

CURVE BALL

Written by D. Ross Kellett

FADE IN:

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Trophies. Photos. First-place ribbons. Yellowed newspaper articles. Olympic gold medal. A shrine to the athletic career of a female athletic superstar.

Headlines read "Freshman Beats Local Record." "Mowry Leads Lady Buccaneers to State Title." "Star Pitcher Bound for University of Washington." "Danielle Mowry Leads USA Softball to Olympic Gold." "Mowry Looks for Third National Title."

WHIFF! Batter swings.

SMACK! Softball hits mitt.

UMPIRE (V.O.)
Stee-rike!

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. HUSKY SOFTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT

DANIELLE "DANI" MOWRY (22) stares the BATTER down. A strong young woman. Winning her life's goal. Steely determination with a ponytail.

The crowd-- all in University of Washington Husky purple and gold-- on the edge of their seats.

The CATCHER signals between her knees. One finger.

Dani nods.

She steps forward. Right arm shoots skyward, makes a graceful backwards arc, and propels the softball over the plate at 80 miles-an-hour.

WHIFF! The batter swings... as the ball sails past.

SMACK! Ball meets leather.

UMPIRE
Stee-rike two!

The crowd ROARS.

SAMANTHA (22), at shortstop, pounds fist into mitt. Bubbly. Funny. The best friend every girl wishes she had.

SAMANTHA

Come on, Dani-girl. Burn it in there. She's got nothing.

Dani catches the toss from the catcher. Breathes deep. Takes a look at the scoreboard.

Bottom of the ninth. Huskies up by one over the Arizona Wildcats. Two outs. Two strikes, one ball.

IN THE STANDS

PAUL MOWRY (45), Dani's father, mangles his fingernails. The ultimate Sports Dad. Wearing more Husky gear than the mascot.

PAUL

That's it, baby. Stay focused.

DANI

Readies herself. This is it.

The crowd stands.

The catcher signals. Two fingers.

Dani nods.

Again, the graceful arc. The ball rockets forward--

--but the batter doesn't take the bait. She holds her ground. The ball finds the catcher's mitt. SMACK!

The crowd holds their breath.

Dani smirks. Knows it even before the Umpire says:

UMPIRE

Stee-rike three! That's the game!

Happy chaos. The crowd explodes. Purple and gold fireworks light up the night.

Samantha reaches Dani first. Arms wrapped tight, a best friend hug.

Other Husky players rush Dani. She's all smiles as they tackle her.

PAUL

Climbs over the rail at the bottom of the stands. A SECURITY GUARD tries to stop him.

PAUL
That's my little girl!

The guard happily steps back. Paul rushes the field.

Happy crying faces of her teammates surround Dani. Her focus elsewhere.

DANI
Dad?! Where's my dad?

Paul pushes through the sea of reporters and fans.

PAUL
Dani! Dani!

DANI
Dad!

They meet. Embrace. Paul lifts her off the ground and spins her. She gives in, eight-years-old once again.

Flashbulbs POP. Applause builds. Dani cries tears of joy on this, the greatest night of her life.

EXT. SEATTLE - EVENING

Fly-over the Emerald City. Space Needle. Lake Union. Pike's Market. Qwest Field. Capitol Hill. Starbucks Headquarters. The Waterfront.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
The Huskies absolutely destroyed the Wildcats to take the NCAA title in three games straight. It was a perfect ending to the career of senior Danielle Mowry. Gold medal at the Olympics... now this. If Mowry doesn't earn Tournament MVP with one hundred percent of the vote, I'll eat my hat. Go ahead, Caller. You're on Ten-Ninety Sports Talk with Chuck Silvi.

CALLER (V.O.)
Hey Chuck. Thanks for taking my call.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
What else am I gonna do? Swing dance for ya?

CALLER (V.O.)
I'd like to see that. Hey, this
Mowry girl. Think we'll see her
back at the next Olympics?

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
I'd put money on that. This is
definitely not the last we've seen
of Danielle Mowry.

CALLER (V.O.)
Girl's got one heck of an arm.
Maybe the Mariners could use her.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
Not a bad idea, Caller. Speaking of
utter hopelessness... the Mariners
complete their home-stand against
the Padres tonight.

CRACK! Bat hits ball.

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - NIGHT

FRANKIE HERNANDEZ (30) watches a baseball fly into the stands
for an easy home run. The Mariners' Star Pitcher. Cocky.
Mean. Temper as big as his 6'4" frame.

HERNANDEZ
Damn it!

He kicks the dirt. The crowd at Safeco-- only one-third full--
breaks into a chorus of BOO's.

Hernandez looks at the scoreboard. San Diego Padres over the
Seattle Mariners, 8 to 1.

The Padres runner rounds the bases with a happy smile.

JOSH (O.S.)
You're tired, Frankie.

JOSH ALLEN (25) jogs to the mound, catcher's mask on his
head. Handsome, youthful, with a level head. Good-ole-boy
charm. He tosses a new baseball to Hernandez.

JOSH (cont'd)
That pitch was such a gift it
shoulda come with a bow on top.

HERNANDEZ

They ain't pulling me, amigo. Let me close it out.

JOSH

Listen to the crowd. You don't shut this down, they're gonna start screaming for blood.

The BOO's get louder. Manager JON KENJI (55) approaches the mound. Great disappointment. Eyes red and droopy from too many sleepless nights.

KENJI

How you doing, Frankie?

HERNANDEZ

I'm fine, Coach. I can stop the bleeding.

KENJI

Bleeding? We've already lost an arm and a leg. At this point, it's a damn mercy killing.

JOSH

Send this next guy to the dugout. Then we can go home... amigo.

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dani tosses her tattered softball glove on a chair. Her dirty hat. Cheeks still stained with happy tears. Smile on her face here to stay.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The disappointed crowd filters out. GRUMBLES of anger.

Owner TAKESHI NAKAMURA (60) is a statue as the crowd exits around him. A man of great silence but even greater business sense. He listens to their disappointment.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Join us this Thursday as the Mariners host the visiting Texas Rangers in a three-game series. Great tickets are still available.

A dejected FATHER walks by, holding hands with his eight-year-old daughter.

FATHER
Of course they're still available.
Freaking Mariners.

He tosses his giant foam Number One finger in the trash... as he sees Nakamura standing there.

FATHER (cont'd)
Do something!

Nakamura watches father and daughter walk away.

Sighs.

INT. MARINERS RADIO BOOTH - NIGHT

Radio announcer BUD CHARLIE finishes post-game comments into his microphone. His partner, RALPH BARNES, blows into a pinwheel.

BUD
And with tonight's loss to the
Padres, the Mariners fall to last
place in the American League West.
Ralph?

RALPH
Padre is Spanish for Father.

Bud sighs.

BUD
Despite a series of trades in the
last month, Seattle wallows at the
bottom of the barrel. Unable to get
anything started on offense... and
giving up everything and the
kitchen sink on defense with some
of the worst pitching I've ever
seen. Manager Jon Kenji must be
begging to keep his job tonight
with owner Takeshi Nakamura.

(shrugs)
Or maybe he wants to be fired. Go
back and coach a college team.

RALPH
We just got beat by the San Diego
Fathers.

INT. NAKAMURA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Kenji sits at a grand boardroom table. Head in his hands.

Nakamura paces. Passionate. Angry.

NAKAMURA

We need a spark, Jon. We're dying out there... and so are the fans.

KENJI

I don't know, Nakamura-san. I'm at a loss.

NAKAMURA

You better think of something. I can stand losing a few games. It's when I start losing fans that I get sick to my stomach.

KENJI

Bobby's got a few hot prospects down in Triple-A. Says he's got some Cuban kid with a ninety-two mile-an-hour slider.

Nakamura stares out the window. Far below, the GROUNDS CREW prepares the field for the next game.

NAKAMURA

New talent's not going to fire up the dugout. Not this late in the year.

KENJI

What's your answer, then? More Ken Griffey bobblehead nights? Giveaway Ichiro jerseys? All that does is remind the fans of the glory days... and how far we've fallen.

NAKAMURA

But it gets them through the turnstiles.

Kenji chooses his next words carefully.

KENJI

Do you care more about winning... or selling out?

NAKAMURA
If we sell out, we all win.

KENJI
Not my guys.

INT. MARINERS LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

WHAM! Hernandez throws Josh against a locker. Arm on his throat.

HERNANDEZ
Call me that again, you hick! I
dare you!

Other players rush over. A big man, designated hitter MARCUS, pries them apart. Loads of muscle. Missing a few brain cells.

JOSH
Get off me, man!

MARCUS
Guys! Fighting makes my brain hurt!

The players, in two factions, keep them apart. Hernandez foams at the mouth.

HERNANDEZ
I'm doing my best. Would help if
you could hit once in awhile.

JOSH
Yeah? What about you walking every
batter that looks at you funny?

HERNANDEZ
Screw you.

JOSH
They didn't HAVE to hit five home
runs tonight.

HERNANDEZ
I'm trying my best!

JOSH
What's really going on, Hernandez?
You on the other team's payroll?

Hernandez lunges at him.

HERNANDEZ

Take it back!

Marcus stands between them. Big hands on their chests.

MARCUS

Hey! Don't make me drop both of
you... cuz I will.

The rooms falls silent. All eyes on-- Kenji in the doorway.
Deep sadness in his eyes.

JOSH

Coach...

HERNANDEZ

We was just...

Kenji walks away without a word.

INT. KENJI'S CAR - NIGHT

Kenji drives through the night. Rain batters the window. His
wipers barely keep up.

He turns on the radio. Station where it always is: Sports
Talk 1090.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)

...dead-last in the AL West.
Pathetic. There's no other way to
describe them. Their pitchers are
slow. Inconsistent. Their batting
is about the worst I've ever seen
from the franchise. I'm not on the
"Fire Manager Jon Kenji" bandwagon
just yet, but I'm about to book my
ticket. What say you, Caller?

CALLER (V.O.)

Thanks, Chuck. I say fire his ass.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)

Watch the language, Caller. You're
live on-the-air.

CALLER (V.O.)

Fire his butt, then. Whatever.
Change needs to come from the top
down.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)

What do you suggest? Fire everyone?
Start brand new with some Triple-A
talent?

CALLER (V.O.)

Nah. They got some batting
talent... Josh Allen just needs a
hot streak. Marcus is a bomber. I
can't believe he ain't taking some
performance enhancers, if you know
what I mean. Hey, what about that
caller you had at the start of your
show? The one that suggested they
bring in that girl from UW
Softball, what's her name...?

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)

Danielle Mowry.

CALLER (V.O.)

Yeah. Mowry. Let the babe pitch a
little. Heard she's got a wicked
curve ball. Couldn't be any worse
that what they had going tonight.

Kenji's eyes light up.

SMACK. Ball hits glove.

EXT. MOWRY'S BACKYARD - DAY

Dani and Samantha toss a softball back and forth in a small
backyard. Average home, middle-class. Single-story. 1950's
construction. Nothing fancy.

SAMANTHA

So...

DANI

So?

SAMANTHA

Sam and Dani Beach Fest. Annual
tradition. You coming or not?

Samantha lobs the ball. Dani catches.

DANI

I don't think I can.

SAMANTHA

Sure you can. You and Shaun are done.

DANI

Done with a side of restraining order.

SAMANTHA

School's done. Season's done--

DANI

--in glorious, championship fashion, I might add.

SAMANTHA

All thanks to me.

(off her look)

You wouldn't pitch half as well without my pretty face at shortstop. You aren't seriously thinking of ditching?

Dani tosses. Samantha catches.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Mexico. Beaches... margaritas... boys with tans...

DANI

Tempting. Especially the 'boys with tans' part. But it's time to put my Art History degree to good use. I wonder if McDonald's is hiring.

(gets serious)

I gotta get a job. Help my dad out.

Samantha throws the ball back. Hard.

SAMANTHA

You never have any fun.

Dani holds the ball. Looks in the kitchen window.

Paul sits at the table, going through a pile of bills.

Dani throws the ball back. SMACK! Samantha winces as ball hits mitt.

DANI

Some of us have responsibilities. Not everyone has the money to go lay by a pool.

Samantha throws the ball back. Lightning speed.

SAMANTHA
We've been planning this for
months. Nearly the whole team's
going.

Dani throws a scorcher, right at Samantha's head.

DANI
Sorry. Some of us have adult
responsibilities.

SAMANTHA
Jesus... you sound like my mother.

Samantha throws it back. Dani is a statue. If looks could
kill.

The ball sails past Dani's head. Just misses. Samantha
instantly knows she screwed up.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)
Oh, jeez, Dani. I'm sorry. I didn't
mean--

DANI
--I'm thirsty.

Dani heads for the back door. Samantha sighs. Tags along.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dani approaches Paul from behind. Throws arms around him.
Plants a big kiss on his cheek.

PAUL
Good morning.

DANI
Morning, Daddy. Do you want me to
make you something?

PAUL
I'm full. Had some toast with that
heart-healthy butter you bought me.
Mighty filling... and disgusting.

She squeezes him tight.

DANI
Then my work is done.

DING DONG. Dani exits, heads for the front door.

Samantha helps herself to a seat at the table, across from Paul.

SAMANTHA
Hey, Mr. Mowry.

Paul peers over glasses on the end of his nose.

PAUL
Samantha.

SAMANTHA
You ever think about dying your hair? You'd look great as a blond.

INT. THE FRONT DOOR - DAY

Dani opens the door. Kenji stands on the front porch. Nice suit, but with a Mariner's baseball cap.

KENJI
Danielle Mowry?

DANI
Holy. Cow.
(calling out)
Dad! The manager is here!

PAUL (O.S.)
Who?

DANI
THE MANAGER!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kenji sits on a couch. Dani, Paul, and Samantha on the other. Kenji looks into the kitchen-- at the table-- at the PILE OF BILLS.

KENJI
It's just a ceremonial pitch.
You've probably seen the President do it a dozen times. What do you think?

Dani looks at Paul for help. He just smiles like a boy meeting Superman.

Samantha's more help... she gives an enthusiastic thumbs-up.

DANI

When?

KENJI

The first home game against the Rangers, this Thursday. We'll give you a Mariners jersey with your name on it. Of course, you get to keep the ball. We'll have all the players sign it.

DANI

And all I have to do is throw out the first pitch?

KENJI

You're the local sports hero of the moment, Dani. Think of how inspiring it will be for all the little girls in the stands to see you on the mound.

DANI

It's just one pitch. They probably won't even remember me by the end of the game.

KENJI

You want to be a part of Mariner's history, don't you?

Paul grabs her hand. Tight.

PAUL

Sure would be sweet to see you up there... on the mound at Safeco.

KENJI

It goes without saying that your father will get a special seat... right there, near the home dugout.

Paul grins like a child. Dani matches his enthusiasm.

DANI

Yes! Of course, yes. You could have asked me to dress as the Mariner Moose, and I would have said yes.

Laughs all around. Samantha sheepishly raises her hand.

SAMANTHA
Can I be the Moose?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Kenji walks to his car. Takes out his cell phone. Dials.

KENJI
She said yes. Make sure the media
is in place.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

SWEEPING shot over the baseball diamond. Seats maybe half-filled. Gorgeous, sunny day. Retractable roof sits open.

BUD (V.O.)
That famous Seattle rain decided to
take a vacation today. The sun is
out... the roof is open... it's a
great day for baseball at Safeco
Field.

RALPH (V.O.)
You know what's a great day for
baseball? Thursday. Wednesday? Not
so much.

AT HOME PLATE

A pretty BEAUTY QUEEN belts out The National Anthem. The crowd stands. Hands on hearts.

BEAUTY QUEEN
...AND THE ROCKETS RED GLARE, THE
BOMBS BURSTING IN AIR...

BY THE MARINERS' DUGOUT

Dani on the field. Looks mighty cute in her custom Mariners jersey. Samantha, in a primo front-row seat, gives her a big hug.

SAMANTHA
Good luck. Remember... you're
throwing a baseball, not a
softball.

DANI
Boys always play with smaller
balls.

SAMANTHA
Knock 'em dead, Dani-girl.

DANI
Meet me for a frilly girly drink
after the game?

SAMANTHA
As long as it has a tiny umbrella.

They clasp hands. A look between them. BFF's.

Paul stands next to the dugout. Stares at the crowd. The lights. The field. The players.

DANI
Close your mouth. You're drooling.

PAUL
(snaps out of it)
Sorry.

She wipes his chin. Motherly.

DANI
I get it. You're five-years-old
again.

PAUL
Is it that obvious?

DANI
When I'm done, I'll get you a nice
big lollipop.

He plants a kiss on her cheek.

PAUL
Knock 'em dead, kiddo.

As she walks away...

DANI
Everyone's telling me to knock 'em
dead. Why the violence?

Kenji joins her. Arm around her shoulder. Leads her to

HOME PLATE

He tosses a baseball into her glove.

KENJI
Here you go. A little smaller than
you're used to.

DANI
Size doesn't matter.

She stifles a laugh. Kenji allows the hint of a smile.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Throwing out the first pitch...
Olympic Gold Medalist... two-time
NCAA female athlete of the year...
star pitcher of your national
champion University of Washington
Huskies Softball Team... DANIELLE
MOWRY!

Big applause. Dani gives a wave. She stares at--

--A LITTLE GIRL in the third row. Pink Mariners hat. Waves
back with a huge grin minus two front teeth.

Dani blows her a kiss.

KENJI
I want to introduce you to your
catcher... Josh Allen.

Josh bounds over. Catcher's Gear on minus the mask. He and
Dani shake hands. His Ryan Reynolds good looks cause her to
blink.

DANI
Josh Allen...

JOSH
That's MY name.

DANI
Sorry. Duh. I'm Dani.

JOSH
I know. Dani Mowry. You've got a
hell of an arm, kid.

DANI
Thanks. I have two, you know.
Double the pleasure. Doublemint
gum.

Dani shakes both arms out like a sick pelican. Josh and Kenji
stare at her like she farted.

JOSH

Alright, kid... nice and easy. Just lob it, overhand... that underhand softball stuff don't play here. You keep it within my reach, I'll snag it, make you look like a star.

DANI

Nice and easy...

JOSH

Good luck out there.

Josh gives her a friendly pat on the butt. Dani goes beet red. Kenji leads her to the

PITCHER'S MOUND

KENJI

Okay, Dani... we wanna give the crowd a little thrill. How do you feel about burning one in there?

DANI

What... you mean, like a real pitch?

KENJI

You're back on the mound, aren't you?

Dani looks down: at the dirt under her cleats, the field all around, the crowd. This is home.

DANI

I dunno... Mr. Allen doesn't have his mask--

KENJI

--He'll be fine. He catches ninety mile-an-hour fastballs in his sleep. Besides, it was his idea. Most first pitches are snoozers that rarely go over the plate. Remember the last pitch Bill Gates threw? Barely made it to the plate. Burn one in there... show us one of your famous Mowry curve balls.

Dani looks at the little girl in the pink hat. Feels the baseball in her hand.

KENJI (cont'd)
When are you going to have a chance
like this again?

Dani nods. Sets herself.

KENJI (cont'd)
That's my girl.

Kenji jogs away.

Dani steadies. Stares ahead-- like it's the championship game
all over again.

Josh pounds fist into mitt. Gives her a smile. Takes a casual
stance behind the plate.

JOSH
Come on-- come on-- right here.

Dani steps forward. Arm flies backwards, then down. Release!
Ball screams forward.

Josh's eyes go wide.

Ball curves high. Target: Josh's face.

Dani cringes.

Josh gets glove up-- just in time! SMACK! Josh pulls the
glove down. Ball safely inside. Gives Dani a look... annoyed.

Crowd to its feet! ROAR! Flashbulbs POP!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Holy cow! Did you see that? Folks,
Danielle Mowry near took off Josh
Allen's head!

The speed count lights up the Titantron: 86 MPH!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (cont'd)
I have never seen a ball curve like
that... amazing!

INT. MARINERS RADIO BOOTH - DAY

Bud drops his coffee cup.

BUD

Holy Cheesemakers. Without warming up, twenty-two-year-old Danielle Mowry just threw a curve ball with more heat than most major league pitchers could ever dream of!

RALPH

Do you really think pitchers dream of throwing curve balls?

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Kenji escorts Dani off the mound. She basks in the roar of the crowd.

KENJI

Nice job, Mowry. I could feel the heat from the dugout.

DANI

'Nice and easy' is for girls.

Dani gives Paul a wave. Samantha too. Kenji leads her to a door beneath the

MARINER'S DUGOUT

KENJI

Follow me. There's something I want to show you.

They disappear through the door. At

HOME PLATE

Josh clutches the ball with angry fist. He gives chase.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Kenji hustles Dani through. Empty. Featureless. Maintenance rooms on either side.

JOSH (O.S.)

Hey!

They stop. Josh jogs towards them.

JOSH (cont'd)

You forgot your ball.

Dani puts her hand out with a smile. Josh SMACKS the ball into her hand. She winces.

KENJI

Josh--

JOSH

--What the hell was that?

DANI

(joking)

Whassa matter? Couldn't take my heat?

JOSH

(clearly not joking)

Your HEAT nearly took my head off. How about a warning next time?

DANI

Just wanted to give the fans a little show.

Kenji grabs her arm.

KENJI

Come on.

JOSH

Nice. You could have knocked my teeth out and all you thought about was giving the people some entertainment?

DANI

What are you talking about? You knew I was gonna burn it in there.

Kenji pulls her away. The vein in Josh's forehead pulsates with anger.

JOSH

News flash: you're crazy!

DANI

Editorial: you need a shave!

JOSH

Stubble is fashionable!

DANI

Five years ago!

KENJI

Allen. Get back to the dugout...
NOW!

Josh stares daggers at Dani. She gives it right back. Kenji pulls her around a corner, into

INT. MARINERS MEDIA ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A wave of FLASH BULBS. Huge crowd of REPORTERS clamor for a statement. Kenji brings a shell-shocked Dani to the podium. He quiets the mob with a raised hand.

KENJI

Thank you all for coming. You just witnessed a pretty amazing feat of pitching. Unconventional, yes... but the lady's got a hell of an curve ball.

Dani blushes. The reporters laugh.

At the back of the crowd, Paul and Samantha run in. Paul stretches to see over the cameras and raised hands.

Dani sees them. Gives a little wave.

PAUL

There she is!

SAMANTHA

I can't see her... curse my tiny body.

Kenji throws his arm around Dani. Pulls her to the podium.

KENJI

Washington State was first to grant women the right to vote... a proud tradition of equality and opportunity. Today, we continue making history. I'd like to formally announce the new addition to the Seattle Mariner's pitching roster... the first woman to play Major League Baseball: DANIELLE MOWRY!

Dani's mouth drops open.

Reporters rush forward. Questions fly like bullets.

PAUL

What did he say? Is he serious?

Samantha smiles, but something hints that she's less than thrilled.

SAMANTHA

Guess she's not coming to Mexico.

Kenji whispers to Dani, hand over the mic.

KENJI

What do you think?

DANI

Can't talk. I think my tongue might fall off.

KENJI

Think of all the girls you'll inspire. Think of the history you'll make.

Flashbulbs reflect off her watery eyes.

KENJI (cont'd)

You're good, Dani. Really good. A little training, and you'll be unstoppable. How would it feel to strike out Derek Jeter?

Dani looks past the crowd... into the eyes of her father. Kenji notices.

KENJI (cont'd)

This isn't a volunteer thing, Dani. You'll be paid. More than you could ever need... more than your dad would need to get rid of that pile of bills in the kitchen.

That did it.

DANI

Okay. Okay.
(through tears)
Sign me up... Coach.

KENJI

You sure? Last chance to back down.

DANI

I NEVER back down.

Kenji steps away. The podium is all hers.

KENJI
I noticed.

INT. MARINERS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Players take off uniforms after a tough game. Hernandez rubs his sore pitching arm.

MARCUS (O.S.)
Guys! Look at this!

They rush over. Josh at the front. On the locker room TV: ESPN SportsCenter. Clip from Dani's press conference.

MARCUS (cont'd)
Hey, Allen... it's your girlfriend.

JOSH
Shut it, you ox.

They watch. It takes a few seconds to register... as Josh's face turns red.

JOSH (cont'd)
Wait... this is a joke, right?

INSERT SERIES OF CLIPS - TV MONTAGE

ESPN SPORTSCENTER

SPORTS ANCHOR
...it must be a joke. With one crazy decision, Manager Jon Kenji makes history but ignites a firestorm. Is there any other way to look at this besides a poorly-conceived publicity stunt from the pathetic Seattle Mariners?

MSNBC

FEMALE ANCHOR
At first glance, what a great achievement for women in sports. At second glance, though, does anyone really believe Danielle Mowry will get any actual playing time? One can actually hear owner Takeshi Nakamura standing outside Safeco Field saying "Come watch us play."
(MORE)

FEMALE ANCHOR(cont'd)

We have a woman now. Look how progressive we are."

CONAN

CONAN O'BRIEN

The Seattle Mariners have hired the first woman to play professional baseball. Have you seen this? Gives new meaning to the phrase "two strikes, no balls."

END SERIES OF CLIPS

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dani at her open closet. Trendy, fashionable college girl outfits fill the space. She pushes hangers aside. Makes a space.

Hands brush against her purple Husky jersey. She runs a hand along the shoulder.

Dani brings in a crisp white Seattle Mariners jersey. Hangs it in front of the college jersey, covering it completely.

INT. KENJI'S OFFICE - DAY

Kenji sits at his desk. Bonsai Tree next to his computer. Ancient Japanese etchings on the wall.

Josh, Hernandez, and Marcus confront him. Rest of the team just outside the office, peering in. Wolves ready to pounce.

Kenji is serenity.

HERNANDEZ

Bullshit, Coach! Absolute, one hundred percent, bullshit.

JOSH

How does this make us look? The world is laughing at us. Look at the freaking Mariners... they gotta bring in a girl to win.

HERNANDEZ

I just wanna hear you say it: that this is just some crazy publicity stunt. Give her an honorary jersey. Let her sit in the dugout for a game. Whatever!

(MORE)

HERNANDEZ(cont'd)

Just tell me you're not actually serious about this, man.

Kenji stands. Statue of calm.

KENJI

I saw an eighty-six mile-an-hour curve ball.

JOSH

So did I! Nearly took my face off.

HERNANDEZ

Am I out of a job? Is this some crazy Title Nine, Affirmative Action thing?

KENJI

Of course not. She's got amazing control... but she has no power... not yet. We're going to train her.

HERNANDEZ

What does this say to the guys in Triple-A? Hey, bust your ass, train for years for a shot at the bigs. What? Don't have a uterus? Too bad... you're not wanted.

The other players get riled up. Shouts of "Yeah!" And "You tell 'em!" Kenji's losing them.

Marcus raises his hand.

MARCUS

What's a uterus?

KENJI

Come on, guys... I know we're rewriting the rule-book with this one. She SHOULD spend time in the minors... but I'm asking you to give her a chance, like any other rookie.

MARCUS

What about the locker room? Is she gonna be in here... changing with us?

Kenji swallows. Doesn't have an answer. Clearly hasn't thought about that.

MARCUS (cont'd)
 You know I like to walk around
 naked.
 (points at crotch)
 Marky Mark and the Funky Bunch need
 to be free!

Laughter and shouts of agreement from the players.

MARCUS (cont'd)
 Funky Bunch! Funky Bunch! Funky
 Bunch!

Marcus leads the players in an angry, if humorous, chant.
 Josh and Kenji lock eyes. Genuine anger remains.

NAKAMURA (O.S.)
 You will BE QUIET!

The chant stops mid-Funky Bunch. The team makes room.
 Nakamura stands in the center of the locker room. Hands
 clasped neatly in front.

You could hear a pin drop.

NAKAMURA (cont'd)
 The acquisition was Manager Kenji's
 idea... but championed by me. If
 anyone has a problem with her
 skipping Triple-A, they can bring
 it up with me. Clearly you need
 something-- anything-- to help you
 win.

Josh grows some balls.

JOSH
 Mr. Nakamura, we--

NAKAMURA
 --if I hear another word, you will
 be traded to the Tallahassee
 Mudslingers. Do not forget, Mr.
 Allen, whose name is on the bottom
 of your inflated paycheck.

That shut him up.

NAKAMURA (cont'd)
 Miss Mowry will bring new fans to
 the game. New attention.
 (smug smile)
 (MORE)

NAKAMURA(cont'd)

I came down to inform you we have already sold out the next series of games.

The players look at each other. Eyebrows raised. Impressed.

NAKAMURA (cont'd)

You play better with a sold out crowd. You know it. I know it. Trust me... you will win.

He heads for the exit.

NAKAMURA (cont'd)

You're welcome.

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dani gazes at a framed photo. She kisses her finger. Transfers kiss to photo: nine-year-old Dani in the arms of a beautiful woman.

DANI

Mom... I hope you're watching. You're gonna LOVE this.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

Dani pulls up to the Player's Entrance. Her Honda Accord rattles, many years past prime. SECURITY opens the gate. Waves her in.

REPORTERS mob the car. Cameras in the window. Shouted questions. Dani freezes. Terrified and excited all at once.

Security clears the mob away. Dani pulls in.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Kenji leads Dani along. Her arms piled high with uniform, shoes, and hat.

KENJI

We had to improvise, but we managed to find you a private room to get dressed.

DANI

Honestly, the locker room arrangements never even crossed my mind.

KENJI

Mine either. But the guys...

They walk past the open door to the--

MARINERS LOCKER ROOM

Most the guys are fully dressed in practice uniforms. Angry looks at she walks past. Marcus stands proud, towel around his waist. He smirks at her. Flexes his pecs.

KENJI

...they had some concerns.

Josh glares at her. Something about his stare... she looks away.

DANI

Talk about your cold shoulders.

KENJI

Come on. Give those shoulders time to warm up.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - LATER

Dani emerges from a tiny office no bigger than a broom closet. Her own personal locker room. She looks cute in her practice uniform. Pulls the hat on tight, ponytail out the back.

She looks down the hallway. One way, then the other.

DANI

Hello?

Her voices echoes off lonely hallway. She starts walking. Stops. Pulls fabric out of her ass.

DANI (cont'd)

Now I know why they're always adjusting themselves.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Dani climbs the stairs. The field opens before her. Practice in full swing. A group plays catch in the outfield. Another do jumping jacks behind third base. Marcus and the biggest guys line up for batting practice.

Everyone stops as Dani walks onto the field. She forces a smile.

DANI

Hi.

Her small voice is barely heard beyond home plate. A look to Kenji... help me out here.

DANI (cont'd)

Where do you want me, Coach?

Josh looks at the scoreboard... and the time. Smug grin.

JOSH

It's nine-oh-three.

Kenji sighs.

KENJI

You're late.

DANI

I couldn't get the belt right--

KENJI

--Five laps. Around the outfield.

DANI

You're not serious.

KENJI

Welcome to the team.

Dani pleads with her eyes, but he's not having it.

She scowls at Josh. He shoots her a bemused look of satisfaction.

She takes off. Jogs past the dugout.

Hernandez leans over the railing. Checks out her ass.

HERNANDEZ

(just between them)

You got a juicy butt... for a white girl.

Dani ignores him. Keeps running.

LATER

Dani jogs around the end of center field. Determined.

Josh watches.

LATER

Dani makes another lap. Practice continues... as the players laugh and mock her.

LATER

Dani rounds home plate. Face red. Breathing heavy. Kenji blocks her path.

KENJI

Okay... that's enough.

She side-steps. Bolts around him. Picks up the pace.

DANI

(out of breath)

No. That was only four. I owe you five.

The punishment continues. Josh's amusement turns-- slowly-- into a look of respect.

LATER

Dani finishes her jog at a Gatorade dispenser. She slams back several cups worth.

The team gives her a mocking round of applause. Kenji joins her. Hands her a brand new baseball glove.

DANI

I've already got one.

KENJI

There's no room for your over-sized softball gloves here. You're a baseball player now.

He shoves the glove in her chest. She handles it like a dead cat.

KENJI (cont'd)
 Now, get your ass to the bull pen
 and teach these boys how to pitch.

INT. NAKAMURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nakamura looks down on the field. Watches Dani jog across the field.

He smiles with quiet satisfaction.

EXT. MARINERS BULL PEN - DAY

A long, caged space where back-up pitchers warm up. Josh catches, full gear. Hernandez winds up, delivers a missile over the plate.

SMACK! Josh catches it. Stands. Takes off his mask. Annoyed.

JOSH
 I said change-up. Not fast-ball.
 That look like a change-up to you?

HERNANDEZ
 I changed it up... to a fast-ball.

JOSH
 I give the signal, you decide, then
 you throw the pitch we both agreed
 on, you cocky S.O.B.

HERNANDEZ
 (mocking salute)
 Yes, Captain!

JOSH
 Enough with you...

Dani enters. The guys fall silent.

Josh sighs.

JOSH (cont'd)
 ...what about you, Mowry? You know
 how to work with your catcher?

HERNANDEZ
 (under his breath)
 Sure, in the kitchen, or making
 babies.

Laughter from the peanut gallery. She ignores them.

DANI

The pitcher and catcher are a partnership. They drive the defense. Each one complements the other.

HERNANDEZ

Yeah, right. Who's the bigger star... Cliff Lee, or his catcher?

DANI

That's why your ERA is so pathetic... you're more focused on posing for your bobblehead than improving your game.

Hernandez seethes.

Dani smirks.

The other guys laugh... they're enjoying this.

HERNANDEZ

Rookie doesn't know her place. Pitch a no-hitter against the Yankees, then you can talk smack.

DANI

You're right. I'm sorry. I should respect my elders. My MUCH elders.

The guys ROAR with laughter.

HERNANDEZ

Okay, okay. Let's see what you got, chica. Think you can burn one in there without using that underhand softball crap?

Dani takes her place on the mound. Catches the toss from Josh.

DANI

Please don't tell me how to pitch. Have I mentioned I won an Olympic Gold Medal?

The guys WHISTLE.

DANI (cont'd)
I'll bring it, next practice. It's
so shiny, Hernandez. Like a mirror.
You could see all your acne.

The guys howl with laughter. Impressed with her moxie.

Hernandez goes red.

Dani sets up.

Josh takes his position. Mask down.

JOSH
Notice the mask. Kindly keep the
ball away from my face. I'm very
pretty.

DANI
Pretty cocky, maybe.

Josh signals for a curve ball.

She nods.

She winds up. The same underhanded softball pitch as before.
The ball screams across the bull pen... curves down, and hits
Josh's glove with a satisfying THWACK!

The guys are speechless.

HERNANDEZ
Eh... way outside.

JOSH
BARELY outside. But damn, that was
one hell of a throw. Think you
could do that for nine innings?

DANI
Did I mention a gold medal is much
heavier than a silver?

Josh tosses the ball back.

JOSH
Yeah, yeah.
(Dani impression)
I was on the Wheaties box. Look at
my perfect white teeth.

HERNANDEZ

Hey Josh... you supporting this circus?

JOSH

Look at it this way, Hernandez: whatever helps us win. If Kenji found a monkey that could hit, I'd say hire the monkey.

DANI

Gee, thanks.

JOSH

Just pitch. It ain't always about you, little girl.

She sets up again.

Josh gives the signal.

Dani nods. Burns it in there. Nearly perfect. She takes a bow.

HERNANDEZ

Beginner's luck.

DANI

I'll be signing autographs after practice.

Josh winds up, ball in hand.

HERNANDEZ

Don't your boobs get in the way?

Josh throws... but Dani is looking at Hernandez.

DANI

No. Do your's?

WHACK! Josh's throw hits Dani in the shoulder. Not a hard throw, but it drops her to the ground. She cries out.

The guys run to her. Josh there first.

Hernandez stifles a laugh.

AT HOME PLATE

Kenji hears her yell out. He sprints for the bull pen.

DANI

Sits up. Rubs her shoulder. Eyes wet... but she squeezes back the tears.

JOSH

Oh, man... I'm sorry. You okay?

Dani rotates her arm. Winces.

DANI

I'm fine. It wasn't my throwing arm.

JOSH

That was my fault. I should have looked--

She pulls away.

DANI

--I said I was fine.

Dani stands. Josh tries to help but she squirms away.

Kenji appears at the cage, big with concern.

KENJI

What happened?

HERNANDEZ

(with a smirk)

Josh nailed the new girl.

KENJI

(ignores him/to Dani)

Do you need the medic?

Dani shakes it off.

DANI

I'm alive. You can stop with the concern.

JOSH

Screw this... get the medic.

DANI

I said STOP.

They do.

DANI (cont'd)
 I'm fine. I'll live.
 (to Josh)
 I'm nobody's little sister...
 (to Kenji)
 ...or daughter.

Dani walks away. In pain. Keeps it inside.

INT. DANI'S CAR - DAY

The long drive home. Dani sits in traffic. Radio on... a familiar voice.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
 Let's get down to brass tacks. When some giant Chicago Cub comes barreling in from third base, is Dani Mowry gonna throw herself in front of him to get the out? I'm saying this for her safety, so hold the angry calls my female listeners... all three of you. She's gonna get killed. Is that what the Mariner's want? The first female player in the MLB has her career cut short after getting flattened by some two-hundred-fifty pound monster on steroids?

Dani rips off her cap. Punches the steering wheel.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I'm saying this for the safety of any girl out there who, because of this whole mess, wants to be a pro-baseball player. Or football. Or hockey. Whatever. Don't play her, Manager Kenji. Don't give her one pitch from the mound. This is a disaster waiting to happen. The sooner it's over, the better.

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Dani takes off her shirt. One careful button at a time. Winces. Sports bra underneath. She looks at the--

GIANT PURPLE BRUISE

--on her shoulder. She lifts her arm. Whimpers in pain.

She collapses on the bed. Looks at her phone. Dials.

PHONE (V.O.)

You have one new message.

A button press. BEEP.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

Dani-girl! It's me, Sam. Mexico awaits. Plane leaves first thing in the morning. Look, I know you can't go, but can you at least join me and the girls at Jillian's for a good-bye drink? I'll buy you a basket of chili fries! Extra cheese!

Another button press.

PHONE (V.O.)

Message deleted.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Dani at the open fridge. Can't decide. Still rocking the sports bra and shoulder shiner.

PAUL (O.S.)

Mugged again?

DANI

Gang of ninjas got the jump on me.

Paul enters. Sits.

PAUL

Don't eat the cold pizza. That's my dinner.

DANI

Why is my father the only man in my life that DOESN'T want to take me to a hospital?

PAUL

Because I've seen worse. I seem to remember a certain little girl who wanted to skateboard with all the boys.

Dani smiles. Pulls out a milk carton. Takes a drink.

PAUL (cont'd)
The Mariners are away at San Francisco this week. You going?

DANI
In case you missed the papers... and every TV Channel... I'm a Mariner now. Hence: going.

PAUL
I can't protect you when you're away.

DANI
Have you seen the bruise on my shoulder? You can't protect me in town either.

PAUL
My daughter: speaker of the truth.

DANI
My father: forgetting who the REAL strong one is in this family.

A nice moment. Dani gulps down more milk.

Paul looks at the pile of bills. Gets serious.

PAUL
If you're doing this for the money... for me... I don't care. You can quit, and--

DANI
--Dad--

PAUL
--Let me finish. You can quit... and we'd find a way. I took on a lot of debt... after your mom--
(catches himself)
--but we always made it work. You don't HAVE to do this.

Dani puts the milk on the table. Kneels before him and grabs his hand.

DANI
There was a little girl in the stands when I threw out that pitch. Pink Mariners hat.
(MORE)

DANI(cont'd)

Missing her two front teeth. That
look in her eyes...

PAUL

Dani...

DANI

Tell her I don't have to do this.
If you can... I'll quit tomorrow.

But he can't. And she knows it.

INT. JILLIAN'S SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Happy chaos. Girls overflow with laughter and beer.

Samantha sits among the group. Lost in her own world. She
checks her phone.

Nothing.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Josh walks past the locker room. Normal clothing. Bag over
his shoulder. He glances at Dani's personal locker room, the
tiny office.

He laughs at the poster on the door: a sexy poster of a Coors
Light Girl in a Mariners jersey. Cleavage hangs out. Beer
bottle in each hand. On her exposed mid-riff, written in
Sharpie: DANI MOWRY.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

The morning sun rises over the baseball diamond. Empty.
Peaceful.

Josh walks onto the field. He hears swift FOOTSTEPS on
cement. Looks.

High in the stands. Upper decks--

DANI

--jogs up the stairs. She reaches the top, jogs down, then
back up. A determined workout.

Josh watches, impressed.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Josh rips the poster down. Crumples it. Tosses it in a nearby trash can.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

The official team bus waits at the curb. Players stream out of the stadium. Out of uniform, bags over shoulders. They head for the bus.

MARCUS
Didya like it?

JOSH
I didn't see it. It musta fell down.

MARCUS
Darn. I like boobies.

JOSH
Of course you do.

Marcus notices something... stops in his tracks. Holds Josh back with giant arms.

MARCUS
What the hell?

REVEAL the side of the bus. The Seattle Mariners logo next to a giant picture of Dani. Written beneath her smile: "A baseball diamond is a girl's best friend."

Kenji runs to the front of the mob.

KENJI
What's going on?

MARCUS
No way, Coach. That's crap. Where are the rest of us?

Hernandez shoves others aside. Forehead vein pulsates.

HERNANDEZ
What are we? Barbie's Mariners?

KENJI
Come on, guys. It's just marketing.

Hernandez throws his bag down. Marcus follows.

HERNANDEZ

No. This is a team. We're more than one man.

MARCUS

(whispers)
She's a girl.

HERNANDEZ

I know that, you stupid--

Players break into JEERS. Bags thrown down.

KENJI

--Guys, please...

HERNANDEZ

We're not getting on that bus, Coach.

KENJI

Get on that bus, Hernandez... or there'll be fines. For all of you.

Hernandez crosses his arms.

HERNANDEZ

I'm a millionaire. Bring it on.

JOSH

(just between them)
See this, Coach? This is what we were afraid of.

Kenji can't speak. Hopeless. Lost.

Dani exits the stadium. Back of the crowd. Can't see what all the fuss is about.

DANI

What's up?

The guys part. Angry eyes on her. Dani gulps. Gets a clear view of--

THE BUS

HERNANDEZ

Quit now, Mowry. It's okay. Maybe you can trade in your fame and do some commercials for Tampax.

MARCUS

Yeah! Maybe a... bra company too!

Dani storms through the crowd. Shoves guys back. Fire in her steps. Guys tower over her, but she presses forward.

Hernandez expects to be punched. Raises his arms for protection--

--but Dani sails past. Heads for the bus.

She rips into the picture. Scratches. Tears. Pulls her face completely off. Players watch in shock as she rips it away... leaving only the Mariners logo.

DANI

(to Hernandez)

You done whining like a little girl? We've got a plane to catch.

Josh laughs. Shoves Hernandez toward the bus.

JOSH

Let's go... little girl.

Players pile onto the bus. Looks of respect toward Dani.

Dani stuffs the crumpled picture in Kenji's chest.

DANI

We're a team, Coach. The next time I see something like this, I'm gone.

She blows past him. Kenji bows his head. Wounded.

EXT. SEATAC AIRPORT - DAY

The Mariners private jet takes flight.

INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY

A flying frat house. Players lie back in first-class leather seats. Some listen to music. Others toss Nerf balls back and forth.

Marcus dances for his teammates. The Sprinkler. The Roger Rabbit. An exercise in stupidity.

Hernandez holds up a home-made dance scorecard. Gives Marcus a 2.

At the back... Dani sits alone.

BOING! A ball bounces off her head. She grabs it. Annoyed. Josh jogs down the aisle. Hands up, wants it back.

JOSH
How's your shoulder, kid?

DANI
How's your face?

She throws it back. A hard throw, but he catches it.

He's one inch from being offended, but her smile gives her away. He grins right back. Handsome.

JOSH
Keep it up, Mowry. You might impress me yet.

DANI
(swoons/over-the-top)
Really, Mr. Allen? My goal in life!

He laughs. Jogs back up the aisle.

KENJI (O.S.)
He'd never admit it...

Kenji comes up from the rear. Takes the seat across the aisle.

KENJI (cont'd)
...but he thinks you've got it.

DANI
"It." Yay. Maybe I can be the next American Idol.
(gets serious)
What about you?

KENJI
I gave you the jersey. Have a little faith.

DANI
About the bus thing... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to take it out on you.

KENJI
No. It's my team. You had every right.

He gives her a fatherly smile. Dani fidgets, uncomfortable.

DANI

Look... I don't mean to offend you... but, I hope this isn't some misguided father/daughter thing with me.

KENJI

Dani--

DANI

--I wouldn't be upset. Really. I just need to know that I'm here for the right reasons.

Her eyes beg for truth. Kenji takes a deep breath.

KENJI

My daughter, Monica, is a year younger than you. She's at Columbia studying pediatrics. No time for fun. She is the most committed person I've ever met. It'll be many years, I fear, before I have a grandchild.

Dani smiles knowingly.

KENJI (cont'd)

I'd be lying if I said I didn't see her passion in your eyes.

He grabs her hand.

KENJI (cont'd)

I'd also be lying if I said you didn't throw the greatest curve ball I've seen in all my years in baseball. THAT is why you're here.

A silent nod between them. Understanding. Respect.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY INTO NIGHT

Establishing. Golden Gate Bridge. Alcatraz. Pier 39. Coit Tower. San Francisco trolley.

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Home of the San Francisco Giants. Sold out crowd watches the evening game.

GIANTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Welcome to a cool Thursday night at AT&T Park as the San Francisco Giants open a home series against the visiting Seattle Mariners. One could wonder, why such a big crowd for a weeknight game against the last-place team in the division? Wonder no more. Count the number of young girls in the seats and you'll come up with the answer pretty darn quick: Danielle Mowry could make her Major League Baseball debut. She's not in the official pitching rotation, but the crowd is hopeful.

Various shots of the crowd. Definitely pro-Giants, but many home-made signs. TEENAGED GIRL holds sign: "I came to see Dani play." YOUNG WOMAN holds sign: "Go Dani Go!" LITTLE GIRL wears T-shirt: "Future baseball player!"

GIANTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 The marketing geniuses worked their magic with this one... Mowry has definitely increased attendance. But the question remains: will Manager Jon Kenji give her any playing time tonight?

EXT. VISITING BULL PEN - NIGHT

Mariner's RELIEF PITCHER warms up. Other Mariners pitchers sit on a bench. Dani on the end. Excited, but trying to act casual.

Group of TEEN GIRLS in Giants jerseys passes the bull pen. They spot Dani.

TEEN GIRL
 Go Dani!

OTHER TEEN GIRL
 Whooooo!

Dani gives a little wave. The mean-looking Relief Pitcher notices.

RELIEF PITCHER

If you'd rather sign autographs, go ahead. If you'd rather play... you need to ignore all that.

DANI

Got it. Ignoring.

INT. MEXICAN HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Samantha and her FRIENDS gather around the TV. Dressed in tropical wear. Bikinis. Ready for the pool.

IMPATIENT FRIEND

Come on, Sam... the pool is filled with water and drunk college guys.

SAMANTHA

Shush. It's Dani's first game.

IMPATIENT FRIEND

(pleading)

Drunk college guys!

Excited pointed finger at the TV.

SAMANTHA

What part of "first woman to play professional baseball" don't you understand?

ON THE TV, footage of Dani sitting in the bull pen. Samantha claps with joy.

INSERT SERIES OF SHOTS: MARINERS AT THE GIANTS

--Someone sings the National Anthem.

--A relief pitcher chews tobacco. He offers some to Dani. She refuses with a disgusted look.

--The game begins. Josh hits a double. Dani applauds.

--The relief pitcher offers Dani a stick of pink gum. She gladly accepts.

--Hernandez strikes out a batter.

--Giants strike back. BOOM! Someone homers off Hernandez.

--Mariners return the favor. Marcus nails a grand slam. Dani on her feet with applause.

--Back and forth, inning after inning, the game stays close.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Crowd on their feet.

GIANTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Bottom of the ninth. Mariners lead by one, but the Giants have one last chance to claw their way back. Martin on third. Pinch-hitter Robby Timms at bat. Mariners pitcher Frankie Hernandez is tired, but he sets up for the final throws.

Hernandez holds. From the crowd: a TINY VOICE--

A LITTLE GIRL

--begins chanting.

LITTLE GIRL
 Dani! Dani! Dani!

The chant grows. First the front rows. Then the whole section. Soon... the ENTIRE CROWD: Dani! Dani! Dani!

VISITING DUGOUT

Kenji listens to the crowd.

GIANTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Amazing. This crowd could care less about the Giants winning. They just want to see the glass ceiling shattered tonight by a baseball... thrown by Danielle Mowry.

Kenji looks at Josh.

AT HOME PLATE

Josh shrugs.

VISITING DUGOUT

Kenji picks up the dugout phone.

EXT. VISITING BULL PEN - NIGHT

The PITCHING COACH listens to the phone call.

PITCHING COACH
Yes, sir.

He hangs up. Looks at Dani.

PITCHING COACH (cont'd)
You're up.

RELIEF PITCHER
Who? Her?

DANI
Me?

PITCHING COACH
Yes, you Mowry. You want an
engraved invitation?

Dani stands. Puts on her glove.

RELIEF PITCHER
(rolls his eyes)
Great. Here we go.

The pitching coach opens the door to outfield. Dani steps up.

PITCHING COACH
Welcome to the history books.

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Dani steps onto the outfield... and into a tsunami of CHEERS.
The crowd ROARS. Flashbulbs POP.

She allows a moment of wonder... then calmly jogs to the--

PITCHER'S MOUND

Kenji, Josh, and Hernandez meet her there. Hernandez slams
the ball HARD into her glove.

HERNANDEZ
You wanted the spotlight. Hope you
know how to tap dance.

KENJI

You pitched well, Hernandez. Let her finish what you started.

(to Dani)

It's sink or swim time, kiddo.

DANI

Swim, sir.

JOSH

Just maintain control. Keep it over the outside corner. This guy swings at everything.

DANI

Outside. Got it.

Hernandez heads for the dugout. Josh back to home plate.

KENJI

I believe in you. Give 'em a show.

DANI

A tap dancer who can swim... that's me.

Kenji laughs. Leaves her on the mound... by herself.

Dani takes several practice pitches. The ball SCREAMS into Josh's glove.

TIMMS stands back. Smirks. Beefy Giants batter who thinks he's hot shit (and is probably right).

Dani signals that she's ready.

UMPIRE

Let's go, gentlemen.

The crowd quiets. Every camera focused on her. Girls in the crowd hold their breath.

Dani sets herself.

Josh crouches. Mask down.

Timms takes a few practice swings.

TIMMS

This is a freaking joke, man.

JOSH
Just wait. The punch-line's
hilarious.

Dani pitches... a blazing underhand curve ball.

Timms swings. WHIFF!

UMPIRE
Strike one!

Crowd explodes! Mix of CHEERS and BOO's.

JOSH
You're right... that WAS pretty
funny.

Timms seethes. Face red. Josh tosses the ball back.

Dani catches. Sets herself.

VISITING DUGOUT

Kenji leans over the dugout railing. Hands squeeze together.

KENJI
Come on, kid... come on...

Hernandez sits back. Feet up. Chews tobacco like he doesn't
give a damn.

PITCHER'S MOUND

Dani winds up. Underhand. Fires away.

Timms swings. Nothing but air. The ball meets Josh's glove
with a satisfying THUD.

UMPIRE
Strike two!

JOSH
(through fake laughter)
Stop it. My sides are hurting.

Ball back to Dani. Crowd on its feet. Dani makes eye contact
with--

LITTLE GIRL

--in the front row. All smiles. Hands together in prayer.

Josh signals for the pitch.

Dani nods. Fires!

CRACK! Timms connects.

The ball sails right over center field.

Dani watches it go.

Josh throws his mask off. Watches the ball fly.

The ball flies into the stands. Home run.

Timms tosses the bat aside. Takes off for first base.

TIMMS

Whassa matter, Allen? I don't hear
you laughing.

GIANTS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Giants win! Giants win! A short,
disappointing debut for baseball's
first female player... but a hell
of a comeback for San Francisco!

Dani watches the little girl look down. Sad.

MARTIN crosses home plate. Then Timms. Giants dugout empties
with celebration.

Mariners exit the field. Dejected.

Dani stays on the mound. Players avoid her.

Josh heads for the dugout. Doesn't look back.

INT. AT&T PARK - VISITING LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Uniforms off. Street clothes on. Pall of depression hangs
over the room. Hernandez and Marcus lock horns.

HERNANDEZ

Coach made that decision, you cave
troll.

MARCUS

Hey... I did my job. I hit the damn
ball out of the park. Our pitching
left us high and wet... not the
batting.

Josh steps between them. David between two Goliath's.

JOSH

It's high and DRY. And no one's to blame. They're a hell of a team. We just lost this one.

HERNANDEZ

Your girlfriend lost this one.

Josh lunges, fist clenched. Marcus holds him back. Hernandez smirks.

HERNANDEZ (cont'd)

What? If she wasn't pitching, Timms wouldn't have hit that ball to the freaking Moon.

(to the other guys)

Am I wrong?

Grumbles of agreement from the guys.

JOSH

It was a good pitch, and you know it. Timms just got a piece of it.

HERNANDEZ

A piece? Takes more than a piece to hit a bomb like that.

JOSH

Dani's pitch wasn't the problem. In fact, it was faster than the snails you were throwing in the ninth.

Hernandez' turn to fly off the handle. He gets a piece of Josh's shirt before the guys pull him back.

KENJI (O.S.)

Guys! HEY!

They freeze. Kenji slowly enters. Looks like he's aged ten years.

KENJI (cont'd)

Your anger at Dani is anger at me. I made the call. She wasn't ready... but it was time to give her a chance.

HERNANDEZ

We all agree this was a fun little publicity stunt but the horse has broken her leg. It's time to put her out of her misery.

MARCUS
You gonna shoot her?

JOSH
I call bullshit...
(off Kenji's raised
eyebrow)
...sir. How many chances have you
given me? Hernandez?

HERNANDEZ
Hey!

JOSH
She threw three pitches. Three! And
two thirds of them were strikes.
That's a hell of an average... sir.

Kenji heads for the door. Depressed.

KENJI
Dani's fate is for Mr. Nakamura and
me to decide. The rest of you head
back to the hotel. Curfew's in two
hours.

MUMBLES of "Yes, sir," "Yes, Coach," etc.

The team files out. Hernandez shoves Josh as he passes.

Josh finishes stuffing catcher's gear into a large duffel. He
rummages through. Looks. Lost something.

JOSH
Damn.

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Josh exits the locker room area. Steps onto the field.
Stadium empty.

He jogs to the visiting dugout. Steps down. There, end of the
bench: his CATCHER'S MITT.

He picks it up. Stops. Senses someone watching him.

At the other end of the dugout, sitting in darkness, legs
curled up against her chest like a child--

DANI
(small)
I tried my best.

JOSH

I know. It was a lucky swing. Timms didn't win the Home Run Derby because of his looks.

DANI

I tried my best... and you left me. You all did.
(chokes up)
What kind of team leaves their pitcher on the mound?

Josh nervously grips the catcher's mitt.

JOSH

I'm sorry, kid... I don't know what to say.

DANI

Stop calling me kid. We're almost the same age.

JOSH

Sorry... Dani.

DANI

Can't you just treat me like one of the guys? Punch me on the arm... or pour Gatorade on my head?

Josh exits the dugout. Laughs.

JOSH

Yeah, right. Like you wouldn't freak out if something messed up your perfect hair.

Dani storms out. Comes after him.

DANI

What's that supposed to mean?

JOSH

Nothing, princess. Better get back to your castle before curfew.

Dani throws her glove. NAILS Josh in the back of the head.

DANI

Jerk!

JOSH

Go on back to UW. I hear they need
a new softball coach.

Josh takes the steps down to the locker rooms. He stops. Hand
on door.

Dani stands on the field. Motionless. Lost. Alone.

Josh faces her, full of anger. But her vulnerability throws
him.

DANI

I want to get better. I want to
win.

JOSH

That's your problem.

Josh bounds up the stairs. Picks up her glove. Tosses it back
to her. Grabs his catcher's mitt. A ball.

DANI

What are you doing?

JOSH

Helping you.

Josh takes her by the arm. Leads her to the pitcher's mound.

DANI

What did you mean, "that's your
problem"?

JOSH

You've got a wooden bat up your
butt. You've forgotten how to have
fun.

DANI

Says the millionaire pro-athlete.

JOSH

I bet you've won everything life
threw at you. I bet you've got
shelves upon shelves of all the
trophies you won as a kid.

DANI

And you don't?

JOSH

Actually, no. The only thing my parents have up in the living room is a picture of me making the throw to second base in game four against the Blue Jays. I got the out, won the game... and I had a huge smile on my face. THAT'S what this game is all about.

He sets her up on the mound. Ball in her glove.

JOSH (cont'd)

You're too stiff. If you loosened up, you'd be able to control your pitches better.

DANI

If I loosened up, as you say. If I stopped caring about winning and just...

(air quotes)

"had fun"... well, I wouldn't be Dani Mowry anymore.

JOSH

That's cool with me. She's far too serious for such a pretty face.

She smacks him on the shoulder-- with a smile.

DANI

So... you're my pitching coach now?

JOSH

Sorry. I only coach people who know how to have a little fun.

DANI

I wrote the book on fun.

JOSH

You wrote a book? What did I say about being fun?

DANI

It was a fun book, I promise. It had unicorns... with guns.

Josh jogs to home plate. Crouches, mitt open.

JOSH

Lob one in here.

DANI
Dani don't lob.

JOSH
Notice I'm not wearing my mask. You
burn one in here, you might take
off my head.

DANI
(to herself)
Your head's my favorite part...

Dani sets herself. Arm spins around. A slow pitch. Goes high.

JOSH
Ok. That was crap.

DANI
I blame the coach.

Josh tosses the ball back.

JOSH
Again. This time... tell me a joke.

DANI
Excuse me?

JOSH
A joke. A dirty limerick. I don't
care. Just smile when you do it.
Let's see if you can get this baby
in the strike zone.

DANI
You are so weird.

JOSH
Would you rather I make you wax my
car, Danielle-san?

Dani sighs. Sets herself.

DANI
Knock, knock.

JOSH
Who's there?

DANI
Interruptive cow.

JOSH
Interrupti--

Dani throws. Smiles.

DANI
--MOO!

The pitch is slow... and perfect. Dani leaps into the air like a caffeinated cheerleader.

DANI (cont'd)
Yes! What do you think of that, huh?

JOSH
Not bad. The joke needs a little work, though.

Josh tosses the ball back.

JOSH (cont'd)
Two more perfect throws and we'll call it a night.

Dani mock-salutes.

DANI
Yes, sir, Drill Sergeant sir!

PFFT! PFFT! The field's SPRINKLER SYSTEM comes to life. Water shoots all over outfield and infield. Dani screams. Soaked within seconds.

Josh runs to her.

JOSH
You okay?

DANI
I'm freaking out! Something messed up my perfect hair!

Josh frowns... then notices her silly grin. Water pours down. Drenches them both. Middle of a man-made typhoon.

DANI (cont'd)
You look ridiculous. I thought all that hair product was waterproof?

JOSH
You look like a halibut with a ponytail.

They stand closer. Inches apart. His hands on her waist.

DANI
We're just gonna stand here until
we drown?

JOSH
Don't worry. I know mouth-to-mouth.

DANI
You use that line a lot?

Closer.

JOSH
Does it work?

DANI
God, no.

They kiss. Water-soaked. Epic.

As quickly as it started... she pulls away. Steps back.
Shocked at how good that felt.

DANI (cont'd)
No.

JOSH
Yes.

DANI
No no no. Not professional. You
wouldn't kiss Hernandez.

JOSH
Of course not. He smells like feet.

DANI
I'm not... this isn't me... I
can't...

And she's gone. Lost in a waterfall of man-made rain.

INT. NAKAMURA'S HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Nakamura sips brandy. Stoic. Tight neck-tie. He watches
plasma TV in his ridiculous, over-the-top, hotel suite.
Skyline of San Francisco behind him. Sharks swim through a
giant aquarium along one wall.

The ESPN report finishes. Footage of Dani pitching to Timms. Nakamura presses a button on the coffee table. The TV shuts off.

NAKAMURA

The League should shine my shoes.
She's a marketing dream. She'll
sell out every stadium we play for
the rest of the year.

Kenji stands next to the giant aquarium. He nervously eyes the sharks. Takes a small step away.

NAKAMURA (cont'd)

But her debut was less than
impressive.

KENJI

I played her too soon. The crowd
was chanting. I thought-- no one
could have known Timms would have
hit that home run on her third
pitch.

NAKAMURA

Put her in the rotation. Play her
again. Tomorrow night.

KENJI

She's not ready, Nakamura-san.

NAKAMURA

Make her ready. That's your job.

KENJI

And if I can't?

Nakamura finishes his brandy with flourish.

NAKAMURA

The fans are smart. I listen to
them and their spending habits. The
player with the lowest T-shirt
sales gets sent back to Triple-A at
the end of the season.

(raises an eyebrow)

How many T-shirts do YOU sell?

EXT. VISITING BULL PEN - AFTERNOON

The Mariners share field with the Giants. Fans filter in for Game 2.

Dani pitches. Josh catches.

JOSH
Good! Again.

Another pitch. Right over the plate. SMACK!

DANI
How was that?

JOSH
Good... but you can do better.

DANI
What's the answer? More jokes?

JOSH
How about a funny story?

Josh tosses the ball back.

Kenji watches.

DANI
Dear Penthouse, you'll never
believe what happened to me last
night at Giant's Stadium...

Josh notices Kenji nearby. Shoots Dani a look like "shut up!"

Dani laughs. Fires. WHAM! The perfect pitch.

Kenji nods. Impressed. Walks away.

Josh signals for another pitch.

DANI (cont'd)
Another curve ball? Snoresville.

JOSH
There are only so many options, and
your fast ball needs work. You want
something new?

Dani holds up four fingers.

JOSH (cont'd)
Four fingers? What the hell pitch
is that?

DANI
It's code. It means I'm yours,
FOURever.

Dani blows him a kiss.

JOSH
What happened to "you wouldn't kiss Hernandez"?

DANI
A little harmless flirting never hurt anyone.

JOSH
Harmless flirting. Right.

He signals one finger.

JOSH (cont'd)
Again.

She winds up...

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Game in full-swing. Bottom of the sixth.

IN THE DUGOUT

Kenji reaches for the phone.

KENJI
Put her in. Yes... HER.

EXT. AT&T PARK - NIGHT

Dani on the pitcher's mound. Sold out crowd holds its breath.

Josh signals. Dani nods. Sticks her tongue out at him. Playful.

She throws. THUD!... into the mitt.

UMPIRE
Strike three! Yer out!

Dani runs off the field. Other players give her words of encouragement. Pats on the back. She's all smiles.

IN THE DUGOUT

Hernandez watches. Not impressed.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS - SPINNING MAGAZINE COVERS

--Sports Illustrated, picture of Dani. Headline: The First Lady of Baseball!

--Time Magazine, another picture of Dani. Headline: Can Dani Mowry Save Baseball?

--Seattle Times, Dani on the mound. Headline: Led by Dani Mowry, Mariners Win Again!

--People Magazine, cover photo of Dani next to a clearly photo-shopped picture of Justin Timberlake.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - DAY

Dani strikes out a Chicago Cub in front of a sold out crowd. She runs to home plate. Josh gives her a high-five.

IN THE DUGOUT

Kenji applauds.

Hernandez folds his arms. Sulks.

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The guys celebrate. Pat Dani on the back. Smiles all around. Mess up her hair.

Through the chaos, Josh and Dani stare at each other. A look between them. More than athletic respect. Could it be... romantic?

Hernandez notices. Frowns.

Marcus picks Dani up. She screams with delight. Over his shoulder, he carries her around the locker room with a hearty caveman YELL.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Paul at the table. Same pile of bills.

Dani sneaks up from behind. Big hug. Hands him a check.

PAUL
You're missing a decimal point...
(off her look)
...aren't you?

DANI
We don't have to worry about money
any more.

PAUL
Your mom would be so--

DANI
--I know, Dad. I know.

INT. DANI'S CAR - DAY

Dani stuck in traffic again. Radio on. Familiar Sports Talk.

CHUCK SILVI (V.O.)
...are on a hot streak. Winning
twenty-five of the last thirty. One
could send a giant thank-you card
to Danielle Mowry, but remember
folks... she doesn't pitch every
game. It's more than that. Her
presence in the dugout inspires the
team to something better. They see
the obstacles she's had to
overcome, and maybe it reminds them
of their own problems as a losing
team. However you want to spin it,
here are the cold hard numbers...
the Mariners are now number three
in the division. Yes Seattle, hold
your breath... for the first time
in fifteen years, the Mariners have
a chance to make the Playoff's.

Dani screams with joy. A joyful yell from the depth of her
soul.

EXT. CHEVY DEALERSHIP - DAY

Dani's clunker pulls in. New cars shine under the afternoon
sun.

INT. DANI'S CAR - DAY

Dani on her cell phone.

DANI
Hey... what's up?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SAMANTHA'S BEDROOM - SAME

Samantha stands at the closet. Flips through several jacket/shirt combo's.

SAMANTHA
Me and you, girlfriend. Tight jeans. Even tighter tops. Bar hopping, Pioneer Square... tonight.

DANI
Wish I could--

SAMANTHA
--Don't even give me that. It's my freaking birthday! I know you're home. I know there's no game tonight. And I know your curve ball can get us the primo booth in all the clubs.

DANI
You forgot about practice, Sam.

SAMANTHA
You're kidding.

DANI
Wish I was. Practice, then curfew by ten. Game tomorrow.

SAMANTHA
The hard life of a pro-athlete, right?

DANI
The hardest.

An awkward phone silence. Up ahead, Dani spots Josh standing by a brand-new Chevy Camaro. Arms outstretched. Big smile.

DANI (cont'd)
Look, I gotta go. Coach is calling me.

SAMANTHA
Call me later?

DANI
Have a fun time tonight.

CLICK. Samantha looks at the dead phone. Sighs.

SAMANTHA
Happy birthday to me.

EXT. CHEVY DEALERSHIP - DAY

Dani parks. Gets out. Josh beams.

JOSH
What do you think? It's the one,
right?

Dani takes a solemn look at her old car.

DANI
She's reliable. I've had her for
years.

The sun reflects off the Camaro's curves. Blinds her.

DANI (cont'd)
But this is shiny and new. I love
shiny and new.

JOSH
Even better... look at the rearview
mirror.

Bingo.

DANI
A Mariner's air freshener? Sold!

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS: DANI'S NEW CAR

--Dani test-drives the Camaro. SQUEALS around a corner. Josh
in the back-seat. Smiles ear-to-ear. Car SALESMAN in the
passenger seat looks ready to vomit.

--Dani signs the paperwork.

--Dani writes a check.

--Salesman hands her the keys.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. QUEEN ANNE HILL - NIGHT

Expensive homes overlook downtown Seattle. Dani's new Camaro is parked at the edge. Dani and Josh sit on the hood.

JOSH
The engine works great. How about we take the back seat for a spin?

DANI
Not a chance, lover-boy. The seats are custom leather.

JOSH
So are my ab's.

DANI
That makes no sense.

JOSH
Shut up and kiss me.

DANI
You may hold my hand. Nothing more. I'm a fancy fancy lady.

They interlock fingers. She rests her head on his shoulder.

JOSH
You're not half bad, Mowry.

DANI
Don't make me throw up.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Sold-out crowd. Mariners and Red Sox warm-up around the field.

BUD (V.O.)
...welcome the Boston Red Sox. The Sox have won eighty percent of the meetings between these two teams, but Seattle is on a hot streak. Can they pull it off with their ultimate weapon, Danielle Mowry, on the mound?

RALPH (V.O.)
Note for our listeners: their socks are not actually red.

Dani chats with Kenji near the home dugout.

Samantha bounds down the stairs. Reaches the bottom row, but SECURITY GUARD holds her back. Six feet six inches of muscle.

SAMANTHA

Dani! Hey!

Dani smiles. Enthusiastic wave.

Samantha tries to squeeze past. Security ain't having it.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Watch the hands! This ain't the airport.

(to Dani)

Little help here?

Dani heads her direction.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

Let me through. I'm the star pitcher's designated best friend.

DANI

What are you doing here?

SAMANTHA

Watching you kick some Red Sox butt. Can you tell the Great Wall of China to back off?

DANI

Let her--

JOSH (O.S.)

--Dani!

Josh gestures from home plate... game time.

Dani shrugs, gives Samantha a look of apology.

DANI

Sorry, Sam. Game's starting. See you after?

Samantha watches her meet up with Josh. The Security Guard keeps his beefy arms up.

SAMANTHA

What's he got that I don't?

SECURITY GUARD
Were you one of People Magazine's
Most Eligible Bachelors?

SAMANTHA
If you love him so much, why don't
you marry him?

SECURITY GUARD
(lost in a dream)
If only it were legal.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

Samantha exits. Pissed. Fans enter, walk past her. Someone
sings the NATIONAL ANTHEM.

The game begins... but Samantha walks away.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - DAY

After the game. Mariners win! Players head for the locker
room. Happy high-fives all around.

Dani and Josh bring up the rear. He winks, puts a gentle hand
on her butt. She playfully smacks it away.

JOSH
Nice pitching, Miss Mowry.

DANI
Why, thank you, Mr. Allen.

Hernandez frowns. Senses something between them.

LATER

Dani exits her personal locker room. Street clothes. Hallway
empty. She heads for the exit.

Hernandez steps out from the locker room. Dani nearly runs
into him.

DANI
Sorry.

HERNANDEZ
Careful, Mowry. Wouldn't want to
injure yourself.

DANI

Right. I had forgotten to NOT hurt myself. Any more advice, like don't forget to breathe?

Dani peers around his massive shoulders.

DANI (cont'd)

Josh still in there?

HERNANDEZ

He left. I'm the last one out.

She looks disappointed. A look not lost on him.

HERNANDEZ (cont'd)

So it's true.

DANI

What?

HERNANDEZ

You and Josh... playing a little pitcher and catcher in the bedroom?

DANI

You're a pig.

HERNANDEZ

Hmm... not a denial.

DANI

Go to hell.

Dani tries to leave. He grabs her arm. She quickly twists out of his grip.

DANI (cont'd)

Don't touch me!

HERNANDEZ

Where you going, huh? It's time we had a little fun. We got the locker room all to ourselves, mamasita.

DANI

There's not enough disinfectant in the world... muchacho.

HERNANDEZ

So he gets to fool around with you, but I can't get a piece?

DANI

What do you think I am? The team
slut passed around the locker room?

HERNANDEZ

If the jock-strap fits...

Dani storms away. Hernandez watches her go with a smirk.

HERNANDEZ (cont'd)

You're a little butch for my taste,
but I'd be willing to make an
exception.

INT. JOSH'S CONDO - EVENING

All the best in modern, trendy decorating. The classiest
downtown Seattle condo a millionaire athlete could buy.

Josh cooks dinner. Dani stares out the window at the Space
Needle, Seattle Mariners flag waving in the wind.

She glances at the cell phone in her hand. Starts to dial
Samantha... then stops.

JOSH

You've hardly said a word since you
got here.

DANI

You ever get the feeling that
you're a terrible friend?

JOSH

Only every day since I went pro.

DANI

Really?

JOSH

But I don't let it bother me. I got
a pile of friends back in Texas.
Each one asking for my time. My
money. I can't please 'em all. So
you move on. Lose a few, sure, but
you gain all sorts of new ones.

DANI

I'm just talking about one. And all
she wants is my time.

JOSH

If she's important to you, you'll find a way to let her know. Heck, hire a skywriter or something. She'll get the message.

INT. HERNANDEZ'S CAR -- NIGHT

Hernandez is parked in a vacant lot. Cell phone to his ear.

HERNANDEZ

I'm telling you it's true. Every word.

(beat)

No. I'm not prepared to do that. Just call me... anonymous.

He hangs up. Smug grin on his face.

INT. JOSH'S CONDO - NIGHT

Josh and Dani sit on the couch, remains of dinner next to empty glasses of wine. They watch an ESPN ANCHOR.

ESPN ANCHOR

Shocking allegations tonight from someone inside the Mariners organization... that Danielle Mowry engaged in illicit behavior with several players, all to ensure herself a place in the pitching rotation. A scandalous charge against the first woman to play professional baseball.

A tear falls down Dani's cheek, more out of anger than anything else.

DANI

What? WHAT!?

JOSH

That son of a bitch...

INT. MOWRY'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Paul walks to the front door. Bathrobe and slippers on. WHISTLES a happy tune.

Opens door. A mob of REPORTERS take pictures. Shove microphones in his face.

He backs up. Questions come at him like baseballs.

PUSHY REPORTER

Do you have a response to the accusations about your daughter?

PUSHIER REPORTER

Is your daughter sleeping with other players? Coaches?

Paul slams the door.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

Dani pulls her new Camaro into the players' entrance. SECURITY holds back a gang of REPORTERS. Flashbulbs POP.

Dani cringes. Gone are the happy days when she first joined the team... this is an angry mob out for blood.

INT. MARINERS LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Josh tackles Hernandez.

JOSH

I know it was you!

They tussle. A few wild punches. Uniforms fly. Marcus and the other big guys pry them apart.

JOSH (cont'd)

I'll kill you!

HERNANDEZ

You got no proof, man.

JOSH

Only you could be so slimy.

HERNANDEZ

What's the matter, Allen?
Accusations hit a little close to the bedroom?

Josh NAILS him in the jaw.

MARCUS

Enough!

JOSH
That's how you treat a fellow team member, Hernandez?

HERNANDEZ
How does she feel about being just another notch in your bedpost?

Josh lunges again. Players struggle to hold them back.

Kenji runs out of his office.

KENJI
Stop! Stop this RIGHT NOW!

They freeze. He means business.

KENJI (cont'd)
You're suspended. Five games, both of you--

HERNANDEZ
--Coach--

JOSH
--It was him, I know it--

KENJI
--Not. Another. Word. I let you idiots tussle before, but those days are over. I will not tolerate fighting in my locker room... even from two of my best players.

Hernandez and Josh look wounded. The team reacts with anger.

KENJI (cont'd)
Five games. The exit is that way.

JOSH
This scum-bag went to ESPN without permission from the team. You know it. I know it.

MARCUS
So what if he did? He was just speaking his mind. Saying things the rest of us were too afraid to say.

JOSH
And what's that? That you don't like winning?

MARCUS

You said it yourself, cowboy. This is a joke. A publicity stunt. We're the laughing stock of the league. Sure, we win a few games, but at what cost?

SHOUTS of agreement. Anger. All directed at Josh and Kenji.

JOSH

(small)

You're right.

The team goes quiet. Hernandez smirks.

HERNANDEZ

What was that, muchacho? Speak up.

Josh doesn't want to say it. Must.

JOSH

This whole thing is tearing us apart.

DANI (O.S.)

You're better off without me...

All eyes on her standing at the entrance. She stares daggers at Josh.

DANI (cont'd)

...is that it?

Everyone looks down. No one speaks.

DANI (cont'd)

Isn't there anyone who can swallow their goddamn macho pride for two seconds and admit I'm one of the best pitchers you've ever seen? Anyone?

KENJI

They know it, Dani... but they're not man enough to say it.

The team hang their heads in shame.

DANI

Fine. I guess the girl's the only one man enough to see what's best for this team.

Hernandez smirks.

KENJI

Dani...

DANI

It's clear I'm just a distraction.

She rips off her baseball cap. Tosses it on the ground.

Stunned looks from the team. Kenji. Josh.

INT. HALLWAY BENEATH SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Dani jogs down the end of the hall.

Josh sprints. Dani's cap in hand.

JOSH

Dani! Wait!

EXT. SAFECO FIELD SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

Dani PEELS out in her Camaro. Nearly runs over a reporter on her way to the street.

Josh runs out, right behind Dani's car. The reporters spot him. Run over. Microphones and cameras in his face. Security holds them back.

JOSH

DANI!

But she's gone.

INT. DANI'S CAR - DAY

Dani drives. Leaves the city-- and the stadium-- far behind.

Her phone RINGS.

A quick glance. "JOSH CALLING." She presses IGNORE.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Expensive coffee. Amateur writers pound away on lap-tops.

Samantha works the counter. Repeats the coffee order back to an IMPATIENT WOMAN.

SAMANTHA

That's a venti, non-fat, quad-shot,
caramel macchiato. Hint of
hazelnut. Light on the foam.

IMPATIENT WOMAN

And...?

SAMANTHA

(searches)

And... a pinch of cinnamon?

IMPATIENT WOMAN

Correct. Make sure it's right, or
I'll send it back.

Samantha salutes.

SAMANTHA

Yes, Ma'am!

Samantha glances at the Tip Jar. Back to the woman. The woman
just smirks and walks away to the end of the counter.

Samantha sighs.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

I can help who's next.

MURMURS of excitement from the patrons. Samantha looks...

Dani enters.

The CUSTOMERS in line back away. Give Dani a clear path to
the counter.

She sheepishly scoots forward. Gives the patrons a little
wave.

Samantha waits for her. Not amused.

DANI

Hey.

SAMANTHA

Here to get your caffeine fix?

DANI

More like my Samantha fix. Can we
talk?

SAMANTHA

I'm working. I don't pitch for the Mariners, but it's a paycheck.

DANI

Please?

Samantha rolls her eyes. Looks to her MANAGER... who nods.

She and Dani head for the end of the counter. Not exactly private, but it'll do.

SAMANTHA

I expect a tip. And coming from you, Miss Baseball, it better be huge.

DANI

I'm not Miss Baseball. Not anymore.

SAMANTHA

Come again?

DANI

I quit. Even ripped off my hat and threw it in a fit of rage. You woulda loved it.

SAMANTHA

That was pretty stupid, Mowry.

DANI

It just wasn't for me. I'm back.

SAMANTHA

Now you've finally got time for poor old Sam? How convenient.

DANI

I'm sorry I've been so distant. I could really use my best friend right now.

SAMANTHA

I needed my best friend too. Apparently, she was too busy being passed around the locker room to return my calls.

Dani's mouth drops open.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)
I saw the interview. And I read the newspapers. Yes, I know: shocker. I can read.

DANI
It's not true. You know me.

SAMANTHA
I know you're obsessed with one thing: winning. Whatever, or whoever you gotta do, you're gonna win.

Dani can't speak. Hand over mouth. Eyes wet.

SAMANTHA (cont'd)
You can't live the fast life with fancy cars and handsome baseball players and expect everything to stay the same.

DANI
What are you saying?

SAMANTHA
You're not my Dani anymore. She's gone missing. My best friend is a face on a milk carton.

Samantha walks away. Leaves Dani, teary-eyed and alone, as customers look on.

DANI
Sam...

Samantha reaches the end of the counter. Impatient Woman waits for her coffee.

IMPATIENT WOMAN
I'm still waiting.

SAMANTHA
Calm your jets, lady. Don't make me shove nutmeg up your nose.

EXT. MOWRY'S BACKYARD - EVENING

SMACK! Ball hits glove.

Dani and Paul play catch. Paul reaches for Dani's throw. It's high. Barely snags it. Dani shakes her head.

DANI
Sorry.

PAUL
You're off today.

DANI
Gee... I wonder why?

Paul tosses the ball back.

PAUL
Your professional baseball career
ended before it began. Your best
friend won't speak to you.
(off her look)
Despite the gruff exterior, I'm
actually quite hip to the scene.

Dani throws the ball back.

DANI
Dad of the year.

PAUL
The century. Don't sell me short.

A few more tosses. Father and daughter play catch in silence.
The sun sinks below the horizon.

PAUL (cont'd)
Josh called today. Four times. I
figured you didn't want to talk.

DANI
You figured right.

PAUL
If he calls again?

DANI
I've gone missing.
(somber)
I'm a face on a milk carton.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dani and Paul curl up on the couch. Half-eaten pizza on the
coffee table. Mariner's game on the TV.

BUD (O.S.)

Only one word to describe this, folks: ouch. Even with Allen and Hernandez back from their five game suspensions, the Mariners trail the Royals by seven. Someone put this dog out of its misery.

RALPH (O.S.)

A "mariner" is someone who sails the Seven Seas.

BUD (O.S.)

A gloomy fog has settled over Safeco Field. The Mariners seem to be playing with hundred pound weights on their shoulders. No spark. No joy. For all the controversy surrounding her, Dani Mowry certainly added "something" to this team... and now it's gone.

Dani sulks. Paul kisses the top of her head.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - NIGHT

Mariners on the field. Hernandez digs his foot into the pitcher's mound.

Josh crouches, ready to catch.

The Royal's batter, DAMON, sets himself. Takes a few practice swings.

DAMON

Looks like you guys are helpless without your mommy to pitch for you.

JOSH

Stuff it, Damon. Watch the pitch. Would be a shame if Hernandez nailed you in the head.

DAMON

The rumors true? You get a piece of that Mowry girl?

JOSH

Careful.

DAMON

You all get seven minutes in heaven... or did she do the whole team at once?

That did it. Mask off. Josh nails Damon with a hard right hook.

Damon retaliates. Tackles Josh at the waist. They fall to the dirt.

The dugouts clear. The crowd goes crazy.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dani and Paul watch the fight on TV.

BUD (O.S.)

It's on! Both dugouts clear!
Coaches and umpires caught in the
middle! Complete pandemonium!

RALPH (O.S.)

Do you think I could jump in?

Dani can't watch. Gets up and leaves.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD - DAY

Sunny morning. A new day.

Small softball field. Middle of a quaint neighborhood. Young team in the middle of practice. 12-year-old GIRLS with minimal skills, but loads of youthful energy.

Dani walks among them. Observes.

DANI

Nice catch, Ashley. Remember to
turn and burn that ball back to
first base.

The CRACK of a bat. The young SHORTSTOP leans down for the grounder, but the ball goes between her legs.

DANI (cont'd)

Mitt on the ground, Jennifer. Don't
give that ball an inch of space.

SHORTSTOP

Okay, Dani.

A moment of quiet observation. Dani smiles. This is her team. Her girls. Where she used to be.

A familiar face smiles at her from the outfield fence.

KENJI

Dani can't help but smile back. She jogs over.

DANI

I'm supposed to call the police if I see an old man watching girls softball practice.

KENJI

Old man? Way to stab me in the heart.

Dani grabs his hand.

DANI

How you doing, Coach?

KENJI

About as well as the Mariners.

DANI

Ouch.

KENJI

The Playoffs are slipping away.

DANI

Marcus swings the bat like he doesn't give a damn. Your pitchers throw like they're drunk.

KENJI

And Josh?

Her face drops. He's hit a nerve.

KENJI (cont'd)

I'm not here to judge. And I'm the last person who should be giving advice of the "romantic variety." You had your reasons for walking away.

DANI

I saw how I was tearing the team apart... just by being there. I don't regret it.

Dani looks at her girls softball team. The OUTFIELDER sets herself up for a catch. Easy fly ball. But the ball bounces out of her glove.

KENJI

You sure?

DANI

(with a laugh)

God, they suck.

(gets serious)

But I wasn't much better when I was their age. These girls need a role model. Who better than Danielle Mowry?

KENJI

You know who could use a role model like Danielle Mowry? Every girl.

A quiet moment. Dani and Kenji watch the practice.

INT. JOSH'S CONDO - NIGHT

Josh lays on the couch. Can't sleep.

He runs his hand over the couch cushions. Fingers catch a long brown hair. Dani's hair.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Another sold-out crowd. Teams take the field.

BUD (V.O.)

The San Francisco Giants have come to town with one goal in mind: win this game and knock Seattle out of the Playoff hunt.

RALPH (V.O.)

I've hunted the most dangerous game of all: deer.

BUD (V.O.)

Good for you.

INT. VIP SUITE - DAY

The suite overlooks Safeco Field. Buffet of fancy food. Plush chairs. The ultimate in comfort for the well-to-do.

Samantha enters. Looks sheepishly at the SUITE ATTENDANT.

SAMANTHA
Am I in the right place?

The Attendant checks her ticket.

SUITE ATTENDANT
Yes, Ma'am. The rest of your party
is already here.

Samantha squints. Puzzled.

Paul spins around in a plush leather chair. Sips a beer.

PAUL
Get you a beer?

SAMANTHA
Mr. Mowry?

PAUL
I feel like a James Bond villain...
and I love it. Mwuah ha ha!

Samantha joins him in the matching chair. They look out onto the field as the game gets rolling.

SAMANTHA
I woke up this morning. Found a
ticket slipped under my front door.

PAUL
Same thing under my bedroom door.

SAMANTHA
This is stupid. She knows I'm still
mad at her.

PAUL
You came, didn't you?

Samantha doesn't have an answer.

PAUL (cont'd)
Shut up and have a mini-quiche.
They're fantastic.

INT. NAKAMURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Dani and Nakamura face off, boardroom-style. The game begins, but neither pays attention.

DANI
 ...a house. A nice one. And all her
 student loans paid off.

NAKAMURA
 You drive a hard bargain, Miss
 Mowry.

DANI
 And a car. Something red.

NAKAMURA
 Anything else?

Dani removes a wrinkled PHOTOGRAPH from her back pocket.
 Looks at it.

DANI
 There is... one more thing.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

CRACK! A ball sails high over left field. Home run. The
 Giants BATTER happily rounds the bases.

Hernandez kicks the dirt.

Josh looks at the scoreboard. Angry. Giants lead by three.

INSERT SERIES OF SHOTS: DANI GETS READY

--Shoelaces tied with painted fingernails.

--Belt tightened on a Mariners uniform. Female hips look good
 in cotton pants.

--Baseball hat on. Ponytail through the back.

--A fresh coat of lipstick. Nothing too bold.

--Dani grabs her glove. Ready for action.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Hernandez walks another batter. The crowd BOO's.

Josh throws the ball back with disgust.

Suddenly... a MURMUR from the front row. The murmur grows into a ROAR as the whole crowd sees--

DANI

--walk onto the field near the Home Dugout.

Kenji's jaw drops. Can't believe it.

BUD (V.O.)

Are you seeing this? Dani Mowry is back!

RALPH (V.O.)

Color me green and call me Susan!

Josh throws off his mask.

Dani makes brief eye contact with Josh... but turns her attention to the VIP Suite. Paul and Samantha stare down.

Dani stares at Samantha. Serious. Ignores everyone else. Uses Sign Language to form the words "I love you."

Samantha gets teary-eyed.

Dani points at the Titantron over Center Field.

INT. NAKAMURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nakamura watches the action on the field and picks up his phone.

NAKAMURA

Yes. Put it up, now.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

The Titantron comes to life. The wrinkled photo is displayed: 12-year-old Dani and Samantha, arms around each other, all smiles. The caption reads: Friends Forever.

Samantha puts hand over mouth. Eyes wet.

On field, Dani puts her hand on her heart... and smiles.

The crowd AWES.

DUGOUT

The game resumes. Kenji welcomes Dani back to the dugout.

KENJI

Now that your best friend moment has made the crowd sick to their stomachs, are you ready to play some baseball?

DANI

I'm not wearing these pants just because they flatter my butt, sir.

KENJI

I can't have you quit the team again. Are you committed?

DANI

As a mental patient, sir. Forget everything else... let's win this thing.

A firm handshake between them.

ON THE FIELD

Hernandez pitches. The BATTER watches it fly into Josh's mitt. High, outside.

UMPIRE

Take your base!

Ball four. The batter grins. Tosses the bat. Jogs to first base.

Bases loaded. The crowd GROANS.

Kenji steps onto the field. A solemn look at Hernandez. They both know what's coming.

A quick glance back at Dani.

KENJI

You said, "Let's win this thing." What are you made of, Mowry?

DANI

Sugar and spice... and one hell of a curve ball.

Dani takes the field with Kenji. The crowd ROARS.

They join Hernandez and Josh on the mound.

KENJI
Time to hang it up, Frankie.

HERNANDEZ
Great. She's back.

Hernandez SMACKS the ball into Kenji's hand. Walks past Dani and gives her a little shove on the shoulder.

Kenji ignores him. Hands the ball to Dani.

KENJI
You ready?

DANI
Is a baseball diamond a girl's best friend?

KENJI
Then burn it in there... and make me proud.

A look between them and he's gone... leaving Josh and Dani alone on the mound.

JOSH
So--

DANI
--Let me finish out this inning so you can put some runs on the board.

JOSH
Are we cool?

She shoots him a look. All business. Nothing more.

He backs away. Shoots her a look of longing... but she won't have any of it.

Josh gets into the catcher's position. Dani burns in a few practice throws. Perfect. Fast.

The BATTER steps in. Takes a few practice swings.

Crowd on its feet.

Josh signals.

Dani nods. Winds up. The pitch! A blazing curve ball.

The batter swings. WHIFF!

UMPIRE
Stee-rike one!

The crowd ROARS.

Dani catches the toss from Josh. Sets herself again.

Josh signals.

Dani nods. Winds up. The pitch! Another curve ball.

The batter swings. CONNECTS... but knocks it high and right.

UMPIRE (cont'd)
Foul ball... strike two!

Dani catches the toss back. Sets herself. This is it.

Josh signals.

Dani shakes her head.

Josh signals again.

Dani nods. Winds up. The pitch! Slow... going high.

The batter stands his ground. Doesn't swing.

THUD! Ball lands in Josh's mitt. A high pitch. But how high?

UMPIRE (cont'd)
Stee-rike three! Yer out!

The crowd EXPLODES!

BUD (V.O.)
Mowry has done it! Bases loaded,
but she retires the side. This it
it... we head into the bottom of
the eighth, Mariners down by three.
Can they mount the comeback of all
comebacks?

RALPH (V.O.)
You bet they can! I believe!

Awkward pause.

BUD (V.O.)
Ralph... that was... genuine. Are
you alright?

RALPH (V.O.)
 You know who else should mount a
 comeback? Def Leppard.

IN THE VIP SUITE

Samantha leaps out of her chair. Gives Paul a big ole hug.

PAUL
 Careful! Watch the beer!

IN THE DUGOUT

The team pours in. Happy faces. Cheers for Dani. The team on
 her side once again.

Hernandez continues to pout. Arms crossed.

MARIA (O.S.)
 Let me through! Move it or lose it!

Hernandez's eyes go wide. He recognizes that voice. Goes to
 the end of the dugout.

The team goes quiet.

A fiesty Latina, MARIA, calls out from the first row.
 Security tries, with difficulty, to hold her back.

HERNANDEZ
 Maria?

MARIA
 Hola, Frankie. Como esta?

HERNANDEZ
 (through clenched teeth)
 What are you doing here?

MARIA
 You stopped returning my calls.
 Getting too real for ya?

The team freezes. Watches the show. Dani tries not to smile.

HERNANDEZ
 No, baby. You know I'm busy during
 the season.

MARIA

Yeah, yeah. Chica in every town. I know how it is. Coach...

Kenji's eyes widen. Who, me?

MARIA (cont'd)

...you better trade this pendejo to the Padres... cuz he's gonna be a padre.

Hand on her belly. About four months along.

The team roars with LAUGHTER. Dani right there with them.

Security finally drags her away.

Hernandez sulks. Covers his face with his hat.

MARCUS

Padre! Padre! Padre!

The team joins him in the chant.

BUD (V.O.)

It appears as though the Mariners... are chanting for the San Diego Padres. Weird.

RALPH (V.O.)

Yankees! Yankees!

BUD (V.O.)

Stop that.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Giants on the field. Mariners at bat. Crowd on their feet.

Marcus steps up, bat in hand. He flexes his pecs.

The Giant's PITCHER sets up. Nods at the signal. Throws.

CRACK! Marcus nails it! Line-drive, over center field.

The crowd ERUPTS.

BUD (V.O.)

Any higher and that ball would have been out of the stadium!

RALPH (V.O.)
Great jumping Jesus!

Marcus rounds the bases. Stomps on home plate. Mariners cut the deficit to 2.

IN THE DUGOUT

Marcus enters to a chain of high-fives and pats-on-the-back. Dani is right in the mix.

MARCUS
I did my best, Coach.

KENJI
Jesus... the first pitch. You
couldn't create a little suspense?

MARCUS
(genuinely sad)
Sorry. You want I should do it
again?

Kenji laughs. Give him a big ole hug.

KENJI
Come here, ya big oaf.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS: MARINERS ATTEMPT A COMEBACK

--Mariners BATTER hits a ball that slips past the Giants
SHORTSTOP. Gets on base.

--A Mariners BATTER pops a fly ball to right field. Easily
caught. One out.

--A Mariners BATTER takes ball four. Walks to first base.
Runners on first and second.

--A Mariners BATTER strikes out. Chorus of BOO's from the
crowd.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

IN THE DUGOUT

Josh puts on his batting helmet.

KENJI

You're up, Allen. Two on base. Two outs. No pressure.

JOSH

Right. No pressure.

(gulps)

Do you have a bucket for me to throw up in?

Laughter from the guys. Ad Lib support, good luck, etc.

Josh looks past the guys... to Dani. But she's looking the other way.

Josh exits the dugout. Dani looks back. They miss each other by seconds.

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS: JOSH AT BAT

--Josh at the plate. A few practice swings.

--First pitch... WHIFF! Strike one.

--Second pitch. CRACK! Josh gets a piece of it... but it goes wide. Foul ball. Strike two.

--Dani on the fence. Wrings her hands together. Nervous.

--Third pitch. Outside. Ball one.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

AT THE PLATE

Fourth pitch... everything in SLOW MOTION. The perfect fastball, right down the middle. Josh swings. Connects!

The ball sails toward the left field wall. The crowd holds its breath. Is it high enough?

LEFT OUTFIELDER goes back. Back. He jumps!

The ball bounces off his glove into the stands! Home run!

Fireworks EXPLODE! The crowd ROARS!

Josh rounds the bases. Catches a glimpse of Dani... applauding from the dugout.

The scoreboard changes: Mariners now lead by one.

LATER

Another Mariner at bat. The pitch... and the swing! Miss.
Strike three.

Giants back to the dugout. Mariners take the field. One last
chance to put the game away.

Dani jogs away from the dugout.

KENJI

This is it, Dani.

DANI

They won't know what hit 'em.

Before Josh and Dani head separate directions...

JOSH

Keep it loose. Keep it fun.
Remember: it's just a game.

DANI

Really? You're gonna spin your Jedi
advice on this, the inning that
might get us to the Playoffs?

JOSH

There was a time you wanted my
advice.

DANI

Open your glove, Mr. Allen. Let me
burn it in there and win this
thing.

Dani to the mound. Josh to home plate. Both bitter.

THE VIP SUITE

Samantha leans over the railing, bag of peanuts in hand.

SAMANTHA

Holy crap holy crap holy crap!

Paul covers his eyes with his fingers.

PAUL

Tell me when it's over.

SAMANTHA

Big baby.
 (whoops)
 And... I dropped my peanuts.
 (calling down)
 Sorry!

BEGIN SERIES OF SHOTS: DANI TRIES TO SAVE THE GAME

--Dani pitches. The Giants BATTER connects. Ground ball slips past the shortstop. Runner on first.

--The next BATTER nails a fly ball to left field. Easily caught. One out.

--Dani pitches outside. Walks the next BATTER. Two runners on base. Dani kicks the dirt in frustration.

--The Giants BATTER swings. WHIFF! Strike three! Two outs.

--CRACK! Strong hit through the THIRD BASEMAN's legs. Good enough for the runner to take his base.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

Bases loaded. Crowd on its feet.

The next batter comes to the plate. He smirks at Dani. Familiar. Oh no...

TIMMS

Steps up. Takes a few practice swings.

TIMMS

Bases loaded. What a shame. Looks like your girlfriend's lost her nerve.

Dani pitches. Wild. Outside.

UMPIRE

Ball.

TIMMS

Don't even bother pitching to me. I'll take my base, we'll pull ahead, and you can watch the Playoffs from your comfy couch.

Josh throws it back to Dani.

JOSH
Come on, Dani... loosen up. You can
do this.

Josh signals. Another pitch. Low, almost in the dirt.

UMPIRE
Ball.

TIMMS
Wonder if she knows my strike zone
starts about three feet north.

Josh throws it back. Signals.

Dani pitches. Fast. Right down the middle.

Timms swings. WHIFF.

UMPIRE
Stee-rike one!

TIMMS
Looks like the girl's got a little
heat left after all.

Josh throws it back.

JOSH
You'll find she's full of
surprises.

Another pitch. Way inside. Timms has to lean back to avoid
being clocked in the mouth.

JOSH (cont'd)
Told ya.

UMPIRE
Ball.

Dani smirks as she catches the ball.

TIMMS
Tell your bitch she better watch
it.

JOSH
Go ahead. Storm the mound and
attack a woman. That'd be one for
the highlight reel.

UMPIRE
Gentlemen! Back to the game.

TIMMS
Yes, sir.

Timms take a practice swing. Digs his feet in.
Dani winds up... throws. A lazy pitch.
CRACK! Timms gets a piece. The ball sails left.

JOSH
No...

DANI
No...

TIMMS
Game. Over.

The ball keeps going left... just outside the foul marker.

UMPIRE
Foul. Strike two!

BUD (V.O.)
Full count... this is it. One more
strike, and the Mariners are in the
Playoffs.

RALPH (V.O.)
The Superbowl. Now THAT'S a fun
game.

Josh stares at Dani on the mound. Sweaty. Breathing heavy.

JOSH
(to himself)
She's done.

Dani looks around. The crowd. The loaded bases. Timms. She
wipes sweat from her brow.

She catches the toss from Josh. Sets herself. Peers over
glove.

Josh signals. Dani looks.

DANI
What the hell?

Josh signals... with four fingers.

DANI (cont'd)

No.

She shakes her head.

Josh nods. Repeats the signal.

Dani glares at him. Angry.

Josh stands. Throws off his mask. Goes to her.

UMPIRE

Time!

TIMMS

Hey! Where ya going?

AT THE DUGOUT

Kenji and Hernandez lean over the fence. Curious.

VIP SUITE

Samantha and Paul lean forward.

INT. NAKAMURA'S OFFICE - DAY

Nakamura peers down.

EXT. SAFECO FIELD - DAY

Josh meets her on the mound. All eyes on them. He holds up four fingers.

JOSH

Remember what this means?

DANI

That you're an idiot?

JOSH

You're pitching like a machine ready to break. For once in your life, forget about winning and just have fun.

DANI

One strike away from the Playoffs, and you want me to just "have fun?"

JOSH
There are more important things in
life than winning this game.

DANI
Tell that to the sold-out crowd.

JOSH
Your family. Your friends. Or was I
misreading that embarrassing pic
you put up on the Titantron?

He grabs her hand. This time, she doesn't let go.

JOSH (cont'd)
And me. I'm still here... whether
you like it or not.

She glances around, nervous. Her feelings for him bubble to
the surface, but she pushes them down.

BUD (V.O.)
Allen and Mowry appear to be...
holding hands.

RALPH (V.O.)
Gross.

DANI
We... can't.

JOSH
Forget the rules. Forget what you
know about baseball. A beautiful
woman is about to get us into the
Playoffs. I think we can throw the
rule-book out the window.

DANI
You think I'm beautiful?

JOSH
Even in that ugly-ass hat.

She laughs. He moves closer.

JOSH (cont'd)
Now... strike this guy out so we
can go mess up the leather seats in
your car.

She nods.

He jogs back to home plate. Sets himself as Timms takes a few practice swings.

TIMMS

You done making whoopie with your pitcher?

JOSH

Making whoopie? Where are you from? The Fifties?

UMPIRE

Gentlemen, let's play some ball.

Josh signals. Fastball.

Dani shakes her head.

Another signal. Curve ball.

Dani nods. Sets herself. The crowd holds its breath.

In SLOW MOTION, Dani steps forward. Arm up, graceful arc, then down with all the force she can muster.

The ball sails forward.

Timms smirks. Digs in.

Dani watches the ball fly to the target.

Timms swings! Bat heads straight for ball... as the ball curves down.

WHIFF! Timms misses by a millimeter. SMACK! Ball meets glove.

Dani smiles.

UMPIRE (cont'd)

Stree-rike three! That's the game!

Safeco Field erupts! 40,000 flashbulbs POP! The Mariners rush Dani on the mound.

Timms throws his bat in anger.

BUD (V.O.)

Mariners win! MY OH MY!

RALPH (V.O.)

Here we go... Playoffs baby!

BUD (V.O.)
I love you, you simple-minded fool!

RALPH (V.O.)
And I love cheese!

IN THE VIP SUITE

Samantha hugs Paul. Annoyed at first-- he finally breaks down and hugs her back.

ON THE MOUND

The team mobs Dani. Tears of joy stream down her face.

Through the crowd, she looks. Searches. Where is he?

Marcus steps aside... just enough to see Josh, mask off, smiling at her. He mouths the words "Good job."

DANI
Screw the rule-book.

She runs to him--

--and gives him a big ole kiss! A kiss for all time. A kiss bathed in the ROAR of the crowd.

JOSH
You sure?

DANI
Let's give 'em something for the highlight reel.

They fall into each other, surrounded by the team, as the crowd ROARS again.

FADE OUT.