

# **What Strong Women Can Do**

Pilot Episode: "Refuse to Lose"

Teleplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

We ZOOM INTO a sprawling sports stadium brimming with fans on a sun drenched Easter Sunday.

SUPER: EXHIBITION GAME, OMAHA (1952)

INT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

BLACK MEN in starched white shirts and Fedoras RAZZ the umpires. BLACK WOMEN, in colorful floral dresses and matching bonnets, wave cardboard fans to cool off.

In a heavy wool INDIANAPOLIS CLOWNS uniform, a wiry, light-skinned Black woman named JESSE STRONG (32) takes a powerful practice swing and steps confidently into the batter's box.

Her last name's in all caps on the back of her uniform. She's athletic, spunky, and passionate about baseball.

On the mound with his back to her, the legendary SATCHEL "SATCH" PAIGE (46) massages a baseball. In his baggy ST. LOUIS BROWNS uniform, he's lanky, scarecrow thin, and cocksure about his crafty super-skills with the cowhide.

TIGHT ON SATCH

He spins around and taunts Jesse with a Cheshire cat grin.

TIGHT ON JESSE

Rattled, she steps from the box to gather her composure. She hears the White CATCHER laughing and spits near his shoes.

JESSE  
(to the catcher)  
Somethin' funny?

CATCHER  
Never thought I'd see a woman,  
especially a *darkie*, face a future  
Hall of Famer like ole' Satch.

JESSE  
You'd be surprised what *darkie*  
*women* can do.

Paige shoves his glove under an arm and strides to the plate. Jesse crosses her arms defiantly. *What's this?*

CATCHER  
 (chuckling)  
 Here we go.

The UMP calls time. Not much he can do at times like this except sit back and enjoy the *Leroy Satchel Paige Show*.

Satch presses the baseball into Jesse's hand.

SATCH  
 Honey doll, that ball there's gonna strike you out in three pitches.

Jesse flinches at Satch's intimidation tactics.

SATCH (CONT'D)  
 Even tell you the pitches. First, my *Long Tom*, a fastball. Then, my *Whipsy-Dipsy-Do*, a curve. Then, if you're still around, my *Be Ball*.

Jesse's confused. *Be Ball?*

SATCHEL  
 Never heard of it? Called a *Be Ball* 'cause it 'be' right where I want it, high and inside. Wigglin' like a little fishin' worm.

Satch yanks the ball from Jesse's hand and marches back to the mound. The ump signals PLAY BALL. Jesse climbs back into the box. Satch winds up and releases.

SLO-MO CLOSEUP ON THE BALL

The baseball zooms toward Jesse, seams spinning, growing larger in the frame as it nears the plate.

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: AUSTIN, TEXAS (2002)

In a cold sweat, Jesse, now in her 80's, jerks up in bed. The recurring nightmare is over. For now. She plods to the bathroom, MUMBLING something about *Be Balls*.

EXT. EAT SMART FOOD MART PARKING LOT - DAY

A PIMPLY-FACED TEEN totes Jesse's grocery bag. He walks far ahead of her.

A blood orange bounds from the bag and bounces onto the sidewalk. Mesmerized by his new state of the art cellphone, the zombied-out teen ignores the rolling citrus.

But Jesse doesn't. Instinctively, she snaps the orange off the concrete like it's a bunted baseball. She rears back and fires a perfect STRIKE thirty feet into the grocery bag.

JESSE

The old broad's still got it!

The teen looks up from his phone, puzzled but not impressed. He shoves the groceries into Jesse's aging Cadillac.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Not a baseball fan, huh?

Crickets from the teen. Jesse hands him a buck.

PIMPLY-FACED TEEN

(sarcastically)

AWESOME! A whole dollar.

Jesse climbs behind the wheel, and slams the car in reverse, not bothering to check the rearview. Her rear bumper SMACKS the front bumper of the car behind her.

She yanks the car into drive, BOUNCES OFF the side door of the car beside her, and drives away. The teen shakes his head and stuffs the dollar in his pocket.

An overzealous SECURITY OFFICER in a golf cart zooms past, hot on the trail of the smash-and-flee driver.

EXT. JESSE'S HOUSE - DAY

A STOCKY FEMALE COP hands an accident report to Jesse. Her badge reads AUSTIN POLICE. CAPITAL OF TEXAS.

STOCKY COP

Pick it up at impound after thirty days, Mrs. Strong.

Jesse sighs as a TOW TRUCK DRIVER in an oil-stained shirt, cigarette dangling from his lips, hauls off her Cadillac.

STOCKY COP (CONT'D)

Oh, and you'll need to take a new driver's test and eye check when you come in. Have a nice day.

As the cop drives away, a flock of SCREECHING Black Grackles shit-bombs Jesse. She looks to the sky, then to the white spot on her shoulder.

JESSE

Nice day, my ass.

EXT. LONE STAR CENTRAL COLLEGE - DAY

JAMES STRONG (19) timid and insecure, a nervous type with a line up haircut and the chiseled face of a Black model plods down the campus library stairs dodging other rushed students.

In The Quad, James sees a SHOUTING MOB waving hand-lettered signs: MY GENDER IS MY BUSINESS! NO HATE IN THIS STATE!

Beside a makeshift stage, a banner reads: CRIMINALIZING GENDER TRANSITIONS. STAFFORD YOUNG VS. MORGAN DE COSTA.

James finds a spot beneath a Live Oak and listens to a buffoon named STAFFORD YOUNG (50's) spew an angry screed.

YOUNG

My third grade son thinks he's a girl even though he has a penis.

BOOS and ANGRY SHOUTS from the crowd.

YOUNG (CONT'D)

Lib counselors've convinced my ex-wife he has gender dysphoria. Typical for groomers like them who want to sexualize our kids. That's a direct attack on God's creations!

PROTESTOR (O.C.)

You are SUCH a total idiot!!

Young smirks. The crowd grows more restless.

YOUNG

Well, this week, our great Governor finally put a stop to the nonsense. Now, under Texas law, affirming a youth's preferred gender identity will be considered "child abuse."

The crowd CHANTS "FASCIST GO HOME!!" Young is undeterred.

YOUNG (CONT'D)  
 (louder, over the chants)  
 And Family and Protective Services  
 will investigate doctors, teachers,  
 and parents who try to interfere.

A wafer-thin redheaded woman MORGAN DECOSTA (30) raises her hands for the crowd to quiet down. She speaks quietly.

DECOSTA  
 Ah, the wisdom of Texas political  
 leadership.

Scattered CHUCKLES from the crowd.

DECOSTA (CONT'D)  
 So now Texas parents are scared to  
 take their kids to the doctor, to  
 send them to school, or just live  
 in this charming, welcoming state.

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the obviously partisan audience.  
 James finds himself applauding with everyone else.

DECOSTA (CONT'D)  
 The hard truth is gender dysphoria  
 is serious. Untreated, it results  
 in clinical depression. There's a  
 reason four out of ten non-binary  
 kids attempt suicide. But  
 affirmation therapy can help them  
 cope. And we must fight to ensure  
 it! We will not let hate win!

James rises, joins with the others in a STANDING OVATION. The crowd chants "WE WILL NOT LET HATE WIN!" over and over.

Stafford Young whirls on his heels and tromps off stage.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James totes a cardboard box filled with clothes. James's mother DELLA STRONG (50's) greets him with a wide smile. She's plump, cherubic faced and cheerful, ever the optimist.

DELLA  
 (shouting to her husband)  
 SAMSON! JAMES IS HOME!!

JAMES  
 Hi, Mom.

Della helps James carry the box into the house. She palms his cheeks and stands back to get a closer look.

DELLA

My baby boy gets more handsome  
every day!

A stern-faced, bear of a man strides in. SAMSON "SAM" STRONG, decades older than his wife, scrutinizes his son through Coke bottle-thick eyeglasses.

James snaps to attention like a private hailing a general.

SAM

Summer break already? Spending the  
old man's money fast aren't you?

JAMES

Hello Dad.  
(beat)  
Once I pass the bar, I'll pay you  
back.

SAM

Bet your ass you will!

Della reaches over to help James with the box of clothes but she fumbles it. The box tips. Clothes tumble to the floor.

Pants, shirts, jackets, men's loafers. A sexy red dress. A lacy bra. Spiked heels.

Sam's eyes linger over the dress, bra, and heels. He peers at James. James hangs his head. Della snatches the women's clothes and hurriedly tosses them back in the box.

DELLA

Look what I've done. We can just  
put these back and take them to  
your old bedroom, sweetie!

Sam glares at James--a tiger stalking a gazelle.

SAM

Thought you'd gotten over this.

James remains silent.

SAM (CONT'D)

I am an influential member of this  
community. Don't you ever think of  
me and your mother when you get  
these...inclinations?

Della finishes stashing the clothes back in the box.

DELLA

Let's talk about this later. James,  
I'll take your clothes into the--

Sam grabs the box from Della and shoves it at James.

SAM

Nothing to talk about.  
(to James)  
Go.

DELLA

Samson! Please--

SAM

(again to James)  
GO! GET OUT OF HERE. And don't  
expect any more cash from this old  
man. We're done!

Sam tramps away. James wipes his eyes.

Della sobs and wraps her arms around James. He kisses her on the forehead, releases her, and carries the box outside.

Della closes the door. With her back against it, she listens to the car engine START and to James drive away.

EXT. JESSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

James's beat-up VW Bug SPUTTERS into the driveway.

INT. JESSE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jesse answers a KNOCK. She SNAPS on the porch light, spies the keyhole, smiles, and opens the door.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

James holds the box of clothes and his car keys in his hands.

JAMES

Aunt Jesse. Long time--

ON JESSE

She's surprised and delighted to see her nephew. She makes a big show of ushering him inside.



INT. JESSE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James puts down the box and hugs Jesse.

JESSE

If it's not my favorite nephew!

JAMES

I'm honored. Since I'm also your only nephew.

JESSE

That's a minor asterisk. You're still my favorite!

Jesse eyes the box of clothes.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Little late at night for a Goodwill clothing drive, isn't it?

JAMES

(laughs)

I came to ask a favor.

JESSE

Uh oh, you here can only mean one thing. My brother's created more drama.

JAMES

Kicked me out. A misunderstanding we don't ever seem to resolve.

JESSE

Well, stay as long as you like. You can be my chauffeur. My car's in... the shop...for awhile.

INT. JESSE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Still in pajamas, James rubs his eyes and drags himself into the kitchen. We hear the SIZZLE of sausage and POP of bacon cooking. James glances at the clock. Six a.m. Not the usual wake-up time for collegians.

Wielding the spatula like a Louisville Slugger, Jesse fills a plate and slides it in front of James.

JESSE

Good morning, sunshine. Nice farm breakfast for you.

(MORE)

JESSE (CONT'D)

Eggs, bacon, sausage, white toast  
with honey, cheese grits and black  
coffee.

Jesse sits down and joins James.

JAMES

The photos in the spare bedroom.  
Was that you in the ball uniform?

Jesse leans back, chomps on bacon and smiles.

JESSE

That it was. Years ago! I used to  
play professional ball.

JAMES

I never knew! You must've been good  
to play pro softball. Or was it the  
ladies' league in that movie?

Jesse finishes the toast, licks her fingers, and leans in.

JESSE

No. Negro Leagues. Professional  
baseball. With the men.

James's eyes widen. He sits back, all ears.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Your aunt was the first woman, and  
the first Black woman, to play in  
pro baseball. Got the bug at ten  
when we moved to Austin.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

SUPER: AUSTIN (1932)

Black KIDS play stickball on the city street. OTHERS run  
through water spraying from a fire hydrant.

Large roadsters whiz past canopy-covered storefronts. Jesse  
(at 10) sprints into MOSES'S BARBER & BEAUTY SHOP.

INT. MOSES'S BARBER & BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Like an impresario in an opera, Jesse's middle-aged father  
MOSES STRONG trims an OLD BLACK MAN's hair. Her all business-  
all the time mother, POLINE, sweeps clippings off the floor.

JESSE (V.O.)  
 'Cept, nobody but me believed a  
 girl could play baseball back then.

Jesse races in, arms flailing. She slams her baseball glove to the floor. Kicks it. Stomps on it.

MOSES  
 What'd that glove ever do to you?

JESSE  
 IT'S THEM BOYS! They done it again!

POLINE  
 DID. What DID they do again?

Jesse crosses her arms. She's in pants two sizes too big, a white tee, and a kid's Whoopee cap adorned with buttons.

JESSE  
 They say girls don't play baseball.

MOSES  
 So play with the girls.

JESSE  
 I wanna play baseball not Dress Up  
 Dolly!

Poline bends down eye level to Jesse.

POLINE  
 Marcella Jean Strong, I have  
 something for you. To keep your  
 mind off baseball.

Poline removes a box from the closet and hands it to Jesse.

OLD BLACK MAN  
 Hope that's a new baseball glove.  
 Think she killed that other one!

Poline shoots the old man the evil eye. Jesse opens the box, removes a bright red dress.

JESSE  
 (half-hearted)  
 Thanks. So. Much. Mama.

POLINE  
 I've registered you for etiquette  
 classes. So you can act like a  
 little lady and not a tomboy.

INT. BALLROOM - DAY

Clearly uncomfortable in her new red dress, Jesse joins other GIRLS parading with books atop their heads while the FEMALE INSTRUCTOR demonstrates how a *real lady* should walk.

SEVERAL BOYS Jesse's age run past the window carting baseball gear. The BOYS' LEADER sticks out his tongue at Jesse. She wrinkles her nose at him. The instructor points to a "time out" chair in the corner. Jesse keeps the book on her head and takes a seat.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jesse stares out the window. NEIGHBORHOOD BOYS play baseball on the empty lot behind her house.

She grits her teeth, runs to her closet, removes her red dress, and tosses it in a cardboard box. She grabs her baseball glove and favorite bat and races out the door.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Jesse dumps the box into a commercial trash bin behind her house and runs to the empty lot.

EXT. EMPTY LOT - DAY

The BOYS see her coming and start to protest.

SHORT BOY

Get out of here TOMGIRL! Boys only!

She holds her ground and raises a palm to plead her case.

JESSE

Just let me play. If I don't hit at least one home run, my daddy will give you a free haircut!

BOYS' LEADER

Two! Two haircuts!

JESSE

Deal.

They shake. The boys' leader points to the outfield.

BOYS' LEADER

Right field.

INT. MOSES'S BARBER & BEAUTY SHOP - DAY

Moses SNORES in his chair. Poline flips through "Photoplay."  
Jesse bursts in, out of breath. Moses startles awake.

POLINE

Girl, what's gotten into you?

MOSES

You alright, honey bear?

JESSE

More than alright! I talked them  
into it. They let me play!

POLINE

What about etiquette class?

JESSE

It didn't take.

MOSES

What made them change their minds?

JESSE

You!

MOSES

Me?

JESSE

I promised free haircuts from you  
if I didn't hit at least one homer.

MOSES

I don't have enough customers as  
is! How can I give free haircuts?

JESSE

It's okay daddy. I didn't hit one  
homer.

MOSES

Oh lord. How many free haircuts are  
we talking about?

JESSE

None. I didn't hit one homerun. I  
hit four!

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

Jesse (at 13) tosses a softball to a CHUBBY GIRL during pre-game. The players, all Black girls, wear uniforms with the team name WATERLOO WONDERGIRLS.

We hear a loud SMACK! when ball hits glove. Chubby Girl drops the ball and the glove. She massages her gloveless palm.

CHUBBY GIRL

(to Jesse)

This is girl's softball, not the Major Leagues! Don't throw so hard!

JESSE

Only way I know how to throw.

The Black FEMALE COACH, in a church lady dress and flowered hat--not your typical coaching attire--hears the girls arguing. She hugs Chubby Girl and surveys her bruised palm.

FEMALE COACH

Baby, you okay? Is she hurting mama's pride and joy?

CHUBBY GIRL

She throws like a boy!

FEMALE COACH

(to Jesse)

Only reason you're here is because Reverend Proctor begged us to give you a chance.

Jesse crosses her arms and stares back defiantly.

FEMALE COACH (CONT'D)

If you want to play like a heathen, join a boy's team!

Jesse rips off her uniform shirt and pants and flings them to the ground. In one-piece long johns, she fires the softball at the backstop. It lodges in the wire-linked mesh.

JESSE

First good idea I've heard all day!

The other girls stop throwing and watch as Jesse shoves her glove under her arm and stomps off in her long johns.

JAMES (O.C.)

So, you just quit playing?

FLASHBACK ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

INT. JESSE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Jesse snatches two pieces of white toast from the toaster.

JESSE  
HELL NO! I was just gettin'  
started! Quitting that softball  
team--best thing I ever did!

She bites into the toast and chews open-mouthed.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Cuz now I knew where I belonged.  
And I was about to prove it.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

SUPER: AUSTIN (1937)

In torn jeans and tee, Jesse (now 15) climbs the bleachers overlooking a well-manicured baseball diamond. The stands are packed with young fidgeting Black boys a bit older than her.

A sign hanging from the backstop reads: AUSTIN BASEBALL ACADEMY TRYOUTS ALL WEEK. Jesse plops down beside a muscular teen. She smiles. He promptly moves away.

GABBY PRIDE (40's), a dogmatic Black man with "COACH" on his cap, finishes calling names from a clipboard.

PRIDE  
Slocom. Swann. Thompson. Wallace.

Pride looks up from the clipboard at the captive audience.

PRIDE (CONT'D)  
Okay, those twelve boys take the  
field. Rest go home, try next year.

The lucky twelve rush to the diamond. Those who didn't make it CRY, CUSS, and PROTEST as they slide slowly off the bleachers. Jesse watches them then looks at Coach Pride.

She rushes over and talks to his back as he walks away.

JESSE  
Coach Pride. I didn't hear my name.  
Marcella Jean Strong. Go by Jesse.

PRIDE

That's cuz I didn't call it. If I had called it, you'd be on the field. Like I said, come back next year.

JESSE

But Coach. Just give me a tryout. I've seen these guys play and I'm better than anyone out there.

Pride stops suddenly. Jesse nearly plows into him. He spins around. Sees he's talking to a girl. Breaks out in a smile.

PRIDE

Did Coach Swank send you? That Swanky! That S.O.B. been trying to get even ever since I pissed in his beer and said it was Texas lager!

JESSE

Nobody sent me. I came because baseball's my life! To those guys, it's just a game.

Pride's expression turns sour. He leans down to Jesse.

PRIDE

Is that so? Well, there's plenty of girl's softball teams around town. Maybe you can make your *life* on one of them.

He turns back to the field, grabs a fungo bat, and starts swatting fly balls to the players.

Jesse slouches back to the bleachers, takes a seat, watches, and waits, just in case Coach Pride changes his mind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - A BIT LATER

Pride's team scrimmages in an intersquad practice game. A BATTER smacks a line drive for a hit and races toward first base.

Watching from the bleachers, Jesse jumps down and parallels the runner in foul territory. He starts several feet ahead but she catches up and beats him to first by three feet.

Jesse spins around and smiles at Coach Pride. He doesn't return the smile.



EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - A BIT LATER

A BATTER fouls a ball off along the right field foul line. The RIGHT FIELDER starts for it but stops when he sees it's beyond his reach.

But Jesse scrambles after it, racing like a thoroughbred in the Kentucky Derby. At the last second, she dives for the ball and snatches it barehanded before it hits the ground.

Pride sees the amazing catch. He crosses his arms, spits out tobacco juice, and sighs. He curls his finger at Jesse. She runs to his side. He peers down at her, frowning.

PRIDE

Okay, three swings. If you don't hit the ball, your tryout's over. If you do, stay in the box 'til you get an out. I'll make a decision what to do with you after that.

Jesse runs onto the field and grabs a bat. The boys stop practicing and watch, confused. Coach Pride tosses three balls to the PITCHER.

PRIDE (CONT'D)

(to the pitcher)

Let's see what she's got.

The other boys take positions in the field. Jesse takes a practice swing and positions her feet in the batter's box.

The pitcher peers over his glove. He shakes off the signal. Smirks. There's no way a GIRL is going to get a hit off of him. Not today. Not any day. He winds and throws.

Jesse flaps her elbow, slides her front foot toward the ball, shoots out her hands to level the bat, and drives from her back thigh as she strides into it with power.

She misses. The players in the field YELP in unison.

CATCHER

(laughing)

Little late on that one. Should I ask him to throw it underhand?

Jesse ignores him. She steps from the box. She tilts her neck left, then right with a CRACK, and steps back in.

The pitcher's cocky now. He shakes off another pitch, winds and throws. Jesse makes a smooth stride and a powerful weight switch. And smashes a line drive!

Coach Pride and the players watch the ball go just foul off the left field line. They're all paying more attention now.

CATCHER (CONT'D)

Huh.

The catcher gives the pitcher a pep talk. Jesse smiles and takes more practice swings. The pitcher rears back, farther than the first two pitches. Jesse senses he's coming with the heat. The players on the field CHANT.

PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

BOYS RULE. GIRLS DROOL. HEY BATTA,  
BATTA, SWING.

Jesse grits her teeth, slides the front foot, and powers through her swing...

...and connects!

The ball WHOOSHES toward the pitcher, but he's having nothing to do with that rocket ball. He dives out of the way. The ball zooms into centerfield. Jesse takes off for first.

She sees the centerfielder trotting nonchalantly toward the ball. She rounds first and hauls ass to second. The centerfielder can't believe she's trying to stretch a single into a double. He barehands the ball and fires it to second.

Jesse dives headfirst under the throw. A double!

Coach Pride clicks ONE on a counter in his hand. He tosses another ball to the pitcher.

PRIDE

Until she gets an out.

Jesse smiles at the pitcher. Then the catcher.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONTINUOUS

1. Another pitch. Another hit. The counter clicks to two.
2. The counter clicks to five.
3. The counter clicks to ten.
4. Jesse pitches from the mound now. The batter swings, misses, and trudges away. Jesse smiles and waves to him.

5. In the outfield, Jesse fields a fly ball. A runner on third tags up and heads for home. Jesse fires a perfect strike to the catcher who tags the runner at the plate.

JESSE (V.O.)

I had ten hits in a row that day before they got me out! When I pitched, I struck out seven. Not bad...for a girl!

MONTAGE ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

INT. JESSE'S KITCHEN - DAY

James is entranced, his elbows on the table, chin in hands.

JAMES

So you made the team?

Jesse simply smiles.

INT. JESSE'S SPARE BEDROOM - DAY

James rifles through the clothes box and locates a business card: SPIRITUAL COUNSELING, CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH. He tosses the card on the bed and retrieves a pair of shorts, a button up shirt and sneakers from the box.

He sits on the bed and starts to dress but stops. He glances at the business card on the bed. Pauses. Filters through the box and withdraws women's underwear and a silk slip.

He touches the underwear to his cheek, closes his eyes, and smiles. He puts them on, then the silk slip, and covers them up with the men's shorts and shirt.

Before leaving, he snatches the business card and shoves it in his pocket.

INT. CALVARY BAPTIST WAITING AREA - DAY

James scans the titles of brochures on a rack. GOD AND FAMILY, JESUS OVERCOMES ALL PROBLEMS, and the one he picks up--AFFIRMING THE GENDER GOD GAVE YOU AT BIRTH.

A door opens. REVEREND ZEKIAH PLUMBER (50's), a tragically overweight Black man in a comic hairpiece extends his hand.

REVEREND PLUMBER  
James, correct?

JAMES  
Yes, sir.

REVEREND PLUMBER  
I remember you from that visit with  
your parents. Come in.

INT. REVEREND PLUMBER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The quarters are spacious, ornate. A polished oak desk and chairs and a gargantuan purple satin couch. Walnut bookshelves display photos of the good reverend posing with local and state politicians.

Certificates and degrees are proudly displayed on the wall along with, of course, the classic White Jesus portrait.

Reverend Plumber plops into a large chair behind the desk. He folds his hands and leans toward James with urgency.

REVEREND PLUMBER  
Was our last talk helpful? Have  
you been better able to control  
your...confusion?

James shifts uncomfortably in the chair.

JAMES  
Uh, no, not really.

REVEREND PLUMBER  
That's okay. God works his ways at  
his own pace, not ours.

JAMES  
Right. It's just, I'm not sure how  
I feel about who I am is something  
to...control.

Rev sits back and folds his thick arms over his huge belly.

REVEREND PLUMBER  
Tell me more.

JAMES  
Well, I've been trying to control  
the fact...I mean, the feeling,  
that I'm a female in a male body  
all my life. And. And.

Arms still crossed, the Reverend narrows his eyes.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I mean no disrespect to God.

The reverend points to the portrait on the wall.

REVEREND PLUMBER

Or Jesus.

JAMES

Right. Or Jesus. But, what if God screws up sometimes. I mean look at the flamingo. Backward knees? Or hairless cats. Or Steve Buscemi. God still loves them.

(beat)

Well, maybe not hairless cats.

This time, when the reverend leans forward, he's frowning.

REVEREND PLUMBER

We should never blaspheme God.

JAMES

Or Jesus.

REVEREND PLUMBER

Hmm. Putting aside your attempt at humor, you're not falling for that gender affirmation garbage are you?

JAMES

That's just it. I don't know. I just know I feel all alone.

REVEREND PLUMBER

Then, I suggest you work harder. Our loving God becomes an angry God when his work is not appreciated.

James nods. Reverend Plumber stands up, a signal that this session is over. James ambles to the door but returns to drop the *God Affirming* brochure on the reverend's desk.

JAMES

I should leave this for another member of your flock. I don't think it'll do me much good.

EXT. JESSE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Jesse finishes taking garments off the clothes line. James picks up the clothes basket for her.

JESSE

Thank you, son. That basket's got all our undergarments in it. All nice and dry and smellin' like honeysuckle!

James gulps as he carries the basket to the house.

JESSE (CONT'D)

(winking to him)

We just had white cloth underdrawers when I was your age.

James stops momentarily to digest his aunt's observation.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Bring those in and I'll tell you more of my story.

Jesse chuckles as James trots after her to catch up.

BEGIN FLASHBACK.

EXT. BACKROAD - NIGHT

SUPER: RURAL ALABAMA (1942)

The COLORED COWBOYS barnstorming bus WHEEZES down a bumpy, blacktop road beneath a full moon.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Jesse (now in her 20's) sits in the front row alone.

JESSE (V.O.)

I'd expected white folks to harass me at the Deep South's ballparks.

In the back, a TEAMMATE pulls a spit wad from his mouth, winks at his SEATMATE, and fires it at Jesse.

JESSE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But I hadn't anticipated being harassed by my own teammates.

SPLAT!

Jesse frowns, reaches into her hair and removes the dripping wad. In the bench seat beside her, Coach Pride hears a commotion of LAUGHTER in the back of the bus.

PRIDE

(to Jesse)

They're jealous. You're hittin' three forty. None of them's over two sixty.

JESSE

Some mutual respect'd be nice.

The bus pulls into the parking lot of IMPERIAL MOTOR INN-- twelve tiny, dilapidated one room cabins in a row. Jesse get up, but her teammates file past and block her exit.

EXT. IMPERIAL MOTOR INN - CONTINUOUS

The inn's owner, a strange bird with a nervous eye twitch, CLAXTON BROOKER (40's), hands keys to the men as they climb off the bus. He's in cowboy boots, checked shirt and bow tie.

BROOKER

Welcome to Birmingham's finest all Negro lodging establishment.

We see Brooker's mouth move as he counts the large number of players getting off the bus. He runs out of keys.

BROOKER (CONT'D)

Looks like your going to need to double or triple up tonight, boys!

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The final few players straggle down the aisle. Jesse's still hemmed in. Nobody's offering her a chance to exit. She sees the GUILTY SPIT WADDER. He grins as he passes. She drops her bat. He trips over it and crashes to the floor.

Jesse snatches her bat, steps over him, and exits the bus.

JESSE

(to the spit wadder)

Why thank you! What nice manners to let a lady go first.

EXT. IMPERIAL MOTOR INN - CONTINUOUS

Brooker scrutinizes Jesse as she gets off. He races over.

BROOKER

WHOA! We're good Christians here.  
No ladies of the evening allowed.

JESSE

You think I'm a hooker?

Brooker flinches. He whispers into Jesse's ear.

BROOKER

Twenty eight male baseball players  
get off a team bus. And then one  
woman. What would you think?

JESSE

I'd *think* that the one woman must  
be one hell of a baseball player.

Brooker shakes his head. He pushes Jesse away.

BROOKER

You need to leave.

JESSE

HEY! Hands off, Howdy Doody! Us  
hookers get paid by the touch!

Coach Pride hears the argument and strolls over.

PRIDE

She's with us. She's not a hooker.

BROOKER

She goes or you all go. If word  
gets out a woman stayed here with  
twenty eight negro men, Birmingham  
City Council'd have me lynched!

Jesse sighs. She raises her palms and surrenders.

JESSE

It's okay Coach. I'll find a place  
to stay and meet you tomorrow.

Pride elbows Brooker in the ribs.

PRIDE

Asshole!

Brooker rubs his side and hang dogs it to the motel office.



EXT. BROTHEL - NIGHT

Jesse climbs the stairs of a Victorian home with a red door and wraparound porch. Women of all ages, sizes, and races lounge about in various states of undress.

VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN  
You look lost, honey.

JESSE  
Just lookin' for a place to stay.  
Motel down the road kicked me out.  
Thought I was a whore.

VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN  
(smiling)  
Sounds like Claxton's doing. You  
ain't the first woman he's denied  
cuz he thought she was a hooker.

SKINNY WOMAN  
All us girls've been kicked out of  
there, ain't we ladies?

Nodding heads and YEP's from the lounging FEMALES.

VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN  
It's one of the reasons I started  
this place. To have a permanent,  
clean place to do business.

BLACK WOMAN  
That, and your sugar daddy up and  
died and left it in the will!

WILD LAUGHTER.

VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN  
(to Jesse)  
We can make room for one night. You  
won't even need to turn tricks!

INT. BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS

They enter an opulent living room with a marble fireplace flanked by arched insets and walnut bookcases. Oil portraits of naked women cover the wood-paneled walls. A gaudy animal print sofa sits in the center of the room.

VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN  
Knock on the first door to the left  
upstairs.

(MORE)

## VOLUPTUOUS WOMAN (CONT'D)

Tell Pepper that Rashida sent you.  
It's her night off, so you can  
sleep on her couch.

## JESSE

I can't thank you enough, ma'am.  
Uh, Miss Rashida.

Jesse starts up the stairs. Rashida yells up.

## RASHIDA

What brings you to town anyway?

## JESSE

My baseball team. Colored Cowboys.  
Got a game tomorrow against the  
Black Knights at Rickwood Field.

## RASHIDA

Knights are a men's team. You their  
cheerleader?

## JESSE

No ma'am. A player.

Rashida steps back. Presses a palm against her ample bosom.

## RASHIDA

Bless your heart! That's why that  
dunce Claxton thought you was a  
whore! Say, you be sure to  
recommend our fine establishment to  
your teammates, you hear?

## JESSE

(chuckles)

I sure will, Miss Rashida.

## EXT. PEPPER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jesse knocks on the door. Footsteps from inside. The door swings open. PEPPER (24), an elegant, wafer-thin, Black Amazon leans sensually on the door frame. Jesse tries to appear unruffled, but the look on her face betrays her.

## JESSE

Ra-Ra-shida asked me, or ah, she  
sent me, for you. I mean, to you.  
To be with you. NO!

Pepper shakes her head, shoots Jesse a fluorescent smile, and yanks her inside. She flows across the room, her red silk Kimono robe waving behind her like a flag in the breeze.

PEPPER

Never seen a whore in real life,  
sweetie?

Jesse becomes animated and anxious. She fumbles for words.

JESSE

It's not that. No. I mean. Well.  
Yes, I've never seen a lady of the  
evening. Well, I mean downstairs,  
but no one as--

PEPPER

Tall?

JESSE

No, not tall.

PEPPER

Black?

JESSE

(smiles)  
No. Not. No.

PEPPER

Oh shit. Fat right? I been puttin'  
on way too much weight around here.  
Too much of Rashida's fried food.

JESSE

OH GOD NO! You're perfect! Like a  
movie star. Like Josephine Baker or  
Mildred Washington!

Pepper sits on the bed, legs crossed, and lights a cigarette.  
She puffs, exhales, and smiles at Jesse.

PEPPER

You're cute.

Jesse stares at her feet, embarrassed.

JESSE

Thank you. My name's Jesse.

PEPPER

Pepper. That's my working name.  
Birth name's Delilah. Delilah  
Delacroix.

JESSE

Beautiful name.

PEPPER

You come to learn the trade?

JESSE

Oh gosh, no! I mean, nothing wrong with it. I just need a place to sleep for the night. Rashida said I could use your couch.

Pepper finishes her cigarette, exhales, and stubs it out.

PEPPER

What kind of a hostess would I be if I made you sleep on the couch when I got this king size all to myself. Come on, I won't bite.

Pepper pats on the bed. Jesse's eyes widen. She stares as Pepper removes her robe and climbs under the covers. Jesse stands, paralyzed, the proverbial deer in the headlights.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

Turn off the light too, will you doll?

EXT. RICKWOOD FIELD - DAY

Standing room only. A raucous crowd. The hometown fans make it known which team they're rooting for with CATCALLS.

The scoreboard shows the BLACK KNIGHTS ahead of Jesse's COLORED COWBOYS, 4-3 in the top of the ninth with two outs and a runner on second and third.

Jesse's on deck. She glances into the stands. Rashida waves to her. A half dozen other GIRLS from the brothel wave too. One holds a sign: Jesse STRONG FAN CLUB.

Jesse smiles. She looks closer, trying to find Pepper. There's an empty seat next to Rashida. But no Pepper.

UMPIRE

BALL!

The BATTER before Jesse walks to first. The bases are loaded. Jesse glances one last time at the stands. Rashida and the women go crazy, CLAPPING, YELLING.

RASHIDA AND THE WOMEN

JESSE! JESSE! JESSE!

Still no Pepper. Jesse steps into the batter's box. The first pitch. Jesse takes a powerful swing. WHIFF! Strike one.

She steps out of the box. Checks the stands again. The seat next to Rashida is filled. It's Pepper in a bright red dress and flowered hat. She flutters her hand at Jesse and smiles.

Jesse returns the smile and steps back in the box. She grits and swings. The ball's hit well, deep into left field.

She races to first. Her TEAMMATES take off. To second. To third. To home. The ball heads toward the fence. Jesse leaps in the air. The KNIGHTS FANS hold their collective breath.

At the very last second, the ball twists just left of the foul pole. The hometown fans SIGH with relief.

Jesse slouches back to the box. The scoreboard changes to two strikes. No balls.

She glances into the stands for encouragement. Pepper nods. Jesse's focused now. Pepper believes in her. Rashida and the women believe in her. She believes in herself.

She flaps her elbow. The ball's delivered. High and tight. Jesse doesn't hesitate. She's going for the fences again. She takes a ferocious cut. The moment seems to freeze in time.

Then...THWACK! The sound of the ball slamming into the catcher's mitt. Strike three. Game over. The scoreboard reads: Knights 4, Cowboys 3.

INT. COWBOYS DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

The bleachers empty out. Knights fans congratulate each other on another victory. Coach Pride and Jesse's teammates filter out headed for the team bus.

Jesse sits all alone, too upset to cry. She tosses a baseball against the dugout's concrete wall. Toss. Catch. Toss. Catch. A voice from the stands breaks her rhythm.

PEPPER

You gonna mope all day in there?

Jesse stops tossing. She steps out of the dugout, and sees Pepper, by herself, arms crossed. She jumps into the stands.

JESSE

Why aren't you with Rashida? And the ladies?

Pepper glides down the stairs to Jesse.

PEPPER

I wanted to be with you. You need  
cheerin' up and I'm just the woman  
to do it.

Out of the blue, Pepper kisses Jesse. Jesse glances around.  
Black women showing that type of emotion in the state of  
Alabama...not a good idea.

JESSE

(whispers)  
Are you crazy?

PEPPER

Maybe later tonight I can be. After  
you wash off the ballplayer stench.

Pepper winks. Jesse chuckles at Pepper's pass.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

A smile suits you a lot better than  
that ole' frown you was wearin.'

Pepper reaches for Jesse's hand.

PEPPER (CONT'D)

You can take a bath at the house.  
And tell me all about this game you  
love so much.

Jesse scans the park. No witnesses. She leans over and kisses  
Pepper. Passionately. They embrace and saunter off the field.

A MALE CUSTODIAN catches the eyes of a FEMALE CUSTODIAN high  
up in the bleachers. They both smile at what they just saw  
and return to cleaning.

INT. PEPPER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jesse chases Pepper around the room trying to snatch the  
cigarette from her hands. Pepper stops, holds up her index  
finger. Jesse stops running, crosses her arms, and waits for  
Pepper to take one last puff.

JESSE (V.O.)

After that, Pepper and I were  
inseparable.

Pepper puffs, smiles, stubs out the cigarette, and leaps onto  
the bed. Jesse jumps on top of her and turns out the light.

JESSE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Back then, you couldn't say what we  
felt about each other out loud.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Enscorced on a gold velvet couch, Jesse scans a baseball book  
under an oil Betty lamp.

An ugly, bald loser named WYLIE LOCKETT (50's) erupts from  
Pepper's room. He sneers at Jesse and trudges downstairs.

We see Pepper beckon Jesse in with a finger curl. Jesse drops  
the book, races into the room, and slams the door behind her.

JESSE (V.O.)

But everyone knew. We were two  
women, two Black women falling in  
love in the Jim Crow south.

EXT. RICKWOOD FIELD - DAY

Rashida and the OTHER LADIES root for Jesse from the stands.  
ONE OF THEM in a leopard skin full body suit winks at several  
BLACK MALE FANS in the bleachers.

JESSE (V.O.)

And Rashida and the girls were  
becoming my biggest fans. They went  
to my games.

INT. BROTHEL, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rashida and the other women listen to a wood-encased tube  
radio. They CLAP and CHEER as they toss around a baseball.

JESSE (V.O.)

They listened to my games on radio.

EXT. BROTHEL, PORCH - DAY

Rashida finishes sewing a padded chest protector and straps  
it around Jesse beneath her COWBOYS uniform. Jesse braces  
herself while the ladies take turns hitting her in the chest.  
Jesse gives a thumbs up after each punch.

JESSE (V.O.)

They even made a chest protector to  
protect my front lady parts.

EXT. BASEBALL STADIUM - DAY

Establishing shot of the building's exterior. Over the front entryway carved in stone is WELCOME TO PLAYLAND PARK.

SUPER: SOUTH BEND, INDIANA (1945)

INT. BASEBALL STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

In pants and button up shirt, Jesse carries her baseball bat in one hand and her glove in another.

JESSE (V.O.)

But that spring, Pepper quit the debauchery business and moved to Houston to care for her parents.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONTINUOUS

Jesse walks under towering arches and onto a vibrant green, lushly manicured baseball diamond.

JESSE (V.O.)

I figured if I wanted to be around Pepper, which I most surely did, I'd need to earn a better wage than the barnstorming Negro teams were paying.

Pretty young white WOMEN in short baseball skirts and low cut, button up shirts with team names toss, field, and hit baseballs. White COACHES and LEAGUE BIG WIGS leer.

JESSE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The All-American Girl Professional Baseball League was making a name for itself. So I decided I'd show up for a tryout.

Jesse approaches a Big Wig. Simultaneously, the white girls stop tossing, fielding, and hitting. This is something they've never seen before--a Black girl on the field.

JESSE

Afternoon, sir. My name's Jesse Strong. I'm here for a tryout.

The Big Wigs look at each other. The man Jesse addressed puffs out cigar smoke, coughs with abandon, and laughs. The other men join in. Jesse furrows her brow.



BIG WIG

Take a look around, sugar. You see  
any girls who look like you?

A poker face Jesse is not. She frowns and glances around.

JESSE

You mean Negro girls?

Big Wig takes another puff. Exhales a cloud of smoke. A bit  
too close to Jesse's face.

BIG WIG

Good Lord! We're not racists here  
lil' gal. No, I mean the girl next  
door type. Smart. Sexy.

JESSE

Huh. So, a Negro woman can't be  
smart or sexy or live next door?

The other Big Wigs nod. The white girls shake their heads at  
the Big Wigs. Jesse's jaw drops before she catches herself  
and realizes the reaction by the Big Wigs is nothing new.

JESSE (CONT'D)

And here I thought this league's  
*brand* was about good *baseball*.

Big Wig's fellow partners in crime glance at their watches.

BIG WIG

You need to stand behind the fence  
while the other girls try out.

Big Wig SNAPS his fingers. A GROUND CREW MEMBER escorts Jesse  
off the playing field. The white girls get back to tossing,  
fielding, hitting.

EXT. BEHIND LEFT FIELD FENCE - LATER

Jesse drops her glove and bat. She leans over the fence with  
her face in her palms and watches batting practice.

A white male COACH pitches. Nine women PLAYERS take their  
positions fielding while OTHERS take turns batting. Jesse  
watches as the batters hit slow grounders, pop ups, bloopers.

JESSE

(to herself)

How 'bout some power, ladies?

Finally, a tall, muscular PLAYER takes a low, outside pitch deep to the alley in left center.

Behind the fence, Jesse instinctively gives chase. The left fielder goes to the wall but the ball flies over her head and over the fence.

Jesse easily flags it down barehanded. The left fielder motions for Jesse to throw the ball back.

Jesse smiles. She casually snatches up her bat, takes a stance, tosses the ball into the air, and blast it over the fence, back towards home plate.

The players are glued to the ball as it rockets skyward. As are the coaches. And the Big Wigs.

The ball hurtles over the outfield, the infield, the backstop, the bleachers, over the stadium rooftop and out of the stadium.

TIGHT ON JESSE

Jesse grins. She slings her bat over her shoulder, grabs her glove, and strolls out of the park.

TIGHT ON BIG WIG

The Big Wig's cigar falls from his gaping mouth.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As she strides past the women players on her way out, Jesse smiles and nods. The women return with smiles of their own, appreciative of Jesse's talents.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Be extra careful slidin' in those  
short dresses, ladies.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jesse wields the water hose while James soaps down his car.

JAMES

Please say they gave you a tryout!

Jesse rinses off the car and shakes her head.

JESSE

Nope. That league never did let  
Black women play.

They both begin drying the car.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Just the way it was then. But, I  
was learning if you want something  
bad enough, you keep on keepin' on.

James stops drying when he sees a tear in Jesse's eye.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Only time I thought about giving up  
was when that lowlife murdered  
Pepper.

JAMES

What!?

JESSE

I was barnstorming again. Pepper  
went to visit Rashida and the girls  
back in Alabama. One of her old  
johns thought she should come out  
of retirement though. And when she  
refused, he shoved her off a  
balcony. She died instantly.

JAMES

Aunt Jesse—

JESSE

Thought I'd die of a broken heart.  
She was the love of my life.

Jesse shuffles to a lawn chair. James helps her sit.

JESSE (CONT'D)

But time heals. I still think about  
Pepper every single day, but it  
helps knowing I avenged her by  
killin' that murderin' sumbitch.

James rises from his lawn chair. Jesse pats his hand.

JESSE (CONT'D)

But, that's a story for another  
day.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

James jogs down a desolate road as the morning sun rises in the background. Birds CHIRP and FLIT along the tree line.

He rounds a bend and descends a steep hill. To his left, a cliff overlooks a verdant valley. To his right, a rocky canyon's speckled with teetering boulders.

WE SEE

--the back of his t-shirt and six lines of different colored type: BLACK LIVES MATTER. WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS. NO HUMAN IS ILLEGAL. SCIENCE IS REAL. LOVE IS LOVE.

Behind him a semi-truck appears.

INT. SEMI TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

OVER THE SHOULDER we see what the semi driver sees--James running on the road ahead of him. He's on a phone call.

SEMI DRIVER

SON OF A BITCH. Lemme call you back, Bucky. Look like some coon picked the wrong neighborhood to run through.

The semi driver tosses his cell onto the seat.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The semi's HORN BLASTS. James turns his head. Sees the eighteen-wheeler baring down. Faster and faster. There's no shoulder to seek refuge. Another BLAST.

JAMES

The fuck?

James glances ahead. A tunnel's been blasted through the rock to make way for the road. The truck continues to bare down. BLAST after BLAST echoes off the canyon walls.

INT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

James races through the tunnel. The truck lights shine on him like Broadway spotlights. The truck lights flash. On and off. The massive truck closes in. It's just feet away from James.

The tunnel ends.

EXT. ROADSIDE - CONTINUOUS

James jumps off the road and into thick bushes as the truck zooms past. He SIGHS and catches his breath.

SKIDDING TIRES. The truck SLAMS to a stop.

WE SEE

--the semi's side door open. Steel-toed boots hit the pavement. A bearded man with a potbelly, emerges.

He wields a shotgun and wears a sweat stained, sleeveless wife-beater's T-shirt and creeps toward the tunnel. He points the gun where he last saw James--the bushes.

SEMI DRIVER

Come out you nappy haired sissy  
boy!

James moves slightly. The bushes quiver. The man inches closer. He's just steps from the bush.

SEMI DRIVER (CONT'D)

Brother, you picked the wrong  
country road to run on!

James shakes his head and closes his eyes.

SEMI DRIVER (CONT'D)

Come out and say hello to Mr.  
Browning, smartass.

The man fires the shotgun into the air. James flinches and covers his mouth.

Suddenly, from inside the tunnel, the sound of a CAR ENGINE. Headlights shine on the bearded man from the darkness. A tiny two-door Fiat emerges and pulls up beside the semi driver.

The FIAT DRIVER, a purple-haired millennial with pierced nose and tightly cropped hair, rolls down her window.

FIAT DRIVER

(to the semi driver)  
Huntin' wabbits?

SEMI DRIVER

(flummoxed)  
What? NO! Rattlers. Thought they  
might hurt some unsuspecting hiker.

FIAT DRIVER

So, you were gonna shoot these rattlers on the side of a canyon with cascading boulders next to a dangerous tunnel?

SEMI DRIVER

Well. Yeah.

FIAT DRIVER

Tell you what. You get back in that shiny semi. Be on your way. And I won't report you...

She checks out the semi's license plate.

FIAT DRIVER (CONT'D)

Texas plate T-R-U-C-K-Y-O-U. I like that! Cute. And easy to remember.

The semi driver shakes his head. He ambles back to the semi. She watches until the truck is out of sight.

James emerge from the bushes and scrambles to the Fiat.

JAMES

Thank you so much!

The driver leans out the window and laughs.

FIAT DRIVER

You must be the rattler.

She motions for James to climb in.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

James hops into the front passenger's side. The Fiat driver looks him over and steps on the gas.

FIAT DRIVER

Normally, I'd say my name's Bennett and I ain't in it, but rednecks with shotguns are fair game.

They roll down the road a bit before she breaks the silence.

KHLOE

I'm Khloe. With a K.

JAMES

I'm James.  
 (beat)  
 For now.

Khloe wrinkles her brow, glances over at James. Her eyes pause on his. He's wearing eye shadow.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I know this sounds stupid but you seem cool.

KHLOE

Was it the purple hair or the pierced nose that gave me away?

They both smile.

JAMES

It's just, I dunno, you seem self-assured. Wish I could be like that. Instead...

KHLOE

Instead...a bunch of assholes want us to party like it's 1799 where women churn butter and men--especially white men--rule the proverbial roost.

JAMES

(chuckles)  
 Right.

Khloe checks him out again.

KHLOE

Parents did a reverse Johnny Cash on ya, eh?

James looks over, doesn't understand the reference.

KHLOE (CONT'D)

Named you James when you'd rather be Lucy or Leslie or Linda Lou. The guy in the song was named Sue when he'd rather be Bill or George.

JAMES

Wait, how'd you know that.

KHLOE

Not everyday I pick up a guy  
wearing eye makeup being chased by  
a redneck with a long gun.

James stares at her. She smiles back.

KHLOE (CONT'D)

You shouldn't wait, you know. I  
didn't come out 'til three years  
ago.

JAMES

What made you finally do it?

KHLOE

Couple of things. I got tired of  
seeing how me and my lifelong  
friends had to hide who we really  
are instead of who small minded,  
loud mouthed bigots want us to be.

James nods in agreement.

KHLOE (CONT'D)

And a book. *Warriors Don't Cry*.

JAMES

Never hear of it.

KHLOE

By one of the Little Rock Nine,  
Melba Patillo Beals. She tells what  
it was like as one of the first  
Black kids to integrate a school  
system in the Deep South. The white  
students threw acid in her face!  
And every day, armed guards  
escorted her to class. But she  
battled on. After I read it, I felt  
empowered. That's when I decided to  
tell the world I'm proud to be a  
card carrying lesbian!

James sits back silently in his seat, considers Khloe's  
words, and watches as the world outside whizzes by.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE DIAMOND - DAY

In his VW, James blasts past a little league park filled with  
KIDS of various ages playing baseball.

He slows down to read a banner on a trailer by the fields.



INSERT: Banner: COACHES NEEDED. MIXED TEAMS AGES 11-12. DRAFT DAY THIS SATURDAY.

James shoves the car in park. HORNS BLAST behind him. He waves the DRIVERS around. They yell OBSCENITIES as they pass.

He glances at the banner again. Then a second look at the kids. Their faces are filled with joy and concentration. James jams the VW into drive, and heads for the little league sign-up trailer.

INT. JESSE'S HOUSE - DAY

James bursts into the front door. The WHIR of the vacuum cleaner Jesse's pushing drowns out James's excited SHOUT.

JAMES  
AUNT JESSE, I SIGNED US UP!

She doesn't see or hear him and continues to sweep. He runs in front of her and flips off the vacuum.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
I signed us up!

JESSE  
I'm way too old to serve. I'll wait for the over 70 draft.

JAMES  
No. For coaching. Little League!

Jesse takes a seat on the couch.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
With your baseball knowledge and my organization skills, we'd make a great coaching duo.

James sees Jesse's not convinced. He raises an index finger and leaves the room. Jesse makes a face, shrugs. James comes back, hands her a framed photo of Jesse in an INDIANAPOLIS CLOWNS uniform.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
To beat Jim Crow, you must've had supporters who helped you out?

JESSE  
Yeah.

JAMES

Now you can pay it forward by being  
the kids' coach. Their mentor.

Jesse slides her wrinkled fingers over the photo.

JESSE

Well.

(a beat)

S'pose so. Beats cleaning this  
house and playing solitaire. When  
do we start?

INT. JAMES'S VW - DAY

James is at the wheel, Jesse's in the passenger seat. They  
tool down a suburban street lined by colorful blooming trees.  
On the sidewalk, TODDLERS plod along hand-in-hand behind  
their PRE-SCHOOL TEACHER.

JAMES

So cute!

JESSE

Shame that innocence can't last  
when they're grown men and women.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

SUPER: MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE (1950)

In a sleeveless Gingham dress, Jesse ambles past a trophy  
case and knocks on a door labeled UMPIRES ONLY. She totes a  
duffel and her ever-present bat and glove.

A BLACK UMPIRE IN GLASSES and game gear ushers her inside.

INT. UMPIRE'S LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jesse stations her bat and glove in a corner and opens a  
locker. She plops on a bench, nods at the Umpire in Glasses  
and another TALL BLACK UMPIRE in similar protective gear.

BLACK UMPIRE IN GLASSES

Kicked out again?

JESSE

Not much chivalry in that group.

## TALL BLACK UMPIRE

Best hitter on the team and those  
fools can't share one damn locker.

## BLACK UMPIRE IN GLASSES

I'll give you this, Jesse. You got  
spirit! Bad enough to be a Negro  
male here in Billy Bob World. Must  
be godawful to be Negro and female.  
Especially when your own teammates  
turn against you.

## JESSE

Harder they make it, better I play!

They all CHUCKLE. Jesse grabs her uniform and tosses it on  
the bench. The team name is sewn in cursive: MEMPHIS CROWS.

Jesse nods her head at the door and the two umpires realize  
they've just been excused. They smile and exit.

## EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - NIGHT

The Memphis hometown crowd BOOS Jesse as she swings and  
misses. Downtrodden, she shuffles back to the dugout. The  
scoreboard reads BILOXI 3, MEMPHIS 0.

## MEMPHIS FAN (O.C.)

GO HOME AND COOK FOR YOUR OLD MAN!

## ANOTHER MEMPHIS FAN (O.C.)

YOU'RE AN EMBARRASMENT, LADY!

## INT. MEMPHIS DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

In the dugout, Coach JOSIAH JACKSON (60s), a snarly, tobacco  
chomping Black man smirks at Jesse.

## JACKSON

Three strikeouts in three at bats,  
Strong? You do know the idea is to  
hit the ball, right?

He spits tobacco juice into a paper cup as she claims a spot  
on the bench. The other players slide away.

## JACKSON (CONT'D)

Don't understand why you wanna make  
a fool of yourself out here when  
you could be warm and safe at home  
cooking and cleaning for hubby.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - NIGHT

The scoreboard still reads BILOXI 3, MEMPHIS 0, but the bases are loaded. Two outs. In the on deck circle, Jesse wipes her bat, tosses the cloth away and lopes to the plate.

INT. MEMPHIS DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Jackson stops chewing tobacco and hangs his head. He slaps the Crow's Assistant Coach HADDY SMITH (50's) on the arm.

JACKSON

Get Mule out there to pinch hit before she embarrasses us. Again!

SMITH

Coach, Mule's battin' two fifteen. Jesse's hittin' three forty.

Jackson rubs his forehead, spits into the cup.

JACKSON

Put Ike in then.

SMITH

Ike's battin' lower than Mule.

Jackson crumbles his paper cup, tosses it at Smith. Tobacco juice splatters his uniform. Smith grimaces.

JACKSON

Christ on a cracker! A woman ball player. It's against nature.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - CONTINUOUS

Jesse steps into the box. The BILOXI PITCHER grins at her. He turns to the outfield, motions for the three players to come in closer. No need to play deep with this woman at the plate.

BILOXI CATCHER

(to Jesse)

Tryin' to make it four strikeouts in one night Slugger?

Jesse ignores the comments. She flaps her elbow. The ball's on the way. A low, outside fastball. She strides and smacks it into deep left center, over the outfielder's heads.

The Memphis runners spin around the diamond. One run scores. Biloxi 3, Memphis 1.

The Biloxi OUTFIELDERS chase down the ball. Jesse turns the corner at first. Another run scores. Biloxi 3, Memphis 2.

Biloxi's CENTER FIELDER reaches the ball. He snatches it with his hand, bobbles it. Jesse turns the corner at second. Another run scores. Tied up--Biloxi 3, Memphis 3.

Jesse races for third. The Biloxi centerfielder fires the ball to SHORT. The Memphis THIRD BASE COACH waves his hands wildly for Jesse to stop at third. She ignores him, rounds third, and heads for home.

Biloxi's shortstop fires the ball home. Jesse and the ball arrive at the plate at the same time. Biloxi's catcher stakes a huge piece of real estate to guard the plate, expecting Jesse to slide.

But she doesn't.

She barrels over him and knocks him to the ground. The ball falls from his mitt. Jesse touches home plate with her hand. The ump makes a dramatic *SAFE* sign.

The scoreboard changes once again. Memphis 4, Biloxi 3.

Jesse gets up, dusts herself off. The hometown crowd APPLAUDS loudly and at length. Suddenly they've changed their tune.

FEMALE FAN

You show 'em girlfriend!

ANOTHER FEMALE FAN

Give those men hell, Jesse Strong!

INT. MEMPHIS DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Assistant Coach Smith pats Jesse on the shoulder as she descends the stairs. Coach Jackson leers at her and shakes his head. Jesse faces him. She squints with a smile.

JESSE

The only cleaning you're ever gonna  
see me do is cleanin' the bases  
with a grand slam like that one.

The other players gather around her. It's quiet. They look at each other. Then all at once, they break out in celebration. Jesse takes it all in. Coach Jackson heads for the lockers.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS play catch. The boys pair with other boys, the girls with other girls. COACHES with clipboards watch from the stands.

Jesse and James approach Little League Commissioner GERALD MCKESSON (30's), an earnest pasty-faced man analyzing a clipboard. Without looking up, in a blunt tone straight from the Marine Corps handbook, he admonishes them.

MCKESSON

You're late.

JAMES

We're really sorry. We--

MCKESSON

Don't care.

McKesson blows a whistle. The other coaches stop writing notes on their pads. The kids stop tossing balls.

MCKESSON (CONT'D)

(to the kids)

Ok, single file, boy, girl, boy, girl. Face me.

The KIDS scramble to form a line. The BOYS push and shove the GIRLS out of the way until ONE OF THE GIRLS slams her glove into a shoving BOY'S crotch.

With his back to the kids, McKesson paces back and forth as he addresses the coaches.

MCKESSON (CONT'D)

Coaches. I need you to line up facing the kids. You'll see the order number on your handout.

The coaches form a line. James and Jesse glance at the handout. The number SIX is printed on it in black marker. Jesse mouths as she counts the number of rows. Five.

Jesse and James realize their fate and shuffle to the back of the line. McKesson shoots them a hostile stare.

MCKESSON (CONT'D)

So, coaches you've seen our children hit, catch, run, and throw. Now comes the draft. Each of you picks ten players. And--

Jesse waves her hand and keeps waving it when McKesson doesn't stop talking.

JESSE

Excuse me but my nephew and me didn't get a chance to see the kids try out. So--

MCKESSON

And that's my problem?

JESSE

Well, I mean, we are new. And the coaching information said be here at ten. Which we were, so--

MCKESSON

Ten is when we draft. Eight thirty is when the try out starts. Coaches know to be here at eight thirty on draft day.

JESSE

Maybe so, but James and I are new--

MCKESSON

Obviously. Again, not my problem.

The other coaches turn around and frown at Jesse.

MCKESSON (CONT'D)

Coach one, who are your ten picks?

Jesse waves her hand again. McKesson rolls his eyes.

JESSE

We pick all the kids at once?

MCKESSON

(with an attitude)

Yes.

JESSE

Usually, drafts are done in several rounds. That way--

MCKESSON

(even more attitude)

Not in our league, Coach Six.

JESSE

But--

MCKESSON

Coach Six, we don't draft in rounds because our coaches work together in advance of draft day to discuss their preferred choices. Any disagreements are worked out before hand. So, on draft day, which happens to be today, it becomes simply a rubber stamp.

JESSE

That's ridiculous.

MCKESSON

It is what it is.

McKesson turns his attention to the FIRST COACH in line.

MCKESSON (CONT'D)

Coach One, your picks please.

ON JESSE

She removes her ball cap, scratches her head, and frowns.

EXT. - INFIELD - A BIT LATER

The FIRST FIVE COACHES stand in front of their teams. Each team contains ten PLAYERS.

Jesse and James look closely at the other teams. All of the players on the five teams are boys. They spin their heads to check out the remaining ten players they have to choose from. Nine girls. One boy.

They glare at McKesson. He grins back with delight.

The only players left--the nine girls and one boy--drag their way over beside Jesse and James. McKesson ushers everyone close together for a group picture. WE SEE THE RESULTS.

INSERT: A photo where the five all-boys teams and coaches have wide smiles. Jesse's and James's team--all frowns.

EXT. FOOD TRUCK COURT - DAY

James and Jesse sit at a picnic table having lunch.

JAMES

You still want to coach after what happened today?



Jesse stops eating and wipes her mouth.

JESSE  
Even more than before!

JAMES  
Actually...me too.

JESSE  
Today was all about intimidation. I  
seen that many times in my life.  
And I got a special way of dealin'  
with it.

Now, James stops chewing and leans toward Jesse. She crosses  
her arms, leans back.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I channel my spirit animal, Brave  
Bear.

JAMES  
Whadya mean channel?

JESSE  
I close my eyes...

FLASHBACK BEGINS.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: INDIANAPOLIS (1952)

INDIANAPOLIS CLOWNS owner MYRON KATZ (mid 40's) a portly Jew  
in a starched white shirt addresses an ocean of baggy flannel  
suits and banded fedoras, otherwise known as the all-male  
PRESS CORPS. Jesse stands beside him in a CLOWNS uniform.

JESSE (V.O.)  
...and imagine I'm a six-hundred  
pound grizzly named Brave Bear. And  
everybody else is just a little  
rainbow trout.

Katz motions for calm and turns to the microphone.

KATZ  
Gentlemen, you may've heard I just  
signed a new player. And a hell of  
a player she is. Miss Jesse Strong.

Jesse shields her eyes as flashbulbs erupt all around.

KATZ (CONT'D)

She's got big shoes to fill, that's for sure. With Hammerin' Hank heading to Milwaukee, Jesse will be taking his spot at second.

The press corps buzzes like a swarm of agitated yellow jackets. Questions are SHOUTED. Flashbulbs EXPLODE. A TALL REPORTER manages to be heard above the crowd.

TALL REPORTER

Jesse, the Clowns are arguably the best team in the Negro Leagues--

KATZ

No argument about it. They are the best team money can buy!

TALL REPORTER

(laughs)

So, do you think you'll be able to play the championship caliber of baseball the Clowns are known for?

Jesse speaks into the cluster of microphones on stage. Her voice is soft, measured. A reverb causes her to step back.

JESSE

Mr. Katz sure thinks so.

Katz nods. The hardened reporters manage a group chuckle.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Look, I been playing ball with the male species since I was ten. At first, they hate playing ball with a female. But after they see I can help the team win, they respect me just like any other teammate.

BLACK REPORTER

I've been told your fellow players on the barnstorming teams didn't allow you in the locker room. And you were made to sleep at a different hotel. I wouldn't call that respect.

Jesse squints at the reporter, considers his question.

BEGIN DAYDREAM:

FROM JESSE'S POV

The Black reporter slowly transforms into a trout in a suit.

ON JESSE

She slowly changes into a grizzly bear in a Clowns uniform. Jesse/"Brave Bear" leaps off the stage, grabs the Black reporter/"trout" and bites his head off. The other reporters SCREAM and DASH from the scene. Total chaos ensues.

END DAYDREAM.

Jesse returns to reality.

JESSE

True, but by the end of the season,  
I'd earned their respect.

BLACK REPORTER

And how exactly did you do that?

JESSE

By batting three fifty and stealing  
forty bases, including home six  
times.

Laughter from the other reporters. The Black reporter sighs. Jesse flashes a wide smile as the flashbulbs go off.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

INT. JESSE'S HOUSE - DAY

James enters his bedroom to find his laundry ironed, folded, and placed on top of his bed. Next to the clothes is a pink-striped department store shopping bag.

He peeks in and pulls out a pair of black women's thongs, then a leopard skin pair, a pair in red and in teal. He walks to the mirror, holds a pair in front of him, smiles.

FROM THE HALLWAY

JESSE

Your underdrawers were looking  
kinda ragged. Hope you don't mind.

James blushes. Jesse notices. She enters the room.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Sweetie, I've known since you was little. Your mom and dad know too, they just don't want to admit it.

James sighs as he places the underwear back in the bag. He steps to his aunt, embraces her, and begins to tear up.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Last time I looked, your last name's Strong. Might as well start acting like it.

JAMES

I don't know how to thank you.

JESSE

You can start by being who you are. Show some balls!

(beat)

Metaphorically of course.

They laugh at the irony.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Second thing you can do is help me get those kids on track.

JAMES

Count on me! Like Euripides said 'Ten soldiers wisely led will beat a hundred without a head.'

JESSE

Well, I think that Euro Petey was on to something.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Jesse and James welcome the ten kids to their first practice. The lone boy player, a nerdish eleven-year old MILTON FREELANDER sits on the ground behind his nine girl teammates.

Jesse grabs a kid sized baseball bat, takes a few swings.

JESSE

Swinging a bat still brings a smile to my old wrinkled face. And I hope after our season's over, you'll feel the same way.

She motions to a bag full of kid's bats.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Everybody grab a weapon.

The kids jump up and scramble to claim a bat. They return to stand beside Jesse. Jesse raises her bat in the air.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Raise 'em high.

The kids look surprised but raise their bats in the air like an Olympic torch bearer.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
Here's to--

Jesse beckons James.

JAMES  
The Grizzlies.

She notices half of the kids flash braces when they smile.

JESSE  
To the Grizzlies!

EVERYONE  
TO THE GRIZZLIES!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Practice has ended. Jesse, James, and the kids see a soft-serve ice cream truck trolling them like the Pied Piper with that familiar merry-go-round melody.

JESSE  
Ice cream's on me. A reward for a good, first practice.

The kids sprint to the truck to place their orders.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
(to James)  
Pepper used to love chocolate soft serve. With peanuts and sprinkles.

James notices her *happy sadness* and places his arm around her. They sit down on a bench and watch the kids wrangle for a good spot in the ice cream line.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
When I avenged her, I thought I'd feel that justice was served. But...it wasn't. Not really.

JAMES

The story you began to tell me?

JESSE

Yea. I'd retired from ball by then.  
The Negro League was just a shell  
of its former self. All the great  
players had gone to the majors.

FLASHBACK BEGINS.

INT. BROTHEL - NIGHT

SUPER: BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA (1962)

Miss Rashida lounges on a sofa waving a fan to cool off.  
Jesse (early 40's) reaches the top of the stairs, reaches  
behind the sofa and withdraws a baseball bat.

JESSE (V.O.)

Miss Rashida, the girls, and me had  
waited ten years for that day.

Miss Rashida nods to Jesse. They march to a nearby door.  
Jesse shoves open the door, and rushes in, bat in hand.

INT. BROTHEL BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A drunk, naked Wylie Lockett lays beneath a fleshy CARMEL  
SKINNED WOMAN enjoying carnal pleasures at an hourly rate.  
The woman leaps off Lockett when she sees Jesse.

JESSE (V.O.)

The girls lured Pepper's murderer,  
Wylie Lockett there. And they left  
the revenge gettin' up to me.

At the sight of the baseball bat, Lockett suddenly seems to  
sober up. Jesse motions for him to get up. She escorts him to  
an open window. The sheer curtains flutter in the breeze.

Lockett drops to his knees and pleads for his life. He sobs,  
covers his face. Jesse jabs him with the bat, makes him stand  
up. He raises his hands in front of his face.

Jesse shakes her head at his cowardice. She's had enough. She  
takes a home run swing at his head, which smashes like a  
cantaloupe. Lockett falls backward out the window.

JESSE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'd be lyin' if I said killin' that  
White trash didn't feel good.

Jesse, Miss Rashida, and the sex worker peer out the window at Lockett's body sprawled on the ground.

ON LOCKETT

He lays motionless, dead on impact, as other WOMEN filter out of the brothel to take a look.

JESSE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But it didn't bring Pepper back.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

BACK TO 2002.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The kids motion Jesse and James over to the ice cream truck. Jesse finishes her story while they walk.

JESSE  
Miss Rashida and the ladies got rid of Lockett's body. The sheriff investigated but with no body, he closed the case. Nobody ever really missed that son of a bitch anyway.

The kids hug Jesse for the ice cream and hop on their bikes to head home. James and Jesse wave goodbye. She turns to the ice cream truck's impatient, long-haired, teenage VENDOR.

JESSE (CONT'D)  
I'll have a chocolate soft serve with peanuts and sprinkles.

ICE CREAM VENDOR  
None of my business, but those toppings might be hard on your teeth, grandma.

JESSE  
You're right son, it is none of your business. You worry about finding a better barber, let me worry about *grandma's* choppers.

INT. SAM AND DELLA STRONG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sam lays in bed hooked to an IV Drip. His thick-lensed glasses rest on the nightstand. His breathing is labored, his eyes closed, his face unshaved and sullen.

ON DELLA

DELLA  
Samson, someone's here to visit.

WE STAY ON DELLA

--as James enters the room. Della's been crying; her face is still wet from the tears.

DELLA (CONT'D)  
(to James)  
He just slumped over on the couch.  
I thought I'd lost him.

JAMES (O.C.)  
He's gonna be okay, mom. He's a survivor.

She pulls back, peers up at James.

DELLA  
He's softer inside than he let's on.

CLOSEUP OF DELLA TAKING JAMES'S HAND

ON DELLA

DELLA (CONT'D)  
They've got him on statins, Beta blockers, medications I can't pronounce. He's drowsy but he's been asking for you.

JAMES (O.C.)  
Dad.

SAM  
(eyes still closed)  
James.

DELLA  
I'll leave you two.

Della leaves the room.

ON SAM

SAM  
Funny how being on your deathbed focuses your mind.



JAMES (O.C.)  
Dad, you're years away from--

SAM  
Oh, I know I'm a tough old  
sumbitch. But all those years of  
bad habits may've caught up with me  
this time.

WE SEE JAMES'S HAND REACH FOR SAM'S

Sam allows him to hold it.

ON SAM

SAM (CONT'D)  
When you were born, I had this idea  
you'd grow up to be a younger  
version of me. Hardnosed, tough but  
fair. A no nonsense kind of guy.

Sam coughs.

SAM (CONT'D)  
So when you started acting  
differently with the clothes and  
the toys you played with and the  
makeup. It threw me.

JAMES (O.C.)  
I understand.

SAM  
I know you aren't a boy anymore,  
but you'll always be my son.

Sam opens his eyes.

FROM SAM'S PERSPECTIVE

--we see what appears to be James but to Sam's bad eyes James  
is a complete blur without his high-powered eyeglasses.

JAMES (O.C.)  
You deserve that son you wanted,  
dad. But, I'm not him. I *will*  
always be your child. It's just...I  
have to be the human being I am not  
the one you wish I could be.

Sam puts on his eyeglasses. Now, through the eyeglasses,  
James comes into focus. He's wearing elegantly applied  
makeup, gold earrings and matching necklace, a chic, form-  
fitting dress and heels.

ON SAM AND JAMES

Sam closes his eyes and turns away from James. The room's engulfed by complete silence. He shoves his palms at James.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Dad?

Sam stares savagely at James.

SAM

(angrily)

GO JAMES! Go be whoever or whatever the hell you *think* you are. Just be it somewhere else. This can no longer be your home.

Sam breaks into a COUGHING fit. Della rushes in.

SAM, JAMES, AND DELLA IN FRAME

JAMES

I don't *think* dad. I know. I know I'm not a James. From now on, my name's Moxie. It means 'strength of character, rebellious, a world-changer. And change the world is just what I intend to do.

Della smiles at her 'new daughter' as she watches her leave.

ON DELLA

DELLA

Goodbye James.

A tear streams down her face as she adds, softly--

DELLA (CONT'D)

Be safe and be happy...Moxie.

EXT. BASEBALL DIAMOND - DAY

Little League Game Day.

Free now to be her true self, Moxie is way over-dressed for a kid's baseball game. Players' parents display their disapproval with head shakes on their way to the bleachers.

Undeterred, Moxie grins at them while she records the event on her cell and narrates the action.

AS SEEN ON MOXIE'S CELL PHONE

The GRIZZLIES are on the field. Their opponents, the all-male PANTHERS are at bat. The stands are packed with screaming PARENTS. The scoreboard reads Panthers 9 - Grizzlies 0 at the bottom of the fifth. Two outs with the bases loaded.

MOXIE (V.O.)

What a game! Even though the Panthers are packed with experienced players, our Grizzly Bears have played their hearts out.

A COCKY KID in a Panther's uniform steps into the box. He chomps on gum as if paid by the chomp. The Grizzly's star player BECCA (11) is on the mound. She fires a pitch down the middle. Cocky Kid rips into it and sends it to deep center.

The Panther's runners tag and take off. The ball rockets over the head of the centerfielder, Milton Frelander.

MOXIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Come on Milton! You can do it!

Milton loses the ball in the sun and covers his eyes with the glove. The Panthers fans' CHEERS turn to LAUGHTER.

But the laughing stops when the ball plops into Milton's glove. He sees the ball resting safely in the web, withdraws it, smiles, and proudly hoists it into the air.

MOXIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Milton's caught it! The ten run mercy rule won't be in effect! The Grizzlies earn another at bat!

Milton's teammates run to centerfield and pile onto him. They lift him into the air. From the bleachers, the Grizzly parents all shower their kids with a STANDING OVATION.

The Panthers and their parents ponder the celebration and wonder if the Grizzly parents and players have gone crazy.

INT. GRIZZLIES DUGOUT - A BIT LATER

The game has ended. Jesse glances out at the scoreboard: Panthers 9 - Grizzlies 0. The Grizzly players file out of the dugout in a wave of high-fives.

GRIZZLY PLAYERS

Thanks Coach Jesse! Coach Moxie!

When the last kid leaves, Jesse places her hands on Moxie's shoulders and looks her in her mascara-laden eyes.

JESSE

Thank you for signing me up to coach. You and the kids have added ten years to my life!

MOXIE

But we just got shut out nine to zero!

JESSE

Oh it was worth it to see that one great play Milton made. Sometimes it's not the final score you remember. It's how happy that one great play made you feel.

Jesse is all smiles as Moxie helps her aunt up the steps.

INT. JESSE'S BEDROOM - DREAM

Jesse relives her recurring dream. She's in her CLOWNS uniform batting against SATCH in his ST. LOUIS BROWNS uniform. She's down in the count, two strikes, no balls. Satch releases a hard fastball.

In SLO-MO, the ball rockets toward the plate. She flaps her elbow, grits her teeth, fires through the swing...and whacks it hard and out of reach of the leaping Satch.

She takes off for first. The ball drops into center safely for a single. When the ball is returned to him, Satch signals time out. He marches to Jesse, standing on the bag at first.

Satch reaches her. He leans down and hands her the ball. She cradles it with both hands like a tiny bird.

SATCH

Put that in your trophy case, Jesse. Tell your grandkids you got a hit off the greatest pitcher of all time.

Satch lopes back to the mound. Jesse shoves the ball in her back pocket and takes a lead off first AS WE HEAR:

UMPIRE

PLAY BALL!

SLAM CUT TO:

INT. JESSE'S BED - NIGHT

The dream ends. Jesse turns on the bedside lamp. She opens the top drawer of the bedside table and withdraws a baseball. She examines it closely and gets out of bed with a sigh.

JESSE

Like clockwork. I wake up, I gotta  
pee. Better'n wearin' Depends I  
s'pose.

She tosses the ball in the air and catches it as she heads to the bathroom.

ON THE BATHROOM DOOR

From inside the bathroom we hear Jesse peeing. The toilet flushes. Silence. Then a THUMP. The baseball she'd been holding rolls out of the bathroom onto the bedroom floor.

CLOSEUP ON THE BASEBALL

An autograph reads: TO JESSE, ONE HELL OF A HITTER AND ONE STRONG WOMAN, SACHEL PAIGE.

THE END