THE SOUND OF THE GAME

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FADE IN:

On BLACKNESS and the background BUZZ of a minor-league baseball crowd. A peanut vender, a SHOUT at the umpire. Familiar SOUNDS of the American pastime on the radio.

SUPER: SUMMER 1975

CAL (O.S.)
The infield is in and, Charlie, this would be a perfect time for D.P. Roberts to break the record.

The OPENING CREDITS roll.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Surely would, Cal. A double play would end the game and put Roberts in the history books.

CAL (O.S.)
The wind-up and now here's the pitch.

The bat CRACKS and the crowd STIRS.

CAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Grounder to short. This could be it. Garcia shovels to Roberts for one. The relay to first. Double play!

The crowd erupts with CHEERS and APPLAUSE.

CAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This sellout crowd at Burbank Stadium is on its feet. D.P. Roberts now holds the minor-league record for most double plays in a season. And the best is yet to come for this young man, Charlie.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
You can say that again, Cal. The sure-handed second baseman from Tumbleweed, Colorado has a long big-league career ahead of him.

The SOUND of the game fades. The blackness gives way to...

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY BURBANK, CALIFORNIA

SUPER: SUMMER 1988

CHATTER echoes across a manicured infield as the Warriors prepare their defense. The strongest voice comes from second baseman CLEM ROBERTS, 11, the only girl on the diamond.

Clem's emerging beauty hides beneath a tomboy exterior. She crouches, knees bent, poised and ready for the next play -- and the wonders of life -- to unfold.

CLEM
(to pitcher)
Don't forget to cover the bag, Petey.
(to shortstop)
Alvin, let's turn two and end this thing.
(to third baseman)
Kenny, you can cheat off the line. He's never gonna pull one of Petey's pitches.

Each player responds to Clem's commands. But PETEY, a lanky African-American kid, can't let that last comment go.

PETEY
He's never gonna *hit* one of Petey's pitches. That's what you mean, right Roberts?

KENNY taps his hat, blows in his glove, shakes a foot, whips his head side to side, slaps himself on the cheek and leans over in exaggerated readiness, his glove flat to the ground.

Petey, a left-hander, waits for Kenny to finish his ritual. Petey checks a RUNNER at first. The CHATTER crescendos as...

Petey delivers. Wood HITS leather. The ball SIZZLES toward the hole between second and first. Clem lunges. Knocks it down. Grabs it bare-handed. Tags the runner, spins and throws as she goes down -- a double play to end the game.

Spectators CHEER. Clem's teammates congratulate her.

Clem's eyes scan an empty section of the bleachers as if searching for someone. Disappointment washes over her face.

DOC MELVIN, 55, the Warriors' coach, talks into his bulky DynaTAC cell phone. A grizzled face and gravelly voice give him the appearance of an ex-con.

DOC
Sounds like Braxton-Hicks -- completely normal, but I'll stop by on my way home.

Doc ends his call and greets Clem with a sly smile.

DOC
Way to go, Clem. Saw your dad make plays just like that.

Clem seems embarrassed by the attention but high-fives Doc.

DOC (CONT'D)
Good job, Warriors. Practice at five tomorrow. In bed by ten, now. And don't forget to tell your parents you love 'em.

A few players roll their eyes. A PARENT hands out pints of orange fluid. The players don't seem too excited.

PETEY
Not carrot juice again. A growing boy cannot survive on carrot juice.

DOC
Even a crafty left-hander needs to see the strike zone.

CLEM
That means Petey would have to open his eyes, Coach.

PETEY
I could strike you out blindfolded, Roberts.

CLEM
You'd need a blindfold, all right. That's the only way you wouldn't see me tattoo that meatball of yours over the scoreboard.

Clem smiles at Petey. He can't help but grin, too.

PETEY'S FATHER, 40, beaming with pride, gives his boy a hug.

PETEY'S FATHER
I'm proud of you, son. Gonna start callin' you Bob Gibson, or Satchel Paige.

Clem's smile vanishes; she seems deeply affected by this.

Petey squirms uncomfortably, pulls away from his adoring dad and points to the nearby Snack Shack.

PETEY
(to Clem)
Come on, I'll race ya!

Clem gazes longingly at Petey's smiling father, then gathers herself and sprints after Petey.

Doc strolls off the field with the gorgeous AMANDA ROBERTS, 35, Clem's mom. Amanda wears a frumpy white blouse and work dress with her auburn hair in a bun. She carries paperwork.

DOC (CONT'D)
Clem is just phenomenal, Amanda. Her understanding of the game runs almost as deep as her passion for it. ... Sounds like somebody else we know, doesn't it?

AMANDA
She's determined to be the first woman to play in the majors.

DOC
I pity the man, woman or child who tells her otherwise.

Clem runs up holding an ice cream cone in her baseball glove.

DOC
Hold on there, slugger. Is that on the major league diet I gave you?

CLEM
(smiling)
Oh, right. Like I'd be the first baseball player with weight issues.

Clem glances at her bare wrist, pretending to check the time.

CLEM
Oh no, I'm late for my pizza party with Babe Ruth and Fernando Valenzuela. Gotta get there before Tommy Lasorda shows up.

Clem mimics Lasorda's stride as she heads toward her friends.

AMANDA
Clem, I've got summer school papers to grade, let's go!

Clem runs away even faster. Amanda utters a deflated sigh.

DOC
Go on, I'll bring her home.

AMANDA
Are you sure?

DOC
Every win deserves a celebration; there's no guarantee we'll ever win again.

Doc sports a wry smile. Amanda concedes.

DOC
Just wish her father could've seen it. Too bad they've got D.P. working nights and weekends now.

Amanda offers a quizzical look as if surprised by this.

AMANDA
Yeah, too bad.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

In a brightly lit walk-in freezer: A pile of semifrozen fish here, a slab of meat there and a big mess on the floor.

A weary-eyed D.P. ROBERTS, 36, Clem's father, wears a bloody butcher's apron with a name tag that reads: D.P. ROBERTS, MEAT MANAGER. He cuts strips of beef with a sharp knife.

IGGY WILSON, 19, sporting a blue Mohawk, tattoos and a tongue ring, enters through the back, struggles to put on an apron.

D.P.
You're twenty minutes late, Iggy.

Iggy, unaffected, plays with a half-frozen fish. He squeezes its mouth so it appears to speak his words:

IGGY
Sorry, Mr. Roberts. Thought you'd cut me some slack on my first day.

Iggy turns on a RADIO with the fish's mouth. A Ramones song PLAYS. D.P. frowns. Iggy turns it down. He plays with the fish, flying it through the air like an airplane.

D.P.
You do know how to clean fish, right?

IGGY
I totally know how. Practically grew up on a lake. ... Well, we went to one once.

D.P.
So maybe you could... get started?

Iggy picks up a meat cleaver. Puts it back. Tries another knife. Too long. Grabs a smaller one. Slips it into the fish's mouth. Points it at the head, tail and eye. Then he wipes the fish with a towel like he's polishing chrome.

D.P. sighs at Iggy's incompetence and goes over to help.

D.P.
Three steps to cleaning a fish: Scale it.

D.P. scrapes his knife across the body of a trout.

D.P.
Cut it.

D.P. slices open the fish from its tail to its head.

D.P.
And gut it.

He removes all the entrails with one sweep of his fingers and hands the fish back to Iggy.

D.P.
Then rinse it and clean it out. Easy.

IGGY
Thanks, Mr. Roberts.

Iggy spots some nasty scars on D.P.'s right wrist.

IGGY (CONT'D)
Wow, you do that cleaning fish?

D.P. raises his knife, unintentionally holding it in a threatening way.

D.P.
Maybe you'd better mind your own business and do what I'm paying you for.

IGGY
Like, I was just askin', dude. ... My dad says I'm no good at nothin'. But this is the third time in a month I've made my new boss mad at me on the first day.

Iggy slumps his shoulders. D.P. softens.

D.P.
(uneasily)
I, uh, was trying to turn a double play. Smacked my hand on the runner's batting helmet. Broke my wrist in three places.

IGGY
Dude, that's intense.
(enthusiastically)
I love baseball.

D.P returns to his work station and stabs a slab of beef.

D.P.
I hate it.

INT. BUDGET MART - BULK FOOD AISLE - DAY

Amanda scoops peanuts into a bag. Enough for two teams.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

In the freezer, Iggy throws a fish in the air and tries to catch it in his apron pocket. It hits the ground.

Several unhappy CUSTOMERS compete for D.P.'s attention at the counter. Amanda squeezes her way to the front.

OLD MAN
Lady, you have to wait in line like the rest of us.

AMANDA
I've been trying to get this man's attention for years.

Amanda leans across the counter. D.P. keeps wrapping meat.

AMANDA
Do you know what your daughter did on Saturday?

D.P. tries to ignore her.

AMANDA
She turned four double plays, hit for the cycle, had six RBI and threw out a runner at the plate.

D.P. brings the order to the counter to ring up the sale.

D.P.
(irritated)
And you felt it necessary to interrupt me at work just to tell me that? She could've told me herself tomorrow.

AMANDA
But she won't because she knows how freaked out you are about her playing baseball.

D.P.
Clem respects how I feel. Unlike other people I know.

AMANDA
She told Doc you're working nights and weekends. You've turned your daughter into a liar!

D.P.
Can we please not do this right now, Amanda?

AMANDA
I'm not here to argue, D.P. Just thought maybe you could get over yourself long enough to at least see your daughter play a game.

D.P. turns away from her to assist the next customer. Flustered, Amanda stomps out of the store.

D.P.
Can I help you sir?

OLD MAN returns a leaking package of meat to D.P.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Your pig brains have expired.

D.P. enters the walk-in freezer and tosses the pig brains in the garbage. Iggy gives him a curious look.

IGGY
Was that your ex? She's hot! ... Think she'd go out with me?

D.P. glares at him.

IGGY
I like older women.

D.P.
(stern)
She is currently my ex. Doesn't mean she will be forever.

IGGY
Oh, it's complicated, huh?

D.P. pulls a meat cleaver from its wooden knife-block holder. Iggy hastily returns to his task of wrapping chicken thighs.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A woman's hand flips the pages of a scrapbook and settles on a photo of a youthful D.P. in a Burbank Pilots uniform, circa 1975. The hand belongs to Amanda. The tears are hers, too.

A door SHUTS. Amanda wipes her eyes, closes the book, places it on a stack of photo albums and grabs a magazine off the coffee table. Clem walks in.

CLEM
Hi Mom. Love you.

Clem cheerfully kisses Amanda's cheek and heads for her room.

CLEM
Goin' to bed now.

AMANDA
Wait, did you have fun with your Dad?

Clem's shoulders drop. She backtracks a bit and stands across from Amanda, who flips a page in the magazine.

AMANDA
Didn't you go to the arcade?

CLEM
Yeah. But I really wanted to play World Series Baseball.

AMANDA
He wouldn't play it?

CLEM
I didn't ask.

AMANDA
It's just a video game. I bet he would.

Clem's look suggests she disagrees.

AMANDA
Did he say anything about coming to your next game?

CLEM
Why would he?

Clem studies her mother's face, spots trails of tears.

CLEM
Are you OK?

AMANDA
I'm fine, Honey. Sweet dreams.

CLEM
Mom, you're reading Video Game Digest.

Amanda checks the cover; sure enough. Clem takes it away.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Better give this back to Alvin.

Seeing the scrapbook and photo albums, now Clem understands.

CLEM (CONT'D)
I miss us too, Mom.

They hug. Tears flow down both faces as the embrace lingers.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Amanda sits at the top of the bleachers, grading papers.

Clem struts up to the plate. She stops when she notices D.P. standing beyond the first-base dugout, trying to hide behind a utility pole. She can barely believe her eyes.

UMPIRE
Batter up!

Clem steps into the batter's box and tries to focus. She swings, slices the ball sharply to third base and sprints like a mad woman. The throw just beats her.

Clem circles first base. Rolls her batting helmet toward the dugout as her teammates take the field. She's too nervous to look her father's way.

Doc skips to the dugout from the third-base coach's box.

DOC
Let's play solid defense now, here we go.

Doc grabs Clem's glove off the bench and tosses it to her. D.P. observes, retaining his covert presence behind the pole.

Doc sneaks up on him.

DOC (CONT'D)
It's a better view from the dugout, D.P. You're welcome inside anytime.

D.P.
Oh, hey Coach.

DOC
I could use your expert help and advice.

D.P.
So busy right now. Don't have the time.

DOC
Yeah, who does? You know how many babies decide to make their grand entrance in the last inning of a tie ball game? The kids coach themselves half the time.

D.P. checks his wristwatch, seems anxious and uncomfortable.

DOC
Remember when you convinced me to come out here? What was it, fourteen years ago? I wanted to stay in Tumbleweed. I was scared to death to coach professional ballplayers.

D.P.
I forfeited part of my signing bonus to pay your salary. It was your big break.

A CHEER. D.P. glances at the field. Doc just looks at D.P.

DOC
No, D.P., it was *yours*. I was just along for the ride, to do whatever I could to help make your dreams come true and--

D.P.
The ride ended with a crash. You can go on back to Colorado, Coach. Nothin's stopping you now.

The suddenly moody D.P. starts to walk away.

DOC
Aw, D.P., you're missing the point.

D.P.
Trying to tell me it was all worth it?

DOC
Overcoming your own fears for the sake of someone you care about? I'd say it was worth it.

A bat CRACKS. Clem sprints into foul ground and snags a pop-up. She makes eye contact with D.P. and momentarily freezes.

D.P.
Runner's taggin'!

Clem pivots, throws home and nails the runner. The crowd CHEERS. Clem grins at her father and trots back to second.

DOC
Is *she* worth it, D.P.?

Doc pats D.P. on the shoulder and returns to the field.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Amanda marks a test paper with an "F." D.P. shuffles across the bleachers to her side. There's no one around them.

D.P.
This seat taken?

AMANDA
I think we could squeeze you in.

D.P. sits uneasily, as if the stands might collapse.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Thanks for coming.

At second base, Clem eyes her parents, seems nervous.

CLEM
Turn two, now.
(to third baseman)
Hug the line, Kenny, he's a dead pull hitter.
(to shortstop)
I'll be there for you, Alvin.

Kenny touches his cap, blows in his glove, lifts his foot, jerks his head, slaps his cheek and leans forward oddly.

Petey finally pitches. The ball rockets to Clem's right. She dives. Backhands it on the first bounce. Scrambles to her feet. Steps on second for one out. Jumps up, twirls her body 180 degrees and throws to first for the double play.

The crowd ERUPTS. D.P. responds slowly. But when he starts to CLAP he doesn't let up. Amanda smiles her approval.

Clem and D.P. make eye contact. She swells with pride.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Clem, ice cream in hand, her ball glove draped across the cap that covers her head, walks D.P. to his sports car.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Can you come over for dinner tomorrow? I could boil us up some ballpark franks. Crackerjack on the side?

D.P.
This week is kind of tough for me, Clem.

She seems hurt.

CLEM
I was hoping you'd give me some pointers.

D.P.
I'd say your game is pretty sound.

CLEM
I bet Mom would even cancel her date and join us.

D.P. seems disturbed by this information.

CLEM
Please, Dad?

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Tidy, modest. A photo of Clem in uniform adorns the fridge.

Amanda prepares dinner. Hears playful VOICES outside. Opens the blinds. Melts as she sees D.P. playing ball with Clem.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

The sun shines on D.P. as he throws a two-hopper to Clem. She fields it with starry eyes. Tosses it back. Thrilled.

D.P. hurls another grounder. He eyes his right wrist and shakes out his hand as if it's not functioning properly.

D.P.
Maybe that's enough for today.

CLEM
But you promised you'd give me tips about how to play second.

D.P. concedes and places a Frisbee on the grass.

D.P. (CONT'D)
OK, now, slide into the base.

Clem grins. Charges full speed. Slides feet first into the Frisbee. D.P. tags her up on the arm instead of the foot.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Always tag 'em high. Tag 'em in the chest if you have to.

CLEM
Why?

D.P
You want your hand to get crushed between the runner's cleats and the bag?

CLEM
That's not how Doc told us to do it. You sweep across the bag and tag whatever comes in first.

D.P.
Yeah, well, Doc played the game a long time ago.

CLEM
So did you, Dad.

D.P.
Trust me on this one.

D.P. demonstrates a throw to first base.

D.P.
Now, in a double-play situation, wait till you move off the base, away from the runner, before you throw.

CLEM
That's not how Ryne Sandberg says to do it in his instructional video.

D.P.
Just try it once.

D.P. backs up, jogs slowly and slides into the Frisbee. Clem goes through the motions with little enthusiasm, tagging him on the shoulder and stepping an exaggerated five feet away from the Frisbee before making a throwing motion.

D.P.
That's it. See?

The sun slips behind a cloud. The threat of rain arrives.

CLEM
If I do it that way, I might tag 'em late or miss the tag altogether. And my throw isn't gonna be in time. I'm not gonna--

D.P.
Clem, that's enough! I said tag 'em high. You hear me?

Clem stares at him with a pout and rolls her eyes.

D.P.
Come on, let's do it again.

CLEM
Dad, there's a dark cloud hanging over us.

D.P. lowers his head and sighs.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Don't you think we should go in?

It starts to RAIN. D.P. smiles, seemingly relieved that she was only referring to the weather. Now it POURS.

D.P.
Run for it!

Clem gleefully pushes her dad out of the way, beats him to the door and closes it on him. She waves through the glass as the downpour drenches her father. D.P. forces a laugh.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

D.P.'s hair sticks up like the quills on an angry porcupine. Clem chuckles as Amanda brings more towels for the wet ones.

D.P.
Thanks Amanda.
(sniffs)
That's your meatloaf, isn't it? Are you sure you didn't mind canceling your date?

AMANDA
What date?

D.P. and Amanda look at Clem.

CLEM
I should totally get out of these clothes.

Clem dashes away. Amanda helps D.P. towel off. He removes his soaked shirt. Their eyes meet. Amanda looks away.

D.P.
Thanks for inviting me over.

AMANDA
You don't need an invitation.

D.P.
Thought maybe I did.

AMANDA
You think too much.

She unfurls a button-up shirt and drapes it around his shoulders, placing their bodies into close proximity.

D.P.
You wanna know what I think?

Amanda's receptive eyes widen with anticipation.

D.P.
I admit it -- Clem's as good as I was at that age, if not better.

Amanda recoils as if she'd hoped to hear something different.

AMANDA
She has big dreams, you know. First woman in the big leagues.

D.P.
And what happens when she realizes that's all it is, a dream? I don't want her to go through what I went through.

AMANDA
You had a freak accident.

D.P.
She's a girl, she'll never make the majors. You're setting her up for disappointment.

Irritated, Amanda puts a pan in the sink with a noisy CLANK.

AMANDA
You're her hero, she looks up to you. She wants to follow in your footsteps.

D.P.
The only footsteps she needs to take are the ones that lead to the library. And class. If anything, she should be playing softball, not baseball with reckless boys. A college softball scholarship? Now that's realistic.

AMANDA
Can you just pretend you support her?

D.P.
I'll be sitting right there next to you when she graduates.

AMANDA
And where do you plan to be between now and then?

D.P.
I'm here today, Amanda, can't you be happy with that?

AMANDA
Don't do me any favors, D.P. I stopped counting on you a long time ago.

He seems bothered by this.

D.P.
I've never missed child support. I see her twice a week, at least. I call her--

AMANDA
That wasn't a comment on your parenting.

Their eyes meet once again. A moment passes.

D.P.
And I'll keep going to her games. ... With you. ... OK?

AMANDA
That would be nice.

D.P. starts to slip one arm into a shirt sleeve but stops.

D.P.
You know, I think I've got something in the trunk. I'd rather not wear some stranger's shirt if you don't mind.

AMANDA
It's yours. Who else's would it be?

He reconsiders, puts it on. She buttons it for him, slowly.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

D.P. and Amanda sit close together in the bleachers.

Clem comes to bat with the bases loaded. The opposing CENTER FIELDER, a boy, SNICKERS to himself, takes 10 steps forward and waves for his two outfield teammates to do likewise.

CENTER FIELDER
It's a girl. Move up, move up!

Opposing LEFT FIELDER moves in. The RIGHT FIELDER stays put.

Clem drives the first pitch over Center Fielder's head for a bases-clearing double. Center Fielder runs to the wall, makes the relay throw and tries to hide under his cap.

RIGHT FIELDER
(to Center Fielder)
That's not a girl, that's Clem Roberts.

D.P. hands Amanda his hot dog and APPLAUDS enthusiastically.

The crowd settles down. D.P. takes his dog back. Amanda takes a bite of her own hot dog and SPITS it into a napkin.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Where does the Snack Shack buy their meat, D.P., do you know?

D.P.
From us, Budget Mart, of course.

Amanda sets her dog on the empty seat behind her. D.P. chews his food without concern as BIG KID, the catcher for the other team, gloves a foul ball for the inning's last out.

D.P. (CONT'D)
(impressed)
A lot of meat on that kid. If he gets a hold of one, look out.

Big Kid leads off the inning and slaps Petey's fastball over the fence. Clem can't let him go past second base without:

CLEM
That's the last hit you get today.

Big Kid laughs at Clem and STOMPS on second with both feet.

D.P.
What did she say to him?

AMANDA
You should know. You talked so much trash in Vancouver they called second base 'the landfill.'

D.P. nods and grins a bit at the thought of his old persona.

LATER

Petey leads off second, talks at the PITCHER as Clem bats.

PETEY
Better stick to the outside, Pitch. Anything down the middle, it's like loading a cannon.

The pitch is way outside but Clem, batting right-handed, reaches out, pokes a double down the right-field line.

D.P.
(to Amanda)
How many eleven-year-olds can go opposite field like that!?

Petey crosses the plate. Pitcher glares at him.

PETEY
(to Pitcher)
What're you listenin' to me for? I'm on the other team.

The distracted Pitcher drops the relay throw from the second baseman. The ball rolls away. Clem alertly runs to third.

Clem beams proudly at D.P. as he CHEERS her wise decision.

LATER

Playing second, Clem glances at the TWO OPPOSING BASERUNNERS.

The batter swings. CRACK.

Clem leaves her feet, diving toward first base. She catches the line drive, stands and tags the runner leaving first. Then Clem beats the other runner back to second base.

D.P.
(overly enthusiastic)
An unassisted triple play!

AMANDA
She's your daughter.

D.P.
I never did *that*.

LATER

Top of the last inning, score tied, two outs. Clem struts to the plate. Sees her parents sitting together.

D.P. watches as Clem checks her swing on a pitch in the dirt.

D.P.
They haven't given her anything good to look at the whole game.

The next pitch is down the middle. Clem skyrockets the ball toward centerfield. D.P. grabs Amanda, pulls her up. They watch as the ball disappears over the scoreboard.

D.P.
That's my girl!

D.P. HOOTS and HOLLERS long after other fans stop. People stare. He realizes the fool he's making of himself and sits.

LATER

It's the bottom of the last inning. One out. Warriors lead by one. Petey's pitch to Big Kid just misses for ball four.

PETEY
(to himself)
Umpire's the one who needs carrot juice.

D.P. and Amanda lean on the fence near third base.

D.P.
Now this is baseball. A double play wins the game. ... Never forget how nervous I got. Heck, I'm nervous now -- for Clem.

Big Kid stares at Clem. Takes a sizable lead off first base.

Doc, on the dugout steps, yells out to his team.

DOC
Let's turn two, Clem. The batter's fast. Gonna need a quick turn and throw.

Clem and Big Kid stare each other down.

CLEM
Give us a grounder, Petey, come on now.

Kenny goes through his ritual at third but stops halfway through when he realizes Big Kid is glaring at him.

Petey throws to first. Big Kid hustles back. The ball SMACKS Stretch's mitt just in front of Big Kid's ear.

Big Kid stares angrily at Petey, then Clem. He takes an even larger lead off first to spite them.

Petey pitches. Big Kid takes off to steal second. Clem covers the bag. The catcher's throw is to the left-field side of the base but she makes the grab.

Clem, straddling second, starts to sweep her glove across the bag. But something clicks; D.P.'s words go through her head.

D.P. (V.O.)
Always tag 'em high. Tag 'em in the chest if you have to.

Clem pulls her glove up, comes out of her crouched position and sets for a high tag. Big Kid barrels straight into Clem, knocks the ball from her glove and sends her into the air.

From Clem's upended perspective, she sees: Big Kid's menacing face. Treetops. The sky. The sun. Earth, again.

Feet above head, Clem crashes onto the hard infield, back first, atop the baseball. The ball nestles beneath her spine as the out-of-control Big Kid tumbles on top of her.

A SNAP is heard. The crowd GROANS and goes fearfully SILENT.

D.P. hurdles the fence and sprints toward Clem. Doc follows.

Clem lies on her back. Her legs are twisted, but not as badly as the faces of Petey, Alvin and Kenny, hovering above.

D.P. is the first adult to reach her, followed by Doc and Amanda. Doc holds the players back, dials 9-1-1 on his cell.

DOC
Don't anyone try to move her.
(into phone)
Yes, this is an emergency.

The disoriented Clem looks for strength in D.P.'s eyes.

D.P.
Does it hurt?

CLEM
I don't know, I can't feel anything. ... I can't feel anything. ... I can't feel anything!

Clem's eyes focus on her father as her vision fades to BLACK.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Clem lies on her stomach on an examination table. A TEAM OF DOCTORS observes as a LEAD DOCTOR examines her back.

-- D.P. HAMMERS in the final nails needed to connect a wheelchair ramp to the back door of Clem's house.

-- D.P. and Amanda, led by a SALESPERSON, shop for a used accessible van. Each of them leaves the lot with a used van.

-- An ORDERLY pushes Clem down a hospital corridor in her wheelchair. A LEGLESS MAN, also in a wheelchair, passes and waves. A YOUNG GIRL without arms stands in a doorway, raises her foot and waves goodbye to Clem.

-- D.P. pushes Clem up the ramp and into the house. Doc and Clem's teammates welcome her home with balloons, ice cream and CHEERS. Clem wants none of it; she sulks and wheels to her room, confusing and disappointing Doc and her friends.

-- The brawny hands of a PARKS EMPLOYEE secure a padlock on the ball field gate. A sign reads CLOSED FOR THE SEASON. Dry leaves blow across second base and spiral upward.

-- Clem lies in an indoor pool, on her back in the shallow end. She grimaces. Looks toward her feet. Starts to CRY. A PHYSICAL THERAPIST reassures her and supports her back.

-- Clem sits on a patient's table. Puts crutches under her armpits. A DOCTOR enters, smiles and gently takes them away from her; way too soon for crutches. Clem crosses her arms.

-- Petey, Alvin, Kenny and Stretch, wearing sweatshirts and carrying a football, slowly back away from Clem's front door. Amanda thanks them for the plate of cookies they delivered.

-- Clem leans on the window sill. A tear rolls off her cheek as she watches the boys play football in a nearby yard. Her dinner and the cookies sit untouched, next to her MVP trophy.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: SPRING 1989

D.P. studies his checkbook. Amanda observes, arms crossed.

D.P.
I can barely pay you what the court ordered, how am I supposed to pay these deductibles?

AMANDA
Relax. We'll manage. ... There's always bankruptcy.

D.P.
At least when I got hurt, my bills were paid for.

D.P. runs his hands through his hair in exasperation.

D.P.
God damn it. My advice was supposed to protect her, not put her in a wheelchair.

AMANDA
Accidents happen, D.P., we know that better than anyone. But you can't blame God. And you can't blame yourself.

D.P.
I didn't want her to play. And now she's paralyzed because I didn't put my foot down. Baseball did it to me again.

AMANDA
We met at a baseball game. If it weren't for baseball, we never would've married.

D.P.
Exactly.

D.P. glowers and exits the house. Amanda fights back tears.

ON TELEVISION:

JIM ABBOTT, a 21-year-old left-hander, stands on the mound and prepares to deliver a pitch for the California Angels.

CLEM (O.S.)
What an amazing story this is, folks. Jim Abbott, born without a right hand, now pitching in the big leagues and seeking his first victory here today.

Abbott checks the sign from his CATCHER then rests his mitt on the end of his right forearm.

CLEM (O.S.)
The crafty southpaw goes into his wind-up and here's the payoff pitch.

The BATTER swings and misses.

CLEM (O.S.)
Strike three! That's the fourth strikeout of the game for the rookie phenom from Flint, Michigan.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY

Clem holds an ice cream scooper like a microphone and continues to mimic a sportscaster as she watches the game.

CLEM
The odds were stacked against him but this tenacious young man overcame adversity to reach the pinnacle of his sport. Who would've thought this was possible? Just goes to show what you ca--

Amanda appears at her door. Clem, seemingly embarrassed, puts down the scooper. Her inspired mood changes to gloom.

AMANDA
Well, look who's finally awake.

Clem turns off the TV with a remote and turns away.

AMANDA
Kenny called. And Alvin, three times. And that was Petey at the door. They want you to come watch them practice.

CLEM
What did you tell them?

AMANDA
Not to get their hopes up.

Amanda sits on Clem's bed, next to the wheelchair.

AMANDA
It's been nine months, Clem.

CLEM
Eight months, three weeks, four days...

Clem glances at the clock by her bed.

CLEM (CONT'D)
... two hours and eleven minutes. But who's counting?

AMANDA
It's a pretty day. Sunshine would do you good.

Clem sarcastically mimics a play-by-play announcer again.

CLEM
The sun is hot, the sky is blue. It's a beautiful day for baseball. *Unless you happen to be a cripple*. No thanks.

AMANDA
You know what you need? You need a new goal -- a realistic future you can believe in. Like medicine or science. Or why not teaching?

CLEM
I lost my legs. I didn't turn into you, Mom.

AMANDA
Your father couldn't have exactly what he wanted and chose to feel sorry for himself instead of embracing other options, like coaching. And look at him now. You think he's happy slicing meat?

CLEM
I know what I want.

AMANDA
Great. I'll do everything I can to help you get it. What is it?

CLEM
I want to be the first woman to play Major League Baseball.

Amanda sighs.

AMANDA
There's plenty of front-office jobs. You could work in media relations.

CLEM
I want to play baseball.

AMANDA
You could be a general manager.

CLEM
I want to play baseball.

AMANDA
Or how about a scout?

CLEM
I want to play baseball!

AMANDA
Stubborn like your father.

Amanda leaves. Clem yells loud enough for her Mom to hear:

CLEM
Nobody believed in Jim Abbott, either.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Baseballs fly through the sunshine as the Warriors warm up before practice. Petey throws to Kenny, as hard as he can.

KENNY
Stop burning them in, Petey. You know what Clem would say: You're gonna ruin your arm.

Petey glances at his teammates and Doc, glumly looks around.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Not gonna be the same without her, huh?

Petey throws more heat. Kenny GRUNTS as he catches the ball.

PETEY
This is my team now.

DOC (O.S.)
All right, Warriors, let's see how much you forgot during the offseason.

KENNY
It'll always be Clem's team, Petey, and you know it.

Doc stands at the plate, bat in hand. He scans the field. Petey straddles the mound. Stretch is at first, Alvin at short, Kenny at third, outfielders ready -- no one at second.

DOC
Gentlemen, we need a new second baseman.

No one volunteers. Doc points the bat at his shortstop.

DOC (CONT'D)
Alvin?

The skinny Alvin shakes his head "no."

ALVIN
How come you won't let me play catcher?

DOC
I'm sorry, did you gain fifty pounds?

ALVIN
(convincing himself)
I won't be scared or nothin'. Not with all that equipment on.

Doc, testing that statement, hits a blistering line drive at Alvin. Alvin dives out of the way. Issue resolved.

Doc looks at Kenny, Petey and Stretch but each declines.

DOC (CONT'D)
Outfielders? Anyone wanna play second?

The outfielders stay put. Doc shrugs his shoulders.

DOC (CONT'D)
OK, fine.

Doc hits a grounder to Kenny. Kenny rubs his face, cap and glove before fielding it cleanly and throwing to first.

Doc hits a slow grounder to Alvin, then one to Petey. And before he can catch himself, Doc sends a grounder to second. It rolls to the outfield, untouched. Everyone's quiet until:

DOC (CONT'D)
Look, guys... The game goes on. And the game requires a second baseman.

ALVIN
We already have one. Clem Roberts.

Doc doesn't have the heart to force the issue.

DOC (CONT'D)
That's enough for today boys.

The players gather to sign a baseball for Clem. Petey signs first. His signature takes up half the ball.

KENNY
Leave some room, Petey. This is for Clem, not the Hall of Fame.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY

Classical MUSIC plays: Verdi's V'ho ingannato. The baseball, with tiny signatures crowded around Petey's big one, rests in Clem's hand. She stares out the window at KIDS playing ball next door. Looks like she's been crying for hours.

In a moment of inspiration, Clem tunes the RADIO to the game.

CAL (O.S)
And the Pilots trail fourteen to nothing. Now it's time for the answer to today's trivia question. Our question again...

Clem opens her journal to a page entitled LIFE GOALS. The top entry reads PLAY PRO BALL. She crosses out the word PLAY and inserts a question mark, then underlines PRO BALL.

CAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Who holds the minor-league record for most double plays in a season?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Cal, you and I remember him well, played right here in Burbank -- D.P. Roberts.

Clem about falls out of her chair. She had no idea.

CAL (O.S.)
One of the most accurate arms around. Wonder whatever happened to ol' D.P.?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Doc Melvin of Toluca Lake called in with the answer. And Cal, he should know. Coach Melvin was the Pilots' hitting instructor when D.P. Roberts played here.

Amanda stands at the door and observes her daughter with sadness in her eyes and car keys dangling from her hand.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
That was before Melvin left baseball to become an ob... an ob... an obstetrician.

CAL (O.S.)
As his prize, Doc Melvin will be invited to join us here in the booth later this season as our guest announcer for a day.

From behind, Amanda places her hands on Clem's shoulders.

CLEM
Did you hear that? Dad holds the record for most double plays in the minors!

AMANDA
(matter-of-factly)
Your Dad would've made the Hall of Fame.

Amanda turns off the radio.

CLEM
How come you guys never told me? I have to hear it from a couple of old geezers?

Clem's head spins 180 degrees. Amanda holds her wheelchair from behind and pushes it toward the door.

AMANDA
You've got to get out of this house now!

CLEM
I'm not a poltergeist. I live here.

Clem sticks her arms out as Amanda pushes her to the doorway.

AMANDA
I wouldn't call it living.

Clem's arms catch and bend backward before Amanda lets up.

CLEM
Ow!

Clem pulls her arms in and rubs them. Amanda thrusts the chair out into the hallway.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The Warriors warm up. Doc reclines on the mound, talks on his new MicroTAC flip phone. It's much smaller than his old cell, but with an antennae. Baseballs fly above his head.

Petey and Alvin chat and toss balls to different teammates.

ALVIN
I heard her feet turned black and her toes shrunk up like dried raisins.

PETEY
Can't think about gettin' hurt, Alvin. If you do, it'll mess with your head. And your head's been messed with enough.

Amanda's van pulls up. The side door WHIRS open.

Clem's chair BITES through gravel as Amanda muscles it along. Clem tries to jam the chair's joystick into reverse.

CLEM
I already know the number, it's five-five-five, four-KID. I'll be eating breakfast with my foster family.

Amanda parks Clem next to the dugout, slaps a Warriors cap on her head, drops a ball glove in her lap and kisses her cheek.

AMANDA
See you in two hours, Sweetie.

CLEM
See you on holidays. Bet my foster Mom will let me eat ice cream in my room.

Amanda leaves. Clem tries the joystick again but it won't move. She notices the battery cable has been disconnected.

LATER

Her teammates gather around Clem but don't know what to say.

CLEM
Don't stare at me. I'm not a freak.

ALVIN
How come you never call us back?

PETEY
Yeah, and when your doorbell rings, you're supposed to answer it.

CLEM
Well, I'm here. You happy now?

DOC
Can't watch 'em practice, Clem...

Doc moves between Clem and her former teammates.

DOC (CONT'D)
... if they don't finish warming up. Remember boys, a warm arm is a happy arm.

The boys trudge back onto the field like oppressed servants.

THE BOYS
And a happy arm is a baseball's best friend.

Doc kneels in front of Clem, speaks to her alone.

DOC
It's good to see you out of the house, Slugger. ... Be patient with your teammates. It's hard for them, too.

CLEM
I didn't ask to come here.

DOC
Life's full of disappointments. You can let 'em take you out of the game, or you can dust yourself off and take another swing.

Clem folds her arms with indifference, and then...

CLEM
Doc, why did you quit baseball?

DOC
(teasing)
Thought it was your back, not your brain.

Doc glances at his baseball uniform, pointing it out to her.

DOC
I never quit the game. I just started bringing new ballplayers into the world instead of yelling at the old ones. ... You'll find a way to make baseball a part of your life again. And leaving your room is a good start.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - DAY

Clem's chair cruises down the sidewalk to the adjacent park.

CLEM
But I like my room. I feel safe there.

Alvin wheels Clem under the shade of a tree and they chat.

ALVIN
I used to feel that way about shortstop. Now I'm so scared I have to put my glove between my legs to keep my knees from knockin' together.

CLEM
Don't think about what happened to me. It was a once-in-a-million kind of thing.

ALVIN
I think you're a once-in-a-million kind of girl.

Both Clem and Alvin seem embarrassed as soon as he says this.

ALVIN
And maybe you can't play anymore but you could still be, like, our team mascot.

CLEM
Oh, right. Warriors *is* politically incorrect, but somehow I don't think the nickname Little Crippled Girls is gonna fly, either.

ALVIN
Did that attitude cost extra or did they throw it in with the surgery?

Clem pouts and looks away.

ALVIN
Doc says life is like a road trip in the minors. You have to be uncomfortable if you're ever going to get anywhere.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Clem sits uneasily near the dugout. A ball bounces toward her. Instinctively, she reaches out. Not close enough. Kenny retrieves it, turns to throw. It slips from his hand.

CLEM
(sarcastic)
What happened, Kenny, forget to rub your lucky baseball card?

Kenny pulls a ball card from his pocket. Rubs the surface.

Alvin backpedals as a pop fly takes him toward Clem. He smiles at her. Stumbles. Does a backward half-summersault, lands upside down. Clem gloves the foul ball from her chair.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Never take your eye off the prize, Alvin.

Alvin picks himself up. Yanks grass out of his hat and hair.

Petey plays third. Lets a slow grounder go between his legs.

CLEM (CONT'D)
E-five, E-five.

A sharply hit ball sizzles toward Petey. He lunges. Makes a great snag but then drops the ball. The RUNNER is safe.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Scouts don't care which arm you throw with, Petey, if you can't hold onto the ball.

Petey puts his frustrations into a blistering throw to Doc at home plate. Doc takes his hand out of his glove. OUCH.

PETEY
(to Clem)
Don't have to field it if they can't hit it.

Petey at third, Alvin at short and Kenny at second converge on a pop-up. All three CALL for it. They collide.

CLEM
(laughing)
You guys are pathetic!

The boys fail to see the humor. Petey approaches Clem.

PETEY
Listen, funny girl, you see what I'm working with here? My new second baseman has so many good luck charms in his pants he can't walk straight.

Kenny jogs back into position, leaving a trail of trinkets.

PETEY (CONT'D)
And my shortstop's so afraid he makes practice seem like Halloween. But we're tryin' our best. If you're gonna come here and laugh at us, we don't need you!

INT. AMANDA'S VAN - DAY

Amanda drives Clem home. They ride in silence for a while.

CLEM
Can we move to another state? Or how about Vancouver? You liked it, right?

AMANDA
We'd never see your Dad. He refuses to go back there.

CLEM
Oh, that's where it happened, huh?

AMANDA
It was a two-two pitch with a runner charging hard from first.

CLEM
You saw it?

AMANDA
Never missed a game, even with morning sickness. It was a bad throw from third. Your Dad had to reach across the runner. When he threw, his hand smacked the guy's helmet. The impact shattered his wrist.

Amanda gets choked up as she relives the moment.

AMANDA
I knew that minute his career was over. But it took years of surgeries and failed comebacks for your dad to admit it.

Clem looks down. Amanda hesitates, then adds:

AMANDA (CONT'D)
The irony is, your father didn't have to play that night. They told him before the game he was getting called up to the majors. But he begged his manager to let him play one last time in the minors; that's how much he loved the game.

CLEM
How can you stop loving something you loved for so long?

Amanda raises her eyebrows.

AMANDA
He resented the game for so long. But when he finally came to see you play, I saw that twinkle in his eyes again.

CLEM
Then I went and ruined all that.

AMANDA
Stop it. You can't blame yourself for your accident. It's bad enough that your father blames himself for it.

The look on Clem's face suggests this is news to her.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY THE NEXT DAY

D.P. feeds a trout into an upright saw. It SLINGS the fish across the floor, where it joins a dozen other uncut trout.

D.P. cuts the next two fish successfully but the saw JERKS the next fish through the plastic strips, over the meat case... and into Clem's lap as she arrives. D.P. hoists himself up on the counter and leans over for a surprise.

CLEM
Didn't know you sold flying fish.

Clem pushes the fish in her father's face.

D.P.
Oh, hi Clem. Is today Tuesday?

CLEM
You know, Dad, you and this fish have something in common.

D.P.
We're both really happy to see you?

D.P. grins in an exaggerated way, inches from the fish.

CLEM
This fish had just as much to do with my accident as you did.

D.P. doesn't want to hear it.

CLEM (CONT'D)
I tagged that kid high on purpose. To show him I wasn't afraid, that he couldn't stare me down like that.

Clem turns the fish's face toward her and stares it down, then glances back at her father.

CLEM (CONT'D)
It was not your fault! So stop acting like it was. ... And buy me some ice cream. Please?

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DAY

A sunny spring day. Clem and D.P. eat ice cream outside.

D.P.
It's the fourth time I've been turned down for a promotion. Starting to believe I'll never be store manager.

CLEM
Why would you want to be store manager?

D.P. seems uncertain. Shrugs his shoulders.

CLEM
How come you never told me you held the minor-league record for double plays?

D.P.
Would knowing that have helped you concentrate on your school work? Or would it have made you more determined to play baseball against my wishes?

CLEM
Dad, I have a four-point-oh. That's GPA, not ERA. Besides, even though I knew you were a career two-hundred hitter, I still wanted to be the first woman in the majors.

D.P.
(confessing)
I hit three twenty-four lifetime. That's BA, not BS.

D.P. pushes his half-eaten ice cream away. Clem, eyes wide with awe, mouths the words "three twenty-four."

D.P. (CONT'D)
Do you know how many kids think they can make it in pro sports? Spend their whole childhood chasing that goal? Most end up with a one-way ticket to Heartbreak City.

Clem finishes her ice cream and starts on the rest of D.P.'s.

D.P.
Or a dead-end job in a butcher shop. I didn't want you to waste your life on baseball like I did.

CLEM
It's not a waste if you love what you're doing. Besides, Doc says it's not important whether your dream comes true. What's important is that you have one.

D.P.
Sounds like something he'd say.

CLEM
Said he heard it from a kid he coached back in Colorado. Best second baseman he's ever seen.

D.P.
What's your dream now? Stanford? UCLA?

Her eyes dart from the ice cream to D.P. and back, until:

CLEM
Dad, why did you and Mom get divorced?

This isn't easy for D.P. He takes a moment to respond.

D.P.
Maybe you should ask *her*.

CLEM
I wanna hear it from you.

D.P.
She's the one who asked for it.

CLEM
Did you have a girlfriend?

D.P.
(almost offended)
I haven't kissed, dated or even looked at another woman since the day I met your mother.

Clem waits, hoping he'll say more.

D.P.
Look, I don't blame your Mom. OK? I only have myself to blame.

CLEM
Do you still love her?

Instead of answering, he repeats himself in a different tone.

D.P.
I haven't kissed, dated or looked at another woman since I met her.

Clem seems slightly encouraged.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Amanda forces Clem's chair outside and leaves her in front of Petey, Alvin and Kenny. Clem folds her arms and pouts.

PETEY
We came to apologize. We do need you.

ALVIN
They like my idea of you being a mascot.

CLEM
Do I look like a fat green Muppet with a party favor for a tongue?

KENNY
Not a mascot. Our lucky charm.

EXT. ICE CREAM SHOP - DAY

Alvin pays for a giant ice cream sundae and presents it to Clem. The three boys eat ice cream and chat with her.

CLEM
Thanks! I never get ice cream.

PETEY
I'd see you as more like assistant coach.

CLEM
You guys don't wanna hear what I think.

PETEY
Sure we do. Just don't make Alvin cry.

Alvin elbows Petey. A stretch limousine passes by slowly.

PETEY
That's what I'm talkin' 'bout. That's gonna be me. I'm gonna pitch for my favorite team, Oakland, and hire a white boy as my chauffeur.

KENNY
I'm not driving you around. Besides, you'll never make it to the show.

PETEY
Oh, it'll happen. Unless you guys screw up this year. If we don't win the league championship, my career takes a dive.

CLEM
What career? You're twelve.

ALVIN
If Clem doesn't help us, we're not winnin' no title.

The boys stare at Clem expectantly. She eats her ice cream.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

D.P. hangs up the phone in his tiny office. Iggy enters through the back with a boom box, PUNK ROCK turned up.

IGGY
Five bucks. What a steal, huh?

D.P. glares at the boom box.

D.P.
(to himself)
More than likely.
(to Iggy)
Turn it off, Igster. This isn't a mosh pit.

Iggy sticks his tongue out in exasperation then turns it off.

D.P.
And will you take that stupid thing out of your tongue when you come to work? Looking at you is painful enough already.

Iggy lowers his shoulders, deflated.

IGGY
But nobody sees me back here.

D.P.
I've gotta go pick up Clem. You've got the counter.

IGGY
You're giving me more responsibility?
You don't hate me after all!

D.P. gives him a look, grabs his keys and heads for the exit.

IGGY
Thanks Mr. Roberts!

Iggy sticks a hand into his mouth to remove the tongue ring.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A bunch of identical blue fliers hang on a bulletin board. Clem strains to reach them from her chair but manages to grab one. It reads: SIGN-UPS, ADULT BASEBALL LEAGUE. NEW THIS YEAR: DESIGNATED HITTER. She sticks the flier in her pocket.

The Warriors compete for flies off Doc's fungo bat. Clem watches beside the bleachers where the players can't see her.

Doc's cell phone RINGS. He waves Alvin in to hit.

Alvin hits several fly balls but his bumbling teammates can't catch a single one. Clem squirms in her chair.

CLEM
(to herself)
So hard to watch people do it wrong.

D.P. arrives in his van. Seeing that practice isn't over, he stops and observes from afar, unbeknownst to Clem.

Alvin pummels a ball sky high.

KENNY
I got it!

Kenny turns his cap backward. Tucks his shirt in. Taps his glove. And Petey snags the ball just above Kenny's mitt.

KENNY (CONT'D)
Hey, that was mine!

PETEY
You were changin' your underwear.

CLEM
(yelling)
If you're gonna catch it, Petey, call him off. Don't just take it from him.

The boys look around. Clem rolls closer to the field.

ALVIN
Clem's back.

STRETCH
What'd she say?

KENNY
She said if Petey did that to her she'd knock his head off.

PETEY
She said if Kenny would stop givin' himself a rub down every play maybe Petey wouldn't have to save his butt.

Clem's chair becomes stuck in a spring mud bog near third. She tries to move the wheels by hand but can't.

CLEM
Guys, stop it! Listen up, guys!

Petey pushes Kenny. Kenny touches his ear, rubs a hand across his own chest, tugs at his cap and then slugs Petey.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Petey, you go hit now. Alvin, take his place in the field. Guys!

Petey and Kenny fight each other. Clem slams her glove down.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Nobody's listening to me.

Doc breaks up the scuffle; D.P. approaches a frustrated Clem.

D.P.
Should I come back? After the boxing match?

CLEM
No, let's go. I can't help these guys from this stupid chair.

EXT. OLD MAN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Old Man stoops on his doorstep and speaks to someone.

OLD MAN
I'm sorry, young man, but I'm so poor the only meat I can afford is pig brains.

In front of him stands Big Kid, the boy who injured Clem. A bag of chocolate bars hangs off his shoulder. A sticker on his ball uniform says TEAM FUNDRAISER.

BIG KID
But it's for a good cause.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
What, baseball? Didn't you hear about that little girl who got paralyzed? How would you feel if *you* were in a wheelchair for the rest of your life?

The door shuts. Big Kid sulks, walks away, head down.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Big Kid shuffles along. Takes a dollar from his wallet, puts it in the collection bag, unwraps a candy bar and eats it.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - DAY

Big Kid RINGS the doorbell, wipes chocolate from his face. The door opens. Big Kid glues his eyes to an index card, not noticing Clem in front of him. Clem, recognizing him, covers her face, below the eyes, with a Burbank Pilots game program.

BIG KID
(monotone)
Hi, I'm Kirby Walker with Burbank Baseball. Won't you please support our players and coaches by buying one of these scrumptious chocolate bars?

Big Kid looks up. Sees only the Pilots program and hair.

BIG KID (CONT'D)
You like the Pilots? Me, too. If I sell this whole bag, I'll get a new radio so I can listen to the games in my room.

Big Kid notices her wheelchair for the first time.

CLEM
Won't that be fun? Maybe some bully will tackle the second baseman and you'll get to hear the sound of bones being crushed.

Clem reveals her entire face; Big Kid drops the bag of candy.

BIG KID
I... I'm sorry. Coach said anybody gets in the base path, just run 'em over.

CLEM
You didn't even call or send me flowers.

BIG KID
I tried to see you in the hospital but your friend Petey said he'd beat me up.

CLEM
He says that to everybody. And why would you be scared of him? We all know you're the meanest, toughest kid in the league.

BIG KID
Actually, I'm very sensitive. My Mom says society's expectations of my gender role cause me to compensate for my lack of dominant masculine tendencies by exhibiting overly aggressive behavior in certain situations; she's a psychologist.

CLEM
A personality disorder? We've all got one of those. That's no excuse.

Big Kid hangs his head, then rebounds with an idea.

BIG KID (CONT'D)
I'm gonna quit baseball. I don't deserve to play anymore.

He lumbers off, leaving the chocolates behind. A reflective Clem picks up the bag and wheels down the walk after him.

CLEM
Hey Kirby, don't quit. It was an accident that ended my baseball career. Don't let a stupid decision end yours.

Clem slaps the bag of chocolates into Big Kid's gut.

BIG KID
But it's my fault you're like this.

CLEM
If you quit baseball, I'll just feel bad again. Don't make me feel bad again.

With an apologetic grin, he gives her the bag of chocolates.

BIG KID
They're on me. Since you can't walk to the store. Hope you don't get zits.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

Iggy, minus his tongue ring, carves a side of beef. A baseball BROADCAST pulsates from his boom box.

CAL (O.S.)
Friends, don't forget Friday night is SoCal Fresh Cut Meats Night.
(MORE)

CAL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The first five hundred fans receive a free two-pound kielbasa sausage molded into the shape of a baseball bat.

Iggy bursts into D.P.'s office. D.P.'s head is down, a stack of order forms and unprocessed paperwork around him.

IGGY
Mr. Roberts, how come we don't do some sort of promotion with the baseball club?

D.P. sits up to reveal a white butcher's uniform covered with blood, feathers, fish fins and other animal parts.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Iggy... do you think I'm easy to talk to?

IGGY
It's easier now that you made me stop wearing that steel barbell in my tongue.

Iggy briefly exposes his bare tongue and sits down with him.

IGGY (CONT'D)
It's your daughter, isn't it? You're having trouble communicating?

D.P.
She asked me a question the other day and I didn't really give her an answer. Made me wonder if I'm meeting her needs as a parent, you know?

IGGY
Ah, I see. I think the key is to anticipate her needs ahead of time and figure out a way to provide what she needs before she even knows she needs it.

D.P. squints but nods slightly as if he follows Iggy's logic.

IGGY
Like, one time my Dad gave me this brick.

D.P.
A brick?

IGGY
Yeah, his grandmother used it to keep her feet warm at night. So I'm thinking, what am I gonna do with a freakin' brick? Then my friend, Dogbreath, he locks himself out of his Mustang. We used the brick to smash in a window so we could make it to the Ramones concert on time.

D.P. doesn't get it but tries to sound positive.

D.P.
That's one handy brick.

IGGY
Brought me and my Dad a lot closer.
Still keep it in my car for emergencies.

D.P. thinks. He glances into the freezer at Iggy's boom box.

D.P.
Iggy, can you do me a favor?

IGGY
Sure, Mr. Roberts. Want me to smash a window on your van with my brick?

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - PARKING LOT - DAY

A windshield SHATTERS on a car with the license plate: BABY DOC. A baseball comes to a rest on the front seat.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

At the plate, bat in hand, Alvin's about to have a breakdown. But Doc, on the mound, waves off his concern.

DOC
Don't worry about it, Alvin. Lots of windshields where that one came from.

Clem watches the Warriors' practice game, talks to herself.

CLEM
You're giving up too much of the middle, Kenny, you can't expect...

Alvin swings. CONNECTS. A ground ball skirts past Doc. Kenny dives to his right but can't get to the ball in time.

CLEM (CONT'D)
... the pitcher to cover the middle. And you're not as quick as I am. Was.

With that admission, Clem shrugs off sadness. Kenny gets up, looks at his shoes and announces to no one in particular:

KENNY
I forgot my lucky socks.

Clem hears a voice just behind her.

D.P. (O.S.)
The hardest part is watching someone else do a job you know you can do better.

D.P., a gym bag over his shoulder, uses bungee cords to strap Iggy's boom box under the arm rest on Clem's wheelchair.

CLEM
What's this?

D.P.
Thought maybe you'd have use for it.

CLEM
Nobody wants to hear my music.

D.P.
Could've given you a brick.

Clem sports a puzzled look. D.P. hands her a microphone.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Comes with this, so the boys can hear your advice. Or in case your chair gets stuck in the mud again. Or you could...

D.P. reaches into the bag. Hands Clem a large cell phone.

D.P.
... call *me* for help.

D.P. removes another cell phone with antennae from the bag.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Doc got us a discount.

CLEM
Dad, you hate talking on the phone.

D.P.
Not when I'm talking to you.

Clem beams. Puts the phone to her ear.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY THE NEXT DAY

Clem, with the phone to her ear, observes another practice.

CLEM
Thanks again, Dad. Oh, can you look for my scorebook? Think I left it on your desk.

Clem hangs up. Iggy stands beside her with a mess of barbecue wings and drinks for the team.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Iggy, are you sure this is a good idea? First game's in one hour.

IGGY
That's perfect. Takes five or six before botulism sets in -- if that's what you're worried about.

Clem stops herself from biting into one of the wings.

IGGY (CONT'D)
We haven't had an issue since I took over inventory inspections. Your dad's a good guy but sometimes he overlooks things.

CLEM
Yeah, I know.

Iggy sets out the food for the players.

IGGY
When he retires, I should be an obvious choice to replace him, don't you think? He looks old, is he close to retirement?

CLEM
You know, having to digest food during the game might not be an advantage.

IGGY
Are you kidding? You can eat a hot dog every inning and still play baseball. When I found that out, I was hooked on this sport!

Iggy helps himself to a wing and eagerly bites into it.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

D.P.'s hands wrap a semifrozen beef heart and mark it for sale. He tosses the package into the meat case.

He pulls a clipboard off a hook in his office. Spots Clem's scorebook on the desk. Picks it up. A blue sheet of paper falls out. It's the flier Clem found on the bulletin board.

D.P. reads it to himself: SIGN-UPS, ADULT BASEBALL LEAGUE. NEW THIS YEAR: DESIGNATED HITTER.

D.P. thinks. Crinkles it up. Aims for the trash. Stops short of tossing it. He grabs a yard stick off the wall. Tosses up the paper wad and KNOCKS it out of the office.

D.P. retrieves the paper wad and bats it around behind the counter. An OLD WOMAN stops her cart and stares at him.

He picks up the crumpled flier, unravels it, reads it over again and gives it further thought.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The Warriors huddle around Doc in the outfield.

As the team meeting ends, Clem unravels the mike cord and changes the boom box's channel selector to MICROPHONE. She gets LOUD FEEDBACK at first, which draws the boys' attention. Then she makes a clear and easily heard announcement:

CLEM
Hey guys, come get your free barbecue wings! And sodas you need to drink before Doc takes them away.

The Warriors surround Clem as she dishes up the chicken. With the speakers still turned up, she uses the mike again:

CLEM (CONT'D)
Back off now, gimme some room. Were all of you raised by wolves?

The boys immediately obey. Clem admires the microphone.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

D.P. loads Clem and her wheelchair into his van. The boom box is still strapped to the back and Clem cradles the mike.

Amanda, on the doorstep, holds snacks for D.P. to retrieve.

AMANDA
Thanks for taking her.

D.P.
I was thinking you should come with us.

AMANDA
I'm in the middle of a water color. She's not playing, what's to look at?

D.P.
I'm being selfish. If you were there, I'd have someone to talk to.

Amanda considers. Clem speaks through the boom box speakers.

CLEM (O.S.)
Come on, Mom, family day at the ballpark. Just like old times.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The boom box hangs on the back of Clem's chair, facing FANS in the bleachers, including D.P. and Amanda.

Petey struts to the plate. Gives Clem a signal. Through the boom box, she announces:

CLEM
Now batting for the Warriors, the pitcher, Petey Corradini.

Petey gives her a thumbs-up. Seems this was his idea.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Last year, Petey scored more runs than any player in the league.

The crowd RESPONDS. Petey enjoys the attention.

CLEM (CONT'D)
But that's because I was batting behind him. Let's see how you do on your own this year, Petey.

Petey glares at Clem as the first pitch crosses the plate.

UMPIRE
Steeeerike!

Kenny, at the plate, taps his cleats with the bat. Licks his fingers, wipes them on his pants. Winks one eye, then the other. Blows into his helmet. Adjusts his shoelaces.

CLEM
While there's a break in the action, we'll remind you tonight's game is brought to you by the Southern California Chapter of Superstitions Anonymous.

LAUGHTER from parents, siblings and others.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Kenny was one of the most feared players in the league last year because he refused to wash his jersey during the Warriors' fourteen-game winning streak.

More LAUGHTER. The CATCHER sniffs in Kenny's direction.

KENNY
(to catcher)
Don't worry, I washed it. My underwear? That's a different story. Seventeen-game hitting streak going back to last year.

Kenny promptly lays down a bunt. The distracted catcher is slow to respond. Kenny reaches base. D.P. smiles at Amanda.

Alvin tiptoes past Clem like he's hoping she won't notice.

CLEM
Here he is, the gallant guy with the gold glove, Alvin Albertson.

Alvin seems glad that's over, then cringes as Clem announces:

CLEM (CONT'D)
Doc's only complaint about Alvin is he's not aggressive enough. You'll notice, he never swings at the first pitch. And that reminds me of a story about Alvin.

Alvin turns red with embarrassment as he steps up to bat.

CATCHER
(to Alvin)
Can't wait to hear this one.

Alvin, seeking a place to hide, swings at the first pitch. It's outside but he pokes it down the line to score Kenny. Alvin stops at second, gives Clem an 'oh-no-you-won't' wave.

Stretch swings and hits the ball deep. Clem makes the call:

CLEM
He connects with that one. But I hope he's not too attached because that bad girl is not comin' back!

Many in attendance laugh and APPLAUD Clem's wit.

LATER

Amanda, D.P. and other parents observe Clem's postgame interviews over the boom box. Kenny holds up a small pebble.

KENNY
This is the rock that made that ball change directions and hop into my glove. I will carry it with me from now on.

Kenny crams the rock into his pocket. Some items fall out -- a rabbit's foot, four-leaf clovers. Petey grabs the mike.

PETEY
OK, Roberts, it's time to talk about me and my buddy here, Mr. Moneymaker.

Petey strokes his left arm like it's a pet dog or cat.

PETEY (CONT'D)
Let's talk about my ten strikeouts and how I would've had more 'cept Doc won't let me pitch past the fifth inning.

Clem wrestles the mike away from Petey.

CLEM
First let's talk about that ball that went between your legs, allowing the tying run to score.

PETEY
I go five-for-five and you start *there*?

CLEM
Maybe it hit Kenny's rock?

PETEY
You know what it is? They're making the balls differently this year.

CLEM
Yes, folks, it's true, each ball has been implanted with a tiny microchip programmed to avoid Petey's glove.

Doc and the parents laugh. D.P. and Amanda give each other a high five. Their hands stay together as they drift downward. Suddenly uneasy, they pull their hands apart.

As the crowd disperses, Petey takes a sip of carrot juice. And SPITS it out.

A PARENT hands Clem a bottle of carrot juice. She sips it while waiting for Doc to gather his things.

DOC
And don't forget to tell your parents you love 'em.

Some of the players groan.

CLEM
Why do you always say that -- tell your parents you love them?

DOC
Should I remind you to eat a healthy breakfast instead?

Doc kneels next to Clem and gives her question some thought.

DOC (CONT'D)
I guess it's because I know how much parents really do love their children. I'm there when it all begins. I see the look on their faces and feel the love in their hearts when they hold that precious child for the first time.

Clem seems touched by this.

DOC (CONT'D)
You kids never get to see that. You see them after a hard day's work with a TV dinner and a migraine.

Clem chuckles at Doc's picture of reality.

DOC (CONT'D)
But maybe, just maybe, if you tell them how much you love them, all of that goes away. Long enough for them to remember how they felt that first day. About you.

Doc glances off the field where D.P. and Amanda wait.

DOC (CONT'D)
And about each other. Now, go tell your parents you love 'em.

Doc watches Clem wheel over to a proud D.P. and Amanda.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Amanda washes the dishes and hands them to Clem to be dried.

CLEM
Mom, why did you and Dad get divorced?

Amanda shuts off the water, sighs and turns to face Clem.

AMANDA
Your dad was so full of life when we met.

A memory causes her to GIGGLE.

AMANDA
We used to laugh so much our sides would hurt.

Amanda's tone returns to one of seriousness.

AMANDA
After all his comebacks failed and he finally retired, he was so bitter, so depressed. He refused to try anymore. He wouldn't get a job. He wouldn't--

CLEM
What about that night job? When he used to sleep till I got home from school?

Amanda pulls up a chair and speaks to her eye-to-eye.

AMANDA
There was no night job, Sweetheart. The only reason he got out of bed was for you. He didn't want you to know how bad off he was -- he saved that for me.

CLEM
He was sad? That's why you got divorced?

AMANDA
I know it's hard for you to understand. Your dad needed help but he wouldn't accept it. Not from me, not from anyone.

CLEM
So you gave up on him?

Amanda takes this as an accusation.

AMANDA
He wasn't capable of being an equal partner in our relationship. And that wasn't fair to me.

CLEM
Did you stop loving him?

AMANDA
I'll always love your father. But loving yourself is important, too, Clem. And staying in a marriage that isn't working, with a partner who doesn't seem to care, isn't healthy. But when I asked him to leave, I never thought it'd be forever.

Amanda rests a hand on Clem's leg.

AMANDA
But we're still friends. He's always been a good father to you. And I'm grateful for that.

CLEM
I bet he'd be happier... if you got back together.

Amanda sighs.

AMANDA
I can't make your dad happy. He has to find that within himself. Until he does, I doubt things would be any different.

Amanda returns to the sink and washes dishes more vigorously.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY THREE DAYS LATER

D.P. and Iggy hang speakers outside the scorekeeper's booth.

D.P.
You expect me to believe you got this entire sound system for twenty bucks?

IGGY
I am Iggy, the Bargain Hunter.

D.P.
Where'd it come from, Igster?

IGGY
Trust me, they don't want it anymore.

D.P.
Just because you don't have something anymore doesn't mean you don't want it.

ON TELEVISION:

It's April, 1975. At home plate of Burbank Stadium, a MINISTER pronounces D.P. and Amanda man and wife. They kiss.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amanda turns off the video of her wedding, wipes away a tear and composes herself. She hears KIDS' VOICES in Clem's room.

AMANDA
Sweetie, we need to leave in five minutes.

CLEM
(O.S.)
OK Mom.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Petey, Alvin and Kenny, in their uniforms, horse around with a soft football while Clem prepares her scorebook.

PETEY
(to Clem)
Sweetie? That's what Alvin wants to call you.

Petey and Alvin scuffle a moment before calmer heads prevail.

KENNY
Hey look, guys, that's Clem's dad when he played for the Los Angeles Stars.

Kenny points to a frame on the wall. The photo shows a young D.P. in a Stars uniform. Petey and Alvin take a look, too.

CLEM
That's the Austin Stars. Double-A. Before that, he was a Burbank Pilot.

ALVIN
Maybe Clem's Dad could help coach us?

PETEY
What? That dude is mean. Mom sent me to buy crab legs and he was grumpier than a teacher on a Monday.

CLEM
Just like crab, he's soft on the inside, Petey. Who are you guys playing tonight?

KENNY
The Breakers. You know, the team that--

PETEY
We're playing the Breakers? We gotta take those guys! This is a revenge game!

Clem spins around to face them.

CLEM
No, Petey.

PETEY
Relax, Big Wheels. We're not gonna hurt anybody. But these are the guys who put you in that chair.

KENNY
And knocked us out of the playoffs.

PETEY
We owe them; it's payback time.

Something clicks with Alvin. He looks at Clem.

ALVIN
And this time, we've got a secret weapon.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Clem wheels to the scorekeeper's booth. Big Kid, in a Breakers uniform, approaches and pulls her aside.

BIG KID
Hey Clem. You didn't tell your old teammates we're friends now, did you?

CLEM
They won't be scared of you if they know you're really a big softy?

Big Kid shushes her. Looks around to see if anyone heard.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Your secret's safe with me. But your team is going down and going down hard. Like me when I fall out of my chair.

LATER

The scoreboard reads WARRIORS 10, BREAKERS 9.

Clem sits in the scorekeeper's booth, mike in hand. Keeps score as well. Amanda walks up, smiles. Hands Clem a soda.

The Warriors play defense with Petey pitching, Kenny at second, Alvin at short and Stretch at first. A LEFT-HANDER comes to the plate. Clem's voice CRACKLES across the P.A.

CLEM
Now batting for the Breakers, Dylan McMillan.

Clem checks the scorebook and the current stat sheet.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Dylan is seven-for-fifteen this year. Six of his seven hits have been on the ground between second and first.

PETEY
Shift!

Alvin slides to Kenny's spot and Kenny fills the gap between second and first -- three infielders on the right-field side.

Petey grins at the batter. Delivers. The batted ball zips to Kenny on two hops. He gloves it and makes an easy toss to Stretch at first for the out. Doc APPLAUDS.

LATER

REGGIE, a cocky Breakers outfielder, steps to the plate.

CLEM
(into mike)
Reggie has struck out twice today, both times on high fastballs.

Petey blows three consecutive high fastballs past Reggie. The OPPOSING COACH glares at Clem.

Big Kid steps up to bat. WHACKS the plate like a caveman clubbing his next meal. Points at Petey with the bat head.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Now batting, Kirby 'Intentional' Walker.

Petey nods. The Warriors' CATCHER stands. Petey throws three consecutive pitches out of the strike zone. But on the fourth, Big Kid reaches and SLAPS it into right field.

Clem watches the relay throw come to Alvin, covering second.

Alvin sees Big Kid barreling at him and loses concentration. The ball skips between his legs, into left field.

Alvin dives out of Big Kid's way. Big Kid runs to third.

Alvin stays down. No one is at shortstop to take the throw from left field. Clem opens the mike and issues a warning:

CLEM (CONT'D)
Petey, there's no cut-off man!

Petey hustles from the mound to the edge of left field. The throw comes just as he gets there. Petey whirls and rifles a strike to home plate. It's close, but Big Kid is out.

The crowd CHEERS. Clem raises her arms in triumph.

CLEM (CONT'D)
And the Warriors win, ten to nine.

VOICE (O.S.)
Oh no they don't.

The old and crotchety Opposing Coach snarls at Clem.

VOICE/OPPOSING COACH
The runner would've been safe if you hadn't interfered.
(to Umpire)
I'm filing a protest!

The UMPIRE pulls a book from his back pocket. Flips pages.

UMPIRE
There's nothing in the rulebook. But it's definitely against the spirit of the game. Runner's safe.

The Breakers celebrate. Opposing Coach points at Clem.

OPPOSING COACH
And that kid is out. I will not sit through another inning of her stealing our signs and helping the other team.

Umpire approaches the fence and politely tells Clem:

UMPIRE
'Fraid he's right, Miss Roberts. Gonna have to cut the sound from now on.

Clem sinks back into her chair, paralyzed a second time.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

D.P. slumps in his office chair, holds the phone to his ear.

D.P.
And uh, just how much does this job pay? ... Nothing? Yeah, I don't think so. And who did you say recommended me?

The look on his face suggests he's not happy with the answer.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY A FEW DAYS LATER

Clem bounces a rubber baseball off the wall as Amanda waters a plant by the window.

AMANDA
Wish you wouldn't do that.

CLEM
It's fun; I can say anything I want about it. *Now here's Roberts. She throws. She catches. She throws. What an arm!*

AMANDA
What's wrong with just being a spectator?

CLEM
I liked being the announcer. But instead I'll set the Guinness world record for bouncing a ball off the wall of a bedroo--

Amanda reaches in. Catches the ball. Sets it on the desk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
And you thought you got all your quickness from your *father*.

CLEM
Mom, I was only three-and-a-half days from the record!

AMANDA
What if, instead of your old team, you were going to see the Burbank Pilots? Would that change your attitude?

Clem perks up. Amanda slaps two Pilots tickets on her desk.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Best seats in the house -- for free! All I had to do was mention your father's name. But he still thinks he's taking you to the Warriors' game.

CLEM
I'll deal with it, thanks Mom; I'll clean the smudges off the wall when I get home.

Amanda leaves the room. Clem removes a half-eaten bowl of ice cream from her desk drawer and gobbles down the rest.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - NIGHT

CAL, a dapper man a few years above 50, calls the action on the radio with help from CHARLIE, a boyish 75. Cal, in a tie and dress shirt, has two hot dogs in front of him. Charlie, in a Pilots jacket, raises binoculars to his thick glasses.

CAL
Welcome back to Burbank Stadium where the Pilots are off to another slow start.

Cal takes a huge bite of his hot dog.

CHARLIE
You can say that again, Cal.

No he can't. Cal, mouth full, signals Charlie to continue.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Or I could tell our listeners about the fine folks at SoCal Fresh Cut Meats.
(squints, reads)
With SoCal Fresh Cut Meats, every bite smells like your mother's nasty feet.

Cal gives Charlie a look. Swallows in a hurry.

CHARLIE
(tries again)
Every bite gives your mouth a tasty treat.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - NIGHT

An easy ground ball goes through the legs of Pilots second baseman TRAVIS CLEVELAND, 18. Two runners cross the plate. The scoreboard reads MODESTO 11, BURBANK 0 in the sixth.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - BOX SEATS - NIGHT

Clem and D.P. sit at the railing on the first-base side. D.P. pats her shoulder. Clem's smile is wider than his.

D.P.
You know, when I got called up to Double-A, I promised myself I'd never set foot back in this stadium.

CLEM
You didn't like it here?

D.P.
Loved this town; met your Mom here. But if I were to return, in uniform, it could only mean I failed to realize my dream.

A bat CRACKS. A high pop drifts foul toward D.P. and Clem.

D.P. (CONT'D)
I had all the tools, Clem.

FANS around them stand. D.P. rises at the last second and snags the foul ball barehanded with his left hand -- the good one. Everyone around them CHEERS.

CLEM
Maybe you still do. Maybe you're just not using them properly.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - NIGHT

Charlie's shaky hands hold the binoculars to his glasses.

CHARLIE
What a great catch. Sign him up.

Charlie keeps his binoculars pointed toward the stands.

CHARLIE
If my eyes don't deceive me, that's D.P. Roberts. First-base side. Section E. Or is that a W?

CAL
D.P. Roberts, of course, set the minor-league record for most double plays in a season for the Pilots fourteen years ago.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - BOX SEATS - NIGHT

A BALD GUY with a radio on his lap and other fans gawk at D.P., who sits by the railing with Clem a few rows back.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
I remember it well, Cal.

BALD GUY
Hey, it is him. It's Dwayne 'Double Play' Roberts.

MUSCULAR MAN
He's the greatest second basemen I ever saw.

Easily overhearing, Clem smiles at her father.

TOOTHLESS MAN
I remember D.P. Roberts. Biggest whiner in the league; never amounted to nothin'.

BALD MAN
He messed up his wrist, didn't he?

TOOTHLESS MAN
A career-ending hand injury? Who ever heard of that? He wasn't cut out to be a big-leaguer. Didn't have it in him.

D.P. scowls angrily at Toothless Man but restrains himself.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - EXIT - NIGHT

D.P., upset and ashamed, wheels Clem away. She pouts.

CLEM
I totally understand how you feel, Dad, but I don't think anything good ever comes from leaving a baseball game early.

D.P. GRUMBLES under his breath.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

D.P. seems a bit worked up. Amanda hands him a cold drink.

D.P.
Amanda, why did you tell the Pilots I wanted to be their official scorekeeper? That's a volunteer job -- zero pay.

AMANDA
Thought it could be a stepping stone to something bigger like... general manager?

D.P.
I told you years ago, if I can't play, I don't want anything to do with the game.

AMANDA
Thought you might feel differently now.

D.P.
You think I want to sit there and keep track of how many times some lucky sons of bitches do what I still wanna do?

AMANDA
If you don't want to do it, don't do it.

Amanda attempts to busy herself with housework as Clem wheels in through the kitchen doorway.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Their last scorekeeper just quit. Doc said they're desperate for a replacement.

CLEM
The Pilots need an official scorekeeper? I'll do it, Mom, I'll do it! Please?

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - DAY

The Pilots' SHORTSTOP fields a grounder. Throws to Travis Cleveland at second. Travis slings it to first for a double play, then does a wild dance to celebrate -- what a showboat.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

A nervous Clem talks on her cell as she records the play.

CLEM
So that's six, four, three. The shortstop and second baseman get assists. The second baseman and first baseman get putouts, right?

She breathes a sigh of relief.

CLEM
OK, just wanted to make sure. Thanks, Dad. You're the best.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

D.P. hangs up. He tunes in the Pilots' game on the RADIO.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

A ball bounces sharply near Travis Cleveland. He hustles to get in front of it but the ball sneaks under his glove.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Cal shakes his head at the second baseman's blunder.

CAL
So the Lumberjacks have a runner on with two out and let's see how that play will be ruled.

Cal and Charlie peer over at Clem, who tries to steady her nerves as she gives it some thought.

CHARLIE
The Pilots have a new official scorekeeper, Cal, after the last one suffered a nervous breakdown.

CAL
Well, if you were the one judging all of Travis Cleveland's errors, you'd have trouble keeping it together too, Charlie.

CHARLIE
Shouldn't be any trouble for this gal. She's the daughter of former Pilots second baseman D.P. Roberts.

Clem signals to the SCOREBOARD OPERATOR, who punches a button on a keyboard. An "E" flashes on the scoreboard.

CAL
Travis Cleveland now leads all of organized baseball with thirty-two errors and it's not even the end of June.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Travis Cleveland eyes the scoreboard. Kicks dirt on second base. Shakes his fist at the press box.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Charlie winks at Clem.

CHARLIE
That was a tough call but I think our new stat gal made the right choice. Travis should've had that one.

CAL
Took his eye off the ball. Good call, Clementine.

Charlie elbows Cal. Points to her name, written down.

CAL (CONT'D)
It's Clemente? Clemente Roberts? Now there's a baseball name for you.

CHARLIE
You can say that again, Cal.

LATER

Clem, alone, totals up the columns in the scorebook.

Travis Cleveland, a lanky kid with a swagger as bold as the chains around his neck, bursts through the door.

TRAVIS
No wonder, they got a little girl keepin' score. You'd better think twice before you flash that E up on the board again.

CLEM
I call 'em like I see 'em.

TRAVIS
Yeah? Well, you best be callin' 'em right or you gonna be seein' lots more of me, you hear what I'm sayin', stat brat?

Clem pushes back, revealing her personal seating situation.

CLEM
(defiantly)
A girl in a wheelchair? You can't touch this!

Travis glares at her a moment then concedes and exits.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - DAY TWO WEEKS LATER

Petey, Kenny and Alvin have quite the skip in their steps as Clem leads them from a concession stand. Kenny juggles an armful of junk food. Alvin helps himself to Kenny's fries.

PETEY
So you get into the game free, you get to sit in the luxury suites--

CLEM
It's the press box. Smells like sweaty old men.

KENNY
You get free food.

CLEM
Stale popcorn.

ALVIN
And you hang out with Travis Cleveland!

CLEM
Oh yeah, that's fun. He's convinced I'm single-handedly sabotaging his career.

PETEY
But you don't make the errors, you just mark them down.

CLEM
I tried to explain it to him.

Travis Cleveland rushes past them, equipment bag on his shoulder, late for the game. Petey can't help himself:

PETEY
Hey punk, why don't you stop blamin' other people for your own mistakes?

The harried ballplayer stops on a dime, takes a step toward Petey and glares. Petey ducks behind Clem's chair and hides.

TRAVIS
You be good to Travis Cleveland, score girl, and I'll leave your little friend alone. Otherwise...

Travis SMACKS his fist into his palm. Then the Pilots' stodgy manager, RUFUS CLYDE, 65, grabs Travis by the shirt.

RUFUS
Cleveland, you're an hour late!

The locker-room door shuts behind them.

ALVIN
What's *his* problem?

KENNY
Same problem Petey has, only Petey can still outgrow it.

CLEM
If he lives long enough.

Petey finally emerges from his crouched position behind Clem.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Clem sits next to Charlie. Cal's seat is empty with a half-eaten plate of meat left behind.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

A grounder heads for Travis at second. He positions himself well, but the ball takes a weird hop. Skips off his glove.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Charlie calls the play-by-play in Cal's absence.

CHARLIE
And Travis Cleveland can't come up with that one, either. The ball took a funny bounce but it was hit right to him. Wha'd'ya say, Clem?

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Travis, with his back to the plate, stares at the center-field scoreboard. The "E" light comes on. Travis slams his glove to the ground. BOOS echo through the stands. Rufus Clyde, on the steps of the dugout, shakes his head.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Clem nervously rips a paper cup into pieces. The space around her is littered with shredded soda cups.

Charlie covers his mike. Looks over at Clem and winks.

CHARLIE
Good call, kiddo; haven't missed one yet.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY

Kenny and Alvin enjoy the food; a seat between them is empty.

KENNY
He's not gonna come after you during the game, Petey.

Petey cowers under the middle seat, shielding his face.

PETEY
She's gonna get me killed!

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Charlie holds an index card in his hand. Cal is still gone.

CHARLIE
Hopefully, Cal will be back with us shortly.
(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Guess he had a little indigestion after that fine pregame brunch courtesy of our new sponsor, Budget Mart Meats. Remember, go see Iggy for your fish and piggy.

Charlie checks the card to make sure he read it right.

Charlie sheds his headphones. The tinny SOUND of an advertisement for Budget Mart can be heard. Charlie stands. Burps. Feels his gut. Looks uncomfortable.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
I'm afraid I've got the same problem, Clem. Back in two.

TWO MINUTES LATER

Clem adds the totals from the last inning. On the nearby headphones, a commercial ends. A PRODUCER's voice is heard.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Charlie, Cal just called on the pay phone by the restroom. He's got it pretty bad. So you're on your own. Throwing it back to you in three, two, one...

Clem looks down the stairs. No sign of Charlie.

PRODUCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let's go, Charlie. One more slip up and you're through. I don't care if you *are* in the stinkin' Hall of Fame.

Clem instinctively slips the headphones over her ears. She tries her best to mimic Charlie's gruff, sing-song voice.

CLEM
Welcome back folks. It's Youth Day here at Burbank Stadium. And in that spirit, we'll turn the inning over to our junior broadcaster, the lovely and talented, although also quite humble, Clem Roberts.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Charlie, what are you doing?

Now Clem uses her normal voice.

CLEM
Well thanks, Charlie, it's a pleasure to be here. But it's been no pleasure for the Pilots so far as Lancaster leads nine to nothing in the bottom of the fifth.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Charlie?

CLEM
Leading off is second baseman Travis Cleveland. A fifth-round pick in this year's draft, Cleveland has loads of potential but plenty of rough edges. He's way too eager at the plate, swinging at the first pitch almost every time.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
Hey, Charlie, that kid's pretty good.

CLEM
The southpaw comes set. He winds... and here's the first pitch to Travis.

A loud CRACK resonates throughout the ballpark.

CLEM
He connects with this one.
(with excitement)
And I hope he's not too attached because that bad girl is not comin' back! A home run for Travis Cleveland!

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY

Charlie exits the bathroom. Doesn't look so good. Hears CLEM'S VOICE coming from a radio on a security stand.

CLEM (O.S.)
The top of the sixth drags on and Manager Rufus Clyde still does not have an arm warming up in the bullpen.

Charlie smiles. Borrows the radio. Sits in the bleachers.

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

The office now has two desks, one with Iggy's name on it. He sits behind it and reads a document: WHOLESALE PURCHASING GOALS BY IGGY WILSON. The GAME is on his boom box. He waves D.P. into the room. D.P. recognizes Clem's voice and grins.

CLEM (O.S.)
Here's the two-one pitch. Lined up the middle, a base hit for Travis Cleveland. He jumped on that curveball like he knew it was coming. If only he could field the ball as well as he hits it.

INT./EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Empty except for Clem, who puts a wrap on the broadcast.

CLEM
Again the final score, Lancaster twenty-three, Burbank one. This is the Burbank Pilots' radio network.

Charlie, looking revived, climbs the stairs like a young man.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
She's fantastic, Charlie. Can you bring her back tomorrow?

Clem yanks off the headphones. Takes a deep, satisfied breath. Charlie enters and gives her a thumbs-up.

CLEM
He wants to know if I can work tomorrow.

Charlie throws on the headphones and adjusts the mike.

CHARLIE
You can count on it. The kid's a ringer.

Charlie tosses the headphones aside. Winks at Clem.

CLEM
I hope you don't mind, I--

CHARLIE
Honey, there's nothing sweeter than the sound of the game the way I heard it today. ... Wish me luck in retirement.

Charlie shakes Clem's hand like a dean handing out a diploma.

INT. BUDGET MART - DAY

D.P. leans over the counter to chat with Clem.

CLEM
Then he handed me his binoculars, tipped his cap and off he went, like a starter leaving the game with a big lead.

D.P.
It takes character to admit you don't have it anymore, that someone younger deserves a chance.

Clem holds the once-crumpled blue flier in her hands.

CLEM
And it takes character to allow yourself to be wrong sometimes. Perhaps the death of your playing career has been greatly exaggerated?

D.P. wipes down the counter.

D.P.
I don't know, Clem.

CLEM
Since it only hurts when you throw, DH is perfect. A lot of designated hitters in the bigs are old like you, Dad.

D.P.
I gave up on baseball a long time ago.

CLEM
And don't you regret it? Just a little?

D.P. considers. Gradually, a smile curls up on his face.

EXT. ADULT BASEBALL LEAGUE FIELD - NIGHT

D.P. steps into the batter's box to bat left-handed. His uniform reads: BUDGET MART and IGGY'S PIGGIES. A cartoon boar's head is depicted.

Iggy, on deck, swings a bat with a very unusual style.

D.P. swings at a fat pitch. Misses. Strike three.

D.P., head down, passes Iggy on his way back to the dugout.

IGGY
Nice cut, Mr. Roberts. Next time.

A downcast D.P. sits with Clem in the dugout as Iggy bats.

D.P.
I really thought I could show these guys something they've never seen before.

CLEM
Bet they've never seen a former pro strike out five times in one game.

Iggy bends his knees at 90-degree angles, holds his bat high and sticks his tongue out. He swings, misses and falls down.

Next, Iggy stands erect with his bat at his ankles like he's ready to putt a golf ball. He leans out over the plate.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Timeout!

D.P. pulls Iggy over by the on-deck circle for a chat.

D.P. (CONT'D)
What are you doing, Igster? You're an embarrassment out there.

IGGY
Did I strike out five times?

D.P.
You're going about it all wrong. Hitting is difficult but it's simple.

D.P. uses Iggy's bat to demonstrate proper technique.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Square your feet. Bend your knees just a little. Grip the bat lightly, don't squeeze. Rotate your hands so the second row of knuckles line up. Knob of the bat points down. Back shoulder higher than the front. Don't put your elbow up, that's a myth. Forearms close to the body. Head turned to the pitcher. Then swing into the path of the ball.

IGGY
That's all, huh?

At the plate, Iggy follows the advice perfectly and fouls off the next pitch. Suddenly confident, he lines the next pitch to right-center and hustles to second with a stand-up double.

LATER

D.P. sits on third base near Clem's wheelchair. They are the last ones left at the park. D.P. massages his wrist.

CLEM
It hurts? Even though you didn't throw?

D.P.
A little stiff, that's all. You know, that's what the Pilots ought to do with Travis Cleveland.

CLEM
Break his wrist?

D.P.
Let him DH a few games, get his mind off his defensive troubles. A ballplayer's psyche is very fragile.

CLEM
You're telling me?

D.P.
I'll tell you what else the club should do. Well, you don't wanna hear it.

CLEM
No, I do, Dad. Honest. What is it?

D.P.
I'll tell you while I drive you home. You describe the Pilots' games so well, it's brought everything to light.

The ballpark lights go out.

CLEM
I'm proud of you for trying, Dad.

D.P.
You didn't tell your mother I was playing again, did you?

CLEM
I respect how you feel. But I really don't think she'd mind.

D.P. doesn't seem convinced.

D.P.
How is she, anyway?

CLEM
Maybe you should ask *her*.

He doesn't respond. They sit in silence for a moment.

CLEM
Dad, I don't know if you noticed, but it's kinda dark.

D.P. stands and brushes the dirt off his baseball pants.

D.P.
Ready to go home, Clemente?

CLEM
Only if you go with me. And stay.

D.P.
One base at a time, young lady.

They walk toward the exit.

CLEM
Yeah, don't wanna trip over your fragile psyche.

A body HITS the dirt. D.P. GRUNTS.

D.P.
Think I just did.

CLEM
That was third base.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clem wheels in through the front door. Amanda, working on a painting, notices her daughter's cheerful mood.

AMANDA
So, what did you and your father do?

CLEM
Oh, you know, a little bit of this, a little bit of that.

AMANDA
You've been going out a lot lately.

CLEM
Taking advantage of the road trip; got a big homestand coming up. And Cal wants me to start doing pregame interviews!

AMANDA
Clem, how many women do you know who broadcast baseball games on the radio?

CLEM
I know, I'll be the first female play-by-play announcer in the majors. It's my ticket to Cooperstown!

AMANDA
Baseball's a man's world. They're not letting you into the good ol' boys club.

CLEM
That's funny, I thought I was already in.

AMANDA
Keeping score, nobody knows who you are. But being on the air, you expose yourself to scrutiny and criticism I'm not sure you're old or mature enough to handle.

CLEM
Well, I'm sure doing a good job of fooling everybody.

AMANDA
You've been through a lot and I'm proud of how you've handled it all. But you're still a kid.
(MORE)

AMANDA (CONT'D)
After this homestand, maybe you should explore other ways to spend your summer?

CLEM
You're just jealous. You wouldn't let yourself go to Paris to study art like you wanted, but that's not my fault so don't try to tell me what I can and--

AMANDA
Clemente Gehrig Koufax Roberts, watch your mouth!

CLEM
I'm gonna be the first woman play-by-play announcer in the Hall of Fame and you can't stop me!

AMANDA
There's plenty of time for that.

CLEM
Dad doesn't have a problem with it. And if you hadn't gotten a divorce, he'd be here to stand up for me.

AMANDA
I'm just trying to protect you.

CLEM
If I want protection, I'll wear a cup.

Clem wheels toward her room in a tizzy.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY ONE WEEK LATER

Petey drinks a cup of soda. Clem, mike in hand, interviews him as Kenny and Alvin cautiously observe.

CLEM
Today's question is: What can Travis Cleveland do to improve his infield play?

PETEY
He's just not trying hard enough. My little sister plays better defense than that and she can't even dress herself.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Travis Cleveland, practicing with teammates, hears the RADIO over the loudspeakers. He locates Clem in the stands and glares at Petey.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY

Clem glances up at the press box and speaks into her mike.

CLEM
It's a long season, but Pilots fans are clearly losing patience. And that's our Fan on the Seat interview for today, Cal.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

A tray of raw vegetables rests in front of Cal.

CAL
Thanks, Clem, great work as always. What about you? What do *you* think the club should do to turn things around?

BEGIN INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BUDGET MART - MEAT DEPARTMENT - DAY

The Pilots' broadcast BLARES from the boom box as Iggy shows D.P. how he has reorganized the freezer. D.P., listening more to the game than to Iggy, hurries over to the radio.

CLEM
... But what I think would help most would be to fire Manager Rufus Clyde.

Cal chokes on a piece of cauliflower. What'd Clem just say?

The fans behind Clem cheer her on. Her confidence grows.

CLEM (CONT'D)
These are young players. They need discipline, leadership. And Rufus Clyde, in his thirty-sixth year as a field general, just doesn't have it anymore.

D.P. SMACKS his hand on the butcher's table.

D.P.
Me and my big mouth. Iggy, you're in charge. I gotta do some damage control.

END INTERCUT

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FIELD - DAY

Petey stands proudly beside Clem. They watch as Rufus Clyde hands a lineup card to the HOME PLATE UMPIRE. Clem readies her recorder. Rufus walks right past her, toward the dugout.

CLEM
Hey Rufus! Time for your pregame interview.

He stops, turns and GROWLS at her.

RUFUS
You think you're ever talkin' to me again? We got a radio in the clubhouse, you know. You can lead a horse to water but you can't drown him.

CLEM
I was just giving my opinion.

RUFUS
Well here's my opinion of your opinion.

The grumpy old manager kicks dirt on Clem's wheelchair.

RUFUS (CONT'D)
How d'ya like them apple turnovers, Barbara Walters?

Clem is stunned and speechless.

RUFUS (CONT'D)
That's what I thought. You can dish it out but you can't swim the tide. If anybody's gettin' fired, it's gonna be you. All I gotta do is make one call.

Clem's jaw drops. Petey looks equally astonished.

Travis Cleveland, bat in hand, ambles out of the dugout.

TRAVIS
What's up, Roof?

RUFUS
(shaking his head)
Kids today. Ya can't live with 'em, ya can't have 'em arrested.

Rufus lumbers back to the dugout. Travis spots Petey, now cowering behind Clem's chair.

TRAVIS
Hey, big mouth, you sayin' bad things about me to my manager?

Petey presses his lips together. Shakes his head "no."

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
(to Clem)
Thanks to you, score girl, I'm ridin' the pine today.
(MORE)

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
(to Petey)
But that's good news for you, big mouth, 'cause that means we can spend a little time together.

Travis puts a hand on Petey's shoulder and walks him off the field. Petey notices black letters on the barrel of the bat that read: K-I-L-L-E-R.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - BEHIND THE BLEACHERS - DAY

Travis conducts a "friendly" talk with a wide-eyed Petey.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Fans like you aren't good for a superstar's image. But we're gonna fix that right now. Repeat after me: Travis Cleveland is the greatest player who ever lived.

PETEY
Travis Cleveland... is the greatest player... who ever lived.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - FRONT SIDEWALK - DAY

D.P. buys a ticket. Runs through the gate.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - BEHIND THE BLEACHERS - DAY

D.P. turns the corner and nearly collides with Petey and Travis. Petey hugs the surprised D.P. and won't let go.

D.P.
Hey, Petey, what's new?

PETEY
I have a big mouth and I lack respect for my elders.

D.P.
I said, what's *new*?

Petey mouths the words "help me" twice. D.P. eyes Travis.

TRAVIS
Teachin' this young fan who's the boss.

PETEY
Travis Cleveland is the greatest player who ever lived.

D.P.
(laughing)
Travis Cleveland's gonna be out of baseball in a year if he doesn't start showing respect for the game. That's the way he comes across on the radio, anyway.
(to Travis)
Is that who you think is the boss?

Travis squirms like a bully in the principal's office.

TRAVIS
No, uh, that's what I call my bat. The boss. I was just showing it to the kid. You know, public relations.

D.P. examines the bat. Sees KILLER scrawled on it.

D.P.
Think your bat's having an identity crisis.

PETEY
Mr. Roberts, *this* is Travis Cleveland.

D.P.
Oh.

Travis studies D.P.'s face. Softens. Flashes a smile.

TRAVIS
Hey, I know you. You're Dwayne 'Double Play' Roberts. I saw that instructional video you did when I was a kid. Oh man, I wish I had *your* glove.

D.P.
Oh, you've got the glove. What's under your cap is the problem. Don't waste your gift, son.

TRAVIS
(humbled)
Yes sir.

D.P.
Working with young people is good. They can teach us a lot about ourselves.

D.P. winks at Petey.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Now if you'll excuse me, I'm concerned about my daughter's broadcasting career.

D.P. jogs off. Travis and Petey, alone, look at each other.

PETEY
Don't worry, I got it. Travis Cleveland is the greatest player who ever lived.

TRAVIS
No he's not. Not yet.

Travis hands his bat to Petey. Walks off toward the field.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY THE NEXT DAY

Cal sets up the next Pilots game for the radio audience.

CAL
Doc Melvin, our trivia contest winner, is delivering a baby at the moment so the former Pilots coach sent a friend of his to serve as our guest commentator.

Iggy, decked out in full punk regalia, sits next to Cal.

CAL
Uh... why don't you tell the folks at home a little bit about yourself?

IGGY
My name's Iggy Wilson and I'm assistant manager at Budget Mart Meats. If your fish is icky, your steak tough and thicky, don't get sicky, come see Iggy!

Cal stares at him, puzzled.

IGGY
I'm a Pisces, I'm single and I can't wait to meet all the groupies after the game.

CAL
Meet the what?

IGGY (CONT'D)
You know, the bat girls, the stick chicks, the mound mommas, the mavens of the mitt, the pixies of the pine tar, the bullpen Betties, the honeys of the horn.

The tongue-tied Cal looks extremely unnerved.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY

D.P. pushes Clem to the railing on the third-base side. She eats ice cream in an upside-down baseball helmet. They watch Travis Cleveland step to the plate.

D.P.
We both know how it feels when things don't go as planned, but maybe quitting wasn't the best way to respond.

CLEM
Rufus would've had me fired anyway.

D.P.
You're a volunteer, how can he fire you?

CLEM
With one phone call, apparently.

D.P.
Rufus Clyde is old school. He can't relate to twenty-year-old men, much less a twelve-year-old girl.

Travis swings and misses; Rufus YELLS at him from the dugout.

D.P.
I'd hate to see you settle for something less than what you can be.

CLEM
I feel the same way about you, Dad.

Travis Cleveland belts a long home run. The crowd CHEERS.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Iggy stands up -- and knocks over Cal's salad -- as he follows the path of the home run ball and makes his call:

IGGY
It's high as a kite and it just might stop to check you out! A home run for Travis Cleveland.

An annoyed Cal scoops his salad back onto the plate.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - STANDS - DAY

Clem and D.P. eat hot dogs as Travis Cleveland bats again.

CLEM
And what if someone did offer you a job coaching baseball? You wouldn't take it?

D.P.
Clem, I've never coached before.

CLEM
But you know the game inside and out. I bet you'd pick it up pretty fast.

D.P.
You find a club willing to hire a guy who didn't make the bigs and hasn't coached at any level, maybe I'll listen.

D.P. loses himself in thought for a moment.

D.P.
Think I've had enough baseball for today.

He rises to leave just as Travis makes CONTACT with a pitch.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

Iggy stands up, SMACKS Cal on the back -- a piece of lettuce flies out -- and delivers another unorthodox home run call:

IGGY
Beat on the brat with a baseball bat, oh yeah, oh yeah, oh-oh!

Cal cringes.

IGGY (CONT'D)
Travis Cleveland's second home run of the night and the move to designated hitter certainly has paid off. Finally, a smart managerial move by Dufus Clyde.

CAL
Rufus.

IGGY
Bless you, Cal.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY

Clem listens to the end of the game. Anchors her elbows on the chair's arm rests. Hoists herself up out of the seat a few inches. Lowers herself back down. Repeats.

IGGY (O.S.)
This player has a lot of confidence, Cal. Seems like anything is possible today.

Clem relaxes. Stretches her arms. She wheels closer to her desk so she can reach it easily with one hand.

CAL (O.S.)
I'd have to agree, Iggy. Never thought I'd call a game with a blue-haired, tattoo-covered slice of Swiss cheese.

Clem pushes herself up and forward. Her feet slide to the floor like discarded puppets. She moves one hand to the desk. Rises upward until she is entirely vertical. On the radio, the CRACK of the bat is heard. The crowd CHEERS.

IGGY (O.S.)
It's up there, it's out there. ... It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine!

Clem takes a deep breath. Moves her right leg forward ever so slightly. Some might define it as a step. Then...

IGGY (O.S.)
That's the third home run of the night for Travis Cleveland.

Clem goes down hard. And out -- bumps her head on the desk.

CLEM'S DREAM

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - DAY

Clem picks herself up. Finds herself at the plate, where she was dusted by a fastball from the pitcher, Petey.

IGGY (V.O.)
What a great story this is, folks. They said she'd never walk again and here she is playing in the minors, a few steps from realizing her dream.

Clem looks for the sign from the manager, coaching at third base. It's her father. D.P. wears a Pilots jacket.

Petey delivers a pitch down the middle. Clem swings. Sends it deep and high. The next thing Clem knows she is...

END CLEM'S DREAM

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - CLEM'S ROOM - DAY

...awake but still down, listening to a RADIO home run call.

IGGY (O.S.)
Every little thing he does is magic. Four home runs for Travis Cleveland and if this dude can figure out how to play defense, Cal, nothing can stop him.

CAL (O.S.)
You can say that again, Iggy.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY THE NEXT DAY

Clem busily writes a letter with pen and paper as her mother serves breakfast for the two of them.

CLEM
Dad called while you were in the shower. He asked to talk to you.

AMANDA
Did you tell him what happened?

Amanda studies the bump on Clem's forehead.

CLEM
He wouldn't be worried about it, unlike you, so why say anything?

AMANDA
Clem, we've seen five specialists. They all say the same thing.

CLEM
Doc thinks I can walk again.

AMANDA
He thinks you can fly, too.

CLEM
I don't need to walk or fly. The pen is mightier than them all.

Clem holds up her finished letter and reads it out loud.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Dear League Officials. I, Clem Roberts, hereby petition for the right to play in the upcoming league championship game.

EXT. CLEM'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Clem, wearing her Warriors cap, wheels to the mailbox.

CLEM (O.S.)
This would require a waiver of rule thirteen twenty-six A, permitting a designated teammate to run the bases for me. You see, I am temporarily unable to display my speed on the basepaths.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY LATER

Petey pitches, Kenny catches and Clem attempts to bat from her wheelchair. She misses every time. But Petey accepts blame. Indicates his pitches are off.

CLEM (O.S.)
While I would not be able to play in the field, this would allow me to contribute, or at least to have that opportunity.

Clem finally pops one up. An easy catch, but Petey drops it so she won't feel bad. Clem feels bad anyway.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
My father missed most of my games. I'd like him to see me get one more hit.

D.P. strolls into the yard and hands Clem a long, thin bat.

CLEM
Not sure a new bat is gonna help.

D.P.
You need extra length to reach pitches from your chair. More bat speed, too.
(noticing her forehead)
Hey, how'd you get that bump on your noggin? Petey throwing wild again?

Petey puts his hands on his waist and scowls at D.P.

D.P.
Everybody thinks hitting's in the legs or the arms, but they're wrong. The hands are most important. That's why I could never hit again.

D.P. pitches. Kenny plays catcher. Clem fouls one off.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Lean in a little. Shift your balance.

Clem hits a grounder back to D.P. They exchange smiles.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Relax your grip. And your arms. Loose muscles are fast muscles.

Clem lines the next pitch to Petey, who misses it on purpose.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Now, focus on your follow-through.

Clem knocks D.P.'s next pitch across the street.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Not sure a new bat is gonna help, huh? Your old man knows a few things about this game.

CLEM
That's what I've been trying to tell you.

Petey and Kenny search for the ball in a neighbor's bushes. Each finds several baseballs but they're old and weathered.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY A FEW DAYS LATER

At the table, Clem RIPS UP a letter. Amanda puts a TV dinner in front of her, gives one to D.P. and takes one for herself.

D.P.
I know it's hard to understand, but liability is a big concern. A lawsuit could force the league to go under.

CLEM
But the championship means everything to Petey and those guys. I would do anything to give them an advantage.

AMANDA
Then I think this is for the best; having you play would've been a big distraction.

Clem looks to D.P. for a rebuttal.

D.P.
Your mother's right. Don't wanna disrupt team chemistry going into a big game.

Clem narrows her eyebrows and pouts.

D.P.
I didn't want to hear it either, but the sooner you accept your playing days are over, the sooner you can move on in life.

D.P. gives Amanda a slight smile.

D.P.
You know what? I really miss this.

AMANDA
One-dollar cheese enchilada dinners?

D.P.
No, this. Being here with you two.

AMANDA
You have your own key.

D.P.
Do I?

Amanda perks up, eager and yet coy.

AMANDA
You know how I feel, D.P.

D.P.
I know how you should feel. Both of you.

D.P. wipes his mouth with a napkin and clears his throat.

D.P. (CONT'D)
I thought playing ball was the most important thing in life so I fought like hell to keep it. But life's about more than whether or not you can hit a curveball. It's about frozen dinners with the people you love.

D.P. squeezes the hands of both Clem and Amanda.

D.P. (CONT'D)
I'm sorry it took me so long to figure that out.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

D.P. and Amanda sit together on the swing and drink iced tea.

D.P.
Amanda, there's something I want to share with you.

D.P. smiles and rests his hand on her leg. She's breathless.

D.P.
Doc hooked me up with a friend of his, runs a sales outfit in Van Nuys. Industrial filters. Good money, lots of potential for advancement. Think I'm gonna take the job.

AMANDA
That's what you really want to do?

D.P.
What I really want is to make you proud of me again.

This touches her. They share a moment.

AMANDA
I've always been proud of you, D.P. Just want you to be happy again. Can you find true happiness with an industrial filter?

D.P.
Don't sell yourself short. You're a lot better looking than an industrial filter.

He gives her a coy smile. Physically, they're close enough to kiss. Emotionally, she's still too far away.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Amanda rinses the sink-drain filter under the faucet. Clem, nearby in her chair, dries the last few dishes.

CLEM
Why not? You heard him say he misses us.

AMANDA
He's always missed us. That has nothing to do with our relationship.

CLEM
But if he's got a new job, won't that help?

AMANDA
Being a butcher made sense; he grew up helping your grandpa on the ranch. But he hates it. He'll hate a sales job, too. And as soon as he realizes it, he's gonna be back on the field of doom and gloom and that's a game I refuse to play.

CLEM
I had a dream that Dad was a baseball manager.

AMANDA
He'd make a great manager or coach and I know he'd enjoy it. Don't know why he can't see that, except it's something I suggested long ago. He's too stubborn to take advice, especially from me.

CLEM
Or me.

AMANDA
It always has to be his idea.

Clem dries the last cup and thinks. Suddenly, she brightens.

CLEM
Mom, I think I've got a plan. But I'm going to need your help.

EXT. CLEM'S HOUSE - DAY THE NEXT DAY

D.P. loads Clem and her chair into his van. Clem wears her Warriors uniform. Amanda waves from the front porch.

D.P.
You're not going to demand to play and create a scene, are you?

CLEM
I just wanna feel a part of it, Dad.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The league championship trophy, a gigantic gold cup with elaborate handles, rests splendidly on a pedestal. Clem's former teammates, eyes wide, gather around and admire it.

PETEY
This is it, boys, the David S. Burbank Championship Trophy. Been trying to win this thing since the day I was born.

ALVIN
Looks like something a genie would pop out of.

Alvin reaches his hands out toward the trophy.

KENNY
Don't rub it! It's bad luck to touch the trophy before you play the game.

ALVIN
What does second place get?

Petey smacks Alvin on the shoulder with his ball glove.

PETEY
Only winners get trophies. And if we don't win this trophy, we can kiss our major-league careers goodbye!

Petey's teammates look at him like he's crazy but no one is willing to challenge him.

The Warriors take the field for the title game against the Breakers, Big Kid's team. The crowd CHEERS them on. Iggy is among them. His Mohawk is gone but he's still boisterous.

D.P. and Clem watch behind the third-base fence. Doc invites them to enter the gate and join the team in the dugout.

D.P.
(to Clem)
See? You'll always be part of this team.

Doc greets them but then his cell phone RINGS.

DOC
(into phone)
Yes? ... OK, I'll be right there.
(to D.P.)
Emergency -- another baseball player is about to enter the world.

Doc brushes past them.

D.P.
Wait, Doc. Who's gonna manage the team?

Doc backpedals away from them as he speaks.

DOC
I know a guy who's perfect for the job. Still holds the minor-league record for most double plays in a season.
(pointing at Clem)
And she's the best assistant coach around.

D.P. watches helplessly as Doc's car peels out. Clem, delighted, flashes a Cheshire grin at her father.

CLEM
Looks like someone's been offered a coaching job without previous experience.

D.P.
Don't tell the boys I played pro ball.

CLEM
Relax, I'll help you, you'll be fine.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Doc's car slows down as it cruises beyond the park. It turns, circles to the other side of the field, out of view.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - PARKING LOT - DAY

Amanda sits beyond the outfield fence. A second lawn chair waits for Doc, who parks behind a tree and soon joins her.

AMANDA
No one will see us out here.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Big Kid, in catcher's gear, stops to chat with Clem.

BIG KID
You guys win, I'll buy you a gallon of cherry vanilla. We win, you buy me a king-size chocolate bar.

CLEM
You're on, Kirby.

Clem notices Petey and Alvin swinging bats and watching them.

CLEM (CONT'D)
You're going to ruin your image.

Big Kid stomps toward Petey and Alvin. Puts on his act.

BIG KID
We're gonna destroy you guys!

Petey bites his tongue. Alvin bites his nails.

LATER

Alvin slides into second base but he's out by a long shot.

D.P. stands in the third base coach's box, within speaking distance of Clem, whose wheelchair is just inside the dugout.

D.P.
I just got a guy thrown out at second, how can you say I'm doing fine?

CLEM
You don't know the personnel, that's all. Alvin hasn't stolen a base in his life. Too scared of getting thrown out.

Alvin SOBS on the bench. His teammates try to comfort him.

D.P.
And now I've scarred him for life.

CLEM
Stick with me. We'll do this together.

Petey checks the sign from D.P. just as a fly buzzes the coach's face. D.P. swats at it, tries to slap it against his leg. Smacks his arm, shoulder and face but the fly escapes.

From Petey's perspective, it looks like D.P. is simply flashing signs at him -- some very odd batting instructions.

PETEY
(to himself)
Bunt? With two out and nobody on? I'm clean-up, I don't bunt.

Petey shakes his head in disbelief, but takes his stance and bunts to perfection. The ball flirts with the third-base line but stays fair. D.P. turns to Clem for an explanation.

D.P.
Why is Petey bunting with two outs and nobody on? He's our clean-up hitter.

The throw from the Breakers' THIRD BASEMAN sails over the head of the FIRST BASEMAN. Petey motors to second.

CLEM
Maybe he saw something we didn't.

The toss to second is overthrown. D.P. waves Petey to third. Then an outfielder bobbles the ball so D.P. sends Petey home.

Big Kid, the catcher, stands on the edge of the infield grass. Petey, knowing he will score, struts his stuff and taunts Big Kid but doesn't watch his step. Petey trips over his own two feet and slides face-first across the plate.

D.P. comes over to the dugout and kneels next to Clem.

D.P.
I haven't seen a belly-flop slide like that since Pete Rose retired.

CLEM
Petey would never slide when he can stand up. You really have an effect on this team, Dad.

D.P., full of confidence now, CLAPS for the next batter.

Petey, covered in dirt, swaggers into the dugout. Exchanges high fives. Plops his thin frame between Alvin and Kenny.

PETEY
Nothing against Doc, but Clem's dad sure knows what he's doing. That bunt caught them totally by surprise.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-- Petey throws a wicked fastball on the corner. Big Kid strikes out looking. Sneers. Petey waves "goodbye." Beyond the outfield fence, Amanda and Doc CLAP.

-- D.P. motions for his OUTFIELDERS to shift to the right. A ball is hit directly to the RIGHT FIELDER for an out. Clem gives her father a thumbs-up.

-- Opposing Pitcher takes a sign from Opposing Coach. The pitcher grins, throws a pitch at Alvin's head. Alvin dives into the dirt. Opposing Pitcher burns one down the middle. Alvin, still shaken, swings meekly and strikes out.

-- D.P. flashes some signs. Petey, running at second, and Stretch, at first, leave their bases on a double hit-and-run. Kenny lines the ball into the outfield. Because he took off early, Petey scores. D.P. smiles at Clem in celebration.

-- D.P. watches as Kenny pulls a rock from his pocket and squeezes it in his palm. A ball bounces sharply to him. Kenny drops the rock. Snags the ball. Steps on second for one out. Turns 180 degrees in the air and throws to Stretch for a double play. But Kenny loses the rock. D.P. motions for him to forget it. Clem shrugs her shoulders.

-- Stretch and Kenny catch Big Kid in a rundown between first and second. Stretch chases him toward second and throws to Alvin, the shortstop. Alvin steps toward Big Kid but Big Kid keeps coming and gnashes his teeth. Alvin turns, runs in the other direction. Big Kid stops at second with a stolen base.

-- Petey's fastball scoots past the catcher and Big Kid goes to third. D.P. thinks, glances at Alvin.

-- D.P. and Clem help Alvin suit up as the catcher. Alvin feels the thick padding of his chest protector and eagerly accepts the assignment. Alvin lowers his mask. Crouches. Petey's next pitch sails outside. Alvin makes a lunging save to keep Big Kid at third. D.P. looks like a genius.

LATER

The scoreboard shows it's the top of the sixth and final inning. The Warriors lead, 2-1. D.P. and Clem watch Stretch take warm-up tosses on the side. He can't throw a strike.

In the dugout, Petey gives a pep talk of sorts.

PETEY
We should be ahead by more than one run.
Do I have to do everything myself?

KENNY
Clem and her Dad are the only reasons
we're even in this game.

PETEY
Hello. That was me scoring both runs.
That was me striking out seven.

KENNY
I lost my rock.

PETEY
I'll give you a rock -- upside your head.

Petey and Kenny stare each other down.

Meanwhile, Clem and D.P. talk strategy, check the scorebook.

CLEM
Dad, you can't take Petey off the mound.

D.P.
He told me Doc pulls him after five innings to save his arm. No game is worth jeopardizing his future, I don't care if it is the championship.

CLEM
You're thinking like a father, think like a manager. Petey's got a fifty-pitch limit; he usually reaches that by now but he's only thrown thirty-nine. He should have eleven good pitches left in him.

D.P. sees players gathered around the dugout.

D.P.
Hey, take the field, guys. Shut 'em down and we win it.

The players obey. D.P. enters the dugout and breaks up a tussle between Petey and Kenny.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, you're on the same team. And it's not a wrestling team.

KENNY
Guess I'm not good enough to be on the same field with Petey.

D.P. eyes Kenny and points at second base. Kenny runs out with his mitt. Petey and D.P. have a moment together.

D.P.
Not everyone has your ability, son, but you can't beat it into them. You only hurt your team when you put others down.

PETEY
Not much I can do now. Mr. Moneymaker is out of the game.

D.P.
That's the thing about baseball, Petey. Just when you think you're out of the game, you're not.

D.P. places the ball in Petey's glove. They're on the mound now and it's Petey's game to win or lose.

D.P. and Clem anxiously watch Petey throw. The BATTER sends a slow grounder to second that skips through Kenny's legs.

CLEM
We wasted six pitches on that batter and didn't get an out.

D.P. suddenly rushes out of the gate. He waves to Iggy, in the bleachers, and calls him over.

Petey visits Kenny at second. Kenny braces himself.

PETEY
It's OK Kenny, that sets up the double play. I shoulda struck him out, anyway.

Iggy delivers something to D.P., who calls timeout and visits with Kenny. D.P. reveals a small piece of brick in his palm.

D.P.
It's a chunk of a brick my... grandmother gave me. Kept her feet warm at night.

A skeptical Kenny eyes the nugget like it's used bubble gum.

D.P. (CONT'D)
Kenny, you don't need a rock or a rabbit's foot or four-leaf clover to be a great ballplayer. You're the one who makes the plays, not some lucky charm.

D.P. isn't getting through.

D.P. (CONT'D)
My grandmother was a witch. A good witch. She cast a magic spell on this brick. I put it in my pocket every game I ever played. Except one day I forgot it. That was the day I shattered my wrist and ended my career. If only I'd remembered my magic brick.

Kenny beams with reassurance. Slips the brick piece into his pocket. D.P. returns to the dugout.

The NEXT BATTER bounces one to second. Kenny barely snags the ball at the end of his glove. Hops up. Tags the runner. And tosses to first base for the double play.

Big Kid steps up to the plate. Petey bears down. Blows a strike past him. Clem makes a mark in her scorebook.

CLEM
That's forty-nine.

Petey throws another pitch past Big Kid. Strike two. Clem and D.P. look at each other. Cross their fingers. Kenny does, too. Petey's next pitch bounces in the dirt.

D.P.
That's just one pitch.

CLEM
Yeah, number fifty-one.

Petey bears down. Throws way outside. D.P. turns to Clem.

D.P.
Your call, Clem. Leave him in or take him out?

CLEM
My call? I'm just a kid.

D.P. gathers his courage. Takes one step toward the mound. Petey looks at D.P. D.P. points a finger at Petey. Winks.

D.P.
You the man, Petey. You the man.

Gut-check time. Petey takes a deep breath. Throws. It's just on, or off, the corner. Big Kid checks his swing. No strike call from the UMPIRE -- ball three and a full count. The fans GROAN and some players CHIDE the ump.

PETEY
(sincerely)
Hey Blue! Good call. I know you're doing your best.

Big Kid crowds the plate for the payoff pitch. Petey glances at Clem before winding up. Clem glances at her father.

SLOW MOTION

The ball hums toward the plate in the middle of the strike zone. Big Kid puts everything he has into the swing and belts the Spalding to right-center.

Big Kid pumps his arms and SNARLS as he runs. The ball dents the wall and caroms past one Warrior OUTFIELDER.

Kenny waits on the edge of the grass for the relay throw. He reaches into his pocket and rubs the piece of brick.

As Big Kid rounds third, the throw finally comes in to Kenny. It's high. Kenny makes the leap of his life to catch it. He comes down throwing and launches a dart toward his catcher.

D.P.
Alvin!

Fans leap to their feet as Big Kid rumbles home.

Alvin, alerted by his coach, blocks the plate. His wide eyes are fixed on Big Kid, who GRUNTS and SNORTS as he runs home.

PETEY
You can do it Alvin, I know you can.

Alvin turns toward the mound. Kenny's relay throw hits Alvin's chest protector on the left side. The impact spins Alvin around so he faces the hard-charging Big Kid.

The ball pops up in front of Alvin. He grabs it and holds on as Big Kid bulldozes toward him. Alvin closes his eyes.

END SLOW MOTION

ALVIN'S DAYDREAM

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Clem SOBS. Drops a flower onto Alvin's grave.

CLEM
I never had the chance to tell you how I really felt about you, Alvin.

END ALVIN'S DAYDREAM

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

Alvin opens his eyes and prepares to be flattened. But there is no impact. Alvin opens his eyes to see Big Kid, clearly beaten by the throw, slowing up and walking into the tag.

BIG KID
You got me.

UMPIRE
Yer out!

The Warriors and their fans go crazy. Players dog-pile D.P.

Amanda and Doc climb over the right-field fence and run in.

Alvin stands there, frozen, blinking, trying to make sense of what just happened. Clem wheels over to congratulate him.

CLEM
Alvin, I'm so proud of you!

Clem pulls Alvin down to her level. Kisses his cheek. Alvin leaps for joy and joins the rest of the team in celebration.

Petey grabs two bottles of carrot juice from Doc's cooler in the dugout. Pours them on himself and his teammates.

PETEY
Finally, a good use for this stuff.

Petey spots Clem. Grabs another carrot juice. Clem braces for a shower. Instead, Petey opens it and hands it to her.

PETEY (CONT'D)
You always drank this stuff. Guess it really does help you see. Helps you see inside people.

Petey and Clem glance at the exuberant D.P.

Alvin and Stretch hoist the trophy above their heads.

PETEY
Hey, that's my trophy!

Petey runs off after them.

Amanda and Doc congratulate D.P.

D.P.
That was a fast delivery, Doc. You almost got back in time.

DOC
I'd say the timing was just right.

Doc winks at Amanda.

Iggy waits near the dugout with a huge box of fried chicken. He plugs the mike into the boom box and announces:

IGGY
Free food, dudes. Come and get it.

Amanda and Doc congratulate Clem.

D.P. approaches Iggy.

IGGY (CONT'D)
I got a steal on pre-cut fryers.

D.P.
(matter-of-factly)
You're Iggy, the Bargain Hunter.

Kenny, brick fragment in hand, gives Clem a high five.

KENNY
Your dad said the only reason he got injured was because he didn't have this piece of brick in his pocket. Does he think I'm that gullible?

D.P., covered in carrot juice, greets Clem with a big hug.

CLEM
Coaching's almost as much fun as playing, huh, Dad?

D.P.
When you're there with me, it is. ... Thank you, Clem. Thank you for believing in me. I love you so much.

CLEM
I love you, Dad.

Father and daughter lose themselves in a long hug.

EXT. BURBANK STADIUM - DAY

Hours before a game. Clem, alone, wheels past the gates.

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Clem arrives as Rufus Clyde fills out his lineup card.

RUFUS
Well, look what the cat dragged across the road.

CLEM
Just wanted to congratulate you on the winning streak, Rufus.

RUFUS
It's no coincidence we started winning the day you left the radio team.

CLEM
Then I guess you're not gonna like this. I'm going back on the air tonight.

RUFUS
What I mean is, you made me realize I wasn't approaching the game with the same fish and vinegar. So I decided to retire at the end of the season.

CLEM
Oh no, I'm so sorry.

RUFUS
Don't be. Ever since then, I feel like I've got a new dog leash on life. If there's anyone to thank for this winning streak, it's you.

CLEM
You kicked dirt on my wheelchair.

RUFUS
I kick dirt on the umpires every day and we still go out to dinner together.

CLEM
So you'll give me a pregame interview?

RUFUS
I'll flap my gums till the cows show up.

CLEM
You mean you've got all day to talk?

RUFUS
No, just till the cows show up. It's agriculture night here at the ballpark. You didn't get the memo?

INT. BURBANK STADIUM - PRESS BOX - DAY

A live chicken struts about on the counter in front of Cal.

CAL
And it's a special night for another reason. My former broadcasting partner called her 'the sound of the game.' She's got a great voice, strong spirit and tremendous passion for the game. And I'm happy to announce Clem Roberts has rejoined the Pilots' broadcast team.

Clem, headphones on, sits beside Cal in her Warriors uniform.

CLEM
Thanks, Cal, it's great to be back. And first I want to congratulate my former team, the Warriors, who went all the way from worst to first. Once again baseball reminds us that anything is possible if you keep your dreams alive.

CAL
You can say that again, Clem, you can say that again.

INT. CLEM'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Clem flips the pages of a book called SPORTS RADIO VOICES.

CLEM
Find 'em yet?

Amanda, in a gorgeous dress, flows into the living room. She attaches a baseball earring to her right lobe, matching the left. Clem is taken aback by her mother's radiance.

AMANDA
They were in my Valentine's box. Your father gave these to me.

CLEM
You're going bowling like that?

Amanda shakes her head at Clem's guess and laughs.

AMANDA
Maybe you haven't noticed, but there is a void in my life not easily filled by ten frames at Burbank Lanes.

CLEM
You're going on a date? Mom, you can't do that!

AMANDA
Why not?

The doorbell RINGS. Amanda and Clem head for the door.

CLEM
Because...

AMANDA
I think you'll like him.

CLEM
There's only one guy you could go out with that I'd approve of and that's ...

The door swings open. D.P. stands there, smiling.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Dad!

D.P.
Hey, Sweetheart.
(to Amanda)
I remember that dress.

AMANDA
I wore it on our first real date.

D.P.
So, is the Home Run Club OK?

AMANDA
That's where we went on our first real date! But won't that be hard for you? I know how you feel about that ballpark.

D.P.
Amanda, Clem -- the Burbank Pilots have hired me to help Travis Cleveland with his defense. I'm a special instructor for a baseball team, can you believe it?

AMANDA
I believed it a long time ago.

CLEM
Way to go, Dad!

Elated, Amanda gives D.P. a kiss on the lips.

D.P.
I'm back in the game. And I've got my two favorite people to thank.

D.P. and Amanda kneel beside Clem for a family hug. Then he reaches across and holds Amanda's hand; smiles all around.

INT. LOS ANGELES MUNICIPAL BALLPARK - PRESS BOX - DAY

SUPER: 2008

PAT GIBSON, 60, the Los Angeles Stars' baseball broadcaster, listens as a commercial ends and then talks into his headset.

PAT
We're moments away from the season-opener as the Los Angeles Stars attempt to come back from a last-place finish one season ago. And with me is someone who knows all about making a comeback.

Clem, 31, looks radiant as she sits next to Pat. She wears a headset with a scorebook open in front of her. An upside-down helmet full of ice cream sits nearby.

PAT
She was paralyzed from the waist down at age eleven. Now, twenty years later, she's realized her dream of making it to the big leagues -- as the new play-by-play voice of the Stars. They call her 'the sound of the game,' please welcome my new broadcast partner, Clem Roberts.

CLEM
Thanks Pat, I'm very excited to be here. I had lots of help from lots of people, especially my parents, who actually got married -- for the second time -- on this date, opening day, eighteen years ago.

PAT
So it's also a big day for your father, Dwayne 'Double Play' Roberts. It's his wedding anniversary and his first day as manager of Oakland, which opens the season today just south of us in Anaheim. His game doesn't begin for a few more hours, however, and the trip from Anaheim is a short one -- in a helicopter.

Clem's eyes widen as D.P., in an Oakland manager's uniform, walks into the booth, grinning ear-to-ear.

PAT
We're now joined in the booth by Clem's father, Oakland Manager D.P. Roberts.

D.P.
(to Clem)
Wouldn't miss this for anything; I'm very proud of you Clem, and so is your mother.

Amanda enters the booth.

D.P.
And all these guys.

The grown-up Petey, Alvin and Kenny come in. Petey, who now plays for Oakland, wears his baseball uniform.

The players are followed by Doc, Big Kid and Iggy, who has short hair and wears a suit.

Clem beams with joy. She pushes her chair away from the press-box desk. It's not a wheelchair, just a regular chair.

She grabs a black metallic walking cane from under the desk. She places it in front of her, puts her weight on it and...

Clem stands up.

She steadies herself, lets go of the cane and...

Clem walks on her own.

She steps toward her parents and hugs them both. Then, continuing to walk on her own, she hugs the other visitors.

It's a happy reunion of family and friends to celebrate Clem's professional and personal success.

FADE TO BLACK

The CLOSING CREDITS roll.

CLEM (O.S.)
It's a full count. The runners go. ... It's a grounder to short. To second for one out. The relay to first. Double play! And that's a record-breaker. Travis Cleveland, in his sixteenth big-league season, has just set the record for most double plays in a career.

The crowd goes WILD.

CLEM
Here's the three-one pitch. ... He connects with that one. And I hope he's not too attached because that bad girl is not comin' back! A home run for Travis Cleveland.

CHEERS and FIREWORKS are heard as the home crowd rejoices.

CLEM (O.S.)
And the Stars win their opener by the final of three to two. That'll do it for tonight. Until next time, this is Clem Roberts reminding you to always pursue your dreams and never forget to tell your parents you love them.

THE END