enacted by MAMIE, is in constant motion. Jumping, stretching, working her arm, testing her reach.)

Connie Morgan, infield, is the third lady player. When Toni goes to Kansas City, Connie takes second base for Indianapolis. She's from Philly, played with the Philadelphia Honey Dippers. She's multisport, too – basketball, swimming, you name it. She's good.

ACTOR 2 (Announcer)

“The girls take a back seat to no one,”

MAMIE

-- says *The Amsterdam News* when we play at Yankee Stadium.
(SHE laughs.)

We wear full flannels – royal blue jersey and matching pants, red stripes down the side. There's a matching cap, and I pull my ponytail through the strap in the back.

(SHE looks up.)

Very first game I pitch, one of the players on the other team sees me on the mound and yells, “Why she's no bigger than a peanut.”

But I have a way of standing tall. It's called: Slider. Circle change. Screwball. I can make an impression when I need to!

Thud! It's fun striking out the fellas.

Grant you, it didn't always work out.

You ever see that movie, *A League of Their Own*? The one about the all-girls league – SEMI pro, ran from about 1942 to '54? The movie has Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell and Geena Davis and Tom Hanks as the coach.

There's a scene where the catcher on the Rockford Peaches – that's Miss Geena Davis – is warming up, and the ball rolls to a fan area. This spectator, African American, dressed in a kind of fancy print dress, picks up the ball and slings it, real hard.

(SHE mimes this)

Geena catches it and looks over in awe. The woman in the fancy dress nods and smiles.

The whole scene lasts 13 seconds.

Except it didn't happen that way.

Fact is, in 1952, a few months before I joined the Negro Leagues, I see a little notice that the all-girls team is having tryouts. The girl teams have different rules – only play seven innings

(MAMIE cont'd)

and the players are all gussied up in these flouncy skirts. But they're playing.

I tell my friend, Rita, and we scrape together some money, and 6 am, get a bus down to their field.

(SHE acts out the next sequence.)

I loosen my shoulders all the way down. Rita and I walk to the field where the girls in the skirts are practicing.

We stand for a few minutes, and then a man holding a clipboard walks over.

ACTOR 2 (Manager)

What are you girls doing here?

MAMIE

(Pulls out the newspaper clipping.)

We're here to try out for the American All-Girls Professional Baseball League. I'm a pitcher, and my friend ...

ACTOR 2 (Manager)

Wrong place.

MAMIE

He snaps his clipboard and walks away. We stand there for another 30 minutes.

Rita says, "Let's go."

"Hold on," I say.

I grab up a ball and wave with my mitt until the girl on third base looks my way. I throw hard as I can. Third base catches the ball, and then pulls off her mitt and shakes her hand like it's stinging.

I turn back to Rita.

"Yeah. Let's find the bus."

Turns out, 600 ballplayers in the girls' league all those 12 years, and not one of them is black. To me, baseball isn't black or white, and it isn't even fellas or girls. If you can play ball, you can be a ballplayer.

I have one philosophy, honey: **Play as if that is what you want to do.** If you're doing what you want to do, then hardships have a way of sliding away. If you're doing what you want to do, then it's not hard.

After three seasons, life was calling – school, family. By then, I'm 33 and 8 – that's 33 wins, 8 losses.

(MAMIE cont'd)

Baseball starts changing, too. After Jackie Robinson goes over to the Major Leagues, they break the color line for good.

But that doesn't help me. It took the Negro Leagues to break the gender line -- with Toni, and Connie, and me.

What are those big old baseball teams afraid of? Worried a girl might strike them out?

(SHE laughs)

There are plenty good enough.

Honey, did you see that girl – Mo'Ne Davis on ESPN? 14 years old. Tall.

(SHE stands, tall, to the side, as if she is holding a mitt to her chest, serious, determined.)

Her ponytail poking out the back of her cap. Like me. She has that look in her eye. I told my son, "I'm going to see her play."

(SHE yells, as if watching Mo'Ne play.)

"Follow through, Mo'Ne! Fire it in there, honey! I did it -- I know you can. Show them what you have!"

Shut out. Little League World Series. The first Little Leaguer on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*.

(SHE turns back to her paraphernalia.)

Even if we're barely mentioned at Cooperstown, all these years, I know inside myself I did something special, something no one else can claim.

(Music rises. SHE suddenly starts grabbing memorabilia she's tossed away.)

I'm going to save some of this memorabilia for Mo'Ne! She could be the first in the Major Leagues. And they'll be others, too. Can't block us forever. We're firing up.

Whoosh!

We're on our way.

(Music fades out.)

End of Scene Seven

Scene Eight
CLOSING

(ANNA stands center stage with MAMIE's box, and ELLIE joins her with another stack of materials. THEY continue to flip through various papers, and to test ideas against the space. Designers are encouraged to use their imagination.)

ANNA

Here's something I clipped:

Marta Vieira da Silva of Brazil has been elected five times as the best soccer player in the world. She's the only person, ever, male or female, to achieve that status. She's now working on the empowerment of women with the United Nations.

ELLIE

I never heard of her. How many clippings do you have?

ANNA

Tons of them. All of these boxes.

ELLIE

All of them?

ANNA

This is what I do. I collect these women's stories.

Here's one. Becky Hammon is the first female coach in the National Basketball Association. Or in any men's professional sports.

ELLIE

I know her ... former player in women's professional basketball. Great ball handler. Only five feet, six inches.

ANNA

Yes, exactly. People always told her she couldn't succeed, but she said, 'My closest voices told me, 'You can.'"

ELLIE

(Reflecting.)

"You can." I like that.

(Picking out a clipping.)

(ELLIE cont'd)

Lydia Ko from New Zealand – born in Korea -- is the youngest golfer of any gender to be ranked number one. Age 17. (beat) What a bully accomplishment.

ANNA

Alie Jimerson! Played lacrosse as a teen on the same team as her mother and they represented the Native American Haudenosaunee Nation at the Women's World Cup.

ELLIE

Dr. Deborah Antoine -- mother, grandmother, standout tennis player in her age category became the CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation started by Billie Jean King.

ANNA

Zaha Hadid, born in Iraq, designed the iconic Olympic Aquatic Center in London.

ELLIE

Yusra Mardini, an Olympic swimmer, had to flee from Syria. Along the way, the boat she was in broke down and she jumped into the sea and pushed the vessel to safety. She's training for the next Olympics as a refugee.

ANNA

'There's nothing but what's inside you.'

ELLIE

This is insane.

ANNA

What?

ELLIE

There are too many stories.

ANNA

Maybe a pop-up museum is a crazy idea.

ELLIE

(Looking around.)

No ... It's just a start.

ANNA

What do you mean?

ELLIE

We need something bigger. People need to know about all of these women ... who are being tossed aside. Maybe we can get the whole mall.

ANNA

What would we do with that?

ELLIE

Or all of the Cosmos' clubs around the country that have been shut down. We can have travelling panels that can be shipped from place to place.

ANNA

You're kidding, right?

ELLIE

A Women's Sports Hall of Fame. All the sports ... soccer, skating, skiing, swimming, baseball, football, golf, wrestling, running. I mean, you look on ESPN, there's like 50 stories and one about women or people who identify as women. We can build an actual place. We should contact that Aquatics Center designer.

ANNA

Now you're being crazy. That's way too hard.

ELLIE

Maybe. Maybe I am. (beat) We have to play as if it's what we want to do. If we play as if it's what we want to do, then the hardships have a way of sliding away. Then it's not hard.

ANNA

'We'?

ELLIE

We're going to get this going. Together. Starting with this Cosmos.

ANNA

And aim for more by the next Olympics. Maybe a whole Expo on Women in Sports.

ELLIE

Now let's get busy.

ANNA

'Whenever they fire a gun or tell me to get going, I say here's where you've got to win another.'

Well, then, on your mark.

ELLIE

(SHE hands ANNA the baton or other artifact.)

Get set ...

ANNA

Go!

ANNA AND ELLIE

(THEY toss their hands in the air.)

(Blackout.)

THE END