

CHALLENGERS

Written by

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SET ONE

A. Donaldson: 0 - 0

P. Zweig: 0 - 0

EXT. A TENNIS COURT IN NEW ROCHELLE - LATE AFTERNOON/EVENING

TASHI DONALDSON, 31, Black, a former player, wearing sunglasses, sits looking out at the court where two men stand across the net from one another looking like they are about to *fight to the death*.

PATRICK ZWEIG, 31, Jewish, scrappy, ranked 271 in the world, wears a mishmash of clothes from different companies -- he's got no sponsorship deal, though he has haphazardly ironed to his shirt the logo of a random Italian company, "IMPATTO."

ART DONALDSON, 31, WASP, good-looking, dressed in pristine Uniqlo, is *the biggest men's tennis star the U.S. has seen in a generation*. His shocking presence at this rinky-dink tournament is the sole reason why the modest venue is packed with locals, tourists, and anyone living in the vicinity of New Rochelle who is even *remotely* interested in tennis.

This is the final of the 2019 PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER, an ATP 80 professional tennis event, close to the lowest level of tournament on the men's tour.

On every available surface, there are banners with the name of the local chain of auto shops sponsoring the event; out in the parking lot, a guy sells MERCH with Art's personalized logo; to the side of the court, a goofy-looking trophy sits waiting for the victor -- an anthropomorphized tire holding a tiny tennis racket, giving a thumbs up.

Aside from an oversized check for \$7200, the winner today receives a measly 80 ranking points, but you wouldn't know it looking at Art, Patrick, and Tashi's faces: they all seem to suggest that this is about something *much more than tennis*.

UMPIRE

Donaldson to serve.

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

Thwacckkkk!

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

Patrick sends the ball out wide.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

UMPIRE

Fifteen - Love.

They reset. Art sends in another scorcher:

Thwacckkkkk!

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

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

UMPIRE

Fifteen - All.

They reset. Art sends in his next serve, and as they trade blows, we pan through the crowd and settle back on **Tashi**.

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

PATRICK

LET'S GO!!!

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

UMPIRE

Fifteen - thirty.

Tashi takes off her sunglasses and looks at Art. He steps back to the line, keeping his eyes on her. When he throws the ball up, it almost feels like he's going to serve it at HER.

Thwackkkkkkk!

CUT TO BLACK:

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

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM IN ATLANTA - MORNING

Two Weeks Earlier.

Art opens his eyes and reaches over to turn off the alarm:
It's 5:30 AM -- barely light outside.

Tashi's already up, applying body lotion in the mirror. As she gets to her knee, she pauses, briefly, running her finger over a scar. She finishes and throws on her robe.

TASHI

Let's go.

Art groans and gets up.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Art gets stretched on the floor by his PHYSIOTHERAPIST as he watches yesterday's matches on TV.

In the kitchenette, Art's PERSONAL NUTRITIONIST labels sports bottles with **strange-colored liquids**: "Set 2," "pre-warm-up."

At the table, TASHI'S MOTHER, white, 50s, eats breakfast with LILY, 5, Art and Tashi's daughter. Lily holds a *stuffed plush peach* that says: "Welcome back to the Atlanta Open."

On the couch, Tashi reviews mockups labelled "Immediate Response Needed: Out in ONE WEEK" for an **Aston Martin ad featuring her and Art** -- "*Game Changer*. The Donaldsons for Aston Martin."

TV SPORTS COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Let's look at today's matchups.

A graphic pops up comparing Art's stats with his first round opponent, LEO DU MAURIER (18, French, a kid). Art's column is full of every achievement in tennis minus a US Open trophy.

TV SPORTS COMMENTATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I think it's safe to say that Donaldson is the *heavy favorite* against Du Maurier.

Art grimaces.

OTHER COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Even if he's been looking pretty shaky coming off his surgery last season, he's still not the guy you want to face heading into your first 250 event as a qualifier. I think if Art can get his game working for him, this is a great opportunity to end his losing streak heading into the US Open.

Art reaches over and mutes the TV. Tashi notices this, then takes out a red sharpie and adds an "s" to the ad copy: "Game Changers."

EXT. PRACTICE COURT AT ATLANTA OPEN - LATER

Tashi feeds Art balls from the net, calling out shots.

TASHI

Inside in! Line! Inside out! Line!
Line!

Art hustles from side to side, trying to hit cones that Tashi has set up along the court as targets.

EXT./INT. GROUNDS OF ATLANTA OPEN - LATER

The team walks through the bowels of the venue. Art has showered and drinks the sports bottle labeled "post warm-up."

TASHI

You want to force him into as many backhand rallies as you can today. He's got one big weapon, and he wants to use it from the center of the court, so take it away.

Art nods, listening. Right then, they pass LEO DU MAURIER and his (much smaller) team, heading the other way. Art nods to him. Du Maurier nods back, in awe. Art clocks Du Maurier's admiration and grimaces. Tashi clocks Art's grimace.

At the end of the hall, through the open garage door, they see that their DRIVER has pulled up in an Aston Martin, waiting for them. FANS flock the car. Art, Tashi, and the security guard brace themselves and head into the fray.

INT. HOLDING AREA - 5:59PM

Art, now wearing his pristine Uniqlo match gear, sits focused, meditative: a boxer before a fight. Tashi sits across from him. On the wall above her there's a **picture of Art, eight years younger, holding the 2011 Atlanta Open trophy**. Art looks at it.

Knock knock. A WOMAN IN A HEADSET stands in the doorway.

WOMAN IN HEADSET

We're ready for you.

Art and Tashi nod to her. She leaves.

TASHI
You ready?

Beat. Art gets up and grabs his tennis bag.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Decimate that little bitch.

INT. THE FANCY HOTEL ROOM IN ATLANTA - EVENING

Thwacckkkk!

Tashi and Art are watching footage of Art getting crushed.

ART
He was playing really well...

Art misses a shot, throws his racket. Tashi pauses the video.

TASHI
We're pulling you out of
Cincinnati.

ART
Baby...

TASHI
We may as well pull you out of the
Open too. If this isn't gonna be
the year, why bother?

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

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

ART
No one's asking you to.

TASHI
You are when you play like that. I
would have *killed* to have a
recovery like yours. I would have
literally *stabbed someone*. An old
lady. A child.
(looks at him.)
What's it gonna take to make you
really *play* again, Art? What do I
have to do?

Art says nothing. Lily appears in the doorway.

LILY
Mommy?

They both turn to look at her. Tashi's mother follows behind.

LILY (CONT'D)
Can we watch *Spiderverse*?

TASHI
Of course, baby. We're just talking
about tennis.

LILY
You're *always* talking about tennis.

TASHI
I know. Come here.

She picks up her iPad from the couch and goes with Lily and her mother to the other room, already loading up *Spiderverse*.

TASHI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You start the movie with grandma,
and then I'll come back and we can
order some room service, okay?

Art looks at the TV still frozen on the image of him throwing his racket. In the other room, he can hear the opening notes of the *Spiderverse* score. Tashi comes back.

TASHI (CONT'D)
She likes this hotel.

ART
We can keep staying here...

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

Art doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Huh?

ART
I'm gonna be a tennis player.

TASHI

Good.

(takes out her phone.)

We need to get you in another event before the Open so you at least have some match time.

ART

I can *play* Cincinnatti.

TASHI

No. You *can't*. Not like this...
What about New Rochelle?

Art looks at her, confused. Tashi shows him the phone.

ART

That's a challenger.

TASHI

I know. It starts in a couple days.
Maybe we can get you a wild card.

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

TASHI (CONT'D)

You need to start *winning*, Art.
Right now, you're getting crushed by guys like *Du Maurier*. We need to go somewhere where there's *no one* on the other side of the net who can shake your *confidence*. So come on. We're going to the --
(checks name on phone)
Phil's Tire Town Challenger. Don't get knocked out in the first round.

ART

(smiles)

You're evil.

TASHI

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

She gets up to go make the call.

ART

Hey.

She looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)

I love you.

Tashi picks up the remote and presses play on the TV.

TASHI

I know.

Thwacckkkk!

EXT. MAIN STREET, WHITE PLAINS, NY - NIGHT

A few days later.

On the side of the **Galleria shopping mall**, a crew is starting to install a billboard which the viewer may recognize as the Aston Martin ad we saw Tashi approving in Atlanta.

On the street below, **a beat up 2008 White Honda CRV** passes by, heading southeast on Main Street for New Rochelle...

INT. ROADSIDE MOTEL LOBBY, NEW ROCHELLE - LATER

Patrick stands at the soul-crushingly sad reception desk. Behind him, a gay COUPLE, 50s, roadtripping across America, impatiently waits to check in. In the corner, a WOMAN in men's boxers and a NY Giants jersey tries to get some Famous Amos cookies from the vending machine. We can see Patrick's Honda through the window. His card has just been declined.

PATRICK

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

FRONT DESK WOMAN

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

PATRICK

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

FRONT DESK WOMAN

That thing at the country club?

PATRICK

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

FRONT DESK WOMAN
I'm sorry. I need a card on file.

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

FRONT DESK WOMAN
Sir, I don't know who you are.

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

PATRICK
The racket alone is worth like
three hundred dollars.

FRONT DESK WOMAN
We need a *card*. For incidentals.

PATRICK
Incidentals?

She nods. Patrick looks around at the place like "you gotta
be kidding me." Woman looks back at him, completely unmoved.

EXT. THE MOTEL PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick leans against his car. He's got his phone up to his
ear, waiting. No one picks up.

PATRICK
Fuck.

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

He sends it, waits. His phone chimes.

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

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

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

He puts the phone down, sighs.

EXT. NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - A BIT LATER

Patrick pulls into the parking lot of the New Rochelle
Country Club, completely dark and empty this late at night.

He parks in the far corner, shuts off his car, and looks around. He turns off the lights, folds up a hoodie into a makeshift pillow, climbs in back and curls up, looking like he's done this before.

BLACK.

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

INT. THE CAR - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Patrick opens his eyes. A CLUB EMPLOYEE is tapping on the glass of his window with his knuckles.

CLUB EMPLOYEE
Can't sleep here.

PATRICK
I'm playing at the --

CLUB EMPLOYEE
This is a private club, sir. I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

PATRICK
I'm in the *challenger*. I'm one of the players.

Club employee notices Patrick's tennis gear in the car.

CLUB EMPLOYEE
Oh. Well, you're early for check in. We're just opening up.

INT. REGISTRATION DESK AT THE PRO SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

As the place opens up, Patrick approaches a USTA OFFICIAL with her head in a binder. She's drinking a coffee, taking bites from a bacon egg and cheese. Patrick eyes it, hungry.

USTA OFFICIAL
Name?

PATRICK
Patrick Zweig.

The woman looks at his face, mid-chew.

USTA OFFICIAL
Oh wow, that's right. You are.
(swallows.)
(MORE)

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

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

PATRICK

Oh. Wow.

USTA OFFICIAL

You were really something back
then, huh?

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

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

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

PATRICK

That's all right.

USTA OFFICIAL

You're still an excellent player,
obviously.

Patrick just looks at her. She smiles awkwardly.

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Well, we're happy to have you here.
You've got your first match against
Grosu this afternoon.

(hands Patrick a packet.)

Should be a nice tournament. It's
supposed to get a little windy mid-
week, but hopefully it'll clear up
before the final. Fingers crossed.

PATRICK

(not listening)

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

USTA OFFICIAL

Oh...

PATRICK

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

USTA OFFICIAL

Well, generally, we don't give out
winnings until a player makes his
way through the tournament --

PATRICK

Right... I just had a problem with my card at the hotel, and um...

USTA OFFICIAL

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

PATRICK

(doesn't laugh.)
Right.

USTA OFFICIAL

Let me see what I can do.

Patrick starts to leave.

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way...

He stops. USTA Official leans in like she's sharing a secret.

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

There's a rumor going around that we had a last minute wild card.

Patrick looks at the woman like "Okay...?"

USTA OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Wanna guess who it is?

PATRICK

(could care less)
Who?

She smiles, gets up, and walks over to the tennis rackets along the wall. She picks up a brand new Wilson and holds it out for Patrick to see. After a beat, his eyes go wide: there's a big picture of **Art Donaldson** on the wrapping.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - 2019, LATE AFTERNOON

Thwaccckkk!

A. Donaldson: 1 - 40

P. Zweig: 2 - 40

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

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

Art returns. They rally, ending with Patrick stabbing at a ball and sending up a lob which Art smashes for a winner.

UMPIRE
Advantage, Donaldson.

Both men steady themselves. Patrick resets.

Thwacckkkk!

LINE JUDGE
OUT!

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

ART
FUCK!

The crowd gasps. They've never heard Art Donaldson curse on the court before. Tashi looks down, resigned, as some spectators around her look over and whisper to themselves.

UMPIRE
Code violation. Audible obscenity.
Warning, Donaldson.

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

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Deuce.

Thwacckkkk!

Art returns Patrick's serve, but Patrick has set himself up perfectly to rip a forehand crosscourt, winning the point.

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

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
Advantage, Zweig.

The crowd is shocked -- Art Donaldson *never* smashes rackets -- and Patrick *smiles*, lining up to serve again.

Tashi puts her sunglasses back on as Patrick goes into his motion.

Thwaackkk!

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

Thirteen Years Earlier.

US Open Boys Doubles Final. 2006. Match Point.

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

ART and PATRICK, both 18 years old, stand across the net from TWO BOYS FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC.

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

Here, as in earlier scenes, we see that while Art's game is *beautiful* -- clean strokes, power from the baseline, one-handed backhand -- Patrick is an absolute MONSTER on the court: low probability shots, the stuff you can't teach.

Art and Patrick win the point when Patrick, chasing after a lob, manages to hit the ball on the run, backwards between his legs (a "tweener") and sends it zipping right down the middle, too fast for either of the Czech boys to go after it.

UMPIRE

Game, set, and match, Donaldson and
Zweig. Two sets to one, six-one,
six-seven, six-two.

They fall to the ground, losing their minds, hugging and kissing each other: Art and Patrick are the Boys Doubles champions, and, it is clear, they are also *best friends*.

MOMENTS LATER

Some officials walk on court to present their trophies. They take a picture holding the goblets in the space between their faces, each kissing the sides -- it's like they're kissing each other with two glass filters in between.

EXT. GROUNDS OF US OPEN / A DIFFERENT COURT - LATER

They walk, carrying hot dogs in one hand and their doubles trophies in the other. They pass screens live updating scores. A big screen says: **Coming up. Girls Singles Final. T. Duncan vs. A. Mueller.** Then, another graphic: **Tomorrow. Boys Singles Final. A. Donaldson vs. P. Zweig.**

ART

Can you do me a favor?

Patrick looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)

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

PATRICK

Shut the fuck up.

ART

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

PATRICK

It's not a *fact*.

ART

I'm just saying... throw me a couple games? Maybe a set?

PATRICK

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

ART

Wow. Okay. Thank you.

PATRICK

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

ART

You seemed excited about the doubles trophy.

PATRICK

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

ART

Well, fine, but you have to *actually play*. You can't just retire. I need it to look like I really beat you.

PATRICK

Do you have *money* on this or something?

ART

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

PATRICK

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

They reach the court for the Girls Singles Final.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Now entering the court, hailing from Switzerland, girls singles ITF world number 4, Anna Mueller.

As Patrick and Art make their way to their seats in the stands which are *noticeably fuller* than they were for the doubles final, the 17 YEAR OLD SWISS GIRL enters on court. She graciously and modestly waves and smiles at the crowd.

PATRICK

Did Mark tell you about the party in Long Island?

ART

The Adidas thing? I'm not going.

PATRICK

What? Why not?

ART

We have a *final* tomorrow.

PATRICK

I just told you I'd let you win.

Art just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You don't want to meet Tashi Duncan?

Art shrugs. Patrick laughs and shakes his head.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You don't get it, man. You've never seen her in person. She's in another league.

ART

You mean her game?

PATRICK

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

And right on cue...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now entering the court, the
girls singles ITF world number 1
and winner of the Junior Australian
Open... TASHI DUNCAN!

Art and Patrick lean forward in their seats as **18-year-old TASHI** enters dressed in sleek 2006 Adidas gear. She looks, somehow, like a stunning supermodel AND a brutal force of nature, and yet this Tashi feels *lighter* than her adult self.

Art and Patrick look on in fascination as she heads over to her bench and gives a nod to her **FAMILY** in the stands: her FATHER, a modestly-dressed Black man wearing an Adidas hat; her MOTHER, here thirteen years younger, filming with a tiny camcorder; her four SIBLINGS with hand-made poster-board signs.

Tashi tests her racket tension, stretches her quads.

ART

Fuck.

THE MATCH

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

Tashi's game has all the control and discipline of Art's and all the wild improvisation and raw athleticism of Patrick's: as the previously mild-mannered-seeming Anna Mueller has a meltdown -- cursing, yelling to her box, smashing rackets -- Tashi looks like she is *taking off from the ground.*

Patrick and Art watch, both of them involuntarily sinking into their chairs, mouths open, drooling.

ART

Look at that fucking backhand...

After a particularly incredible point, Patrick grabs Art's leg as if holding onto him for support.

Art sits up uncomfortably, and from the way he crosses his legs and picks up the doubles trophy on the seat next to him to cover his crotch, we can tell that he's aroused and suddenly, self-consciously, trying to hide it.

Patrick looks down, sees what Art's doing, and is suddenly self-conscious of his own boner. He sits up, crosses his legs, and grabs *his* doubles trophy, just like Art.

As Tashi smacks a backhand, they try to look composed, but they can't hide the look in their eyes: pure, wild *desire*.

Anna finally plays her first great shot of the match, hitting what she thinks is an inside-out winner down the line to Tashi's deuce court, but *Tashi reads it perfectly*: she sprints *ungodly fast* and, on the run, hits a *laser beam crosscourt forehand* winning the point and letting out a *primal scream from the depths of her being*:

TASHI

COME ON!!!!

Crowd goes NUTS. The boys look like they're about to *burst*.

EXT. FANCY PARTY, GREAT NECK, LONG ISLAND - THAT NIGHT

A seaside mansion. Pop hits on the sound system. Waiters going in and out of the house with trays. Art and Patrick stand on the tennis court -- set up for drinks and dancing -- looking at a banner that says "*Adidas Celebrates the Tennis Champions of Tomorrow*." Beneath it, a picture of Tashi in her sponsored Adidas gear.

PATRICK

She's gonna turn her whole family into millionaires... She'll have a fashion line, a nutritional supplement, a *foundation*.

Art laughs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

The Tashi Duncan Center for Girls.
"Taking at-risk youth off the streets and onto the courts."

ART

Don't make fun, man. She's a *remarkable young woman*.

PATRICK

I know. She's a pillar of the community... I'd let her fuck me with a racket.

Art smiles. They turn and scan the scene:

Anna Mueller cries, holding the runner's up trophy, being comforted by her coach; Tashi's siblings sip soda in the corner watching the fancy hors d'oeuvres being passed around; Tashi's parents talk with Adidas executives.

Finally, the boys' eyes land on **Tashi**, dancing in the center of the tennis court. She's done her own makeup, and she wears an evening gown that looks like an ambitious working-class 18-year-old's idea of what a glamorous person might wear to the Met Gala. It's an innocent, immature echo of the comfortably, almost oppressively chic Tashi we'll meet as an adult, and yet, she is a *vision*: you can't take your eyes off of her.

ART

Oh my god.

PATRICK

Oy.

THE TENNIS COURT DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Patrick and Art awkwardly shuffle over to Tashi, who is now taking a break to the side of the court. She notices them. They both put out their hands at the same time.

PATRICK

Hey, I'm Patrick Zwei--

ART

Art Donald--

TASHI

I know who you guys are.

They retract their hands, surprised.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Fire and ice, right?

ART

Oh my god.

PATRICK

In the flesh.

TASHI

Which one's which?

PATRICK

What do *you* think?

Art clocks Patrick and Tashi having a moment and realizes he has to say something.

ART
 You were... fucking incredible
 today.

TASHI
 Thank you.

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

Art looks over at the still crying Mueller.

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

TASHI
 Don't. She's a sore loser. And a
 racist bitch.
 (sees their surprise,
 laughs.)
 She'll be all right.

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

TASHI (CONT'D)
 (to Art)
 I heard you're playing for Stanford
 in the fall.

ART
 Yeah. How did you -- ?

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

Beat. Both boys look at her, taken aback.

PATRICK
You're not going pro?

TASHI
 No. Not yet.

PATRICK
 Why would waste your time playing
college tennis?

Art looks at him, stung. Tashi's about to respond when her
 FATHER comes over.

TASHI'S FATHER

Baby, I gotta steal you for a second. Meet me by the trophy.

TASHI

Okay.

(to the boys)

I gotta go do some pictures, but it was good meeting you guys.

She sees the way they're both looking at her. She laughs.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Later.

She leaves. Patrick and Art just stand there, watching, as Tashi goes and takes pictures to the side of the court with some GUYS in suits.

ART

What now?

PATRICK

What do you mean? That was it.

ART

You don't want to stick around and try to talk to her again?

PATRICK

No. That'll seem too desperate. We should just get the shuttle back to the hotel.

ART

Yeah, okay, fine.

They both just stand there, looking at her.

ART (CONT'D)

Let's go.

PATRICK

Yeah. Let's go.

Neither of them moves. They just keep staring at her.

THE PARTY - LATER

Things have wound down a bit. Art and Patrick are lounging despondently on some chairs around the corner from the court. Suddenly, they see Tashi passing by. They both perk up.

PATRICK
Hey!

ART
Hi!

She looks over at them, a little weirded out.

TASHI
Oh, wow, you guys are still here.

PATRICK
Uh huh.

ART
Great party!

TASHI
Don't you have a final tomorrow?
Shouldn't you be *preparing* or
something?

ART
(trying to sound casual)
Nah, it's just the *juniors*.

PATRICK
We both know how it's gonna go.

Art looks at him, pissed.

TASHI
Well, um, cool that you stayed.

ART
Yeah, you know, I figured we should
get to know each other if we're
gonna be at school together.

TASHI
Sure, yeah, totally.

PATRICK
(cutting this off)
Hey, do you smoke?

TASHI
(looks at him, surprised)
Cigarettes?

PATRICK
Yeah.

TASHI

No. Do *you*?

PATRICK

Yeah. You wanna go down to the beach?

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

TASHI

Sure.

EXT. PROMONTORY OVERLOOKING THE BEACH - LATER

The boys sit in some beach chairs, smoking. Tashi sits on a rock, looking out at the ocean. Party continues behind them.

PATRICK

So I have to ask you about the Stanford thing.

TASHI

(laughs)
Okay...

PATRICK

What's the angle? Why do you wanna go beat up on a bunch of girls who were the best players at their *high schools*?

TASHI

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

PATRICK

Oh, I get it...

Tashi looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You're making us *wait* for you.

Tashi tries not to react, but he's got half the truth.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(mocking)
The 18-year-old tennis phenomenon who *cares about her education*.

TASHI

Is this why you came to my party?

PATRICK

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

TASHI

And when are you going pro?

PATRICK

As soon as I can. *Hitting a ball with a racket is a great way to avoid having a job.*

Beat. Tashi looks him over in his rich boy clothes. Art looks back and forth between them.

TASHI

See, that's your problem. You think tennis is about *doing your thing*. *Expressing yourself*. That's why you still have that *serve*.

PATRICK

It works.

TASHI

(shakes her head)

Yeah, but you're not a tennis player. You don't even understand what tennis *is*.

PATRICK

(smug)

What is it?

TASHI

A *relationship*.

PATRICK

(scoffs)

Is that what you and Anna Mueller had today?

TASHI

It is, actually. For about 15 seconds, we were actually playing *tennis*. We understood each other completely. So did everybody watching. It was like we were in love. Or like we *didn't exist*. We went somewhere really beautiful together.

ART
You *screamed*.

They both look at him, surprised.

ART (CONT'D)
When you hit the winner, you
screamed. I've never heard anything
like it.

Tashi just looks at him. She can tell he's deeply affected.
She smiles, shrugs, and looks over toward the party.

TASHI
I should get back in there before
my dad comes looking for me. See
you at school, Art.

She starts to leave.

PATRICK
Wait!

She stops.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Are you on Facebook?

TASHI
What?

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

Tashi looks at them and laughs.

TASHI
You *both* want my number?

ART
Very much so.

She shakes her head.

TASHI
I'm not a home-wrecker.

ART
We don't live together.

PATRICK
It's an open relationship.

ART
Also, Patrick has a girlfriend.

PATRICK
I do not.

Tashi laughs. She's enjoying this very much.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Come hang out with us later.

She looks at him. So does Art.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
They put you up at the hotel in
Flushing, right? We're in room 206.

TASHI
You want me to tuck you in?

PATRICK
No. We can just keep talking...
about tennis.

Beat. She looks at Art, who seems a little unsure what's
being proposed here. She looks at Patrick. She laughs.

TASHI
Goodnight.

She starts walking away. Patrick calls after her.

PATRICK
We have beer...

She smiles, not turning around.

INT. ART AND PATRICK'S CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - LATER

They are both shirtless, in their boxers. Art lays on the
bed. Patrick sits up, smoking, looking at the door.

ART
She's not coming.

PATRICK
She might.

ART
You made it sound like we wanted to
fuck her in here.

PATRICK
We *do* want to fuck her in here.

ART
Yeah, but not -- I mean, what exactly was your plan?

Patrick shrugs.

ART (CONT'D)
Let's say she *did* come over. Then what? We both keep shooting our shot and hope that she ends up making out with one of us while the other one goes and sits in the bathroom?

PATRICK
Sure. If it came to that.

Art laughs and shakes his head.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
What? You think that's *beneath* you?

ART
I think it's beneath *her*.

PATRICK
What if she chooses *you*? You won't feel comfortable sending me away?

ART
She's not *coming*, Patrick.

There's a faint knock at the door. They look at each other, unsure if they were just imagining it. Beat. Another knock, louder. They *bolt* out of bed.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Tashi can hear the boys falling over themselves, whispering to each other frantically through the door. It swings open: Patrick stands there, shirtless. Art, behind him, is in the middle of putting on a shirt. They both try to look casual.

PATRICK
Hey.

ART
Hi.

She smiles.

INT. THE ROOM - LATER

The three of them sit in a triangle on the floor, sharing *one* large can of Budweiser. Tashi looks at the two of them.

TASHI

So, did you guys go to like, *mommy*
and *me* classes together?

The boys laugh.

TASHI (CONT'D)

You just seem like *brothers*...

ART

That's what the Mark Rebellato
Tennis Academy will do to you.

TASHI

Ah. Right. *Boarding school*.

PATRICK

We've been bunk mates since we were
twelve.

TASHI

Cute.

ART

(to Tashi)

You never thought about doing
something like that?

TASHI

No. We couldn't afford it. And even
if I got a scholarship or
something, I don't think my parents
would've wanted me... *coming of age*
in an environment like that.

PATRICK

Why? What were they afraid of?

Tashi gestures to their current circumstances. They laugh.

TASHI

(to Patrick)

Is that where you met your
girlfriend? At the *Academy*?

PATRICK

She's not my --

She looks at Art, who confirms with his eyes: she *is*.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Yeah.

TASHI

(to Art)

And what about you? How come you're not pretending not to have a girlfriend?

PATRICK

Art's in between ladies.

TASHI

Is that right?

ART

No, I mean, that makes it sound like I'm some kind of --

TASHI

Player?

PATRICK

Art does fine for himself.

Art looks at him, annoyed.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I mean, *look at him*.

She does. He looks back at her. She looks at Patrick.

TASHI

How often does *this* happen? You guys going after the same girl.

PATRICK

Not as often as you'd think, actually.

TASHI

No?

ART

We don't usually have the same type.

TASHI

Are you saying I should be flattered?

ART

No, I mean... You're *everybody's* type, aren't you?

She looks at him. She looks at Patrick, taking them both in.

TASHI
What about *the two of you*?

ART
What do you mean?

She just stares at them, saying nothing.

ART (CONT'D)
Oh. No... Is that surprising?

Tashi shrugs. Patrick gets a weird smile on his face.

TASHI
What?

PATRICK
Well...

Art looks at him.

ART
No.

PATRICK
I mean --

ART
(shaking his head.)
No.

Patrick laughs guiltily.

PATRICK
Sorry, but --

TASHI
Well, now you have to tell me.

Art sighs.

PATRICK
I think it's a sweet story.

ART
It is. Fine. Tell her.

Patrick looks at Art. He looks at Tashi.

PATRICK
I taught Art how to jerk off.

Tashi smiles.

ART

Patrick was an *early bloomer*... and I was, I guess... *on time*, and so one night in our room when we were twelve, Patrick thought I was asleep, and I heard him... you know...

PATRICK

Jerking off.

ART

And I asked him what he was doing, and he said he was...

PATRICK

Jerking off.

ART

And he asked me if I had ever done it, and I told him no... and so he... showed me how...

TASHI

What do you mean he *showed you how*?

ART

I mean, he did it on his bed, and I watched him, and then I started doing it on my bed, and we both sort of did it... *together*... on opposite sides of the room...

TASHI

Just... silently?

ART

(laughs)

No... We were talking about *Kat*, weren't we?

PATRICK

Kat Zimmerman.

ART

Patrick told me it was better if you thought about someone while you were doing it, and I asked him who he was thinking about, and he said he was thinking about Kat Zimmerman... so I thought about her too.

TASHI
Who finished first?

ART
I don't remember, actually --

Patrick points to Art. Art glares at him.

TASHI
What was it like afterwards?

PATRICK
Art was a little *surprised* by the whole thing. He was just sitting there covered in all of it -- he looked like a little kid who spilled milk all over his lap.

ART
(embarrassed)
Jesus, Patrick...

PATRICK
I knew enough already at that point to have a sock nearby, but I forgot to tell Art about that part.

Tashi smiles.

TASHI
What about *Kat Zimmerman*? Which one of you ended up with her?

PATRICK
Neither of us. She got injured a week later and had to quit... But she wasn't very good in the first place.

ART
No... She sucked.

Beat. Tashi smiles.

TASHI
You're right. That is a sweet story.

She downs what's left in the Budweiser can and looks at them.

TASHI (CONT'D)
We're out of beer.

Beat. The boys look down at the can, then back up at her. They all look around at each other for a long, pregnant moment, until, abruptly, Tashi gets up from the floor.

The boys watch as she walks over to the bed, considers for a moment, then sits down. She looks at them.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Come here.

Neither boy moves. They look at each other, then back at her.

ART

Um... Which one of us...?

But Patrick doesn't wait for an answer. He bolts up to go join her on the bed. Art follows. Tashi smiles as they sit down on either side of her.

Beat. They both look at her, no idea what's about to happen. She looks back and forth between them until, finally, she stops on Art. He looks back at her, nervous, excited, as she leans in slowly and *kisses him*, sweetly. Patrick watches.

They break apart. She looks at Patrick. She leans in and *kisses him*, sweetly. Art watches.

They break apart. Beat. The boys *both* go in to kiss her at the same time, almost bumping heads. They stop themselves and laugh. She looks back and forth between them, challenging. Patrick leans in and starts kissing Tashi's neck. Art, seeing this, starts kissing her shoulder. She smiles. They kiss their way up to her face, until, suddenly, accidentally, they're in a three-way kiss: all their tongues touching.

The boys reflexively recoil, but Tashi just laughs. She brings her lips slowly in between them, egging them on. The boys look at each other. They look at her. They lean in, very slowly, until the three of them kiss, passionately, their tongues all touching, all getting bolder with their hands.

Gradually, subtly, Tashi removes her face from the kiss until *Art and Patrick are just kissing each other*, passionately, with their eyes closed. She sits back on the bed and watches them for a long beat.

TASHI

Okay.

The boys open their eyes, instantly breaking apart.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'm going to bed.

Tashi gets up as if nothing had happened, leaving the boys sitting there, suspended, confused, visibly excited. They look at each other, then at her heading for the door.

PATRICK

What about your number?

She stops, sees them staring at her, full of longing.

TASHI

I told you: I'm not a home wrecker.

She starts to leave again.

ART

Please.

She stops, looks down at their excitement. She laughs.

TASHI

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

Patrick smiles. Art deflates.

TASHI (CONT'D)

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

ART

Are you saying you *want* me to?

TASHI

I'm saying you're not getting my number if you don't.

ART

Yeah, but what do you *want*?

TASHI

I *want* to watch some *good fucking tennis*.

Beat. She lets that hang there.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

She leaves, abruptly, letting the door slam behind her. Art and Patrick watch her go, in a daze.

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

PATRICK
That was a lifetime ago.

Art stands up, boner visible through his underwear.

ART
What about my grandmother?

PATRICK
I hope she has a fucking stroke.

He swats Art's boner, *hard*.

THE MATCH - NEXT DAY - AFTERNOON

Thwaccckkk!

There's a few hundred spectators and a camera crew, but Art and Patrick are really playing for an *audience of one*: Tashi sits in the middle of the stands, an Empress watching two gladiators.

Art's playing unbelievably well, but Patrick's *still* too good for him: Art sends up a shallow lob on the run. Patrick looks like he's going for a smash, but it's a fake out. He lets the ball bounce and hits a between-the-legs "hot dog" shot.

Art throws his hands up in despair. One of the LINE JUDGES (the woman from the New Rochelle registration desk thirteen years later) can't help but mouth in disbelief: *Wow*.

Patrick turns to Tashi, does a cocky little bow. She smiles.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - 2019, EVENING

Thwaccckkk!

A. Donaldson: 2 - 0

P. Zweig: 5 - 15

Tashi now watches stone-faced as Art appears to have fully given up in the first set.

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

UMPIRE
Thirty - Love.

Tashi watches as Patrick moves to the other side.

Thwacckkkk!

Another ace.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Forty - Love.

Patrick moves to the other side for his next serve.

Thwacckkkk!

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

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

Thwacckkkk!

Art doesn't even move for it.

UMPIRE

Game and first set, Zweig. Zweig
leads one set to love.

Tashi gets up. The people around her grumble, confused, as she starts making her way out of the stands. Her security guard gets up to go with her, but she shoos him away.

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

Patrick looks over to catch Tashi's eye, but she's gone.

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

1:00, 0:59, 0:58...

SET BREAK

A. Donaldson: 2

P. Zweig: 6

INT. NEW ROCHELLE LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Earlier that week.

Amidst other players changing, heading for showers, Patrick sits on a bench, half-undressed, drenched in sweat, checking his account balance on his phone: he's only got **\$70**.

At the other end of the bench, his defeated first round opponent, VICTOR GROSU, 29, sits, stewing, mumbling to himself, holding his racket like it's a loaded shot gun.

Patrick opens up Tinder and starts swiping right on every woman near Westchester.

FINN LARSEN (O.S.)
Nice match, Zweig.

He looks over and sees FINN LARSEN, 27, naked, standing by the entrance to the sauna.

FINN LARSEN (CONT'D)
You too, Grosu. Tough break.

That sends Victor off the edge: he starts screaming, smacking his racket to bits, cursing himself. None of the other players acknowledge him: they've all seen this, and done this themselves, dozens of times. Ignoring him is their little act of kindness -- a silent pact among brothers.

Larsen shrugs and enters the sauna. Patrick gets a match on Tinder, looks at it, and starts messaging the girl.

EXT. MAIN STREET, WHITE PLAINS, NY - LATER

On the side of the mall, Art and Tashi's Aston Martin ad is now fully installed. "Game Changers."

Patrick's car passes by, heading for White Plains.

INT. LOBBY BAR AT THE RITZ CARLTON, WHITE PLAINS - LATER

Patrick sits across from his DATE. He's severely underdressed. She wears a pantsuit and a name tag that says "Westchester County Bar Association Annual Summit."

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

PATRICK
Sometimes. When I qualify.

DATE
What does that mean?

PATRICK
Those big tournaments usually have
spots for 128 players.
(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So if you're ranked in the top 100, you instantly get a spot, but everyone else has to play a sort of *tournament before the tournament*. Some years I make it, some years I don't. If I win this thing in New Rochelle, my ranking will be high enough for the Open.

DATE

You'll get a spot?

PATRICK

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

DATE

Ah.

PATRICK

(laughs)

I told you tennis was boring.

DATE

No! Really.

Patrick notices someone behind his date. He looks at his date's name tag, which she forgot she was wearing.

PATRICK

Tell me about real estate law...

DATE

Oh. Well --

Patrick instantly tunes out, pretending to listen, and focuses instead on a WOMAN crossing the room for the bar. She gets there -- the bartender gives her a tea in a to go cup. She turns around, instantly seeing Patrick. It's **Tashi**.

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

Are you okay?

PATRICK

Sorry?

He looks at his date, then back at Tashi, who's glaring at him. He follows with his eyes as she walks over to the elevators to meet her mother and the security guard.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I just have to...

Date looks at him, confused, as Patrick gets up and starts heading over there. Tashi hands her mother the tea.

TASHI

I'm just gonna ask about the beds.

TASHI'S MOM

Okay. You want us to wait to FaceTime dad?

TASHI

No. I'll be right up.

Tashi's mom nods and smiles. Tashi smiles back as the elevator doors close. Patrick gets there right as they shut. Tashi's smile immediately disappears.

TASHI (CONT'D)

What the fuck are you doing here?

PATRICK

I'm playing at the --

TASHI

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

PATRICK

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

TASHI

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

PATRICK

Oh.

TASHI

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

PATRICK

Didn't you?

TASHI

Not *this* part.

He takes her in, palpable energy between them. Tashi looks at the bar: Patrick's date is watching them suspiciously.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Are you on a date?

PATRICK

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

TASHI

Can you go seal the deal and get out of here? You guys are on opposite sides of the draw. You won't play each other unless you're both in the final.

PATRICK

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

TASHI

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

Patrick looks at her, stung. He smiles.

PATRICK

Your mom looks good.

TASHI

I *know* she does, Patrick.

Another elevator arrives on the ground floor. The doors open and people get out. Tashi gets in. She presses the button.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Stay the fuck away from us.

Doors close. Patrick just stands there for a moment. He starts to walk away, completely forgetting about his date, then remembers and heads back to the bar. She looks at him, confused, unsettled, as he sits back down and laughs.

PATRICK

Sorry, that was a um... uh...
(gives up trying to explain.)
Hey.

He leans in suddenly and *kisses her*. She recoils, taken aback, but then, after a beat, she goes for it.

They make out, hot and heavy, right there at the bar.

INT. TENNIS FACILITY AT MARK REBELLATO ACADEMY - MORNING

Thwwaacckkkk!

Thirteen Years Earlier.

On multiple courts, PRODIGIES rally and train with COACHES. Art and Patrick, 18, walk past locker rooms, weight rooms.

ART

What do you mean you won't say?

PATRICK

I don't kiss and tell.

ART

Since when?

PATRICK

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

They get to their court and start stretching together.

ART

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

PATRICK

(laughs)

She didn't indicate there were any exceptions.

ART

Fine, just give me a signal.

PATRICK

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

ART

No. I'm happy for you. I just don't want to feel left out.

They keep stretching. Patrick doesn't say anything. Art gets an idea and jumps up, heading onto the court.

ART (CONT'D)

If the two of you slept together,
do a normal serve.

Patrick looks at him. He laughs, gets up and heads towards the service line across the net.

ART (CONT'D)

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

PATRICK

Like *you*?

Art nods.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You know you have a *tic*, right? Before you throw the ball up, you place it in the exact center of the neck of the racket.

Art takes a ball from his shorts and mimes his service motion. Patrick's right. Patrick laughs at Art's surprise.

ART

Okay, so do that... if you fucked.

PATRICK

I'm not telling you anything, Art.

ART

You *won't* be telling me.

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

Patrick bounces the ball. He looks for a moment like he's about to do his own service motion, but then he stops. He starts over again, going into **Art's service motion**.

Art's too distracted to even get into position.

Thwacckkkk!

The ball lands in. Art doesn't even move for it.

Patrick smiles and shrugs. Art smiles back, but as Patrick looks away and resets, Art's expression changes: **HATRED**.

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

Patrick goes back to his own service motion now, and Art gets into position, ready to *demolish* the return.

Thwwwacckkkk!

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - 2019, EVENING

CLOSE UP on the Umpire's timer: 0:57, 0:56, 0:55...

Art wipes himself off, takes his shirt off. He gets a fresh Uniqlo shirt from his bag and puts it on the bench. He takes out a "between sets" sports bottle, glances over at Patrick.

Patrick, also shirtless, has his arm slung over the side of the bench, slouching, exuding cocky ease, eating a banana.

Patrick catches Art looking at him and extends the banana as if to say "Want a bite?" Art scowls at him with the same unmistakable look of **hatred**. *Time to harness it once again.*

He looks over at the stands where Tashi is just getting back to her seat. She feels Art's eyes on her and stops. She turns her head and sees that Patrick is also looking up at her. Right then, two ART DONALDSON FANS ask Tashi for a selfie. She gives it to them, stealing looks back at Patrick and Art.

UMPIRE

Time!

Tashi looks back at the men. Art puts on his fresh shirt. Patrick puts back on the same sweaty shirt.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Second set. Donaldson to serve.

Art downs his "between sets" bottle in one gulp, not even grimacing.

They step onto the court, look at each other across the net. Set one is history. All that matters is what happens next.

Thwacckkkk!

SET TWO

A. Donaldson: 2, 0 - 0

P. Zweig: 6, 0 - 0

EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - DAY

Twelve Years Earlier.

Stanford, 2007.

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

As she sets up on the other side, she sees Art, fresh out of the shower coming over to watch. They wave at each other.

INT. CAFETERIA - A LITTLE LATER

Tashi and Art eat dinner together: Gatorade, greens, pasta. Tashi wears a T-Shirt that says "I TOLD YA."

ART
So when are you going pro?

TASHI
If we win the championships, I'll leave.

ART
So, end of May.

TASHI
I said "if" we win.

ART
Right. So May.

TASHI
(smiles)
Did Patrick tell you he's coming to watch the Pepperdine match?

ART
Yeah, he told me.

TASHI
We should all get dinner or something.

ART
Sure. If you want.

Tashi notices he's being weird.

TASHI
What's up?

ART
Nothing.

TASHI
Art.

He looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

This whole "thing" you're doing is stupid. You're not good at it.

ART

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

TASHI

Uh huh?

ART

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

Beat. Tashi studies his face.

TASHI

Okay.

She grabs her tray and starts to get up.

ART

I'm sorry.

TASHI

Why did you want to have lunch with me today?

ART

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

TASHI

Don't be such a fucking pussy. Is he seeing other girls on tour? Is that what this is?

ART

No. Or, I mean, I don't know. That's not what I'm trying to say.

TASHI

Then what are you trying to say?

Tashi waits for him to say something. She gets up, annoyed.

ART

(blurts out)

He's not in love with you.

She stops. She sits back down and leans in, challenging.

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

Art doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)
When did I say *I* was in love with
him?

ART
You didn't.

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

ART
I guess you wouldn't.

TASHI
Cool.

ART
Cool.
(beat.)
Don't you think you deserve it?

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

TASHI
Jesus fucking Christ.

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

Tashi just laughs, gets up, and starts walking away.

ART (CONT'D)
Sorry.

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

ART
Maybe.

TASHI
(not turning around)
Definitely. Thanks for lunch, Art.

She leaves. Art watches her go for a moment before taking the saddest ever bite of a hardboiled egg.

EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - DAY, THE NEXT WEEK

Art stands at the service line. Across the net, a TEAMMATE is ready to return. The rest of the team watches. Art starts to go into his motion --

HECKLER (O.S.)
WOO HOOOO! Let's go!

Art stops his motion, shakes it off, starts again.

HECKLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come on, Donaldson. Big serve. Big serve.

Art shakes it off again, annoyed. He steadies himself, goes into his motion, throws the ball up --

HECKLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
THAT'S RIGHT, BABY! SHOW THAT
MOTHERFUCKER WHO'S BOSS!

Art, pissed, let's the ball drop as he looks over and sees **Patrick**, wearing shorts, flip flops, sunglasses, and a Stanford T-shirt smiling at him.

PATRICK
FINISH IT OUT, DONALDSON! COME ON!

Art doesn't smile. He just turns his attention back to his teammate, goes into his motion and sends in an ace.

Thwwaaaccckkk!

INT. STANFORD SNACK BAR - A LITTLE LATER

Patrick sits in front of the windows in the mostly empty snack bar, staring at a **poster of Tashi** on a bulletin board nearby: her face is frozen in the same *primal scream* we saw at the US Open. Beneath her, in all caps: **THE DUNCANATOR!!!** Art comes over with some churros and sees Patrick looking at the poster. He sits down next to him and hands him one.

ART
So tell me about the tour.

Patrick just shrugs and takes a bite.

ART (CONT'D)
No fun stuff?

PATRICK
Like what?

ART
I don't know... are you *seeing*
anybody?

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

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

Patrick looks at him -- he notices Art's expression darken.

PATRICK
What?

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

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

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

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

Art nods. Patrick studies his face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Did she say something to you?

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

PATRICK
You got that *impression*?

ART
Uh huh. From a conversation we had.

Beat. Patrick smiles and puts his arm around Art's neck.

PATRICK
You fucking snake.

Art looks confused.

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

ART
I'm not --

PATRICK
It's fine. It's exciting to see you this way.
(beat.)
It's what's been missing from your tennis.

ART
What?

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

ART
Is that what you guys are calling each other now?

Patrick looks at him.

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

ART
I would never --

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

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

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Come on. Walk me over there.

He gets up and shoves the churro in front of Art's face. Art looks at it, then at Patrick. Without breaking eye contact, he takes a bite.

INT. TASHI'S DORM ROOM - LATER

Patrick and Tashi are making out on her bed. Patrick's already down to his underwear. Tashi still wears her "I Told Ya" shirt.

PATRICK
I missed you.

Tashi smiles. They keep kissing.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
You have no idea how lonely it is
on tour.

TASHI
Is that why you haven't won any
challengers?

He laughs.

PATRICK
I just told you I *missed* you.

She rolls on top of him. He takes off her shirt and throws it on the ground.

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

Patrick looks her.

PATRICK
Tashi, come on. Look at me.

TASHI
What?

He sniffs her. She smiles. He bites her ear, and she groans.

PATRICK

When were you gonna tell me about Art?

TASHI

Oh. I thought you knew.

PATRICK

I mean, I feel *bad*, because I know he's in pain, but...

He shrugs, smiles.

TASHI

You're not threatened by him?

PATRICK

No.

TASHI

You *should* be...

She starts reaching her hand down into his underwear.

TASHI (CONT'D)

He's good looking... he's smart... and he's *really fucking good at tennis*.

PATRICK

(panting, heavy.)

He's always been... *very good*.

TASHI

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

PATRICK

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

TASHI

That's your problem: You always think you've won before the match is over.

Beat. Patrick breaks apart and looks at her.

PATRICK

Are we talking about tennis?

TASHI

We're *always* talking about tennis.

PATRICK
Can we not?

Beat.

TASHI
Sure.

Tashi gets up suddenly and starts getting dressed.

PATRICK
What are you doing?

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

PATRICK
Tashi --

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

PATRICK
Why do you care so much?

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

PATRICK
I *suck* now?

She shrugs, rolls out a yoga mat.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
It's not college tennis out there. We can't all walk around calling ourselves the *Duncanator*.

She looks at him: he's actually *jealous*.

TASHI
Wow.

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

TASHI
Well, *someone* needs to be.

PATRICK

Can we just --

TASHI

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

Patrick doesn't say anything. She keeps doing her stretches.

TASHI (CONT'D)

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

PATRICK

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

TASHI

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

PATRICK

No. Just an hour of meditation.

TASHI

And what? You think that's *lame*?

PATRICK

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

TASHI

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

Patrick scoffs.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea how
frustrating it is having to listen
to you complain on the phone every
week about all the ways you're
getting "screwed over" on tour? How
can you possibly think that's a
good use of my time?

PATRICK
Excuse me for *inconveniencing* you.

TASHI
You *are*.
(shakes her head.)
I need to be alone now. I'll see
you after the match.

PATRICK
No.

TASHI
What?

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

Tashi laughs.

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

TASHI
That's what you think I want?

PATRICK
Yeah. A member of the fan club.

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

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

Tashi just looks at him, cold.

TASHI
Okay.

PATRICK
Good luck today, *champ*.

Patrick gruffly grabs his clothes and leaves, still in his underwear, slamming the door behind him. Tashi takes a deep breath and exhales.

EXT. THE DORM BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Patrick finishes putting on his clothes as he exits, pissed. We notice he's wearing Tashi's "I Told Ya" shirt.

EXT. THE COURTS - LATER

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

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

Beat. He gets a reply: **"Had a big fight. Not coming."**

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now... Your 2002, 2005, and
2006 NCAA Women's Tennis Champions.
Give it up for STANFORD TENNIS!

The team takes the court. Tashi doesn't smile or wave to the crowd. She scans the stands for Patrick and spots the empty seat next to Art. She and Art lock eyes before she heads for the bench, looking like she wants to destroy something.

THE MATCH

Thwaccckkkk!

Tashi is using the AVERAGE PEPPERDINE GIRL as a punching bag, hitting punishing shot after punishing shot from the baseline until, finally, she switches direction with a winner down the line.

UMPIRE

Love - 40.

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

Thwackkkkk.

Thwackkkkk.

Thwackkkkk.

Thwackkkkk.

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

Thwackkkkk.

Thwackkkkk.

Thwackkkkk.

Tashi shifts her body to change direction again, but she's on autopilot, and, as she goes into her wind up, she doesn't notice that the Pepperdine Girl's ball is coming up off the concrete with just the *tiniest bit of spin*.

Tashi's body tries to correct itself mid-swing -- her legs go one way, her upper body goes another, and she *slips: her right knee contorts in a way that is completely unnatural*.

CLOSE ON ART'S HORRIFIED FACE as he sees it all unfold:

SNAP. Her knee pops out of place as she falls to the ground.

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

A TRAINER is already on the floor with Tashi trying to calm her down. Tashi writhes around, sobbing, holding her knee.

TASHI

No no no no no no no no.

INT. SPORTS THERAPY ROOM - NIGHT

Art sits next to Tashi's bed. She stares at the wall, completely drained of life. They've been there for hours.

Patrick appears in the doorway. Tashi turns and sees him.

PATRICK

I'm sorry, I --

TASHI

Out.

PATRICK

Tashi...

TASHI

OUT!

PATRICK

Listen --

TASHI
OUT! OUT! OUT!

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

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

Patrick looks at him, then at Tashi, who turns away from him. He shakes his head and goes.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - 2019, EVENING

Thwaccckkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 3 - 15

P. Zweig: 6, 1 - 0

Art and Patrick have a punishing rally -- slugfest tennis, ugly and brutal. Tashi watches, stone faced, as Art hits a backhand to the baseline. Patrick can't get there.

PATRICK
 Out!

UMPIRE
 Thirty - Love.

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

UMPIRE
 The ball was called in.

Patrick turns and looks at the LINE JUDGE.

PATRICK
 Are you blind?

UMPIRE
Zweig.

PATRICK
 Are you here to do your job, or are you just excited that Art Donaldson's over there?

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

PATRICK

Art! This guy wants your autograph!

UMPIRE

Code violation. Unsportsmanlike conduct. Point penalty, Zweig.

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

PATRICK

This how you wanna get your points?

ART

I'm ready to serve, Patrick.

PATRICK

Yeah, I bet.

UMPIRE

Forty - Love.

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

Thwackkkkkk!

EXT. STANFORD PRACTICE COURT - EVENING

Nine months after Tashi's injury.

Art and Tashi rally. Tashi wears a knee sleeve. After a few hits, she smacks the ball way out of the court, frustrated.

TASHI

Stop going easy on me.

ART

I'm not.

She rolls her eyes and gets in position. Art sends in another ball, which she returns, and they rally.

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

TASHI

Hit the ball! Actually start hitting the ball!

ART

Tashi --

TASHI

What? You don't want to hurt me?

He doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Fucking pussy.

She starts to leave.

ART

Wait.

She looks at him. He holds up a ball.

ART (CONT'D)

Okay?

TASHI

Actually try to *win*. *Please*.

Art nods. Tashi gets back into position. Art sends in another ball, and they start a rally, now at *actual* full-speed.

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

Art surprises her with a shallow drop shot. She sprints to catch it at the net, but *her knee gives out from under her*.

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

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'm fine.

ART

You okay?

TASHI

I'm fine. I'm okay.

Art goes to help her up, but she does it on her own. He watches, concerned, as she limps back over to the baseline, and then suddenly starts *smashing her racket* on the concrete, again and again until it's completely demolished.

She drops the racket. Art starts going over to comfort her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'm good... I'm okay.

He gets closer.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I'm good.

He hugs her. She stiffens at first, but then allows herself to fall into his body. They stay there for a long beat.

EXT. STANFORD CAMPUS - LATER

Tashi walks along a path, alone, deep in thought. She sits underneath a tree and looks down at her knee sleeve. Suddenly, she starts taking off her shoe and sliding the knee sleeve off. She looks at her naked knee, still badly scarred from surgery. She takes it in for a long moment, unbearably sad, until we see it register on her face: it's over. She leans back against the tree, letting the weight of it all hit her, until, finally, she breathes out, pushes it down, and starts to get up from the ground.

EXT. PRACTICE COURT AT CINCINNATI MASTERS - DAY

Thwackkkkkk!

Three Years Later.

Western and Southern Open. Mason, Ohio. 2010.

Art, now 22, is practicing serves as his coach, KARL, a German former player in his 50s, gives him pointers. As he starts to go into his motion, he notices...

Tashi, also 22, walking up to the side of the court. She wears a name tag that says: "Tashi Duncan: Katerina Vasileiou Player Guest."

They look at each other for a beat. Tashi smiles and waves. Art waves back. She watches as he goes into his motion again.

INT. APPLEBEE'S IN MASON, OHIO - THAT NIGHT

Art is signing the check.

TASHI

You're getting too much height on the ball toss.

ART

I am?

TASHI

You're a great spot server, but right now, you're clocking in at 129, maybe 130 -- you could push it to 135 with a little adjustment.

Art thinks about it.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I mean, listen, Karl's your coach. I'm just Katerina's *hitting partner*.

ART

You want to jump ship? Come be my assistant coach?

Tashi laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

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

TASHI

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

ART

Why not?

Tashi just looks at him.

ART (CONT'D)

That was a long time ago.

TASHI

It wasn't *that* long ago.

ART

It *feels* like a long time ago.

TASHI

(mock offended)

You're not in love with me anymore?

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

ART

I'm really proud of you, Tashi.

TASHI

Oh god.

ART

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

TASHI

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

ART

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

TASHI

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

Art laughs, a little sadly, then looks down.

ART

This is stupid, but... after you got injured, I kept thinking about what would've happened if I had won that match against Patrick...

TASHI

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

ART

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

Beat.

TASHI

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

ART

I don't know. We've never played each other professionally. And we don't keep in touch...

Tashi laughs.

ART (CONT'D)

What?

TASHI

I really *was* a home wrecker, huh?

Art doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Art.

He looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

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

Long beat. Art looks at her, completely sincere.

ART

Who wouldn't be?

EXT. APPLEBEE'S PARKING LOT - LATER

Art and Tashi are walking to Art's rental car in the mostly empty lot. Behind them, Applebee's is closing up.

They get to the car. Tashi laughs. So does Art.

TASHI

What?

He takes her hand in his.

ART

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

TASHI

To whom?

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

They kiss again, building quickly until they're feeling each other over their clothes.

The backdoor to Applebee's opens. A BUSBOY throws a giant bag of trash onto a pile, startling them briefly, but they keep making out, pressed up against the car.

UMPIRE (PRE-LAP)

Game and second set, Donaldson.
Match is tied at one set all.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

Thwackkkkk!

Thwackkkkk!

Thwacckkkk!

Thwackkkkk!

Patrick is *smashing his racket to bits* against the concrete. Tashi smiles, satisfied, as Art heads to his bench.

UMPIRE

Code violation. Racket abuse. Game penalty, Zweig. New balls, please.

Patrick doesn't even acknowledge it.

Umpire sets the timer on his tablet to 60 seconds.

Patrick picks up his limp, smashed racket, walks to his bench, and throws it in his bag, grabbing another.

The Line Judges pop open two new cans of balls.

SET BREAK

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 1 - 0

P. Zweig: **6**, 2, 0 - 0

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

Earlier that week.

Tashi looks at a printout of the Phil's Tire Town draw. She sits with her laptop: one window shows weather for the week -- *Light wind today. Heavy wind starting tomorrow evening.* Another window shows the ATP player page of Finn Larsen, ranked 219, whom we now recognize from the locker room. She jots down some notes.

PATRICK (O.S.)

He's not bad. I've played him at a few of these things.

Tashi looks over her shoulder, sees Patrick standing there.

TASHI

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

PATRICK

I'm still at that girl's house.

TASHI
Wow. *It must be love.*

PATRICK
(smiles)
Come have a cigarette with me. I
have to talk to you.

TASHI
I don't smoke... And I'm not
talking to you.

Beat. He just stands there, not moving. She sighs.

EXT. SMOKING AREA BEHIND THE HOTEL

PATRICK
I'm gonna propose something to you -

TASHI
Blow it away from me.

PATRICK
Sorry.

He exhales in the opposite direction. There's a faint wind.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
It's gonna make you angry. It's
gonna make you *very* angry. But you
have to hear me out. Okay?

Tashi just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I want you to be my coach.

Beat.

TASHI
What?

PATRICK
Even if he wins the Open, completes
his career grand slam, Art's still
gonna retire as someone who was
just *really, really good*. That's
what you guys will have done
together. But imagine if you could
turn *Patrick Zweig* into a guy who
wins a slam.

Patrick looks at Tashi very seriously.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I still have a season. I still have
one good season, and I need you to
bring it out of me. So what do you
think?

Long beat. Tashi just looks back at him, stone-faced. She
SLAPS him *so hard* that he spits out his cigarette.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

OW!

TASHI

How dare you fucking ask me that.

PATRICK

Jesus Christ.

TASHI

You want some *coaching*? You wanna
hear the most useful advice I can
give you about your tennis?
(shoots daggers at him.)
*Quit. Right now. Right this
instant.*

PATRICK

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

TASHI

You're the *271st* best in the world.

PATRICK

I still have a shot.

TASHI

*You're 31. You'd have a better shot
with a handgun in your mouth.*

Patrick lets that sit.

TASHI (CONT'D)

I mean, really, why don't you go
home and ask your parents for a
seat on the board? Or just ask them
for some *money*. Go be like every
other spoiled little prince who
never amounted to anything and stop
this performance of being some *down-
on-his-luck professional*.

PATRICK

Tashi --

TASHI

No. You're not 20 anymore. It's not *cute* for you to keep pretending like you need to grind it out at these bum-fuck tournaments and sleep in your car. And it's fucking *unforgivable* that you would ask *me* to devote a single second of my time to helping you chase after your *dream*. You don't *have* a dream, Patrick. *You never fucking did.*

PATRICK

Is that what you and Art are doing? Living the dream?

TASHI

That's exactly what we're doing.

PATRICK

Well, then how come you hate him?

Tashi scoffs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

You do. It's obvious that you do. You can feel him giving up already even though you know he's not gonna retire until you let him.

TASHI

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

PATRICK

Sure, but he doesn't. He does whatever *you* want. Except now he's not even pretending to like it.

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

PATRICK (CONT'D)

He's dreaming about eating hamburgers again, watching your daughter -- *Lily* -- grow up, maybe getting a job doing *commentary* on the Tennis Channel. He's ready to be *dead*. And you're starting to realize that you might not want to be buried with him. Because who *is* he to you if he's not playing tennis?

TASHI

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

Beat. Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK

Does Art know about Atlanta?

Tashi just looks at him, searching his face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

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

TASHI

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

PATRICK

Maybe you just wanted to see me.

TASHI

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

Tashi starts to go.

PATRICK

I'm gonna beat him.

She stops.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

If we both make it to the final, I'm gonna beat him. I *have* to.

TASHI

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

PATRICK

It'll break him. You know it will.

TASHI

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

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

PATRICK

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

She looks at him.

TASHI

I won't.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

Close up on Umpire's timer ticking down: 0:16, 0:15, 0:14...

We pan up to Umpire's face. He feels someone's eyes on him and looks out towards the stands: Tashi is looking at him.

She turns and looks at Art, who's taking a new racket out of its wrapper. She puts her finger to her forehead as if to say "You got this." Art nods and leans back in his chair. She looks at Patrick, who is looking at Art with resentment.

UMPIRE

Time.

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

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Final set. Zweig to serve. Love - One.

Patrick goes into his motion:

Thwacccckkkk!

SET THREE

A. Donaldson: 2, **6**, 1 - 0

P. Zweig: **6**, 2, 0 - 0

EXT. PRACTICE COURT AT THE ATLANTA OPEN - DAY

Eight Years Earlier.

Tashi feeds Art balls, calling out shots. Some people watch.

We follow ANOTHER PLAYER from behind as he approaches the stands, sits down, and watches them. Tashi notices him out of the corner of her eye and lets one of Art's shots sail right by her. Art looks over and sees **Patrick** sitting there. He's wearing Tashi's "I Told Ya" T-Shirt.

They all look at each other for a moment before Art turns to Tashi, smoldering and determined, ready for the next ball. She feeds him one. He hits a *monstrous* forehand.

Thwacckkkkkk!

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - DAY

The day before the final.

After the just-concluded semi-final match (scoreboard still shows Art beating Finn Larsen 6-3,7-5) wind is starting to pick up in New Rochelle, sending trash, tennis balls, and fold up chairs flying on the grass behind the court.

Bracing themselves against the wind, the USTA Official from the registration desk earlier and some BALL BOYS are updating the draw on the chalkboard: *Art and Patrick will face each other in the final.*

INT. SAUNA AT THE NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - SAME TIME

Art sits with a towel over his face. The door opens, and a NAKED MAN walks over and stands right in front of him.

PATRICK

Can you do me a favor?

Startled, Art takes the towel off his face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

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

Art just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Congrats on being a *Phil's Tire Town Challenger* finalist.

ART

Yeah. You too.

PATRICK

Hopefully, the wind dies down by tomorrow and we can have a fair fight.

Art looks at him for a beat. He starts to get up.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Art. Come on. Can we talk?

ART
Can you put your dick away?

PATRICK
This is a *sauna*.

Art sighs. Patrick sits down next to him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
We've been here for a week, and we haven't said two words to each other. It's just silly, man. It's dramatic. I mean, really: why are you still so angry with me?

Art just laughs.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I don't buy that it's because of Tashi. Or, I don't think it's because of *what happened to her*. I think you're still just really *disturbed* by the fact that she could be into somebody like me.

ART
When we were teenagers.

PATRICK
Right. When we were teenagers.

They look at each other, something unspoken between them.

INT. HOTEL BAR IN ATLANTA - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Atlanta. 3AM.

Tashi sips a whiskey in the empty bar, watching a TV playing highlights from *Art's semi-finals match* earlier that day: Art wins and looks over to Tashi in his box. She gives him a fist pump -- on her finger, she wears an engagement ring.

Outside, **Patrick** passes by the bar window. He stops, sees Tashi through the glass. He's still wearing her old "I Told Ya" shirt.

As the graphic on the TV switches to **U.S. OPEN WINNERS PREDICTIONS** -- **Art** is the projected men's singles winner; **Anna Mueller**, Tashi's junior opponent, is the projected women's winner -- Tashi takes another drink and then looks to her left. She sees Patrick standing there behind the glass. They look at each other for a long beat. Finally, Patrick heads for the entrance to the bar.

Tashi waits as he comes over and stands right in front of her. He looks down at her ring.

TASHI
It's his grandmother's.

PATRICK
How is she?

TASHI
She died... Stroke.

Patrick laughs, sits down next to her and picks up her drink. She watches as he takes a sip. He hands it back to her.

PATRICK
I miss you.

She just looks at him. Beat. She takes a sip. He goes in to kiss her. She doesn't stop him: she kisses him back.

INT. SAUNA AT THE NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Patrick and Art are where we left them.

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

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

ART
What *were* you for?

Patrick doesn't say anything. He just looks at Art, smiling.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY IN ATLANTA - 3AM

Elevator doors open, revealing Art, having just woken up, stepping into the lobby, concerned.

He looks in at the bar just after Tashi and Patrick have broken apart. He spots them from afar -- they don't see him.

FAN (O.S.)
Mr. Donaldson?

Art turns: A FAN, overjoyed, is coming up the staircase in front of him with a tennis ball and a sharpie.

FAN (CONT'D)

I can't believe I'm running into you so late at night. Would you --?

ART

Sure. Yeah.

Art quickly signs the person's ball and looks back over to the bar. Tashi and Patrick are gone. He stands there for a moment, considers going to look for them but doesn't. He turns around and goes back up the elevator.

INT. SAUNA AT THE NEW ROCHELLE COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

PATRICK

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

ART

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

PATRICK

(laughs)

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

ART

Right. You don't give a shit.

PATRICK

I didn't say that.

ART

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

PATRICK

Do I?

Art looks at him for a long beat.

ART

Where do you get your swagger from?

Patrick's not sure what he means.

ART (CONT'D)

You come in here swinging your dick around like I'm supposed to be afraid of it, but do you understand how *embarrassing* it is that you're *here*?

PATRICK

Not quite as embarrassing as *you* being here.

ART

I'm just stopping by, man. This is where you *live*.

Patrick starts to speak, but Art cuts him off.

ART (CONT'D)

I've always tried to figure out what happened to you, but the more I think about it, the more I realize it's about what *didn't* happen. You didn't *grow up*. You still think you can talk to me like I'm your *peer* because we came from the same place. But it doesn't matter where you come from in tennis, Patrick. It only matters if you win. And I *do*. A *lot*.

PATRICK

You've never beaten *me*.

ART

(laughs)

So *what*? I've never beaten *most* of the guys who play these things. This is a game about winning the points that *matter*.

PATRICK

I don't matter?

ART

Not even to the most obsessive tennis fan in the world.

PATRICK

We're not talking about *tennis*, Art.

ART
What the fuck else do you and I
have to talk about?

Long, tense beat. Patrick laughs.

PATRICK
I just wanted to come in here to
wish you luck.

ART
That makes no sense.

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

ART
Oh yeah?

Patrick nods.

ART (CONT'D)
I don't miss playing with *you*...
I'm too old for it.

Art gets up and leaves. Patrick watches as the door slams.

INT. LILY'S BEDROOM/RITZ CARLTON SUITE - LATER

Tashi and her mother finish tucking in Lily in her bed.

TASHI
Kiss grandma.

Lily kisses her grandmother.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Now kiss me.

Lily kisses Tashi. Tashi smiles.

TASHI (CONT'D)
Good night, baby.

LILY
Good night.

She shuts off Lily's light and leaves her door slightly ajar.
She walks with her mother towards the front door, whispering.

TASHI'S MOTHER

What time do you want me to come
take her tomorrow?

TASHI

Whenever. She can be with Andrew
while we're doing warmups... You're
talking with Ralph in the morning,
right?

Tashi's mother nods.

TASHI (CONT'D)

Okay. Good night.

TASHI'S MOTHER

Good night, baby.

They kiss at the doorway. Tashi's mother goes.

INT. TASHI AND ART'S BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Art is finishing up brushing his teeth. He hears Tashi enter
the bedroom, close the door behind her and get undressed.

INT. THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tashi sits on the bed, in a nightgown, applying body cream --
she can hear the tap running in the bathroom. The tap stops.
Silence. Tashi hears Art walking towards the threshold of the
bathroom. He stops there and looks at her for a long beat.

ART

Tell me it doesn't matter.

Tashi doesn't say anything.

ART (CONT'D)

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

Beat.

TASHI

No.

Art looks at her.

TASHI (CONT'D)

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

Art doesn't say anything.

TASHI (CONT'D)

It can't be about avoiding my judgment. I'm not a nun. I'm not your mommy.

ART

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

TASHI

(laughs)
Who am I? *Jesus*?

ART

(meaning it.)
Yeah.

Beat.

TASHI

You *know* you can beat him.

ART

What if I don't? How are you gonna look at me if I *still* can't beat Patrick Zweig?

TASHI

Just like this.

She looks at him. He looks back at her.

ART

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

(beat.)

I want to retire this year whether we win the Open or not.

She doesn't say anything.

ART (CONT'D)

I'm still gonna try. I'm still gonna go for it. But I'm *tired*. I don't want to be one of those guys who doesn't know when to walk away. It's embarrassing to still be doing this shit when you're forty.

Silence.

TASHI
Okay.

ART
Okay?

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

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

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

ART
Coach me then.

TASHI
I *am* coaching you.

ART
I'm playing for both of us, Tashi.
I *know* that.

Tashi just looks at him for a long beat.

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

Art doesn't say anything.

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

He looks at her. She looks back at him. He goes to the bed
and sits down next to her. He kisses her shoulder, then her
face. They kiss for a long beat until, gradually, they
realize it's going nowhere. They stop, look at each other.

He holds her. Slowly, he starts to make his way down her body
until he kisses her knee. She watches him, moved, pained,
petting the back of his head softly as he keeps kissing it.

ART
Will you just hold me?

Tashi doesn't say anything.

ART (CONT'D)
Just until I fall asleep?

She looks at him for a long beat, his head resting by her knee.

TASHI
Okay.

She holds him. As he closes his eyes, she looks out the window. The curtains are drawn, but outside, we can hear the wind *howling*.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

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

CLOSE UP on Tashi's face, watching.

CLOSE UP on the racket CRACKING DOWN on the ball.

Thwacckkkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 6, 5 - 40

P. Zweig: 6, 2, 5 - 40

They rally, an echo of the Junior US Open: Patrick dictates, Art sprints from corner to corner, *windshield wipers*. Tashi sits, thinking, the only head not swiveling.

INT. HOTEL LIVING ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Tashi stands in front of the mirror, illuminated by the light from her phone. To her left: Art sleeps in their bedroom. To her right: Lily's door is slightly ajar. She holds the piece of paper Patrick gave her with his number. She composes a text: "**Pick me up outside the hotel in 15 minutes.**"

She hesitates. She sends it. She waits.

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

She looks at herself in the mirror. She goes.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

Thwacckkkk!

Art sends in a scorcher. Patrick gets his racket on it, sending up a floater. Art puts away a volley at the net.

UMPIRE
 Advantage, Donaldson.

Reset.

Thwacckkkk!

An ace.

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

Art pumps his fist and looks at Tashi, who looks back at him with a complicated expression. He and Patrick cross each other at the net to go to their benches. Even though Patrick's one game away from losing, Patrick *smiles at him*. Then he turns and smiles at Tashi. Art looks on, confused.

EXT. RITZ CARLTON DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Tashi waits. Valet Guy looks over at her. Wind is still raging. Patrick pulls up. Tashi gets into the back seat.

PATRICK
 What are you -- ?

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

EXT. A SUBURBAN STREET IN WHITE PLAINS

Tashi exits and gets in front, sitting on something. She pulls it out from under her ass: it's the "IMPATTO" patch.

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

She throws it in the backseat, looks around.

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

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

TASHI
(looks at him)
I'm not here to fuck you, Patrick.

Beat.

PATRICK
You're not?

TASHI
No... I want you to lose tomorrow.

PATRICK
I'm aware of that.

TASHI
I'm asking you to lose tomorrow.

Beat. Patrick starts laughing.

PATRICK
Fuck off.

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

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

PATRICK
He needs this?

She just looks at him.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
What about what *I* need?

She shrugs. Patrick laughs and shakes his head.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I can't believe you'd do this to him.

Tashi doesn't say anything.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I mean, fucking me would be one thing, but *this*? This is unforgivable.

TASHI

I'm actually being incredibly kind to both of you right now. I'm taking such good care of my little white boys.

Beat. He just looks at her.

PATRICK

No. No fucking way.

TASHI

All right. Then take me back to my hotel.

(beat.)

DRIVE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!

PATRICK

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

TASHI

Start the car.

PATRICK

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

TASHI

Listen... if that's the only way to get you to throw the match...

PATRICK

Oh, go fuck yourself, you absolute loser.

TASHI

I'm the loser?

PATRICK

Yes. Yes you are. *Look* at you.

Patrick starts the car.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

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

Patrick puts the car in drive. They pull away.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

Thwacckkk!

A. Donaldson: 2, 6, 6 - 0

P. Zweig: 6, 2, 5 - 15

Patrick serves to stay in the match.

They rally, running each other around the court, both feeling exhaustion settling in. Patrick wins the point at the net.

UMPIRE

Thirty - love.

He looks at Tashi, who looks pained. He goes into his motion.

Thwacckkkk!

INT. PATRICK'S CAR

They ride back, not speaking. Wind slaps the car.

PATRICK

Fuck it. I'll do it.

Tashi looks over at him.

TASHI

Why?

PATRICK

What do you mean why?

TASHI

I want you to actually do it, so tell me you understand why.

PATRICK

I'm not married to you, Tashi. Just be happy that I'm doing what you want and shut up about it.

TASHI

You're such a fucking child...

PATRICK

Of course I am. I've spent my entire life hitting a ball with a racket.

Tashi just glares at him.

TASHI

Why am I in your car?

PATRICK

Because you're stupid. So am I. I'm just not as disturbed by it as you are. I don't have nearly that high an opinion of myself.

TASHI

You're one of the most egotistical people I've ever met.

PATRICK

Oh, sure, but I've never been confused about the fact that I'm a piece of shit. That's what you like about me.

TASHI

I don't like *anything* about you.

PATRICK

You like precisely *one* thing about me, and it's that I'm *such* a piece of shit that I could actually see you for what you are.

TASHI

What am I?

PATRICK

In *reality*? A really, really, insanely hot woman. I guess now you'd say a *MILF*.

TASHI

Pull over.

PATRICK

We're almost back at the hotel. Don't be dramatic.

TASHI

PULL OVER.

PATRICK

Fine, dummy.

Patrick abruptly pulls over on a mostly empty thoroughfare. Before he puts the car in park, Tashi undoes her seatbelt and gets out. The wind almost knocks her over as she walks away.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

HEY!

She turns around. Patrick points in the opposite direction.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Your hotel is *that* way.

She fumes and stomps back. He tries to grab her arm as she passes: she swats it away and looks at him, full of hatred.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Are you gonna hit me again?

She **spits in his face**, *hard*, and before he can react, she pushes him up against the car and kisses him. They make out, grasping at each other in the wind.

Behind them, in the distance, we can see **Art and Tashi's Aston Martin billboard**: "Game Changers. The Donaldsons for Aston Martin."

They keep kissing, passionate, desperate.

INT. RITZ CARLTON HALLWAY - LATER

Tashi walks softly down the hallway towards the suite.

INT. HOTEL SUITE AT THE RITZ CARLTON - CONTINUOUS

Tashi tries to enter quietly -- the door clicks loudly shut.

She goes over to the couch, takes off her coat, then tiptoes towards the bedroom. She stops at the threshold and looks in, confused: Art's not there. The bed is empty. Beat.

She turns and tiptoes to Lily's room. *The door is closed* -- she (and we) remember it was left ajar. She cracks it open, looks in, and sees Art cramped next to Lily in the small bed.

She goes back and sits on the couch in the dark living room. She stares out the window, vacant, troubled. Outside, wind is still raging, sound muted, until, gradually, it builds back.

PATRICK (PRE-LAP)

I miss watching you play, Tashi.
You were so beautiful.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR - EARLIER

Patrick and Tashi are entwined in each other's arms, naked. The windows are steamed up.

TASHI

You have to make him feel like he earned it tomorrow. You can't just give up in the middle of the match.

PATRICK

Are you sure this is what you want?

TASHI

What *else* could I want?

Patrick doesn't say anything. They just look each other.

TASHI (CONT'D)

How will I know you're gonna do it?

PATRICK

(beat)

You *won't*.

EXT. PHIL'S TIRE TOWN CHALLENGER - EVENING

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

P. Zweig: **6**, 2, 5 - 30

Thwaccckkk!

Patrick sends his first serve into the net.

Reset.

Thwaccckkk!

It goes wide.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

A few people gasp at the double fault.

Match Point.

UMPIRE

Thirty - Forty.

Patrick looks at Tashi. He bounces the ball and goes into his service motion.

Thwaccckkk!

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

Patrick resets, takes a deep breath, bounces the ball, and pauses in the middle of his service motion.

He looks at Art, crouched down, ready to win the match.

He looks over at Tashi, holding her breath.

He looks back at Art, who's wondering what's taking so long.

He starts the motion over again. He stops.

UMPIRE

Time violation. Warning, Zweig.

Patrick smiles to himself. Tashi looks on, confused.

He goes into his service motion again, but this time, he does ***Art's service motion***, just like when they were eighteen.

Thwaccckkk!

Art's too shocked to even move for it. He just stands there, frozen, looking at Patrick.

The ball lands in.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Deuce.

Neither man moves. They stare at each other across the net like gunslingers in a western. Tashi looks back and forth between both of them, no idea what's going on.

Art looks over at Tashi, then back at Patrick. Patrick nods.

ART

Fuck off.

Patrick smiles.

UMPIRE

Code violation. Audible obscenity.
Point penalty, Donaldson.

Some grumbles in the crowd.

Patrick moves over for his next serve. Art doesn't move.

Tashi looks at him. He looks back at her, totally cold.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
 Advantage, Zweig.

Art just keeps looking at Tashi.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
 Art?

ART
 (not moving.)
 He can serve.

UMPIRE
 You need to get into position.

Beat. Still looking at Tashi, he backs up to the other side of the service line and just stands there.

Some confused grumbles in the crowd. Tashi looks at Art, then at Patrick, then back at Art. Art turns to Patrick, still just standing there, racket at his side.

ART
Serve.

Patrick smiles and hits a soft-as-a-pillow *underhand serve* like he's feeding Art the ball in practice.

Art doesn't even move for it: he just lets it sail right by.

UMPIRE
 Game, Zweig.

Some grumbles and scattered, confused applause in the crowd.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)
 Six games all. Final set. Tie
 break. Donaldson to serve.

Tashi looks at Patrick, then at Art. He can see now that she understands *exactly* what's happening.

He turns to Patrick. They stand looking at each other: Let's really play now.

Art receives balls for his serve. Patrick readies himself for the return.

Art bounces the ball and goes into his service motion.

Thwacckkk!

He sends the ball screaming *right at Patrick's head* like he's trying to *decapitate him*. Patrick has to dodge it.

LINE JUDGE

OUT!

Art smiles. So does Patrick. Art resets.

Thwacckkkk!

He sends in another one, just as hot. This time it's good.

Patrick pounces on the return, and they rally. It's clear immediately that both of them are playing their best tennis in years, the best tennis of their lives. They smack the ball at each other furiously, vengefully, looking wildly *alive*.

As they trade blows, we settle on Tashi, her head swiveling back and forth between the two of them. Gradually, her look of anxiety turns into one of *exhilaration*.

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Each hit releases something in her. As the rally intensifies, the three of them start to form into a *single, electrified unit*. Tashi grits her teeth, clenches her fists, playing as Art, playing as Patrick, *playing as the ball itself*.

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Patrick's ball, coming in hot, hits the top of the net, slowing its trajectory. Art has to sprint to catch it as it drops shallow on his side.

Patrick, seeing this, also sprints towards the net in anticipation of Art's drop volley.

Art gets to the ball and *rips it* crosscourt, but Patrick gets his racket on it, sending a volley to Art's backhand.

Art's right there to meet it, and for a few moments, they volley rapidly back and forth at the net, neither of them able to miss. Tashi's head zips back and forth between them as Art and Patrick's volleys draw them *closer and closer* towards one another until they're right on top of each other at the net, *rocketing* the ball at each other's bodies.

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Thwacckkk!

Finally, Patrick lobs the ball up. Tashi watches, riveted, as Art *launches himself into the air* to **smack it down in Patrick's face.**

Patrick looks up, amazed. Art's racket CRACKS down on the ball.

As the ball lands in, Art *collapses* against the net, exhausted. *Patrick's right there to catch him.* The two of them embrace with the net in between them.

The crowd cheers. Tashi *leaps* to her feet.

TASHI
COME ON!!!!

Cut to black.

END.