

FEVER: THE SERIES

Episode 2: Tayla's Odyssey

Written by

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Based on the short film of the same name written by Jeremy Feight  
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1

INT. COPPER BOX ARENA - TUNNEL - NIGHT

1

We slowly pull back through a tunnel-hallway opening to an active basketball court. Players run up and down the court, the tunnel's walls obstructing our view of the action. A muffled crowd chants inside:

CROWD  
LORI! LORI! LORI!

Then, a unified, HORRIFIC GASP from the crowd as the action stops. Medics and referees run to the court. We hear a grown man WAIL IN PAIN, as:

HARD CUT TO:

2

INT. AFIA'S HOME - BEDROOM - LONDON

2

SUPER: 2022.

We scan over mirrors, Afro-Centric Paintings, and UK sports memorabilia adorning the walls of a small, cozy bedroom. A female voice speaks on the phone:

WOMAN  
(O.S. on phone)  
I understand. Your mum was never going to come to London anyway.  
(beat)  
You would know what my book was titled if you'd ever ring me!

Reveal as we land on AFIA (Black, 30s) applying foundation to her high cheekbones. She spends some extra time covering an unsightly scar on her left cheek.

AFIA  
It's called 'Balls on the Brain'.  
Like - "sports and psychology".  
(beat)  
I'm serious! Controversy sells, bro. Let me give you a crash course in PR.  
(beat)  
I miss him too. I still wish I could have been at the services.  
(beat)  
She's been acting a bit -  
She just gets in knackered in the evenings.  
(beat)  
From her job at St. Bartholomew's, they work them to the bones, man.  
(MORE)

AFIA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Yeah, it's the same hospital.

(beat)

I know.

A longer beat as she's distracted from covering up her scar by the information that's being shared with her.

AFIA (CONT'D)

She hasn't rung Damien at all? In two months?

(beat)

Yeah, I'll tell her to call you.

Okay, sure. Love you too.

Afia hangs up the phone and takes a beat in the mirror. She places her make up down and opens a drawer. She sees a picture of her younger self and her Uncle Andre - smiling ear to ear as she hugs him in his "London Lions" jersey after a game.

3

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL - SHOREDITCH

3

Over BLACK we again hear BLOODY MURDER SCREAMS.

As they continue, we fade in to a view from inside a hospital window. Strikers and protestors are crowded around the building's entrance holding signs that read "TOO VALUABLE TO STRIKE BUT NOT ENOUGH TO BE PAID FAIRLY" and "CLAPPING DON'T PAY THE BILLS", etc.

We pull back from the window to see A DISLOCATED BIG TOE. The screams are coming from the patient this toe is connected to - MR. MOSES (30s-40s).

MR. MOSES

Gaahhh!! Fuck me!

NURSE

(cheekily)

I'm a bit of a wild ride, now - I don't think that would be very fun with a bum toe, Mr. Moses.

It's revealed that we are in a partitioned wing in a hospital Emergency Department. It's also revealed that this nurse is wearing a badge that reads: TAYLA LAWRENCE, PA - next to a large American Flag sticker. She warmly prepares to tend to her patient, dark circles under her eyes.

TAYLA

What were you doing, anyway,  
playing soccer with no shoes?  
Something tells me you know better.

MR. MOSES

Is it broken?

TAYLA

Dislocated. I'm gonna pop it back  
in, okay?

MR. MOSES

Oh nooo no no no please don't!

TAYLA

I know you don't want to keep this  
gargoyle toe. I'm about to give it  
a yank in three, two...

Just as Tayla is about to pop the toe back in, DR. FRANK  
O'MALLEY (30s, white, Cockney) rushes through the partition  
and steps between Tayla and her patient.

O'MALLEY

Mr. Moses, I'm Dr. O'Malley. We're  
gonna get you taken care of.

(To Tayla, no eye contact)

Nurse, can you grab an icepack for  
us?

TAYLA

Tayla.

O'MALLEY

Sorry?

TAYLA

Nurse Tayla.

O'MALLEY

(Here we go...)

Mr. Moses, we're going to need to  
rush you over to Podiatric -

TAYLA

I can take care of this with a  
closed reduction, he doesn't need  
surgery -

O'MALLEY

Tayla, can you please go pull an  
icepack for this man? He's in pain.

Tayla points behind him. There, on a rolling tray, are an ICE PACK, ROLL OF ADHESIVE WRAP, and a SPLINT that Tayla had already prepared.

Dr. O'Malley is impressed. He wraps Mr. Moses' toe shottily.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

(To Mr. Moses)

A nurse will be over to take you to surgery. Feel better.

He begins to exit. Tayla goes to fix the Doctor's wrap job, then:

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

(To Tayla)

Are you coming?

TAYLA

...Me?

O'MALLEY

No, the man with the fucked toe.

She smirks as she finishes her touch-up, gives Mr. Moses a touch and a smile, and follows Dr. O'Malley.

4

INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

4

Tayla is catching up to O'Malley. Before she can reach him:

O'MALLEY

Pretty bold for a temp nurse to jump into unsupervised treatment.

TAYLA

The office told me everyone above an RN was busy picking up slack from the strikes so -

O'MALLEY

I wouldn't abandon my girls like that, now would I?

TAYLA

Gross.

O'MALLEY

Where'd you study?

TAYLA

UPenn - PA Program.

O'MALLEY

Hm. Did they teach you to pull patients' toes with your bare hands at UPenn?

TAYLA

My daddy was an athlete. There were always pieces of him that weren't where they were supposed to be.

O'MALLEY

Huh. Sorry for the interrogation - we don't get a lot of "you's" around here.

TAYLA

"Me's"?

O'MALLEY

Travel Nurses. With a sensible education and beautiful brown eyes. The pay cuts have girls like you running for Switzerland.

TAYLA

I'm a travel **PA**. And I'm sticking around until my work is done.

As Dr. O'Malley continues, Tayla notices a Black family entering behind him. The tall, athletic father helps his pregnant wife limp into the waiting room - she's clearly in pain. Their young son and daughter follow behind them.

O'MALLEY

In that case, we need to get to know each other, no? Drinks this evening?

TAYLA

Oh -  
I can't. My cousin has this book launch thing.

O'MALLEY

I could be interested in a book launch thing - if you'll be there.

TAYLA

Dr. O'Malley. I appreciate this... attention, but "girls like me" aren't really into fondling our way to the top.

O'MALLEY

Who said anything about fondling,  
love? I was thinking more of  
a...bump.

O'Malley pulls a small baggie out of his jacket - coke. He takes a bump and offers it to Tayla unabashedly. She considers, but they are interrupted by screams from the waiting room. **The pregnant mother has begun bleeding heavily from her womb** - her husband cries for help.

FATHER

Help! Somebody help - please!

5 INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S - EMERGENCY WARD - MOMENTS LATER 5

Tayla, O'Malley, and a few nurses have just rushed the mother to the emergency operating theatre. O'Malley is performing an ultrasound - hiding the screen as the father is in his ear.

O'MALLEY

Sir, I'm going to need you to step  
back please.

FATHER

She's been having these sharp pains  
all day but I don't think they're  
supposed to be happening yet.

O'Malley finishes the ultrasound. He hands the tools to Tayla to clean as they step aside. O'Malley begins to prepare for surgery.

O'MALLEY

Get me an anesthesia set up.

TAYLA

What did you see?

O'MALLEY

At least a triple Nuchal Cord.

TAYLA

The baby will just untangle itself.

FATHER

Untangle? Can you please fill me in  
here?

O'MALLEY

The placenta is abrupted - calling  
in support for a Cesarean.

TAYLA

You've got to be kidding? We can't do that here? Give her a chance to decide.

O'Malley picks up a phone and dials.

O'MALLEY

(To Tayla)

Does she seem fit to make a sound decision right now? We have to do it here. No more rooms, no time for a life flight.

(On Phone)

I need all available Maternity Staff to suite 6. What do you mean? I don't care how many nurses we're down today, I have a child strangling on its bloody umbilical cord - send me the fucking receptionist if you have to!

(To Father)

Sir, I'm going to need you to step outside.

FATHER

You're going to just cut her open? Fucking tell me what's happening.

TAYLA

Dr. O'Malley, you sent that other man to a specialist for a dislocated toe. This woman deserves a safe procedure.

O'MALLEY

We don't have time! Do you want to save this baby or not?

A beat as she takes in the mother's pain. Then, Tayla escorts the Father out.

TAYLA

Sir, please head to the waiting room. I promise we'll communicate with you every step of the way.

FATHER

What if she's not ready?

A hard beat. Tayla doesn't know what to say. She closes the curtain. She takes a beat to herself and pulls **half of a heart-shaped locket** from her scrubs.

It holds a photo of her holding her infant son, DAMIEN. She shakes the emotions that rise with this, and stuffs the locket back inside her collar.

6 INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S - OPERATING THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER 6

The mother has been put to sleep as the surgery is underway. O'Malley completes the first incision. He hands the scalpel off to Tayla who replaces it with a clean one. O'Malley prepares himself.

O'MALLEY  
Second incision.

A breath, then the scalpel enters the mother's uterus. The incision is about to be completed successfully until -

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)  
Bloody hell!

Blood begins pouring from the incision and splatters around the floor. One of the young nurses pinning open the incision abandons her post as she heads to another room to vomit. O'Malley begins to stanch the outpour.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)  
Alright, UPenn, let's see what you got.

Tayla takes a beat to push down any shock and insecurity, then dives in. She skillfully reaches inside of the incision until she feels - **the baby**.

A beat as she pushes down her emotions and takes a deep breath. Then, she slowly pulls it out of the mother's womb - the umbilical cord has been wrapped around it's neck 3-4 times. **The baby is obviously near death**.

Time slows, and the environment is hushed as Tayla takes a moment to look in the babies eyes. She feels it's heartbeat pulsing slowly, slower still. Her emotions rise as:

FLASH CUT TO:

7 INT. CLUB BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK) 7

Tayla has passionate sex with a BEAUTIFUL DREADLOCKED MAN.

CUT BACK TO:

8 INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S - EMERGENCY ROOM 8

Tayla slowly wraps her hand around the cord and the babies throat and holds it there - is she squeezing its neck more tightly??

FLASH CUT TO:

9 EXT. GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK) 9

A disheveled Tayla pushes a crying a Damien into her mother, Grace's, arms as she peels out of the house toward her car.

GRACE

Tayla come back here right now!

TAYLA

I'll be back in one hour! Just give me one fucking hour!

CUT BACK TO:

10 INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S - EMERGENCY ROOM 10

The baby's heartbeat makes one last labored **thud-thud...**

FLASH CUT TO:

11 INT. GRACE'S HOUSE - DAY (EARLIER FLASHBACK) 11

Through a cracked bathroom door, YOUNG TAYLA sees her father, ANDRE SR. crushing some prescription meds on the sink. As he prepares to snort them, he's interrupted by a glimpse of his daughter. Before he closes the door:

ANDRE SR.

You're my only little girl, Tay  
Tay. Go make me proud, now.

CUT BACK TO:

12 INT. ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S - EMERGENCY ROOM 12

The heart monitor BLARES A SINGLE ALARMING TONE, as:

O'MALLEY

Tayla! Cut the cord!

She snaps out of the stupor, grabs the scalpel, and slices the baby free. Nurses swoop in to wrap the baby in towels and takes it away to life support.

Tayla breathes heavily as she gathers herself. O'Malley looks to her with concern, then proceeds to tend to the newborn.

TAYLA

It's a boy.

In the background, the mother's womb is sewed closed hastily - like a machine being closed down after a hard day's work.

13

INT. AFIA'S FLAT - FRONT DOOR - AFTERNOON

13

Afia is on a Zoom meeting preparing for her book launch this evening. She's fully glamorized - a slim black dress and fully beat face. She is joined on the meeting by her Publicist, PENELOPE (White, American, Female, 30s) and the Panel Moderator WILLIAM (50s, White). William fights back tears as his partner, GUS (30s, Black), comforts him.

WILLIAM

And as I'm reading your book. And I'm searching up all of these names of these young people that have died. And I'm just appalled at how I could have lived 50 years of my human life not knowing that there has been such a sickness dwelling in your communities.

AFIA

Well, it's really more than just -

WILLIAM

And it is a global issue, of course! Beautiful men - and women - taking their own lives. And your father?

GUS

It was her uncle, darling.

WILLIAM

(Tearing up)

Your uncle. Heavens! In America! It can make one feel rather hopeless. Terrible. EVIL, really. I'm just so grateful to be welcomed into this space, to be called to learn. Thank you for that.

A beat as William cries into Gus. Gus with a "how did I get here?" face.

AFIA

And to contribute, I hope.

WILLIAM

I'm sorry?

AFIA

Aren't you moderating the panel?

WILLIAM

Well, yes, but I'm being intentional about not taking up too much space where I'm not an owner of the room. So I simply mean it's a privilege to be here.

AFIA

Totally. Well I'd love to welcome you to share your experience. Your privilege plays a key part in all of this.

WILLIAM

Oh. Well that's a fresh perspective, indeed, but -

William is about to rebut as Penelope interrupts:

PENELOPE

Excuse us, boys. We can't have Afi working so hard she sweats out her makeup. We'll see you in a few. Gus, get your man a Prozac before he starts another dramatic reading of his review of 'Moonlight'.

The men leave the Zoom. It's just Afia and Penelope.

AFIA

That man is a school counsellor? Couldn't we have gotten someone a bit more -

PENELOPE

It's all part of the dance, Afi, please be nicer to the fucking townspeople. You think he's something, wait until you meet No-Clit Claire.

AFIA

I'm not following.

PENELOPE

(still not getting it)

Don't waste your time trying, love - she's not just on the panel, she's on the SPECTRUM.

AFIA

You know women get cancelled now, too, Pen.

PENELOPE

So what's the update on your little baby cousin.

AFIA

She should be coming.

PENELOPE

'Should' sounds dangerously close to 'at home moping'.

AFIA

She's grieving and working full-time Pen, give her some grace.

PENELOPE

And so are you! Where's your pity party?

Afia chugs the glass of red wine she's been hiding behind her laptop.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Listen this was your idea, girl. But our entire PR plan is based on a "family meltdown" for which, without her, we have no "meltdown family". And you know I love you - but starting from scratch would cost money that we both know you don't have...

AFIA

Piss off, Penelope.

PENELOPE

WITH LOVE - it's no secret. I just want this one to be a success. For you.

(in earnest)

Are you sure you're ready for this?

(MORE)

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Once this is out there, there's no going back.

AFIA

I'm very sure.

PENELOPE

Good. You're gonna murder it up there.

Well -

AFIA

(very serious)

Bitch do not say it'll kill itself.

PENELOPE

(thrilled)

Always reading my mind, my sista'. Kisses.

Penelope logs off. Afia takes a beat in the meeting alone, staring back at herself on the screen.

Abruptly, TAYLA ENTERS THE FLAT. Pushing down her exhaustion. She hangs her jacket and places her shoes neatly by the door.

Afia packs up her laptop and begins to put on her final touches for the event.

AFIA

Well you look fucked.

TAYLA

Boring day at work.

AFIA

Relocating more broken phalanges?

TAYLA

What would they do without me?

AFIA

Literally close the hospital because all of the other nurses are out protesting like sane people.

A beat, then:

AFIA (CONT'D)

Are you riding with me to the launch? My car's around the corner.

TAYLA

Can't go to your launch looking  
"fucked".

AFIA

I'll tell him to wait, get in the  
shower.

TAYLA

Girl, I'm exhausted.

AFIA

Exhausted from your 'boring day at  
work'?

TAYLA

From a lot of boring days at work.

AFIA

You really shouldn't be in that  
place. It's triggering for you.

TAYLA

Stop.

AFIA

Of all the hospitals in London, you  
had to choose that one for your  
little vacay-work-stay?

TAYLA

I said STOP.

AFIA

Snappyyyyyy...  
Sounds like you need to let loose  
is what it sounds like.

TAYLA

On a Monday night?

AFIA

You have a whole entire day off  
tomorrow.

TAYLA

A whole entire day off I'd like to  
use to prepare for my work week.

AFIA

I seem to remember you came here  
for an "escape". Is that the direct  
quote?

TAYLA

No.

AFIA

Mmm. Then what is it?

TAYLA

I came here for new perspective.

AFIA

Perfect, here's some new perspective - if you've traveled to London, you ought to go somewhere outside your commute from my spare room to the local emergency wing.

TAYLA

Great, I'll take a pitstop in the kitchen.

Tayla goes to the kitchen and pours herself a glass of red wine. Afia follows.

AFIA

The book is about my side of the story. So don't worry, we don't have to speak on yours if you don't want us to -

TAYLA

(snaps)

I don't want you to.

AFIA

Okay.

TAYLA

Afia, I'm serious when I say I don't want to be a part of this.

AFIA

Okay!

A beat, then:

AFIA (CONT'D)

I just don't want to do this alone. I need you there.

TAYLA

You've got plenty of adoring fans to keep you company.

AFIA

Wouldn't that be a gift. It seems the only people who care this is happening are my wily publicist and your brother - and he's across the bloody pond.

TAYLA

You've been talking to Andre?

AFIA

Yeah.

TAYLA

What'd he have to say?

AFIA

That they all miss you.

TAYLA

Hm.

AFIA

Why's that such a surprise?

TAYLA

They just hadn't told me.

AFIA

I thought you called yesterday?

TAYLA

Yeah but I just talked to Damien.

AFIA

Oh so the baby answered the phone?

TAYLA

No, I just didn't have time to hear my brother whine about this relationship he's too pussy to save. Or my mom acting like she's the only one going through it.

AFIA

(Playfully)

Too bad. Maybe if you'd talked you could have told them YOU ARE A SEVERE WORKAHOLIC AND NEED TO GET OUT OF THIS FLAT IMMEDIATELY!

TAYLA

Afia, I really am proud of you. I'd love to get the play-by-play tomorrow morning, but tonight I'm beat -

AFIA

Are you for real not gonna come?

TAYLA

...

Afia starts to dial on her phone.

TAYLA (CONT'D)

What're you doing now?

AFIA

I'm calling Andre so he can talk some sense into you.

TAYLA

NO DON'T!

AFIA

Why?

TAYLA

I'm just -  
Not in the mood for an intervention.

AFIA

Why would you need an intervention?

Silence as Tayla turns on the TV. Basketball. Great.

AFIA (CONT'D)

Great, no intervention needed. Be ready at five?

TAYLA

Can I meet you there?

AFIA

Fine. But be a little more inebriated when you get there. We're celebrating.

TAYLA

You know I haven't been drinking like that -

AFIA  
 Doctor's orders. See you at seven!

Afia exits.

Tayla picks up her phone and lands at the background - a photo of her holding Damien tightly at a party in her parents' backyard. She goes to call Andre, but instead stops herself and throws her phone on the couch with a huff.

She stares at the basketball game on TV screen, preparing herself for what she's gotten herself into.

MELT TO:

14 INT. TOTAL MORTGAGE ARENA - CONNECTICUT - AFTERNOON 14  
 (FLASHBACK)

**SUPER: 2019. Connecticut.**

Tayla, her boyfriend Nigel (30s, Black, Dreadlocks, Earthy) pushing an empty stroller, her mother Grace (Late 50s, Black, Refined), and her Uncle Ray (50s, Black, Loose-Lipped) pass their tickets to the Arena employees at it's entrance. Tayla's son, DAMIEN (3 years old) is trailing behind.

As they make their way down a long hallway toward the stadium's seating, Damien yanks on his mother's arm.

DAMIEN  
 Mommy, up!

Tayla, exhausted even now, ignores him. As Nigel grits his teeth and Grace rolls her eyes.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)  
 (Crying)  
 MOMMY I WANT UP!

TAYLA  
 D, if you're tired you gotta get in the stroller.

DAMIEN  
 I don't want the stroller.

GRACE  
 Tayla, pick the child up.

TAYLA  
 He's gotta learn to walk, Mom.

GRACE

One to talk about learning to take care of yourself.

NIGEL

Come here, man.

TAYLA

Don't, Nigel.

NIGEL

Give him to me.

Nigel peels Damien away from Tayla as he cries.

DAMIEN

No, Mommy up! Up, Mommy.

Damien's cries meld with the sounds of two men arguing in attempted hushed tones down a private hallway off their path.

JAY (O.S.)

No, Andre, give me your phone.

ANDRE JR. (O.S.)

Jay it's in the locker room. I have to go warm up.

JAY (O.S.)

You weren't worried about warming up a minute ago when you were all fucking texty texty with him.

ANDRE JR. (O.S.)

I don't know what you're talking about, man. Can you stop?

As they approach, they see the back of JAY (White, late 20s) arguing with his partner, ANDRE JR. (30, Black, Tayla's Brother) in his WESTCHESTER KNICKS Uniform, about to hit the court.

When they notice the group approaching, Jay and Andre Jr. assume normalcy. Jay wipes tears from his eyes and steps out of the way as the family runs in for their hugs. Tayla gives Jay an awkward "how you doin?" smirk as the rest ignore him.

GRACE

There he is! Gosh. Been too long since I've seen you in a uniform.

UNCLE RAY

Perfect day for it.

GRACE  
You look so handsome.

ANDRE JR.  
Thanks, Ma.  
(To a hiding Damien)  
What's my little man crying about?

NIGEL  
Mad at mommy.

ANDRE JR.  
Ohhh, shit. Common thread in this family.

GRACE  
What the hell's that supposed to mean? You're supposed to be the angel child, sir!

They all laugh except Tayla.

UNCLE RAY  
Shouldn't you be on the court?

ANDRE JR.  
Yeah I gotta go, ya'll. See you after.

TAYLA  
Love you, Dre.

JAY  
I love you, Dre.

Andre exits not looking back.

15 INT. TOTAL MORTGAGE ARENA - ARENA SEATING - MOMENTS LATER 15  
(FLASHBACK CONTINUED)

The family is making their way into the stadium from the top of the seats. Tayla lugs the empty stroller as Nigel carries Damien. The rest of the family is tracking for the front rows, but Uncle Ray pulls off into the seats in front of the Commentators' Box.

GRACE  
Ray let's go down front!

UNCLE RAY  
Hell no! It hurts my neck watching 'em run back and forth like that.  
(MORE)

UNCLE RAY (CONT'D)

I like hearing what these guys up here have to say. In case I fall asleep a little.

TAYLA

Let's just stay up here. I don't want to be in the middle of everything.

NIGEL

So we're stopping here?

DAMIEN

I want, Mommy!

TAYLA

Hold on, Damien.

NIGEL

Mommy's having a meltdown, papa.

TAYLA

How am I having a meltdown?

GRACE

Tayla be nice to the man, he's carrying your child.

TAYLA

I'm not doing this with you two today.

They all sit down with a little chaos as they situate. Uncle Ray can't seem to choose his seat. He tests them all out for prime back support. Grace holds up the process as she sees some old High School friends two rows down. Damien continues screaming for Tayla as she struggles to break the stroller down. She tries to slam it shut with a one, two, three -

TAYLA (CONT'D)

Gaahhh!

She throws the stroller down and plops into her seat, she reaches for Damien.

TAYLA (CONT'D)

Give him to me.

NIGEL

You don't have to, just take a minute.

TAYLA

Give him to me!

NIGEL  
Fine, Jesus.

Nigel hands the baby to Tayla. Damien immediately wraps his arms around her neck, tight. A beat as the rest of them carefully sit down around her.

NIGEL (CONT'D)  
(Hushed)  
Meltdown.

TAYLA  
Fuck off.

GRACE  
Tayla, enough.

UNCLE RAY  
Go duke it out in the parking lot  
already, you two.

Tayla ignores them as she stares forward. The game has started. The commentators narrate the action through the window behind them as the family sits in frustrated silence.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)  
Welcome back here to Total Mortgage  
Arena for the first NBA G League  
match of the season.

COMMENTATOR 2 (O.S.)  
For those of you that are new to  
our league, these are the semi-pro  
teams waiting in the wings  
underneath your local NBA teams.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)  
That's right, some of your favorite  
Pro players got their start in a G  
league team: Pascal Siakam, Khris  
Middleton, Andre Lawrence -

COMMENTATOR 2 (O.S.)  
Speaking of which, Lori's son,  
Andre Lawrence Jr. is here starting  
with the Westchester Knicks today.

COMMENTATOR 1 (O.S.)  
That's right! Lovely to see that  
the gene has been passed down from  
the stallion to the foal.

COMMENTATOR 2

Really too bad about Lawrence Sr. -  
he could have been one of the best.

As the commentators continue, Tayla notices that Jay is down front sitting by himself.

TAYLA

Wait why's Andre's man down there.

GRACE

Don't call him his "man".

TAYLA

I'm going to get him.

UNCLE RAY

Oh God, save me.

We stay with the family listening to the commentators as Tayla tries to pass off Damien, decides to keep him as he resists, then pushes past her family to trudge down front and fetch Jay.

COMMENTATOR 1

It's a shame to see how many of our  
boys get swept up in the drug  
epidemic.

COMMENTATOR 2

It is - a lot of bad influences in  
this world, especially for our  
shining stars here in the NBA.

COMMENTATOR 1

And the G Leagues.

COMMENTATOR 2

Especially the G Leagues.

Tayla returns with Jay, puts him in an empty seat on the other side of the family. She pushes past again, still holding a whining Damien. She lands in her seat as the game continues.

Andre, who is the team's point guard, goes in for a lay-up, but is body checked by one of the opposing team. He hits the ground hard as the family reacts with their various "oofs" and "eeps".

UNCLE RAY

That's alright Andre! Can't  
appreciate the win if you don't  
experience the journey. Let's go.

Then, on the Jumbotron, a giant image of ANDRE SR. appears - He is in his London Lions Jersey with animated angel wings imposed over his shoulders. The photo is overlaid with text reading: "ANDRE LAWRENCE SR. - 10 Years Gone but Never Forgotten". The commentators continue behind us:

COMMENTATOR 2

And there he is. Gone but never forgotten indeed.

COMMENTATOR 1

Has it really been 10 years since we lost him?

COMMENTATOR 2

10 years to the day. Well, 15 years for us here in Westchester.

COMMENTATOR 1

You're right - June 2004 we lost him to the blokes across the pond.

COMMENTATOR 2

He was definitely on his way back over if he hadn't torn that knee, Bill.

COMMENTATOR 1

Definitely a tragedy for every New Yorker.

The Jumbotron image then shifts to a crowd-facing-camera pointed directly at Tayla and her family. They look miserable. Tayla a mess with Damien tangled in her hair, Nigel bored on his phone, Uncle Ray rubbing out a knot in his neck, and Grace waving back to the camera like she's a fair princess being paraded through town. Jay is in the shot for a beat, not sure what to do, then the camera refocuses and cuts him out of frame.

Tayla becomes frustrated and passes Damien off to Nigel. He screams.

DAMIEN

Mommy no!

Tayla gets up to push passed them again.

NIGEL

Where you going now?

TAYLA

I'll be back.

GRACE

Tayla can you sit your ass down for one minute?

TAYLA

I said I'll be right back!

She finally pushes past Jay.

TAYLA (CONT'D)

Excuse me Jay.

Jay makes eye contact with the rest of the family for the first time.

JAY

Hey.

They all act like they didn't see him, except Damien who stares. Jay slowly turns back to the game.

16 INT./EXT. TOTAL MORTGAGE ARENA - ENTRANCE/PARKING LOT - 16  
MOMENTS LATER (FLASHBACK CONTINUED)

Tayla steps outside of the stadium and takes a big, labored, but cleansing, breath. She stares into the sky for a moment. The clouds pass. The birds sing.

But she's still exhausted.

She turns and decides to take a walk around the stadium. As she turns a corner, she sees them: A group of girls that could be lovingly described as "ratchet". But to Tayla: **they're angels.**

**MUSIC CUE: Meg the Stallion's "City Girls"**

The world warms as she watches them:

-Rapping along to the music hanging out of their souped-up sedans.

-Twerking with their feet up on the cars hoods.

-Leaning into the car windows for their dude's to light the blunts their smoking.

As Tayla watches, one of the men notices her:

DEALER

Hey Mama, you look like you need to let loose. Come over here!

Tayla looks around her as though they couldn't possibly be looking at her. She looks back to him, then:

17 INT. TOTAL MORTGAGE ARENA - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER 17  
(FLASHBACK CONTINUED)

Tayla is back inside the arena's entrance - but with a bit more of a pep in her step. Folks are pouring into the hallway as they come out of the stands to get their hot dogs, their beers.

As she goes, she again hears an argument happening in the side hallway. She approaches the hallway slowly, then again sees Jay yelling at Andre. This time, one of the coaching staff is in the middle of the altercation.

JAY

Then why did you have to come slink back here alone with him, huh?

ANDRE JR.

He's my COACH, Jay. We're at halftime so we came to the locker room.

COACH

Security!

ANDRE JR.

No, I'm sorry we don't -

JAY

Of course you just HAD to come back to the locker rooms alone. Doesn't sound suspicious at all.

Tayla intervenes.

TAYLA

Hey, hey what's going on.

As she reaches to touch Jay's shoulder, he swings around violently and knocks Tayla off balance.

As she stumbles, a **small baggie of coke** falls from her pocket - luckily, only she and Jay notice.

She quickly picks up the baggie and hides it as two security guards come and pull Jay away from the scene.

JAY

Stop.  
I don't need -  
Okay! I'm leaving!

Andre is left alone, nearly in tears as he and Tayla watch Jay leave. Behind them, the rest of the family watch the scene from the entrance to the stands.

END FLASHBACK

CUT BACK TO:

18 INT. COPPER BOX ARENA - TUNNEL - LONDON - LATER 18

The same tunnel at the same arena as the top of the episode. We continue pulling back where we left off, only this time it is revealed that the space is filled with event attendees wearing glitzy cocktail attire.

We continue to pull back to see event signage that reads: "'Balls on the Brain' by Afia Boakye - Live Reading and Conversation", depicting what could unfortunately or very intentionally be an animated brain getting tea-bagged by a scrotum holding two basketballs.

Pulling back further, we see Tayla in her own attempt at cocktail-wear reading the sign, shaking her head.

TAYLA

Fuckkkk me.

19 INT. THE COPPERBOX ARENA - COURTSIDE (CONTINUOUS) 19

A stage and seating has been set up on the court for Afia's book reading and panel. The pre-show cocktail hour has begun.

Tayla enters the arena. Folks are mingling and laughing - the space is full of industry pomp. Holding back an eye roll, Tayla finds her way to the bar. She gets in line.

Like flies to honey, William and Gus spot Tayla and tap her on the shoulder.

WILLIAM

Could it really be?

TAYLA

Sorry?

GUS

You're Tayla Lawrence.

TAYLA

I am.

WILLIAM

Oh thank GOD you're here. We've been asking in our prep calls if we could get you on to pick your brain.

GUS

And your heart. He's moderating the panel in a few minutes. But neither of us know much about you.

WILLIAM

And you seem to be an important part of the equation.

TAYLA

I told Afia I didn't really want to be a part of the equation. That's probably why -

GUS

She did a great job of keeping you under wraps.

WILLIAM

GREAT job.

GUS

Well we should let the woman enjoy her evening.

WILLIAM

Definitely. Please do enjoy the evening. But just one quick pergunta.

GUS

William don't harass the girl.

WILLIAM

What exactly was your father's diagnosis? I've read Afia's book about 12 times over and she's quite vague when it comes to the specifics of his issue.

GUS

Well darling the states weren't as advanced in their mental health medicine as England was during that time.

WILLIAM

It could just be the fault of the doctors at play, sure, but I thought it might be advantageous to ask you, Tayla, since you were closer to the source.

TAYLA

I was twelve.

GUS

The girl was twelve, William.

WILLIAM

Well I still think maybe you might have heard something around the house - some commotion about it, or...

TAYLA

Excuse me.

Tayla takes a pre-poured champagne from the corner of the bar, and slips away from the duo as quickly as she can, in any direction she can.

20

INT. COPPER BOX ARENA - LOCKER ROOMS ENTRANCE/LOCKER ROOMS 20  
CONTINUOUS

Tayla finds herself outside the arena's locker rooms where a self-guided tour has been opened to the attendees of the evening's event.

Stewing, she absent-mindedly wanders inside behind a line of other, primarily white, attendees. She drinks her champagne, in her mind wondering if she should stay or go.

Then, as though it were an 18-wheeler, she is slammed by the image of a familiar combination of letters:

"Andre Lawrence - #30"

Shocked that this placard still lives in this active locker room so many years later, Tayla takes a moment to make sure she's really seeing her father's name engraved into the locker's name plate.

She takes a moment. She runs her fingers over the placard. The surprise unleashed the stone-cold grasp she had on her held-back tears. As one threatens to slip out, she turns back and pushes her way through the crowd to the exit.

21

INT. COPPER BOX ARENA - MAIN ARENA - CONTINUOUS

21

Tayla grabs her jacket from a seat where she left it and prepares to leave.

As she heads toward the doors, Afia appears from the crowd, and sees Tayla exiting. She chases after her:

AFIA

Tayla! Tayla!

Afia catches up with Tayla, and turns her around by the shoulder:

AFIA (CONT'D)

Where you going? We're about to start.

TAYLA

You're on my ass about working at St. Bartholomew's but you decided to throw your event here?!

AFIA

I didn't hide that I was throwing it at the Lion's Arena.

TAYLA

But I didn't really have much choice around coming did I? And then what, did you sick your little commentators on me to fish for more info for your sequel?

AFIA

What?

TAYLA

I need to go.

Afia steps in front of her, blocking her way.

AFIA

Tayla, wait wait wait. Hey, wait! Please can I have just a minute?

TAYLA

Fine.

AFIA

Okay. Well, um. I'm sorry. Truly. This could have been executed with more - finesse. I'm happy you're here.

(MORE)

AFIA (CONT'D)

Not just at the event but in London. Our alone time has been a really long time coming and I hope we can really...turn it into something good.

Tayla takes a beat.

TAYLA

Thank you. Now I need to step out for a second.

AFIA

Where are you going?

TAYLA

I need a drink. I'll be back.

Tayla marches toward the exit.

AFIA

We've got an open bar right here!  
Tayla!

Afia stands, shaking her head as she's pulled away by another group of conversationalists.

22

INT. A NEARBY PUB - MOMENTS LATER

22

Tayla is drinking a large martini a bit too quickly. She gazes out the window toward The Copper Box Arena - "AFIA BOAKYE - LIVE READING TONIGHT" plastered across it's marquee.

She looks around the bar and notices she's the only Black person here outside of an OLDER GENTLEMAN (Black, 50s) sitting alone in the corner with a beer - Great.

She also notices he is watching the pub TV - it's screening an NBA basketball game. She then notices that the older man is wearing a T Shirt that reads "London Lions - '99". She stares it for a moment, wondering if this is just kismet, until a patron yells at the bartender from behind her.

O'MALLEY (O.S.)

Oy, can we get the West Ham match?  
What is this American shite?

Tayla looks over and realizes that this patron is, indeed, Dr. Frank O'Malley. He notices Afia and leaps up from his table. He goes in for a forced hug.

O'MALLEY

If it ain't U-Penn herself?

TAYLA

What are you doing here?

O'MALLEY

Watching the match.

TAYLA

Convenient that you're watching it right across the street from my cousin's event.

O'MALLEY

No way! Is your book launch at The Copper Box?

TAYLA

I'm very sure you know the answer to that question.

O'MALLEY

It must've been the universe brought us together, love. Like it did today when we saved that baby.

TAYLA

Is that what happened?

O'MALLEY

What? You black out from the adrenaline? Sounds like you need to let off some steam this evening.

O'Malley pulls out the small baggie again. Tayla considers.

TAYLA

Why's everyone saying that shit to me today.

(playfully)

Just one, you psychopath.

23

INT. - PUB BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

23

Tayla and O'Malley are doing lines off of his phone.

TAYLA

You should have life flighted her. Instead of cutting her open with a fucking butter knife.

O'MALLEY

Our skills made up for whatever lack of tools we had on our wing. She's fine.

TAYLA

No - **luck** made up for whatever lack of tools and skills **you** have.

O'MALLEY

We've got a sizable ego, in't we?

TAYLA

I've got a healthy-sized one, how about you?

O'MALLEY

Healthy-sized sounds about right.

O'Malley grabs Tayla's hand and puts it on his crotch - he's hard. Tayla pulls her hand away, but doesn't retreat. Their eyes are locked. O'Malley grabs her chin and goes in for a kiss, when:

FLASHCUT TO:

24 INT. CLUB BATHROOM (FLASHBACK)

24

Loud thumping bass resounds outside the door as Tayla and Nigel have sex in a club bathroom. As Nigel goes to town, the condom gets tangled - he reaches down and throws it on the floor.

Tayla tries to stop him. But he keeps going.

NIGEL

C'mon baby. It feels good right?

CUT BACK TO:

25 INT. PUB BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

25

Tayla pulls away from O'Malley. She gathers her things.

TAYLA

Let's go back upstairs.

O'MALLEY

Come on, stay for one more.

TAYLA

I'm ready to go I think.

He pulls her back in. She puts a stern hand on his chest:

O'MALLEY

I ain't...

She pulls away and goes for the door. O'Malley grabs her arm and pulls back hard. Tayla slips and falls to the floor, hitting her head on the way down. Her shirt lands above her navel revealing a LARGE BULBOUS SCAR running laterally above her waste line.

O'Malley comes to the ground over her as though he is going to continue his pursuit when A LOUD KNOCK comes from the door:

VOICE (O.S.)  
Everything alright in there?

Tayla quickly rises to her feet and opens the door. The older man from upstairs, OVIE, is standing in the doorway.

Tayla picks up her things off the ground.

O'MALLEY  
Don't be like that, U-Penn, it was an accident.

TAYLA  
Save it.

O'Malley looks to Ovie who is staring him down.

O'MALLEY  
What are you looking at, you old wanker?

OVIE  
Not sure myself, but I know you're talking to an ex-athlete that'll snap you in half, Bangers 'n Mash.

Tension. Tayla pauses at Ovie's revealing that he was an athlete. Rather than inquire, she decides to escape the weird energy - she pushes past.

Then, she comes back, snatches the baggie of remaining coke from the floor and exits up the stairs with a her chest high.

26

EXT. PUB/THE STEELYARD - CONTINUOUS

26

Tayla is rushing down the promenade between the pub and The Steelyard holding her bleeding forehead. People are looking, concerned.

Ovie jogs to catch up to her carrying a baggie of ice from the bar.

OVIE

Excuse me! How are you feeling? Are you alright?

TAYLA

I appreciate what you just did. But I don't need saving. So goodnight.

OVIE

Did I hear you say your cousin's book launch is at The Copper Box tonight? I'm quite fond of Afia Boakye.

TAYLA

Snooped on my conversation then followed me to the bathroom - totally normal, man.

OVIE

Just was keeping an ear out - your guy seemed like a creep.

Tayla walks away faster. He tries to keep up.

OVIE (CONT'D)

Are you visiting from America? Do I hear a New York accent?

TAYLA

Honestly it seems like you're the creep, dude. Can you please step back?

Ovie runs in front of her and turns around. She stops. He hands her the bag of ice. She rolls her eyes and accepts it.

OVIE

Listen, I'm not trying to harass you.

TAYLA

Then what are you trying to do exactly?

OVIE

I dunno, make sure you're alright?

TAYLA

Well I am.

(sarcastically)

I appreciate you so deeply. Now can you please let me go about my evening in peace.

OVIE  
Of course.

TAYLA  
Okay.

A beat. Neither of them move. Tayla means to leave, but is distracted again by Ovie's London Lion's shirt.

OVIE  
You like the shirt?

TAYLA  
My dad had the same one.

OVIE  
Your dad is a baller?

TAYLA  
Was.

OVIE  
He doesn't play anymore?

TAYLA  
He died.

OVIE  
I'm sorry.

TAYLA  
Me too.

OVIE  
How did he die exactly?

TAYLA  
Um, fuck you, that's insensitive.

OVIE  
Sorry just trying to clarify the story here.

A beat.

TAYLA  
(Sighs)  
No, you're right, I'm being a bitch.

OVIE  
No, you're not, you're expressing yourself.

Another beat.

TAYLA

Do you want to come with me to this book thing? It's about athletes teabagging each other's brains so maybe you'll find it interesting.

OVIE

Oh, no - oil and water for me in there.

TAYLA

I thought you said you were "quite fond" of Afia?

OVIE

Sure, but I wouldn't want to be a bother.

TAYLA

You didn't have any problem bothering me.

He laughs. She resists a smirk. A beat. Tayla turns to walk away, then:

OVIE

Hey, wait.  
I know what it's like to lose someone. Unexpectedly. Inexplicably. And I know what it's like to be in search of a way to...cope. I also know it can be tempting to go take a roll in the snow, but that can lead to a place that's quite painful, so, I was thinking maybe I could offer you a bit more of a natural experience -

TAYLA

Come on, man. I know we just had a cute moment but I'm really not interested -

Ovie takes out a small baggie - but this time, inside, are mushrooms. He hands them to her.

OVIE

The white stuff isn't going to take you anywhere you want to be.

TAYLA

I'm not taking mushrooms 10 seconds  
after I was attacked in a public  
bathroom -

OVIE

No they're a gift - for later. You  
should take them if you're in need  
of making meaning of some things.

TAYLA

I need to make some meaning out of  
what your old ass wants from me  
right now.

OVIE

(shrugs)

Just want to look out for you.

Ovie holds his hand out for Tayla's phone. She hands it to  
him. He puts in his number.

OVIE (CONT'D)

Call me if you need anything.

He offers the baggie of mushrooms one last time. She  
considers, then takes them. Ovie gives her a pat and turns to  
walk away. She calls after him:

TAYLA

You're weird.

OVIE

So I've heard. Only take one at a  
time!

TAYLA

Whatever, old man.

She watches him leave. "London Lions '99".

27

EXT. THE COPPER BOX ARENA - EARLY EVENING

27

Tayla approaches The Copper Box. From outside, she sees the  
panel. Folks in the seats are glued to the stage. Folks  
behind are schmoozing and mingling, chuckling and flaunting.

She's stopped again by the sight of the "Balls on the Brain"  
sign.

TAYLA

No.

Tayla tucks around the corner and pulls out the baggie of O'Malley's remaining coke. She prepares to take a bump when she remembers the mushrooms in her pocket.

She pulls the mushrooms out and ponders over them. On the packaging, a hand-written inscription reads: "How do you want to feel?".

She thinks. Then she throws the coke in a nearby trashcan and takes out two big caps and stems from the mushroom bag and pops them in her mouth. She chews for a beat - then the taste hits.

TAYLA (CONT'D)  
Gah! Disgusting.

She forces a swallow, then enters the space.

28

INT. THE COPPER BOX ARENA - LATER

28

Tayla is sitting in a seat in the back of the folded-chair audience, listening to the panel.

Afia, CLAIRE (White, Trans Woman, 30s wearing designer shades, a tight white crop, oversized jeans, and exclusive sneakers - a sports agent), and HAKEEM (Black, Male, 30s, suited and booted - a sports reporter) sit on a panel in chairs on the stage in front of a 200-person audience. William moderates:

WILLIAM  
So, forgive me, but I find it important to clarify - you're saying you 'don't identify as white'?

CLAIRE  
No.

WILLIAM  
So...how do you identify?

CLAIRE  
As a citizen of the world.

Murmurs from the audience.

Tayla rolls her eyes. She considers leaving. Then she sees Afia see her from the stage. Fuck - she has to stay. She sits down in a seat near the back of the audience.

HAKEEM

Then - respectfully - how exactly do you claim perspective on this panel? You're here to represent the white voice on the mental health issue, yeah?

CLAIRE

I'm here to critique privileged perspective and represent the voice of my clients who deserve to be heard.

As they continue speaking, Tayla is distracted by an odd movement in the projector screen behind the panelists. The fibers of the projection begin to dance - they look like the tendrils of sea anemone flowing in the ocean current.

Rubbing her eyes, she brings her attention back to the panel:

HAKEEM

Clients who are generally not white, I'm gathering.

CLAIRE

Is that not why we're here? To talk about how non-white athletes are disproportionately affected by mental illness? And unfairly represented by their Cis-White-Male teams?

WILLIAM

Yes, fair point - let's make sure we're focusing on the themes of Ms. Boakye's book -

Tayla is distracted again as her gaze drifts upward to the geometric web of pipes and support poles which create the ceiling of the arena. The pipes begin to breathe - as though they are a part of a giant ribcage inside of a steel animal, breathing at a deep, rumbling rhythm...

The panel continues:

AFIA

I'm fairly sure we haven't diverted our focus from them. This is what my book is about. People in privileged positions denying their power to create change outside of opportunities to have their egos...penetrated.

Claire scoffs. A beat.

WILLIAM

Alright - well, shall we dig into this from another angle? Afia let's talk about this title. I for one, find that rather related, am I right?

Tayla looks down to the hardwood panels of the court's floor. The swirling textures of the floorboards begin to move like water.

**MUSIC CUE: Mac Miller's "Good News"**

Tayla takes one last glance up to Afia on stage. From Tayla's POV, we see her suddenly fall backwards - seeing Afia's face leave her, then the steel ribcage, until she is consumed by the hard-wood ocean that once was the floor behind her head.

SWIRL TO:

29 INT./EXT. TRIP-SCAPE - CLUB BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS 29

With the option to freakout on the table, Tayla instead decides to let go and accept this Alice-in-Wonderland-esque journey.

She again finds herself in a swanky club bathroom - she is dressed to the nines, she feels more alive than we've ever seen her. The walls are still breathing, the world isn't quite "real" - in a way that makes everything feel alright.

Nigel sweeps in from behind her and kisses her deeply on her neck.

NIGEL

The moment I was about to start the life of a single man.

(kisses)

In comes the woman I thought couldn't possibly exist.

As Tayla gives over to this good, good loving:

MATCH TO:

30 INT./EXT. TRIP-SCAPE - NYC APARTMENT 30

The world shifts around them as they find themselves in an NYC apartment, still kissing, still loving.

TAYLA

In comes this man who gave me the chance to heal in a way I thought we were only supposed to go for alone.

As Nigel kneels down to put his face somewhere private, Tayla **GASPS** - this isn't lust, it's healing ecstasy. Off this breath:

31 INT./EXT. TRIP-SCAPE - GOOD TONGUE MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS 31

Worlds and shapes flash before Tayla's eyes:

- The panel back at the Arena - panelists' eyes bulging like other-wordly marsupials.

- A Young Tayla crying as Andre Sr. pulls out of their driveway in a Black Suburban.

- Passionate sex with Nigel in a sea of dark satin sheets.

- The SCREAM of a grown man in shattering pain!

THEN:

32 INT. TRIP-SCAPE - THE COPPER BOX ARENA COURT - CONTINUOUS 32

Tayla whips around to see the source of the scream:

The lights in the arena are all off aside from a dramatic spotlight pouring from the ceiling creating a circle of light in the center of the court. This reveals Tayla's father, Andre Sr., in his London Lions jersey. He is crumpled into the fetal position, having just torn his knee after missing a layup.

TAYLA

Daddy?

Tayla cautiously makes her way toward him. With more momentum, she runs in to help.

Just before she can reach him, she is intercepted by a group of medics who swoop in and toss Andre Sr. onto a medical guernsey.

TAYLA (CONT'D)

Wait!

The medics pull her father out of the light into the darkness. As she chases them, her father just out of reach:

PENELOPE

Hi oh my gosh hi!

As the panel continues in the background, Penelope stops Tayla in her tracks.

Tayla jolts and elbows a row full of pre-poured champagne - she's surprised to have found herself now by the bar at the back of the space. She looks around, searching for the source of the scream...

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

(To Bar)

Bartender, clean this up please.

(To Tayla)

Christ, what happened to your head?

Penelope snaps to a Back of House area and a makeup artist arrives who begins applying coverup to Tayla's now-bulbous bruise. Penelope also grabs a full glass of champagne and hands it to Tayla.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

You're Tayla, right? Great. I'm Penelope, Afia's Publicist - drink this it'll bring you back to Earth.

Penelope begins to pull Tayla to the front, distracting a number of focused guests. Tayla hears the HER FATHER'S SCREAM yet again. As she searches for its source, she realizes Penelope is taking her to the front of the audience.

TAYLA

Wait, no. No.

PENELOPE

No missy, you have to be in the spotlight! We've got a seat for you right up front.

Penelope successfully plops Tayla into a seat front and center. Tayla tries to gather her bearings as the space continues to dance before her eyes.

Afia notices her from the stage - she sneaks a wave with excitement then concern. Tayla does her best to wave back at the googly-eyed Afia. Afia continues answering William's question:

AFIA

...My - my uncle lived with us for about three years while he was playing for the London Lions. That time was really special because he became this father for me in a formative period of my life that otherwise might have been very lonely and dark.

This grinds Tayla's gears a bit. In an effort to release and stay in the moment, she grabs another glass of champagne from a passing server. She chugs it. The space dances.

AFIA (CONT'D)

..As I'm looking back on the season after he left - during which we grew farther and farther apart - I'm left to think about why he was taken from me. And what factors might have contributed to that. There's a lot of self blame in there, but ultimately I'm realizing that it's because a system that he loved didn't return the favor.

Tayla hears HER FATHER'S SCREAM yet again. She looks around for the source of the scream... As she does, she catches Penelope's eye who gives a big cheesy "This is awesome, right?" gesture.

AFIA (CONT'D)

So he couldn't support me in the way I needed because my father figure wasn't supported. He was abused by a system that uses mens' bodies and throws them away - never considering what's going on inside. The trauma imposed on him not only took his dreams away from him - it took him away from his family - and was ultimately handed down to me. That's why it's important for me to share my story, and bring our community to the light.

30 The audience reacts with "mmms" and "wows".

30

Since she can't leave, Tayla decides to discreetly throw another mushroom cap and stem into her mouth. She painfully swallows it.

As she does, she finally sees the visual she's been hunting for - the medics are pulling her writhing father on the guernsey through the audience and around the back of the stage toward the locker rooms.

Tayla gets up and runs after them, but she is intercepted by Penelope.

PENELOPE

Ummmm, what're you doing my love?  
Can't run away just yet.

Using the bit of her grasp on reality she has left, she convinces herself not to run after her dad - This can't be real, right?

Back on stage, a slideshow of images of Afia's childhood set to music are projected on a screen behind the panelists.

WILLIAM

(From the stage)

We've actually got some photographs of Afia's Father Figure ready on the projector. Folks in the audience would you like to see those?

AUDIENCE

Yes! Awe, yes. Mhm.

They scroll through a number of basketball photos until finally the slideshow lands on a photo of Andre Sr. holding YOUNG TAYLA in his arms at a family party in their backyard. It matches the photo of she and Damien on Tayla's phone background exactly.

The photo takes Tayla's breath away. She's lured forward as the photo begins to move - sounds of the space rise and morph into the soundscape of a family birthday party. The floorboards sprout blades of grass, the ceiling shines blue sky, as though the memory is playing before her.

William interrupts:

WILLIAM

How lovely. Look at you and Andre, Afia. So much fatherly love there. It's so important to have this kind of loving parent figure in your life at this age.

The Andre Sr. in the photograph comes to life. He pats and plays with the Young Tayla in the photograph, then slowly looks out of the projected photo toward Tayla in the audience. Tayla smiles and stands - drawn toward the screen, the world around her begins to melt away, as:

Penelope grabs Tayla her by the arm and pulls her toward the stage - Penelope snaps for William's attention.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 (running to the stage)  
 And look at this, folks! We've got  
 a very special guest with us  
 tonight, it seems. Could this be?  
 Afia, could this really be your  
 long lost cousin, in from America?

Penelope places Tayla next to Afia on stage. Tayla looks behind her to the photograph of she and her father. Her father has looked back toward the younger her - it's still again. Tayla takes in the audience whose faces are blurred under the dull light. Their eyes bulge and change shape.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
 We've heard so much about your  
 story from your sister-cousin's  
 book and we just MUST hear more  
 from the source. It must have been  
 a GIFT to share space with Afia and  
 your father during the time you  
 had.

Afia stands up beside her and holds her hand.

AFIA  
 Yes, this is my baby cousin. Here  
 all the way from America to support  
 me. We've had sort of an, um,  
 inverted experience with our  
 family's journey over the years,  
 but I'm so happy to have you here,  
 Tayla - to celebrate my book, and  
 to heal our shared loss together. I  
 love you.

The audience coos and awes. Cameras flash. Behind them, in the back of the house, she sees the shadow of a familiar, fatherly body... Is her father walking again?

Penelope gives Afia the "come on!" look. Afia nudges Tayla to smile for the camera - "Please." Tayla is tugged toward reality again and forces a smile for a camera she can't seem to locate.

WILLIAM

Just lovely. I'm so grateful to be here for this moment - how about you, folks? What a lovely moment of alignment - The Universe really loves us tonight, people. Tayla, do you have any words you'd like to share?

A spotlight blinds Tayla as a PA brings her a microphone. It's feedback rings in the silence as Tayla looks into the eyes of the audience, then to the photo of she and her father, then to Afia, gazing deeply into her eyes.

TAYLA

What are you doing?

AFIA

(hushed)

I'm celebrating my Uncle Andre.

TAYLA

My father. He was my father.

The audiences feels the tension - they begin to murmur.

AFIA

Tayla, I understand that. We're -

WILLIAM

(to audience)

Apologies, everyone, with deep work comes emotional experiences -

TAYLA

I'm not being emotional.

AFIA

Tayla, please, it's okay, we -

TAYLA

I lost him. You should blame yourself -

AFIA

Please breathe for a moment.

TAYLA

You're a part of that system.

AFIA

What?

(To audience)

I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen.

(MORE)

AFIA (CONT'D)

(To Tayla)

Let's get you somewhere quiet,  
okay?

Afia tries to usher Tayla off the stage.

TAYLA

I don't need quiet! I need the  
truth. You're using my father to  
sell your fucking book. When we  
should be helping him.

AFIA

We're memorializing him in a way  
that no one else will. Let's  
celebrate that together.

TAYLA

No! He's calling out for help and  
they're taking him away from me.  
And you're not doing anything.  
Where were you huh?

AFIA

Tayla I'm sorry I missed the  
services, I -

TAYLA

What happened over here? What  
happened to him?

AFIA

He tore his ACL, you know that, I -

TAYLA

Yeah, I know that! And now he's a  
broken, pill-popping mess. My daddy  
is a hero!

AFIA

I - I know that, Tayla. He was in  
pain because he couldn't do what he  
loved, so -

TAYLA

There's something deeper than books  
and basketball going on here and  
I'm not leaving this fucking island  
until I figure out what it is.

Then, a voice calls from behind the audience:

MAN (O.S.)

Tayla!

34

INT. TRIPSCAPE - THE COPPER BOX ARENA - CONTINUOUS

34

Tayla, startled, seeks for the source of the voice. The room has changed. It's now some hybrid of the same room, a hospital wing, her parents' home, and a psychedelic kaleidoscope.

Her eyes again land on the fatherly figure in the back of the house. He slowly steps through the wall of camera flashes into a spotlight in the aisle. Rather than Andre Sr. who she expected to see, Tayla sees NIGEL emerge from the shadows. He begins to walk briskly toward the stage.

TAYLA

Nigel?

(To Afia)

You invited him?

AFIA

What?

Behind Nigel, **a team of medics garbed in teal-rubber full-body gowns barge through the door** with a gurny and run toward the stage.

NIGEL

Tay, I know you're afraid but you have to trust the professionals. It's time to have our baby, okay?

TAYLA

What? No, I'm not -

Tayla hears the splash of water on the stage below her - she looks down to find that **her belly is bulging as though she's 9 months pregnant** and bloody water has pooled around her feet.

NIGEL

We have to go, Tay.

The medics prowl up the Stage Right staircase, ready to pounce toward Tayla. Behind them she sees her mother, Grace, and her brother, Andre entering the space, ready to support Tayla as she delivers her first child.

Tayla tries to run off the Stage Left staircase.

AFIA

Tayla please come back!

Out of nowhere, Nigel grabs Tayla hard and drags her to the gurney. The medics harshly strap her down and begin to pull her down the aisle and toward the center of the crowd.

NIGEL  
 (To the medics)  
 How will I know she's ready?

MEDIC 1  
 (Ignoring Nigel)  
 The cord is wrapped 2-3 times,  
 we'll need to resort to Cesarean.  
 Scalpel.

Tayla struggles to fight off the restraints as the medics park the gurney in the middle of the crowd and prepare for surgery. The crowd stands and fights to get a view of the action.

As Tayla continues to fight to escape, she looks back to the stage and sees a view that knocks the air from her body - **her father, Andre Sr. is now outside of his photograph standing next to Afia**, looking down upon the scene.

AFIA  
 Daddy help me!

The hands of the medics multiply as what seems like hundreds of them hold her down to prepare her for the procedure. She cranes her neck backwards to try to fight for a view of her father through the crowd. Could she really be seeing - Afia kissing her father on the stage?

She screams in pain as the incision is completed. Seconds later, we hear the **scream of a newborn baby**.

35 INT. TRIP-SCAPE - NEW YORK PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Peace for a moment as the familiar scream awakens her motherly impulses. She looks toward her feet to see Nigel on the other side of a hospital gown draped over her spread knees. Nigel tenderly lifts a swaddled heap over the gown toward Tayla's arms.

As she receives her child for the first time, her family creates a wall of love around her. For the first time, and possibly the only time, we Andre Jr., Nigel, Uncle Ray, Grace, and of course - Andre Sr wrapped around her with compassion. They're all focusing on her with an acceptance and peace that she's been longing for.

She feels soothed to be reunited with her son. She tenderly pulls the cloth away from his face, as:

**A 5-year-old Damien flashes devilish razor-sharp teeth up at her!** A fully-grown gremlin-version of her son crawls out of the blankets and lunges toward her breasts, hungry.

Terrified, Tayla tries to leap up, but is again bound by the grasp of the medics and her family. She yanks her arms from the binds and finally frees herself from their grasps. As she tramples her way overtop of her family and the reemerged crowd, she catches a glimpse of her father, walking away down a hallway out of the event space.

36 INT./EXT. TRIP-SCAPE - THE COPPER BOX ARENA - LOCKER ROOMS 3-6  
CONTINUOUS

Tayla chases her father down the hallway that connects the court to the locker rooms. The hallway seems to fold inside of itself as the trip-scape leads her toward her father. Each time she sees him, he slips out of view. Around the next corner.

Finally she rounds a bend into the locker rooms and:

37 EXT. TRIP-SCAPE - GRACE AND ANDRE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 37

Around the corner, she finds herself in her parents' front yard. There, in the driveway, is her father exiting a large Black Suburban and mounting the crutches he now needs to walk.

The world has stilled to frame this moment for them - the reunion that Tayla has been aching for. A beat as Tayla takes him in.

TAYLA

Daddy. What happened to you?

Andre Sr. opens up his arms to call her to him.

Tayla begins to run to him. She runs. Faster. And faster. With each step she let's go of fear, and resentment, and replaces it with release, and the joy of reuniting with her idol. The tears flow as she runs even faster.

Then, just as she is about to leap into Andre Sr.'s arms, Tayla slinks from behind him with a salacious grin. She opens her mouth to bare the same devilish fangs that Damien bore moments ago.

AFIA

Tayla...

Afia's grin gurgles over with malice. She LUNGES TOWARD TAYLA WITH A FERAL ROAR:

AFIA (CONT'D)

TAYLA!!

BLACKOUT.

38 INT./EXT. MOVING CAR - NEAR DAWN

38

Over black, the sounds of a car moving through the city in the early morning.

Tayla begins to come to as the remaining light posts flash by - blurring with the morning traffic beginning to gather.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Tayla looks down in her arms through her still-blurry gaze - there sits her baby, Damien, sleeping. She looks to the driver's seat - there, her father, Andre Sr., driving and sending her a comforting smile.

She blinks a few times to clear her vision. She looks down - she's not holding Damien, but a bundle of her messed jacket and shoes. She looks back to the driver's seat - in her father's place sits Ovie, driving her home.

OVIE

There she is.

TAYLA

(groggy)

Not you again.

OVIE

Saving the day, twice, in 12 hours.  
I need to start charging.

Silence for a moment as the car rolls down the road. The lights of inner city London begin to turn to the cobbled streets of the London suburbs.

OVIE (CONT'D)

I told you not to take those until  
you were in a space where -

TAYLA

Where I needed to make some meaning  
of things.

OVIE

What did you get out of it?

TAYLA

Still downloading.

OVIE  
How are you feeling?

TAYLA  
Like my head is turning inside out.

OVIE  
I wanna know about your heart.

TAYLA  
Feels like it's made of lead.

OVIE  
Poetic.

TAYLA  
There can be more than one literary  
genius in the gene pool.

A long beat. Tayla finally sits up from her stupor. She gathers her thoughts - and with them come a wave of emotions.

TAYLA (CONT'D)  
I just feel like everyone got the  
time they needed with him. And mine  
was stolen. I wasted so much time  
that I should've used with my daddy  
on - hiding in drugs and family -  
pleasing, and men who didn't  
respect the woman he made. And  
making another little man with one  
of those men - I love my baby - I  
do, he's my BODY. But I can't seem  
to - want him with my SPIRIT. It  
all just feels like a wall of  
static between me and this father  
of mine who I thought I knew. Until  
he came here, and I lost him. And  
I'm realizing I've just been  
fighting to find him ever since - a  
fight that he should've fought for  
me instead of - of - leaving me  
here to -

OVIE  
You deserve to be loved without  
going to battle for it, Tayla.

TAYLA  
Do I?

OVIE

(Nods)

You deserve it just the way you  
are.

A beat. Tears.

TAYLA

Why are you doing all of this?

OVIE

I have my own past to pay forward.  
A love to share that just feels -  
familiar to give to you.

TAYLA

Now who's the poet?

OVIE

Both of us it seems.

Tayla looks at him for a long time - who is this man?

39 INT. AFIA'S FLAT, AFIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 39

Afia, inside removing her make up from her scar. She notices headlights and peeks outside. Sees that it's Tayla pulling up with a strange man driving - she rolls her eyes and continues her work.

40 INT./EXT. OVIE'S CAR/IN FRONT OF AFIA'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS 40

Tayla begins to get out of Ovie's car.

TAYLA

Thank you for the lift.

OVIE

Hey, wait.

She does.

OVIE (CONT'D)

I was hoping we could - chat about  
something. For a second.

TAYLA

About?

41 INT. AFIA'S FLAT, AFIA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 41

Afia is sending a text to Andre Jr.:

"I'm not sure I'm able to handle everything your sister is bringing to the table, baby Andre. It might be time for you to step in - ya know? Let me know your thoughts."

As she is about to send, she peaks out her window to the street, to check on Tayla. She looks closer and squints to see the face of the strange man...Afia GASPS and drops her phone - as though she's seen a ghost.

FLASH CUT TO:

42 EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX OUTDOOR RAILING - FLASHBACK 42

In slo-mo, YOUNG AFIA (8 years old) falling backwards over a railing surrounding a fifth-story landing. The dimly lit concrete beckoning below. Her eyes filled with terror, as:

FLASH CUT TO:

43 INT./EXT. OVIE'S CAR/IN FRONT OF AFIA'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS 43

Tayla and Ovie continue:

OVIE  
I also played ball.  
In the early 2000s.

TAYLA  
(Laughing)  
You mentioned when you were going  
full bouncer on Dr. Handsy earlier.

OVIE  
I had a teammate who I toured with.  
Who meant a lot to me.  
He actually saved my life.

TAYLA  
Wait you played professionally?

OVIE  
I did.

TAYLA  
(excited)  
What team?

OVIE  
Only one team matters in London.

TAYLA  
Who was your friend?

OVIE  
Well we called him Captain Lori,  
but his name was -

TAYLA  
You knew my dad?  
You were on the London Lions?

OVIE  
I wanted to tell you earlier.  
But I wasn't totally sure it was  
you and I'm sure he didn't talk  
about me much, and -

TAYLA  
What do you mean you weren't sure  
it was me?

OVIE  
I just think it's only fair you  
know that there was so much more to  
your father's story than what he  
was able to take home with him.

TAYLA  
What are you saying?

A beat.

Before Ovie can answer, **Afia storms out of the front door,**  
brandishing a broom stick. She runs to the back of the car  
and **SHATTERS THE BACK WINDOW.**

Tayla and Ovie quickly leap out of the vehicle.

AFIA  
How did you know she was here?!

TAYLA  
Afia, what are you doing?

AFIA  
Get out of here!

OVIE  
I didn't mean any harm.

AFIA

Well that's a sweet fucking thing  
to come out of your mouth, you  
dickhead.

TAYLA

You two know each other? Ovie, I'm  
so sorry, I -

Afia grabs Tayla by the arm and drags her toward the house.

OVIE

Wait, please, take this.

Ovie extends **a small golden half-heart-shaped locket** toward  
her. It's the other half of the locket around her neck - it  
holds a photo of her younger self being held by Andre Sr. She  
takes it.

TAYLA

How did you get this?

OVIE

Call me when you're ready to talk.

AFIA

She most certainly will fucking  
not! Haven't you caused enough harm  
to this family?  
**STAY AWAY FROM US!**

Afia drags her, with more force, back to the building. A  
delirious Tayla squeezes the locket tightly - eyes locked  
with Ovie as she's dragged inside the flat.

The door slams.

**END EPISODE 2**