

F O R Y O U R C O N S I D E R A T I O N

BATTLE OF
THE SEXES

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
SIMON BEAUFOY

BATTLE OF THE SEXES

Written by

Simon Beaufoy

Huge on the screen, A plastic doll stares at us. A commercial for *Talky Crissy*.

TALKY CRISSY

Hi! Please dry my hair.

V/O

All girls love Talky Crissy with her growing hair....

The screen divides in two to accommodate both *Talky Crissy* and a squadron of B52s unloading its cargo. Hundreds of bombs unzip the sky.

V/O (CONT'D)

... as the last US ground troops are withdrawn from Vietnam, the bombing continues...

The screen divides into smaller squares accommodating the best and the worst of the early 1970's. Clips of *Hawaii Five-O*, *Here's Lucy*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, stills from commercials, documentary footage from *Town Bloody Hall*, each taking centre screen for a few seconds and then shrinking to allow the next clip to take precedence.

"The Kenwood Chef does everything but cook. That's what wives are for".

"Flying Dutchman tobacco: lead Women around by the nose".

"Don't worry, darling, you didn't burn the beer. Schlitz Malt".

Then a news clip takes centre screen:

NEWSCASTER

Good evening, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court today legalized abortions. A majority from Texas and Georgia said that the decision to end a pregnancy during the first three months belongs to a woman and her doctor not the government.

Town Bloody Hall takes precedence as a woman in the audience accuses Norman Mailer on the stage.

TOWN BLOODY HALL

...the dog talks, you know! That a woman should talk at all is something you are finding a little hard to take...

Which fades in favour of the doll *Talky Crissy* again:

V/O

But there's someone new in town.

1A EXT. FOREST HILLS TENNIS COURT. US OPEN. DAY. 1A

BILLIE JEAN KING's 29 year-old face, big on the screen, concentrating hard. We hear a grunt and the noise of a serve. A flash and Billie Jean has reached the ball, returned it.

The ball comes back, but she is across the court with lightning speed and putting every ounce of energy into the shot, returns it again.

We are inside her head: only the sound of her furious breathing, the ball and the squeak of tennis shoes can be heard.

Back comes the ball, again and again, each time, Billie Jean punches it back until....

...The world crashes in: a sudden surge of applause and cheering. The focus on Billie Jean's face finally relaxes into a huge smile of triumph.

UMPIRE V/O

Game, set and match to Miss King.

She throws the racket high into the air and we see she is surrounded by thousands of fans applauding wildly.

LARRY KING, Billie Jean's husband, jumps onto the court and embraces her.

Title: Battle of the Sexes

1B EXT. HIGH RISE OFFICE. NEW YORK. DAY. 1B

A faceless, glass office building. Distant traffic and honking horns. Moving in on one of the many windows, we find...

TV (V.O.)

...and Billie Jean King's triumph in the US Open adds another Grand Slam to a list of titles that makes her the most successful woman player of all time and brings a phone call from a very special fan....

3 OMITTED 3

4 INT. OFFICE. NEW YORK. DAY. 4

...fifty-four year old BOBBY RIGGS, tennis racket in hand, staring at the TV.

On the TV, Billie Jean is on court holding up the trophy from the US Open.

The TV cuts to a boardroom where she is now talking on a speaker-phone to PRESIDENT NIXON.

BILLIE JEAN

Hello, Mister President.

PRESIDENT NIXON V/O

I just wanted to congratulate you on your great successes this year and being the first sportswoman to earn over a hundred thousand dollars in a season.

BILLIE JEAN

Thank you, Mister President. Thank you very much, Sir.

TV (V.O.)

With five Wimbledon titles, a French Open win and now a fourth US Open crown, the Old Lady as she is affectionately known on the circuit- shows no sign of hanging up her tennis shoes any time soon....

Bobby switches off the TV with a sigh. He bats a ball of scrunched up paper expertly into the trash, wanders back behind a large, largely empty desk. He sets the Newton's Cradle desk toy going, his eyes following it's progress back and forth for a while.

Snaps out of it. Presses the intercom.

BOBBY RIGGS

Has that contract from Diemberger come in yet, Mike?

MICHAEL O/S

Oh, yes, Sir. I turned it around yesterday.

BOBBY RIGGS

You did?

MICHAEL O/S
Just needed a signature. Hope that
was the right thing to do, Sir.

BOBBY RIGGS
Oh. Yes. Sure. Anything else come
in?

MICHAEL O/S
No, Sir.

Sits back. Opens his desk drawer. Pulls out a pack of cards.
Suddenly shoves them back in and slams the drawer as if
burned. Presses the intercom again.

BOBBY RIGGS
Mike, I think I'll take an early
one.

MICHAEL O/S
Very good, Sir.

Bobby grabs his coat and leaves.

5 EXT. CHURCH/NEW YORK STREET. DAY.

5

Bobby hunches down the street.

A bunch of kids on rollerskates, one of them with a boom-box
on his shoulder playing the Stones at full volume, speed
past, knocking Bobby off the sidewalk.

BOBBY RIGGS
Hey! Hey!

Completely ignored, Bobby turns into a church and goes in.

6 INT. CHURCH. DAY.

6

A semi-circle of chairs around a table in a side-chapel of
the church. A rag-tag bunch of people- mostly men- are
sitting. One of the men is telling a rambling story about his
gambling addiction.

Bored, Bobby starts making fish faces with his mouth. A
satisfying popping noise.

GAMBLERS ANON LEADER
Would anybody else like to speak?
Sir?

He's looking at Bobby. Bobby points at himself. Really? Me?
He stands up. Sighs. Here we go.

BOBBY RIGGS

My name is Bobby and I am an addict.

ADDICTS

Hi, Bobby.

BOBBY RIGGS

At least that's what Priscilla says. My wife. Lovely lady.

His face briefly shines and then he remembers.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

She's gonna leave me unless I quit gambling.

A couple of 'we hear you, Bobby's from the room.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Puzzles me, this word: gambling. Every time she gets the car out the garage Priscilla's gambling big time. Never checks the mirror, sticks it in reverse, puts her foot down, straight out onto the highway. Jeez Louise, that's gambling. But here I am. Gamblers Anonymous.

GAMBLERS ANON LEADER

And what's your point, Bobby

BOBBY RIGGS

My point? Everybody gambles all the time. Life's a gamble, right? That's the thrill of it: this way or that way, the yes or the no, the heads or the tails of being alive! Yet here I am and here you are, heads bowed, ashamed of ourselves. But that ain't right. You fellas aren't here cos you're gamblers—we're all gamblers. You're here cos you're terrible gamblers. That's what the problem is. You lose, right? And you end up here.

More ashamed nods from the Gamblers.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

I get it. But there's one thing worse than losing, friends: it's not being in the game. If you're not in game, what's the point?

(MORE)

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
We're dead men walking, right? I
mean, look at us!

This is taking a surprising turn. Even Bobby is cheering up.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Heads up, fellas, we can turn this
around, we *can* get back in the
game, we *will* get back in the
game...

Everyone's listening now. This isn't the inspirational speech
they were expecting, but they like it.

GAMBLERS ANON LEADER
I'm not sure that-

BOBBY RIGGS
I play a bit of cards, but sports
is my bag: tennis, golf, shooting
hoops, whatever it is, there's a
bet to made. And if there isn't I
don't get out of bed. I hear you
guys yammering on, and I realized.
I see the problem. What you gotta
do is get yourselves a *thing*.

GAMBLER
A thing?

BOBBY RIGGS
Yeah, a thing! An edge, an angle,
the inside track, the sniff in the
wind, the thing that turns you from
a gambler to a hustler, from a
loser to a winner. A thing!

GAMBLERS ANON LEADER
This is not what we should be
talking about here.

BOBBY RIGGS
Why do you want to stop us doing
the one thing we really love?

The Leader is nonplussed.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Sir, all they gotta do is learn to
do it better. Now, who's dealing?

He throws a pack of cards on the table, rolls up his sleeves.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Isn't this fun?

7 INT. NEW YORK HOTEL ROOM -- BEDROOM/BATHROOM. EVENING. 7

A silver trophy on the bedside table, surrounded by dozens of FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS. Billie Jean's husband LARRY KING (28, tall, immaculately dressed) reads the cards that came with the flowers. Billie Jean is out of sight in the bathroom.

LARRY

Flowers from your parents! We should have them over when we get back to California. A home-cooked meal, wouldn't that be something? Billie Jean?

In the bathroom, in a long evening gown, Billie Jean is putting on earrings. She is lost in her own thoughts.

LARRY (CONT'D)

We should go. Car's here. Billie?

He goes into the bathroom. Billie-Jean is just staring.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Billie.

BILLIE JEAN

Can we not go?

LARRY

Not go? You're the champ, honey. You're guest of honor!

Then he sees that she's serious.

LARRY (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

BILLIE JEAN

It isn't working, Larry.

LARRY

What isn't?

BILLIE JEAN

You and me. Us. Being married. We're never in the same place at the same time and when we are, we don't make each other happy.

LARRY

I'm happy. And if there's more I can do to make you happy, tell me.

BILLIE JEAN

It's not you, Larry. You know it's not.

Larry comes up to her and takes the necklace from her. Starts to put it on.

LARRY

We've had our moments- which marriage doesn't- but we've got through them before and we'll get through them again.

The necklace is tied.

LARRY (CONT'D)

There. You look beautiful. A bit tired maybe which is hardly a surprise. Stop winning everything, honey.

A weary smile from Billie.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Tomorrow you're staying in bed and I'm doing everything, okay?

BILLIE JEAN

Thank you. You're a good man, Larry King.

He offers her his hand.

LARRY

Come on. They can't start the dancing without you.

8

INT. FOREST HILLS CLUB -- BALL ROOM. EVENING.

8

The Tournament Ball. Larry and Billie Jean alone on the dance floor, waltzing elegantly- the perfect, happy couple. They are surrounded by hundreds of people in evening dress, all of whom applaud as the song comes to an end. Larry kisses Billie Jean and welcomes the rest of the party-goers to join them on the floor.

GLADYS HELDMAN, a feisty forty-year old marches onto the floor, interrupting Billie and Larry.

GLADYS

Have you seen this??

BILLIE JEAN

Hey, Gladys.

LARRY

You want a dance?

GLADYS

I want a gun. They've just snuck out this press release, the low-lives.

Gladys waves a piece of paper in front of Billie. Billie grabs it. Reads.

LARRY

Which low-lives?

GLADYS

Our so-called friends, the United States Lawn Tennis Association.

Gladys jabs a finger at one particular line. Billie Jean's eyes widen.

BILLIE JEAN

What?! This is outrageous.

GLADYS

It's got Jack Kramer's fingerprints all over it.

BILLIE JEAN

Absolutely right. And I know where he's hiding. Come on, Gladys.

She grabs Gladys and they march off the dance floor.

LARRY

Good luck!

8A

INT. FOREST HILL COUNTRY CLUB -- DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

8A

Gladys and Billie Jean walk between the tables.

GLADYS

It's a slap in the face, that's what this is.

BILLIE JEAN

Slap on the wrist, more like. How dare we girls do so well?! Better put us in our place!

GLADYS

We can't let them get away with it.

9

INT. FOREST HILLS CLUB -- LIBRARY. EVENING.

9

JACK KRAMER and BOB SANDERS are sitting in club chairs, relaxing. DANA, a young waitress, hands them whiskies.

JACK KRAMER

Thank you, honey.

DANA

Sure, Mister Kramer.

He follows the rear view with his eyes as she goes.

Gladys and Billie Jean come marching in.

GLADYS

Surprised in their lair.

JACK KRAMER

An unexpected pleasure, ladies. You both look sensational, if I may say.

GLADYS

You may not.

BOB SANDERS

You're not supposed to be in here, you know--

GLADYS

- because I'm a woman or a Jew?

JACK KRAMER

Oh, we have a Jewish member now. Don't we, Bob?

BOB SANDERS

One black member as well.

GLADYS

Progress!

BILLIE JEAN

But no women.

BOB SANDERS

Not as yet, no.

Jack pats a seat for Gladys, oblivious to the daggers shot his way.

JACK KRAMER

What can we do for you ladies? Glass of something?

Gladys sits, gets out a cigarette. Bob leans forward to light it. She pointedly lights it herself.

GLADYS

I always find it's best to be clear before committing cold-blooded murder, so, to clarify: the Pacific Southwest Tournament press release.

She bangs the offending piece of paper down on the coffee table, rattling the china.

JACK KRAMER

Ah. Yes.

BILLIE JEAN

It says you're offering twelve thousand dollars to the men's winner and one thousand five hundred dollars to the women's.

GLADYS

That's either a misprint or a provocation. I might get off with manslaughter.

JACK KRAMER

No, those are the terms.

BOB SANDERS

The men's prize has to be that high to attract the best players. We're trying to make this the most prestigious tournament in America.

GLADYS

And paying the women players less than ever makes it more *prestigious*. Aha. I get it. I see the logic. Hallelujah, my eyes have been opened.

BILLIE JEAN

-Gladys.

Said quietly but firmly. Everybody takes notice.

GLADYS

You're lucky she's here. She's like the bomb disposal squad-

BILLIE JEAN

(firmer)

- Gladys.

A huff from Gladys. Silence.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Can I just bring it back around to the money, Jack?

JACK KRAMER

You know I'm sympathetic to your cause, Billie Jean. We've talked about this--

BILLIE JEAN

We have. Many times. You promised this year would be different.

JACK KRAMER

It's simply a question of what we can afford.

BOB SANDERS

People come to see the men play. They're the draw.

BILLIE JEAN

Eight times more of a draw?

BOB SANDERS

Sorry?

BILLIE JEAN

You're offering the men's winner exactly eight times more than the women's winner. Do we bring in an eighth of the crowd?

BOB SANDERS

I don't know the percentages--

BILLIE JEAN

They sold the exact same number of tickets today for the women's final as the men's final. Isn't that right, Jack?

JACK

I suppose so.

GLADYS

Same sales, same prize money. Seems fair to me.

JACK KRAMER

Be reasonable, there's no way we can afford that.

BILLIE JEAN

Then what's your argument? Just give me a logical argument why you should pay a woman an eighth of what you pay a man and I promise I'll stop asking.

JACK KRAMER

Well, for one thing, the men have to support their families.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm the main bread winner in my family.

JACK KRAMER

Look. The men are simply more exciting to watch. They're faster--

BOB SANDERS

-fact-

JACK KRAMER

-stronger-

BOB SANDERS

-fact-

JACK KRAMER

-more competitive-

BOB SANDERS

-just a fact.

JACK KRAMER

It's not your fault. It's biology.

BILLIE JEAN

That's the best argument you've got? Really?

JACK KRAMER

It's just the way it is.

BILLIE JEAN

We'll boycott the tournament.

GLADYS

Fact.

JACK KRAMER

We'd sure miss your pretty faces, but...go right ahead.

BILLIE JEAN
Not only will we boycott, we'll set
up our own tournament.

A flicker of panic from Gladys.

GLADYS
Fact.

BILLIE JEAN
At the exact same time as the
Pacific Southwest.

GLADYS
Um. Fact.

Jack Kramer and Bob Sanders exchange a look. Jack smiles and
stands.

JACK KRAMER
Well, be sure and send me tickets.
You have a good night, ladies.

He holds open the library door for them.

10 EXT. FOREST HILLS CLUB -- CORRIDOR. EVENING. 10

The camera follows Billie Jean and Gladys as they go.

GLADYS
Are we really going to do this?

BILLIE JEAN
Sure we're going to do this.

GLADYS
How are we going to do this?

BILLIE JEAN
No idea.

11 INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. EVENING. 11

An air of tension in this upscale dining room. Bobby,
PRISCILLA his second wife and BOBBY'S SON are sitting at the
table.

PRISCILLA
Busy day?

BOBBY RIGGS

Run off my feet. Not a minute to think...Whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing there, Priscilla, I'm not doing it.

PRISCILLA

Daddy says you're an integral part of the company.

BOBBY RIGGS

Integral. Like the walls? The walk-in closet?

PRISCILLA

It's steady. It's what you need right now.

BOBBY RIGGS

I know, I know.

PRISCILLA

Did you go to- your meeting?

BOBBY RIGGS

Only darned meeting I had. I might have to find another group.

PRISCILLA

But you went.

BOBBY RIGGS

Oh yeah.

PRISCILLA

Well done, honey.

She smiles supportively at him. He attempts a smile back. Another silence. Bobby's son peppers his food with a outsize pepper grinder. Appraises it.

BOBBY'S SON

(sly)

I wonder how much pepper corns are in here?

PRISCILLA

It's not how much, it's how many. And stop wondering. Or you can go wonder in your room.

BOBBY'S SON

Mom...I was just asking Dad an educational question, right?

BOBBY RIGGS
Oh, I...I dunno, Junior.

BOBBY'S SON
I'd say 'bout a thousand.

BOBBY RIGGS
(cracking)
No way, there's at least five
thousand in there.

BOBBY'S SON
I'd put a dollar on a thousand-

PRISCILLA
- young man!

Bobby's son gives the pepper grinder another provocative
twist, winks at his Dad and mouths "one dollar".

BOBBY RIGGS
Absolutely not, young man. We do
not gamble at the table.

PRISCILLA
We do not gamble *any place*, Bobby.

BOBBY RIGGS
Exactly. Any place.

Bobby pats his mouth with his napkin. Dabs at the sweat on
his brow. Gets up.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
You know, honey, now I remember,
there is something I need to do at
the office.

PRISCILLA
Now?

BOBBY RIGGS
Your Daddy put his faith in me.
Don't want to let him down.

She smiles up at him uncertainly- benefit of the doubt.

PRISCILLA
Well, okay. Proud of you, honey.

12 EXT. TOWN TENNIS CENTER -- COURT. MANHATTAN. EVENING.

12

Men's laughter, drinks, music. Wedges of greenbacks
everywhere. In the middle of the table, surrounded by
dollars, a set of car keys.

Bizarrely, two Alsatians are bounding around a tennis court, Bobby on the end of their lead, being towed after them. On the other side of the net is JACK, retired business tycoon and amateur tennis player.

Equally bizarre is the location of the court; on the flat roof of a skyscraper near the belching smoke stacks of the Con Edison Power Plant.

Loving the show are the Boys: HANK, ex-baseball pro: retired KEN and gentle HERB, a tennis star in the 50's, now in a wheelchair and LORNI KUHLE, younger friend of Bobby's and tennis pro.

Somehow, Bobby manages to reach the ball and get it back over the net. The Boys are loving it, the dogs are loving it and most of all, so is Bobby.

JACK

Dammit, Bobby....

BOBBY RIGGS

Teach them to serve and we could get them on the Circuit! Good boys, good boys go, go...

He wins the point.

KEN

A chair. C'mon, guys...

BOBBY RIGGS

Two chairs and I'll raise you both five hundred.

KEN/ HERB

Done. Take him, Jack!

Lornie rushes two chairs onto Bobby's side of the court that he now has to dodge around with the dogs. Chaos. Bobby is leaping over the chairs, getting the lead tangled in the legs...and yet somehow, the ball keeps being returned.

More dollars are put down on the table by the Boys. There's big money on this game.

A fierce exchange of shots, culminating in a lot of barking and a massive lob from Bobby. Everyone watches its progress high into the sky and then down on the baseline. Right on the baseline. Jack scrabbles back for it. Doesn't get there.

Bobby leaps the net, shakes his hand.

BOBBY RIGGS

Good game, Jack.

JACK
Dammit, I thought I had you this
time, Bobby, I really did.

Dejected, he walks off. The boys watch him go.

BOBBY RIGGS
He keeps betting me. What do I do?

HANK
Thing about Jack is- he can afford
to lose.

Jack gets the car keys from the bowl in the middle of the
table. Throws them to Bobby. Towels his face down.

LORNIE
What's Priscilla going to say,
Bobby? That's what you gotta ask
yourself.

BOBBY RIGGS
Don't spoil it, Jack, you know?

HERB
Priscilla? You still married,
Bobby?

KEN
He sure will be if he turns up in a
Rolls Royce.

LORNIE
He sure won't be if he turns up in
a Rolls Royce.

HERB
Whadd'ya mean?

LORNIE
You think Priscilla won't know
where it came from? Even Bobby's
gonna find it hard talking that one
away. "Hi, honey, this guy on the
corner just gave me a Silver
Shadow..." Think that'll cut it?

HERB
What's to talk away? You've just
won a damned Rolls Royce.

LORNIE
Herb, Bobby doesn't gamble anymore.

HERB
You don't?

BOBBY RIGGS

No! I'm Gamblers Anonymous once a week, shrink twice a week. Bobby Riggs is as clean as Montana snow.

KEN

You are?

BOBBY RIGGS

Absolutely. A reformed character. That's what my psychoanalyst's report says and Priscilla's very happy about that, I can tell you.

HERB

How did you ever get the shrink to write that?

BOBBY RIGGS

The chump keeps losing at Black Jack. But Lornie's got a point. It's a big car to hide in a drawer. No hurry, Jack.

Bobby throws the keys back.

JACK

You saying I'm not good for a bet?

BOBBY RIGGS

No, I'm just saying keep the engine warm, don't scratch my paintwork, you know?

The Boys laugh as Jack curses and walks away.

13 OMITTED

13

14 INT. TOWN TENNIS CENTER -- LOCKER ROOM. MANHATTAN. LATER. 14

Teak lockers, steam coming from the showers, a man on a massage table getting treatment and a card table. Lots of men in towels lounging around.

Hank is reading an article about Billie Jean. Bobby is getting changed. Notices the article.

BOBBY RIGGS

"The hundred thousand dollar girl". Don't see anybody on the Senior Tour getting a hundred gees.

HANK

Reckons she should get more. Same as the men.

BOBBY RIGGS

She's not happy with a hundred thousand dollars, now? That Billie Jean King. Just what is her problem?

HANK

It's all equality this, equality that now, Bobby. Bra burning and the like.

BOBBY RIGGS

Why would they pay women the same as the guys? Why would they?

HERB

I say there's nothing wrong with watching a nice girl in a short skirt running after a ball.

BOBBY RIGGS

No argument there, Jack, but I could beat any woman on the planet. Any of them. And what are they paying me on the Seniors? Anybody offering me equal prize money? No, sir. Peanuts, that's what I'm getting. Peanuts.

Silence. Then:

HANK

That would be a bet.

BOBBY RIGGS

What?

HANK

Bobby Riggs versus Billie Jean King. I'd pay a lot to see that.

All the men stare at Bobby, suddenly interested.

15

INT. GENE SHAWCOVE'S HAIR SALON. DAY.

15

Nine tennis player renegades are having their hair done: Billie Jean King, ROSIE CASALS (El Salvadorian-American), JULIE HELDMAN (Gladys's daughter), VALERIE ZIEGENFUSS (very blonde), PEACHES BARTKOWICZ (Polish-American), NANCY RICHEY (always knitting), KRISTY PIGEON (only 20), KERRY MELVILLE REID (English) and JUDY TEGART DALTON (older, Australian).

Gladys smokes as she pays the salon with a personal check. Billie Jean can't sit still in the chair where she's meant to be having her hair done by MARILYN BARNETT (late twenties).

PEACHES

Gladys? What if some of the men
decide they want to join our tour?
You know, in solidarity?

Billie Jean pops out of her seat. Marilyn's hands reach after her, helpless to keep her in the chair.

BILLIE JEAN

No! That's the whole point! We have
to show everyone we can bring in
the crowds without the men.

ROSIE

How are ticket sales going?

BILLIE JEAN

Good! Fine! We're working on it!

JULIE HELDMAN

Are we going to have our hair done
before every event? Because I could
get used to this.

Some of the women make noises of agreement.

BILLIE JEAN

Right! Um. Gladys?

Billie Jean sits back in her chair, ceding the floor to Gladys. Marilyn resumes styling Billie Jean's hair.

GLADYS

The salon is a once-only, because
the press are here and because I
love you. Tomorrow, the press
aren't here and I don't love you.

JULIE

What about me, Mom? You'll still
love me, right?

Some of the girls laugh.

GLADYS

This is a budget tour, ladies. And
yes, you'll be sharing rooms, so
you might as well start getting
friendly.

PEACHES

I call bunking with Valerie!

ROSIE

I thought you were getting us a sponsor, Gladys.

GLADYS

I was, I am and I will. Until then, we're broke, so shut up.

VALERIE

Wait, what about our prize money?

ROSIE

Why are you worried, Val? You only get prize money if you win.

Lots of laughter and mock 'oohs' from the girls. Billie Jean pops back out of her chair. Marilyn frowns.

BILLIE JEAN

Listen, everyone. I know how much you're risking here, because I'm risking the exact same thing.

GLADYS

More.

BILLIE JEAN

No. The same. We're all putting our careers on the line for this. So I thank you. For your bravery. And your balls.

The women applaud and whoop. Billie Jean grins.

GLADYS

All right! You've got thirty minutes until we go face the press!

How long? Outrage from the girls.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Okay, twenty.

As Gladys passes by Billie, Billie grabs her arm.

BILLIE JEAN

Anything from the USLTA? From Jack?

GLADYS

Not a word. They're up to something.

Gladys walks away. HANDS clasp Billie Jean's shoulders. Billie Jean looks up at Marilyn, who holds onto her.

MARILYN

Sit. Please.

BILLIE JEAN

Sorry. I'm excited. Or nervous.
Something.

Billie Jean sits in front of Marilyn. BONNY, the stylist working on Julie, pipes up:

BONNY

Sounds like you girls are getting men to pay attention to what you're saying for once.

JULIE

You know what would really get their attention? A sex strike.

PEACHES

Wouldn't that punish us as much as the men?

VALERIE

I don't even think I'd miss it. My ex went about it like he was fixing the carburetor on the Oldsmobile.

ROSIE

And he never could get that damned car to start.

The girls laugh.

MARILYN

(Quiet, to Billie Jean)

At least women know where the carburetor is. Right?

Billie Jean doesn't know how to answer. Marilyn leans over so her face is level with Billie's, intimate:

MARILYN (CONT'D)

So, Billie Jean. What do you want?

BILLIE JEAN

...What?

MARILYN

With your hair. What do you want to do with it?

BILLIE JEAN

Oh, um. It doesn't matter. Just get it out of my face.

MARILYN

You don't care what you look like?
Someone as pretty as you?

BILLIE JEAN

What? No. I'm not pretty. I mean
thank you. But that's not me.

MARILYN

If you say so.

Billie Jean can't look away from this woman's direct gaze.

BILLIE JEAN

What's your name again?

MARILYN

Marilyn Barnett. You're all tennis
players?

BILLIE JEAN

Yeah. You don't watch tennis?

MARILYN

I don't own a TV.

Marilyn runs her fingers through her hair. It feels good.
Billie Jean closes her eyes. Her face relaxes. She opens her
eyes, feeling caught.

BILLIE JEAN

Sorry. That feels nice.

We're close on her face, Marilyn's hands. It's sensual.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

What is that? Is that perfume?

MARILYN

I like to put lavender oil on my
wrists. To relax the customer.

Marilyn leans over so her face is next to Billie Jean's.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Why don't you let me give you a
trim? You'll come out feeling like
a new person.

BILLIE JEAN

I don't think a haircut has ever
made me feel anything like that.

MARILYN

Well, you've never had me cut your hair. Relax. I promise I'll make you happy.

Marilyn goes to work on Billie Jean's hair. Billie Jean watches her in the mirror, transfixed in spite of herself.

15A

INT. FRONT DESK. GENE SHAWCOVE'S HAIR SALON. DAY.

15A

The Nine are hurrying out the door. Billy Jean lingers, putting on her jacket. Her hair is shorter and *much* more stylish. She watches Marilyn sweep up.

BILLIE JEAN

Thanks again. I really like what you did with it.

MARILYN

It was my pleasure. Good luck.

Rosie bangs on the window. They're late.

BILLIE JEAN

Coming!

Billie Jean roots around in her bag, pulls out some fliers. She hands them out to various HAIR DRESSERS in the salon.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Here. We're playing in San Diego next month.

Billie Jean hands a flier to Marilyn. Marilyn smiles. Billie Jean looks away, nervous.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Okay. I gotta run. Bye.

And Billie Jean is out the door. Marilyn watches her go. Bonny comes over, fanning herself with the flier.

BONNY

You think she knows she's gay?

MARILYN

Dunno. But she sure she knows I am.

Billie Jean peers back over her shoulder. Eye contact. Marilyn waves. Billie Jean quickly turns away.

16 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. DAY. 16

A room full of Photographers and Press, all facing the newly-coiffed Nine. They are led out onto the stage by Gladys who does a lot of noisy choreographing.

17 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM. STAGE. DAY. 17

GLADYS

Peaches, there. Kerry, Kerry, I know he's cute, but can you just-thank you. Judy, here.

Larry King is sitting at the back, surrounded by paperwork. He gets up and goes to Billie Jean, murmurs in her ear.

LARRY

Guess who showed up?

He nods. There at the back is Jack Kramer. Billie moves out of the line-up and walks through the Press.

BILLIE JEAN

Jack.

JACK

Billie Jean, what you're doing here, this is a big mistake.

BILLIE JEAN

Are you here to give us another option, Jack?

JACK

On behalf of the USLTA, I'm here to ask you girls not to do anything hasty.

BILLIE JEAN

So what are you offering? Equal prize money? Women at every tournament?

JACK

I'm offering to keep you in the United States Lawn Tennis Association.

BILLIE JEAN

You're throwing us out?

JACK

If you do this, you're becoming our rivals. We'll have no option.

BILLIE JEAN
We'll miss your pretty face, Jack,
but go right ahead.

The Nine are sat, waiting, though there's still a hubbub surrounding them.

GLADYS
Hey, Billie Jean!

BILLIE JEAN
One minute.

JACK
I'm not sure you understand. If
you're not in the USLTA, you can't
play the Grand Slams. No Wimbledon,
no Palm Springs, no nothing.

BILLIE JEAN
Oh, I get it. But what will your
Grand Slams be without the best
women players in the world? Not so
grand. I appreciate you coming,
but if you've got nothing to offer,
I've got a contract to sign. Bye,
Jack.

She walks away. Larry is waiting with paperwork.

LARRY
A deal?

BILLIE JEAN
Nope. No deal.

LARRY
So do it.

He hands a pen to Billie Jean. She looks Larry in the eyes.

BILLIE JEAN
We're really doing this.

LARRY
Proud of you.

She adds her signature to the list on the contract. Larry hands her a dollar bill.

LARRY (CONT'D)
You're in. One dollar. Don't spend
it all at once.

She goes to join the Nine.

GLADYS

Okay, hold that dollar bill up! Are we at a funeral, or what? Smile!

Flash guns pop. The Nine hold out their dollar bills. Through a fixed grin...

BILLIE JEAN

Keep smiling, ladies, but we've just been thrown out of the USLTA.

GLADYS

Give old Jack a wave, girls. Don't let him see you care.

And they wave their dollar bills at him, standing motionless in the doorway.

JACK

Yeah. A dollar. Remember that, ladies. One dollar.

Cameras click. Freeze frame on the photo for a second. A lot of slightly threatened faces.

20 OMITTED 20

20A EXT. LOCAL AIRPORT DROP OFF AREA. DAY. 20A

Gladys and the Nine pile out of various cars, carting their suitcases and equipment. It's a lot of stuff. They hug and kiss loved ones goodbye. Billie Jean hugs Larry.

LARRY

Take care of yourself on the road.

BILLIE JEAN

I always do.

LARRY

I'll see you in Los Angeles. Call if you need anything.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry! Don't let the plants die.

She smiles. He salutes her.

18 EXT. TENNIS COURT. FLORIDA. DAY. 18

Rosie and Billie play each other, going hard. Billie scores a final point to win the game. We pull out to reveal: bleachers three-quarters empty, a few fans huddled in their coats.

Billie Jean and Rosie run off the court to a smattering of applause.

21 INT. RADIO STUDIO. DAY.

21

Music, jingles. The Nine are crowded around a table in a tiny radio studio. Across the table, the DJ.

DJ

...and for all you tennis fans out there, we are privileged to have the great Billie Jean King in the studio, along with a lot of very lively WTA tennis players. Say hi, ladies.

The Nine yell "Hi!" Rosie, sassy, calls out, "Hi ladies!"

DJ (CONT'D)

So you're renegades from the tennis establishment. Is that right?

BILLIE JEAN

Yup! The US Lawn Tennis Association weren't giving us women our fair share, so we thought: hey, we'll do it for ourselves.

DJ

And how is this different from a normal tennis tournament?

BILLIE JEAN

We want to get tennis away from the stuffy old country club game. After all, this is 1973.

22 OMITTED

22

22A EXT. TENNIS COURT. DAY.

22A

Peaches takes a winning shot. Applause from a small but vocal crowd that includes Billie Jean, ice packs on her knees, cheering harder than anybody.

BILLIE JEAN (V.O.)

I love it when the crowds cheer, shout out their support. Love it.

22B OMITTED

22B

22D INT. RADIO STUDIO. DAY. 22D

DJ
You girls are playing a lot of
tournaments- that's some schedule.

22E INT. GYM. DAY. 22E

The Nine pushing a massive roll of ASTROTURF over a gym
floor. Lots of heaving as the plastic grass rolls out.

BILLIE JEAN (V.O.)
It's pretty much non-stop. A new
tournament every week, right across
America.

22D CONTINT. RADIO STUDIO. DAY. 22D CONT

DJ
Don't you miss your husbands?

BILLIE JEAN
Sure. But we're used to it. Pro
players are almost never home.

Peaches leans forward to the microphone with a wicked grin.

PEACHES
Some of us don't have husbands.

A burst of giggling from the Nine.

DJ
Whoa! Single men, you heard it
here first.

22G OMITTED 22G

22H INT. LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 22H

Rosie and Billie Jean wash out their socks in the hotel
bathroom sinks.

DJ (V.O.)
And what do you girls get up to in
your down time?

BILLIE JEAN (V.O.)
Down time?

22D CONTINT. RADIO STATION. DAY.

22D CONT.

The girls all look at each other and laugh. The DJ smiles.

DJ

I take it that was the wrong
question.

22F EXT. SUPERMARKET DAY.

22F

The Nine handing out tickets at an intersection.

ROSIE (V.O.)

Here's the inside scoop. We're
doing everything: laying the
courts, selling the tickets,
publicity... Not to mention keeping
up with our practice.

22D CONTINT. RADIO STUDIO DAY.

22D CONT

DJ

Wow-wee. Isn't that a lot of
pressure?

BILLIE JEAN

Pressure is a privilege. We're
trying to change the sport here.

Julie cuts her off, trying to lighten the mood.

JULIE

But above all, it's fun. Come see
for yourselves!

ROSIE

Bring your daughters--

PEACHES

--Your sons!

BILLIE JEAN

Bring the whole family. That's the
point of this tour. It's for
everyone.

19 INT. DINER. FLORIDA. EVENING.

19

The Nine are sitting around a big table in a dismal diner as
the rain smashes against the windows. Billie Jean is wrapping
a tea-towel full of ice cubes around her swollen knee.

A WAITRESS puts down a solitary bowl of fries for the whole table.

WAITRESS

Is that it? For all of you?

The door bangs open and in comes Gladys, cigarette in mouth. Gazes at the dour group.

GLADYS

Who died?

BILLIE JEAN

Hey, Gladys.

GLADYS

Oh, I get it. It's all my fault. Well, Gladys has got just the thing for you miserable ingrates...

She delves in her bag and starts throwing packets of cigarettes at the Nine.

VALERIE

Cigarettes. Fabulous.

GLADYS

Not just any cigarettes. Virginia Slims!

ROSIE

None of us smoke, Gladys.

GLADYS

You do now. Ladies and Gentleladies, may I present to you the Virginia Slims Championships, a Gladys Heldman, Philip Morris co-production. Smoking our guts out around the United States of America in return for twelve months of funding and a winner's prize of-- drum roll, stand by on the cymbal-- seven thousand dollars!

This wakes everybody up.

BILLIE JEAN

Woah! Every tournament?

GLADYS

Every tournament. That'll perk up your lousy second serve.

Whoops from the Nine.

JULIE
Way to go, Mom!

GLADYS
Didn't I tell you Gladys would come through?

PEACHES
I'll smoke to that.

Peaches takes a cigarette is lit by Gladys and promptly coughs her guts out. Gladys grabs the cigarette. She now has one in her hand and one in her mouth.

GLADYS
You do the tennis, I'll do the smoking. From today, my girls, we're properly funded. We're professional. We're serious and we're going big. I've asked Ted Tingling to join as our personal couturier. You're all going to have tennis dresses made just for you!

Excited response from the Nine.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
And I'm putting in calls to every woman who's ever picked up a racket. Guess who's signed already? Margaret Court.

"Oohs" from the Nine.

ROSIE
Be afraid, Billie Jean, be very afraid.

BILLIE JEAN
I can take her.

More "oohs".

GLADYS
Well, you'll have your chance soon enough, because she's arriving next week. Ladies, before you know it, we're gonna be the only party in town.

Puts both cigarettes in her mouth. Inhales and exhales magnificently.

GLADYS (CONT'D)
Waitress, ice-cream sundaes all round. We are In The Money!

20 OMITTED 20

22C INT. DRESSING ROOM. DAY. (AMBASSADOR AUDITORIUM) 22C

In a bright yellow tennis dress, Billie Jean is standing with her arms up as TED TINLING, the tall, gay, English couturier to the players, pins Billie's sleeves. HENRY, Ted's assistant, works on the hem of Valerie's skirt.

VALERIE

You do know tennis players normally wear white, right?

TED

And where's the fun in normal, may I ask? If you want to attract an audience, you must put on a show. You girls will look like flowers strewn across the Astroturf. A veritable *bouquet*.

BILLIE JEAN

I think it's *wonderful*.

Rosie walks from the bathroom in another outfit. Ted motions for her to do a twirl in the dress. She does and puts in an imaginary serve at the end. Ted narrows his eyes. Nods.

HENRY

You are clever, Ted.

TED

Thank you, Henry.

30A EXT. AIRPORT. DAY. 30A

The Nine exit the terminal. Gladys looks around.

GLADYS

It's Wednesday, it must be San Diego.

31 EXT. SEAPORT MOTEL. SAN DIEGO. DUSK. 31

A car pulls up outside the motel. MARGARET COURT, 29, statuesque Australian, gets out holding her baby, Daniel. Her husband, BARRY, joins her. They gaze at the building.

MARGARET COURT

Not exactly the Ritz.

Billie Jean and Gladys come out.

GLADYS
Margaret Court, welcome to the
nuthouse.

BILLIE JEAN
Hi, Margaret.

MARGARET COURT
Billie Jean.

An awkward pause. These two don't get on.

BILLIE JEAN
If you're looking for the spa, the
restaurant or the swimming pool,
there isn't one.

GLADYS
But if you're looking for the
tickets you're selling at the
intersection, they're right here.

She dumps a load of tickets into Barry's hands.

32

EXT. TENNIS COURT. SAN DIEGO. DAY.

32

Billie Jean and Margaret Court are signing autographs. Billie
Jean signs almost mechanically. A pair of hands push the
FLIER for the match at Billie Jean.

MARILYN (O.S.)
Nice hair.

Billie Jean looks up, right into Marilyn's eyes.

BILLIE JEAN
You came.

MARILYN
Why didn't you tell me how *good* you
are?!

Billie Jean laughs. Margaret clocks their interaction as she
walks away.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Can I ask you a question?

BILLIE JEAN
You can. I may not answer it.

MARILYN
Do you like dancing?

33 INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. DRAWING ROOM. NIGHT.

33

Bizarrely, Bobby and Bobby's son are both standing on a very small coffee table in the middle of a very formal, ornate room.

Bobby takes a huge step over onto a large armchair. He holds out a hand and heaves Junior across.

BOBBY'S SON

Watch out for the alligators.

They are trying to get from one end of the room to the other without touching the floor.

BOBBY RIGGS

Okay, here's hard.

BOBBY'S SON

Quicksand, right?

BOBBY RIGGS

Acid quicksand.

He leaps off the back of the armchair onto a chest.

Bobby's son reaches for the dado rail attached to the wall. It's a stretch.

BOBBY'S SON

Dad, what if I don't make it?

BOBBY RIGGS

What kind of question is that?
You're a Riggs. We always make it.

BOBBY'S SON

Yes, but-

BOBBY RIGGS

- burns you to the bone in seconds.
Most painful death known to
mankind. Where do you think your
elder brothers disappeared to? Now
go.

Somehow his terrified son gets himself flat against the wall, shuffles towards the safety of the sofa. Then...

BOBBY'S SON

Dad...!

He comes crashing onto the floor, bringing a vase of flowers and a couple of framed photographs with him

BOBBY RIGGS
You blew it. I can't believe it.

His son picks himself up. Seems surprised to be still alive. Then a knock at the front door. Bobby starts tidying up quickly. The knock comes again.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Gimme a hand here, kiddo.
Honey! Can you? Just reading Junior
a story.

34 INT/EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. DOORSTEP. NIGHT.

34

Priscilla opens the door to a perfectly-attired CHAUFFEUR. Behind him is a Rolls Royce. The Chauffeur holds out a set of keys.

CHAUFFEUR
Good evening, Madam. Compliments of
Mister Jack Dreyfus.

PRISCILLA
Bobby?

She peers at the car.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)
Do you know anything about a-

Bobby's son is at the door.

BOBBY'S SON
- Rolls Royce! Cool!

BOBBY RIGGS O/S
Rolls what? No, I-

Bobby appears in the hall. Sees the car. Sees Priscilla staring at him.

BOBBY RIGGS
Dammit, Jack.

PRISCILLA
After everything we discussed.
Everything we agreed.

BOBBY RIGGS
I know, I know. I agree! Look, it
was just once- weeks ago- it was
all Jack's idea, I didn't really...

PRISCILLA
How could you, Bobby, how could
you?

BOBBY RIGGS
(shrugs)
Just happened.

PRISCILLA
It always just happens.

BOBBY RIGGS
Maybe we can-

PRISCILLA
- no. Not this time. I've had
enough. It's all about you all the
time. You're like a little kid-

BOBBY RIGGS
- you're great with kids-

PRISCILLA
- I already have a child, Bobby!
And I'm thinking about him when I
say enough. You promise, you let us
down, you promise you let us down.
Over and over. I'm sorry, Bobby. No
more.

BOBBY RIGGS
Okay, okay, I get it.

Bobby snatches the keys from the motionless Chauffeur.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Gimme those.

35 INT. NIGHT CLUB. NIGHT.

35

A 1973 club. Music blasting, mirror balls, flairs, sequins.
At the bar, Marilyn and Billie are talking, in a world of
their own.

MARILYN
I can't believe how you move on the
court. It's like watching some wild
animal.

Billie Jean laughs at her hyperbole. She's having fun.

BILLIE JEAN
Well, I'm glad you enjoyed it.

MARILYN

Enjoyed it?? I've never seen anything like it. It must be intoxicating.

BILLIE JEAN

Playing tennis?

MARILYN

Being inside your skin.

There's a moment. Billie Jean swallows, overwhelmed. Just then, a HANDSOME MAN approaches Billie Jean.

HANDSOME MAN

I'm sorry to do this, Mrs. King, but I'm such a huge fan.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh, thank you.

HANDSOME MAN

Do you dance as well as you serve?

Billie Jean shakes her head regretfully.

BILLIE JEAN

Thanks, but we're just going to watch.

But Marilyn stands.

MARILYN

I'd love to dance.

HANDSOME MAN

Sure thing.

35A INT. NIGHT CLUB. NIGHT.

35A

He leads Marilyn onto the dance floor. Billie Jean watches, feeling strangely jealous. Marilyn moves flirtatiously, touching the man's shoulders. Across the dance floor, she makes eye contact with Billie Jean- *is she flirting with him or me?* Marilyn looks away. Billie Jean keeps watching.

35B INT. NIGHT CLUB. HALLWAY. LATER.

35B

In the mirrored hallway, Billie Jean and Marilyn wait in line for the bathroom with other women. Marilyn fixes her lipstick. Billie Jean watches in the mirror.

MARILYN

Here. Let me do yours.

She puts lipstick on Billie Jean. Billie Jean's eyes never leave her face. With a soft finger, Marilyn touches the edges of Billie Jean's lips, fixing the line of the lipstick.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

There. Now you're perfect.

Billie Jean looks at herself in the mirror, Marilyn smiling beside her. Marilyn checks her watch.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

I should go soon.

BILLIE JEAN

No! Why?

MARILYN

I have to catch a bus back to LA.

BILLIE JEAN

At this time of night? Don't be silly. You can stay with me. I mean, I have two beds in my room. So. You're welcome to crash.

MARILYN

Okay. Thanks.

35C OMITTED 35C

35D INT. SEAPORT MOTEL -- CORRIDOR. SAN DIEGO. NIGHT. 35D

Billie Jean and Marilyn walk down the hallway, a few feet apart. Billie Jean stops in front of her room.

BILLIE JEAN

This is me. I mean, us. Me.

She laughs, nervous. Tries to unlock the door. It takes her a few tries. Finally, red-faced, she gets it open.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

After you.

Marilyn goes inside. Billie Jean checks the empty hallway, to be sure no one is watching, before closing the door.

36 INT. SEAPORT MOTEL ROOM. SAN DIEGO. NIGHT. 36

The door shuts. Marilyn turns to face Billie Jean. Billie Jean, hyper-aware of being alone with this woman, starts talking to fill the silence.

BILLIE JEAN

Gladys used to make us share rooms,
but now we can afford our own. I
usually take the bed closest to the
door, but you can have whichever
one you want.

Marilyn crosses to Billie Jean. Billie Jean shuts up. She's
physically frozen. Marilyn takes off Billie Jean's glasses.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

I'm married.

MARILYN

And you'll still be married in the
morning.

They are very close together now. Breathing the same air.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

(Quiet)

So...?

A beat. Billie Jean gives a tiny nod. Marilyn leans in and
kisses Billie Jean. It's soft, careful, intense. Marilyn
finishes the kiss and leans back to examine Billie Jean's
face. Billie Jean opens her eyes.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

We can take it slow. There's no
rush--

But the end of the sentence is cut off by Billie Jean kissing
her, hard. Within seconds, their hands are all over each
other. They are practically discombobulated with desire.

A massive parking lot, empty but for a Rolls Royce parked up
in splendid isolation.

38 INT./EXT. ROLLS ROYCE -- LONG ISLAND PARKING LOT. NIGHT. 38

Even if it is a Rolls Royce, it's still not the most comfortable place to spend the night. There are clothes and shoes, strewn over the seats- whatever he could pick up before being thrown out of the house. Bobby is flicking through a photo album.

Shots of Bobby in his youth- at Wimbledon holding up the Winner's trophy, then the US Open trophy.

He sighs and throws the album on the seat. A tiny black and white TV is showing clips of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. He changes channel: *Kojak*. Changes again and there's a local news report about the Virginia Slims Tour. Bobby stays on this channel, stares closer at the set as Billie Jean is seen playing Rosie.

39 INT. SEAPORT MOTEL ROOM. SAN DIEGO. NIGHT. 39

Billie Jean and Marilyn are now on top of the bed, their hands all over each other, mouths locked together.

The phone rings. Billie reacts as if electrocuted. She virtually pushes Marilyn off her and JUMPS out of bed.

BILLIE JEAN

It's Larry!

MARILYN

What?

BILLIE JEAN

Or Gladys! Jesus, what if it's my parents?!

MARILYN

They can't see down the phone, can they?

The phone continues to ring.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm a really bad liar.

MARILYN

You don't have to lie. Anyone asks, you've got a girlfriend staying over.

BILLIE JEAN

Don't joke. Don't...do...anything. Just please be quiet. Please.

MARILYN

Scout's honor.

Billie Jean takes a deep breath, reaches for the phone.

40 EXT. LONG ISLAND PARKING LOT. NIGHT. 40
Bobby is on a gas station pay phone by the side of a highway.

BOBBY RIGGS

Eureka!

41 EXT. LONG ISLAND PARKING LOT / INT. BILLIE JEAN'S SEAPORT 41
MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

BILLIE JEAN

Hello?

BOBBY RIGGS

Eureka, Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN

(beginnings of panic)
What? Who is this?

BOBBY RIGGS

- it's Bobby. Bobby Riggs.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh. Bobby. How did you get my-

BOBBY RIGGS

- rang every hotel in San Diego.
Listen, I had an idea. It's the
greatest idea I ever had.

BILLIE JEAN

It's past midnight, Bobby. Can it
wait?

Marilyn gets out of bed, goes into the bathroom. *

BOBBY RIGGS

You and me, Billie Jean. Three
sets. Five sets. You choose.

BILLIE JEAN

Are you drunk, Bobby Riggs?

BOBBY RIGGS

Course not. Man versus Woman,
Billie.

(MORE)

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Male Chauvinist Pig versus Hairy-
legged Feminist. No offense. You
are still a Feminist, right?

BILLIE JEAN
I'm a tennis player who happens to
be a woman.

BOBBY RIGGS
That's right! That's exactly who
you are. And I'm tennis player who
happens to be a man. Who says he
can beat any woman on the planet.
Think of the publicity we'd get.
Think of the money...!

BILLIE JEAN
No.

BOBBY RIGGS
Thirty-five grand.

BILLIE JEAN
Where did you get that kind of
money?

BOBBY RIGGS
You see, you're tempted.

BILLIE JEAN
I'm really not.

BOBBY RIGGS
Billie, this isn't just another
match, this could be bigger than
Bigsville, broader than Broadway,
higher than- what's a really high
thing?

BILLIE JEAN
You're sounding pretty high. *

BOBBY RIGGS
This could be huge, Billie Jean. *

BILLIE JEAN
No way. I win, I beat a fifty year
old man. Big deal.

BOBBY RIGGS
Fifty-five. Of course you'd win.
You should see my hip. I can barely
walk. So prove it.

BILLIE JEAN

You win, and every male supremacist
dinosaur in the country is right:
women can't play tennis. Not a
chance.

BOBBY RIGGS

Are you saying I might win?

BILLIE JEAN

I'm saying good night, Bobby. *

BOBBY RIGGS

Billie, wait..!

BILLIE JEAN

And for your information, I do
shave my legs.

BOBBY RIGGS

You do? That's lovely! Don't hang
up-

Bobby is left listening to the disconnect tone, heartbroken.

Billie Jean flops back onto the bed. Marilyn comes out of the
bathroom in a bathrobe and goes to the bed. *

MARILYN

Who the hell was that? *

BILLIE JEAN

Some crazy old hustler trying to
get a game. Sorry. *

MARILYN *

Yeah, where we? Apparently you
shave your legs. *

She runs her hand up Billie's leg. But Billie stops her. *

BILLIE JEAN *

Marilyn. *

MARILYN

What? Did I do something wrong?

BILLIE JEAN

No. It's just- this isn't right.

MARILYN

It was a minute ago.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm married.

MARILYN

And you'll still be married in the morning.

She drops her robe to the floor. Billie's eyes widen.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh.

42A EXT. LARRY RIGG'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. 42A

Late twenties LARRY RIGGS, Bobby's son from his first marriage, sleepily answers the door in his night-shirt. Bobby is standing on the doorstep.

BOBBY RIGGS

Larry!

They stare at each other for a while, then Larry sighs heavily and walks back into the house. Bobby follows.

42B INT. LARRY RIGG'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. 42B

Larry moves a cushion off the sofa and waves in its direction to Larry: his new bed.

BOBBY RIGGS

It's just for tonight. And maybe tomorrow.

LARRY

Sure.

BOBBY RIGGS

A misunderstanding. Priscilla goes off the deep end sometimes. You see my Rolls Royce?

LARRY

Yeah, awesome, Dad. You gonna live in it?

BOBBY RIGGS

No, I- I got plans, Larry. Big plans.

LARRY

Heard 'em. All of 'em.

He wanders back to his bedroom.

BOBBY RIGGS

I have. You'll see.

43 INT/ EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. MORNING. 43

Bobby is standing outside. The door to the house is very closed. He shouts up hopefully.

BOBBY RIGGS

Honey, come on...not even a fresh pair of underpants? Toothbrush?

(MORE)

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

I've got a mouth like I ate a raccoon. With the fur on.

Standing back from the bedroom window, Priscilla watches. Despite herself, a brief giggle bubbles up. She suppresses it fast.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, doll. One time. I admit it, I fell off the wagon, okay? Though as wagons go, you gotta admit it's a good one. There's even a TV in the back....Honey, I'm going to the therapist right now to straighten myself out...Can't we talk about this?

Nothing. He turns and wanders back to the Rolls. A top window opens. He turns in time to see a pair of underpants floating down towards him.

44

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE. LATER.

44

Bobby is lying on the Therapist's black leather couch, staring at the ceiling. The THERAPIST stares into space.

BOBBY RIGGS

It's a disaster. I need a way back and she won't budge. I don't know why she won't meet me halfway. That's not unreasonable to ask, is it?

THERAPIST

Have you considered that you might be coming at this from the wrong angle?

BOBBY RIGGS

Every angle, I tried every angle, Doc. Believe me.

THERAPIST

Well, I know we've discussed this before, Bobby...

BOBBY RIGGS

Oh, I dunno.

THERAPIST

You're an Alpha male, she's an Alpha Female. Maybe you have to face the fact that she's just not the right woman for you.

Bobby considers. Decides.

BOBBY RIGGS

Nah. I appreciate what you're saying, Doc, but Billie Jean would make the best match by a million miles. She's the face of these women. The leader.

THERAPIST

At this rate, she's not even going to be Number One next season.

BOBBY RIGGS

She ain't?

THERAPIST

Nope. Margaret Court.

BOBBY RIGGS

The Arm's gonna be Number One?

(interested)

Huh. Stick or twist?

Bobby leans forward, revealing a low table with playing cards.

THERAPIST

Twist.

Bobby turns a card.

BOBBY RIGGS

Jack of Hearts. Bad luck.

Disgusted, the Therapist throws his cards down.

THERAPIST

The point is, not only is Margaret going to be Number One, she's a different kind of woman.

BOBBY RIGGS

You think she'd play me?

THERAPIST

She's a nice, old-fashioned girl, Bobby: she'll do as she's damn well told.

44A INT. SEAPORT MOTEL. BILLIE JEAN'S ROOM. MORNING.

44A

Marilyn sits on the bed, dressed, while Billie Jean tears around the room. She is in a total panic.

BILLIE JEAN

I knew I shouldn't have drunk so much last night. Car keys. Car keys.

MARILYN

You hardly drank anything.

She carries on blundering around looking for her keys.

BILLIE JEAN

Well, something happened. If anyone found out, I'd be finished. Finished. There are plenty of people just waiting for me to mess up, you know. God, what if my parent's found out? Dammit, where are my car keys?!

MARILYN

In your hand.

Billie Jean looks down at her own left hand. She's holding her sunglasses- and her car keys.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh. Thank you.

MARILYN

Nobody's going to find out, okay? It was one night. You're going your way, I'm going mine.

BILLIE JEAN

Okay. Okay.

She puts her sunglasses on.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

You go out now. I'll wait five minutes and follow. No, that'll look suspicious. Maybe you should just stay here.

MARILYN

You were going to give me a ride?

BILLIE JEAN

Right. Right. Right. Right on.

45 EXT. SEAPORT MOTEL PARKING LOT. DAY.

45

Overseen by Gladys, the Virginia Slims Girls throw their bags into their cars. Margaret Court holds her baby while her husband packs up their car.

Billie Jean strides into the parking lot late and dishevelled, Marilyn trailing a few steps behind.

46 INT./EXT. TED'S CAR / SEAPORT MOTEL PARKING LOT. DAY. 46

Ted Tinling, sits in his Lincoln Continental convertible with Henry his assistant. Beautifully dressed, the mannequin sits in the back.

Ted's huge hands are dextrously sewing sequins onto a dress. He looks up as he sees Billie and Marilyn.

TED

Well, look who we have here.

HENRY

Late and a little deshabillé,
wouldn't you say?

TED

I would, Henry, I most definitely
would.

HENRY

And what do you think Larry would
say? He must know.

TED

Well there's knowing and there's
knowing.

He leans out of the window.

TED (CONT'D)

(Loud, to Billie Jean)

Good morning, darling. Sleep well?

He waves a casual hand at Billie Jean. Billie Jean gives him
a short wave, trying to act normal. Gladys is handing out
packs of cigarettes to everyone.

GLADYS

Nobody later than four. Rosie, no
more speeding tickets. We're
tennis, not NASCAR. And girls, for
God's sake, some Slims at the photo-
call? We need them to renew their
contract. They're good to us and
c'mon, they're not so bad. Me, I
love 'em!

She takes a massive drag on one to prove her point and nearly
dies. A couple of cars pull out on their way to the next
tournament. Recovering, Gladys eyes Billie Jean.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

You're late. Who's this?

BILLIE JEAN

Nobody. A friend.

Marilyn extends her hand to Gladys.

MARILYN

Marilyn. From the Gene Shawcove
Salon in LA. Remember?

Gladys eyes her dubiously.

GLADYS

LA? Well, you've come a long way,
baby.

Rosie comes up and claps a hand on Marilyn's shoulder.

ROSIE

Hey! Marilyn, right? You did a
fabulous job on my hair.

MARILYN

Who wouldn't? It's great hair.

PEACHES

Oh my gosh, Gladys! Is she coming on the tour with us?

GLADYS

No, she is not.

General consternation.

VALERIE

Please, Gladys? With all the photo shoots we're doing, we need a hairdresser.

GLADYS

That'll be an "N" followed by an "O". How's your spelling, Val?

ROSIE

Oh, come on. I'm sure we'd all be willing to pay a little.

General agreement. Billie Jean shakes her head.

BILLIE JEAN

No, Marilyn has to get back to the salon in LA--

MARILYN

They won't miss me for a few days. That is, if you'll have me?

Marilyn looks directly at Billie Jean, who stares back, torn. Only Margaret, in her car, clocks this look between them.

PEACHES

Oh please, Gladys, I haven't had a minute to get these bangs done.

JULIE

Mom, please? Imagine having our own stylist!

A chorus of pleading. Gladys is besieged.

GLADYS

Can you do anything with this?

She indicates her own slightly crazy hair.

MARILYN

Of course.

GLADYS

Get in the car.

A cheer from the Nine. Gladys stomps off. Marilyn looks at Billie Jean.

MARILYN

Okay?

Billie Jean gives a nod of assent. Marilyn gets in Billie Jean's car. Billie Jean gets in and they all drive off.

Only Margaret Court, sitting in her car, feeding baby Daniel, is unimpressed.

47 INT./EXT. MARGARET COURT'S CAR/SEAPORT MOTEL PARKING LOT. 47 DAY.

MARGARET COURT

You know what she is, don't you?
That woman with Billie Jean?

BARRY

A hairdresser?

MARGARET COURT

Her lover. *

BARRY

That girl? And Billie Jean?

MARGARET COURT

I heard them last night, Barry. And *
if that was cramp, then I'm Arthur *
Ashe. *

BARRY

But- but she's married. *

MARGARET COURT

They usually are. This is what
happens on an all-women circuit,
Barry. Licentiousness. Immorality.
Sin.

BARRY

She shouldn't be allowed on the *
tour. *

MARGARET COURT

On the contrary.

BARRY

What? Isn't she ashamed of herself?

MARGARET COURT

She is ashamed. That's exactly what
she is. And her game's going to go
to pieces.

48 INT/EXT. BILLIE JEAN'S CAR/COASTAL HIGHWAY. DAY. 48

The top is down on the Dodge Coronet. Billie is driving.

MARILYN

Thanks for letting me come along.

*

*

BILLIE JEAN

What happened last night can't ever happen again. We have to stop fooling around.

MARILYN

Is that what it was? Fooling around?

*

*

BILLIE JEAN

Yes. No.

*

*

Silence for a moment.

*

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Look, I'm a tennis player, Marilyn. On tour. It's my job. I'm serious about it. Even Larry knows not to get in the way of that.

*

*

*

*

*

MARILYN

I promise not to distract you.

*

BILLIE JEAN

But you do distract me! You distract me just being here.

(Half-joking)

I mean, who are you? What are you even doing with me?

*

Marilyn puts her arm across Billie Jean's shoulder and leans in.

*

MARILYN

We don't have to do anything you don't want to do. Okay? Friends.

BILLIE JEAN

Sure. Okay.

*

*

MARILYN

Really good friends.

*

*

She raises her eyes suggestively at Billie. Billie looks over at Marilyn, and shakes her head.

*

BILLIE JEAN

I swear, I don't know what to do with myself around you.

MARILYN

Right now? Just drive.

Marilyn flips the radio on. The car accelerates away.

49 INT. LA BONAVENTURE HOTEL FOYER. DAY.

49

At the reception desk, Gladys is banging on the service bell with gusto. The Virginia Slims Girls pile into the foyer all noise and tennis bags.

Margaret Court is also at the desk, baby Daniel on her hip, screaming the house down. She shoves it towards Gladys who absolutely refuses to help.

GLADYS

Ah-ah. Don't do babies. Can we get some service around here?

Margaret heaves the baby onto Rosie who has a quick attempt at comforting it.

ROSIE

Babies hate me. What do you do with them?

She peers at him, causing a renewed frenzy of screaming. Billie Jean takes the baby and calms him down.

Barry arrives weighed down with baby stuff and tennis equipment. The RECEPTIONIST finally returns with a huge bunch of flowers.

RECEPTIONIST

...and these are for you, Madam.

Whistles and appreciative sighs from the women as Margaret signals that Barry should take them. Somehow he does. And glances at the card.

BARRY

Bobby-goddam-Riggs.

MARGARET COURT

Enough with the curse words, Barry.

He shoves the flowers at Gladys.

GLADYS

Bobby knows you got one of them, right?

She points at Barry.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

And have one of *those*?

She points at baby Daniel.

MARGARET COURT

Oh, it's not *that*. Barry's had dinner with the guy, haven't you, hon?

Looks between the Girls. Margaret turns and takes Daniel from Billie Jean, saying pointedly.

MARGARET COURT (CONT'D)

I'll take Daniel, thank you very much.

49A INT. BONAVENTURE HOTEL - ELEVATOR. DAY. 49A

Marilyn and Billie Jean get into one of the signature Bonaventure glass elevators. The doors close and they rise up, as the panorama of Los Angeles opens in front of them.

In this public/private moment, Billie Jean reaches for Marilyn's hands. Their fingers intertwine, clandestine. We cut to a telephoto view of the elevator, widening to take in the whole hotel.

49B OMITTED 49B

49C OMITTED 49C

49D OMITTED 49D

49E INT BONAVENTURE HOTEL. CORRIDOR. NIGHT. 49E

The empty corridor. A wailing baby.

50 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S BONAVENTURE HOTEL ROOM. LATER. 50

Marilyn wakes to see Billie out of bed. *

In the middle of the bedroom, Billie Jean stands, playing an invisible game of tennis against the wall with her hand, a one-sided ballet of movements, elegant in their miniaturized form; foot-slides, serves, backhands, forehands, slams... *

MARILYN

What are you doing?

Billie Jean responds without stopping or looking at Marilyn.

BILLIE JEAN

Playing Margaret.

MARILYN

Are you winning?

BILLIE JEAN

One set each. Margaret's serving.

She continues to play.

MARILYN

Don't you ever stop?

BILLIE JEAN

Not really. I warned you. *

Marilyn gets out of bed and takes Billie's hand. *

MARILYN *

Come to bed. *

BILLIE JEAN *

That was break point. *

But she allows herself to be led back to bed. Billie Jean and
Marilyn lie in each other's arms. It's quiet, intimate. *

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D) *

How are you so free with yourself?
It seems like you just do whatever
you want. *

MARILYN *

No, I'm just- normal, Bille! What
makes you so driven? Playing tennis
against invisible opponents at
midnight? *

BILLIE JEAN *

When I was twelve, I played at a
this tennis club- we had no money,
not compared to most of the kids
who went there. They were doing a
team photo. And my Mom had made me
some white shorts- couldn't afford
to buy a tennis skirt. Anyway,
there we were, all lined up and the
guy who ran the club, Perry Jones,
pointed at me and told me to get
out of the shot. Because I was
poor. I wasn't dressed right. I
vowed, I absolutely vowed right
there, that I would change that.
And the only way I can change
anything, the only way I can have a
voice is by being the best. I knew
if I was number one, they'd have to
listen to me. That's why I have to
win. So I have a voice. *

Billie looks at Marilyn, her face almost glowing in the dark. *

MARILYN

You do have a voice.

BILLIE JEAN

I guess I'm still figuring out how
to use it.

Marilyn kisses her, tender.

51 INT. MARGARET'S BONAVENTURE HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

51

A frazzled Barry is walking up and down trying to get Daniel
to sleep. Finally, he stops wailing and drops off.

*
*
*
*
*
*

BARRY

Finally.

A thundering rapping at the door. Daniel wakes with a start and starts bawling again. Barry yanks the door open. There stands Bobby.

BOBBY RIGGS

Dammit, Bobby, I just got him to sleep.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Barry! Long time, buddy, long time...

BARRY

What the hell do you want?

BOBBY RIGGS

Five minutes that's all. Five minutes and if you don't like what I say, you'll never hear from me again.

BARRY

Is that a promise?

MARGARET COURT O/S

Oh, let him in, for God's sake.

Margaret comes out of the bathroom carrying weights in both hands. She pumps as she talks, counting the reps. Bobby is impressed.

MARGARET COURT

Eighty-seven, eighty-eight...It better be good, Bobby, nobody's getting a lot of sleep around here.

BOBBY RIGGS

Oh, it's good. Here.

He holds out his arms. Takes Daniel.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Okay, fella, okay. Bobby's gotcha.

A cuddly toy miraculously appears out of Bobby's sleeve. Equally miraculously, Daniel stops screaming. Barry slumps in a chair, exhausted.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Cute little man. Any of the other girls got kids?

MARGARET COURT

No, just me.

BOBBY RIGGS

Tough, huh? Tennis all day and looking after this little one all night. And then there's the travelling, right? You need a Nanny, Margaret.

A huff from Barry.

BARRY

Know how much they cost?

BOBBY RIGGS

But that's exactly why I'm here. I'm guessing thirty-five thousand dollars buys a lot of Nanny.

MARGARET COURT

What's your game, Bobby Riggs?

BOBBY RIGGS

You got it first time, Margaret. A game. One game, three sets. You versus me, thirty-five thousand dollars.

Margaret looks at him suspiciously

MARGARET COURT

Why me?

BOBBY RIGGS

Because you're the best. Billie Jean keeps on at me to play her- you know what she's like- but I say, if you're going to play, play the Number One.

MARGARET COURT

Billie Jean's Number One.

BOBBY RIGGS

Not for long. Not if you beat her tomorrow.

He points at her. Gotcha.

52 INT. BONAVENTURE HOTEL -- BREAKFAST AREA. DAY.

52

Ted and Henry are delicately picking their way through breakfast. Something catches Henry's eye: Larry King striding away from the reception desk down a corridor.

HENRY

Oh my.

TED

No talking at the petit dejeuner,
thank you.

HENRY

But it's Larry.

TED

Aha.

HENRY

Larry King.

TED

Oh. *Ohhh*. I think we'd better make
a call. This hotel just doesn't
have the French Windows for farce.

Scoots to the hotel phone.

53 INT. BONAVENTURE LOBBY / INT. BILLIE JEANS'S BONAVENTURE
HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

53

Billie Jean is lying in bed. She reaches for the phone.

TED

Ted here, darling. I just thought
you'd like un petit heads up.
Larry's in the building.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh. Shit. Right. Thanks.

Billie Jean scrambles to her feet, glances around the room rather desperately. Grabs a robe. Shoves a short skirt and tights under a pillow, tidies the bed, plumping one set of pillows to look unslept in. Hides Marilyn's suitcase under the bed. She eyes the results dubiously.

54 INT. BONAVENTURE LOBBY. DAY.

54

Larry is waiting for the elevator when Marilyn comes down the hall carrying a champagne-labelled ice bucket full of ice and joins him waiting for the elevator. She glances at him. He glances at her. Likes what he sees. The elevator doors open.

LARRY

Going up?

MARILYN

Five, please.

LARRY

Me too.

Irrefutable. The doors close.

55 OMITTED

55

56 INT. BONAVENTURE ELEVATOR. DAY.

56

Larry indicates the bucket.

LARRY

Starting early?

MARILYN

Oh...well, you know what they say,
never too early for champagne.

LARRY

My kind of girl.

Eye contact. Nervous chuckles.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You here for the tennis?

MARILYN

Sure am.

LARRY

Me too. I reckon Billie Jean's gonna take it.

MARILYN

Oh, are you a fan?

LARRY

Could say that.

56A INT. BONAVENTURE HOTEL CORRIDOR. DAY.

56A

Bing. The doors open. Larry holds the elevator doors for Marilyn who steps out.

LARRY

Well. See you around.

MARILYN

Maybe.

She laughs and walks off down the corridor. Larry lets her go a little so he can admire the rear view, then follows her down the corridor.

She turns the corner, stops at one of the doors but before she can unlock it, the door is flung open. Billie Jean with her Welcome Husband face on.

BILLIE JEAN

Hi!

Billie Jean is confronted with Marilyn...

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Oh.

...just as Larry catches up and stops too. Billie Jean tries again- with the husband.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Hi!

LARRY

Hi, honey.

A terrible pause as they both turn and look at Marilyn. Larry looks at Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN

This is...Marilyn.

He looks back at Marilyn. The penny drops.

LARRY

Oh.

Billie Jean attempts an introduction.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry.

MARILYN

(another penny drops)

Oh. Oh. Pleased to meet you.

BILLIE JEAN

Marilyn's--

MARILYN

--the hairdresser around here.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry's--

LARRY

--the husband around here.

MARILYN

Peaches wanted a blow-dry. I'll come back later.

Marilyn starts to walk away.

LARRY

Marilyn?

She swings back, a desperate smile dying on her face.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Was the ice for Billie Jean's knees?

Marilyn looks at Billie Jean, who looks at the ground. Marilyn nods. Larry reaches out, takes the bucket from her.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

57 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S BONAVENTURE HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

57

The door shuts. Larry and Billie Jean face each other.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry...

But instead of confrontation, he goes into the bathroom.

58 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S BONAVENTURE HOTEL BATHROOM. DAY. 58

Removes a lacy bra and panties from the towel rail in order to get at the towel. Realizes what he holds in his hand. To whom they belong. Sits heavily down on the side of the bath, winded. Clears his throat.

LARRY

The roads were clear, so I made good time. I should have called ahead. Let you know I was coming.

He puts the bra and panties back. Adjusts his face.

59 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S BONAVENTURE HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 59

He comes out with the towel and starts expertly wrapping the ice cubes from the bucket.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry.

LARRY

Hop up.

*
*

Billie Jean sits on the bed and Larry starts wrapping the towels around each of her knees.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm so sorry.

*
*

Nothing from Larry.

*

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Larry, say something. Please. Talk to me.

LARRY

Does anyone know?

*
*

Billie shakes her head.

*

BILLIE JEAN

I don't know what to do.

*
*

LARRY

Nothing's changed for me, Billie. We're a great team, you and me, always have been.

*
*
*
*

He stands.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'm going to check in to a room down the hall. I'll be making calls 'til late and you need your rest before the finals.

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)

If there's anything you need, you
know where to find me.

He picks up his bag, goes out and shuts the door. Billie Jean
stares at the shut door.

59A INT. BONAVENTURE HOTEL -- CORRIDOR. DAY. 59A

Bag in hand, Larry wanders down the corridor. Suddenly, he stops and leans over to catch his breath. A moment. Then he stands back up and keeps walking.

60 OMITTED 60

61 OMITTED 61

62 OMITTED 62

62A OMITTED 62A

62B INT. LA. ARENA. DUSK. 62B

Margaret Court and Billie Jean are engaged in an intense match. Billie Jean is losing. Larry sits courtside. Marilyn is seated behind him. We are on their anxious faces as Billie Jean misses another shot. Billie Jean mutters to herself:

BILLIE JEAN

Just great. Christmas every day
with BJ... Hold onto your racquet.
No more mistakes like that. Dumb-y.

63 OMITTED 63

64 OMITTED 64

65A INT. LA ARENA. DUSK. 65A

The crowd are on their feet applauding as Margaret Court lifts the trophy. Larry looks over at Marilyn, who is gathering her things, oblivious to his gaze.

66 INT. LA ARENA -- LOCKER ROOM. DUSK. 66

Locker rooms with a shared bathroom. Henry is packing up boxes of tennis shoes while Ted puts plastic covers on a rack of dresses. Billie Jean beats the ice in a towel, prepping her ice-packs, getting her aggression out. Larry takes the towel from her, and helps her wrap her knees.

LARRY

Let it go. You'll beat her next
time.

BILLIE JEAN
How can I let it go? My ranking was
on the line.

LARRY
You seemed distracted...

The noise of Margaret Court and her husband celebrating.
Billie Jean and Larry look down through the bathroom to see
Barry lifting Margaret into the air- a happy couple. Billie
Jean stands and goes into the bathroom. Larry leaves the
room. Henry and Ted exchange a look.

HENRY
I bet I know what was distracting
her.

TED
Shh.

65 EXT. LA ARENA. DUSK.

65

Larry comes out to the alleyway outside the dressing rooms,
only to find Marilyn out there, smoking.

MARILYN
Oh. Hi. Billie almost ready?

LARRY
I think she'll be a while.
(Beat)
Does Billie know you smoke?

MARILYN
I have no idea.

LARRY
She's not a fan.

MARILYN
I won't tell if you won't.

LARRY
More secrets.
(Beat)
I gather you're staying on the
tour.

MARILYN
I was invited.

LARRY

Not by me. And I pay your salary.
A salary that comes from
endorsements, which would disappear
in a heartbeat if certain things
were made public.

MARILYN

I only have Billie's best interests
at heart.

Larry watches her smoke.

LARRY

You seem like a nice girl, Marilyn.

MARILYN

Don't condescend to me.

Larry laughs shortly.

LARRY

Please. I'm not the competition.
I'm just her husband. Tennis is her
true love. We're side-shows. You
get between her and her game and
you will be gone. And looking at
the way this match went, I wouldn't
quit your job at the salon just
yet.

Larry walks away. Marilyn exhales.

66A INT. LA ARENA -- BATHROOM. DUSK.

66A

Billie Jean splashes water on her face. Margaret comes in. A
tense silence as Margaret undoes her shoes. Finally:

MARGARET COURT

I met Bobby Riggs last night. Funny
man.

BILLIE JEAN

Tell me you didn't.

MARGARET COURT

Didn't what? He wants to play an
exhibition match is all. Now I'm
officially number one.

BILLIE JEAN

It's not a tennis match, Margaret,
you do understand that?

MARGARET COURT

What do you mean?

BILLIE JEAN

Bobby tried that exhibition match line on me.

MARGARET COURT

Oh. And I suppose you turned him down.

BILLIE JEAN

Are you kidding? Why would I want to become part of the Bobby Riggs circus? He wants to make himself look great and women look stupid. It's not a match, it's a show.

MARGARET COURT

Well, I can see why you might not want to play him. But I've got nothing to hide.

Through the doorway, we see Ted and Henry exchange a significant look. Margaret walks out.

BILLIE JEAN

Margaret.

She turns.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

Just- please. You have to win. You have to.

Margaret turns again and walks off.

Billie Jean goes back into the locker room, where Ted and Henry wait for her clothes. Billie Jean practically rips them off, she's so mad.

BILLIE JEAN

Did you hear that?!

TED

Watch the seams, please.

BILLIE JEAN

She's playing Bobby Riggs.

TED

The Arm versus the Mouth. I know where my money's going.

BILLIE JEAN

But what if she loses? Ted, what if she really blows it? He'll never let it go. He'll make women's tennis into a laughing stock.

TED

Calm yourself, Madam Superstar. Margaret's playing better than ever, as I don't need to remind you. Entre nous, we've even had to make some adjustments around the bicep, haven't we, Henry?

HENRY

I couldn't possibly. Almost an inch and a half.

TED

Well, I'm just glad that you're not playing him.

BILLIE JEAN

Not a chance.

Billie Jean heads out.

TED

Best to be careful.

Billie Jean stops.

BILLIE JEAN

What do you mean?

TED

It's not always a forgiving world, my dear.

(Beat)

Your *friend* is waiting outside.

Billie locks eyes briefly with Ted before walking out.

67A INT/EXT. LARRY RIGG'S APARTMENT. DAY.

67A

Larry opens the door to find Bobby in a full-body, plastic sweat suit, jogging on the spot.

BOBBY RIGGS

Larry!

LARRY RIGGS

Dad?

BOBBY RIGGS

Hi, kiddo. Can't come in, I'm training.

He starts doing squat thrusts and star jumps on the porch.

LARRY RIGGS

What the hell are you wearing?

BOBBY RIGGS

Sweat suit. Killing me, but I lose a pound every time I breathe. Heard the news? Bobby's back!

LARRY RIGGS

Yeah, I heard.

BOBBY RIGGS

You did? Isn't it great?

LARRY RIGGS

Is it really happening?

BOBBY RIGGS

Sure it's happening.

He stops.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Will you help?

LARRY

What with?

BOBBY RIGGS

Training, support, you know, hit a few balls for your old Dad. What about it? Lornie's coming in.

Larry is still suspicious.

LARRY

Why me?

BOBBY RIGGS

You're my son, right? We could do this together. You, me, Riggs against the world! It's a big deal, you know, it's on TV- you'll be on TV.

LARRY

You think you can beat her?

BOBBY RIGGS
I'm gonna barbecue her, Larry: I
got a *thing*.

LARRY
(who knows about *things*)
Oh-oh.

BOBBY RIGGS
Yeah! You're gonna love it!

He puts a plastic arm around Larry.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
And I'll let you into a little
secret. Margaret's just the start.

LARRY
Then what?

BOBBY RIGGS
You and me, kiddo, we're going
global.

68	OMITTED	68
69	OMITTED	69
70	OMITTED	70
71	OMITTED	71
72	OMITTED	72
73	OMITTED	73
74	OMITTED	74
75	OMITTED	75
76	OMITTED	76
77	OMITTED	77

78 OMITTED 78

79 OMITTED 79

79A TV SCREEN. 79A

Bobby fills the screen.

BOBBY RIGGS

Now listen, I'm not saying women don't belong on the court- I mean, heck, who would pick up the balls otherwise- but all this shouting about equality. I say, equality? Equal *me*. I'm an old guy on the senior circuit getting paid peanuts- so if I can beat the Ladies's Number One, then I'll have equal prize money, thank you very much, and the girls can get back in the kitchen where they belong.

79B TV SCREEN. 79B

Margaret fills the screen.

MARGARET COURT

Oh, I don't get involved in politics. I'm certainly no women's libber. I'm just looking forward to a good game of tennis.

79C TV SCREEN. 79C

We cut to an excited TV Commentator.

TV ANNOUNCER

...this match has really gripped the nation. Suddenly a simple tennis game has become so much more. This, ladies and gentlemen has come to define the oldest of battles: man versus woman. And a question for our commentator today, Jack Kramer, where's your money? On mankind or womankind?

The camera pans to Billie's nemesis: Jack Kramer.

JACK

Oh, Bobby Riggs, without a doubt. Margaret Court is a great player, no mistake, but the thing about women is- they just can't handle pressure. Just not built for it.

79D EXT. AIRPORT. DAY. 79D

An aeroplane sits on the tarmac as passengers deplane. The Nine are trying to hustle through the crowd down the steps from the aeroplane. Billie Jean is trailed by Marilyn.

80 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT. ARRIVALS. DAY. 80

Sedate lines of travellers wandering slowly through the Arrivals area.

BILLIE JEAN

It's starting!

Out of nowhere, a horde of women in tennis whites charge through, side-stepping passengers, dodging cleaners and sleepy officials.

GLADYS

Virginia Slims, coming through!

They charge onwards leaving a trail of bemusement behind them.

81 OMITTED 81

82 OMITTED 82

83 EXT. DESERT MATCH COURT. BLEACHERS. DAY. 83

Margaret comes down the bleacher stairs onto the court.

83A INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY. 83A

The Girls are crowded around an area of tiny, black and white pay TV's. They are perched two to a seat, using three or four televisions. Everybody is shouting at Rosie to put more quarters in each of them.

ROSIE

I'm doing it, I'm doing it!

GLADYS

Okay, shut up. Everybody shut up.

She turns to the entire bustling airport lounge and yells.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Can we have some quiet here,
please?

The entire airport obeys. On TV, the camera pans across the packed bleachers.

JULIE

Oh my God. This is big.

BILLIE JEAN

Course it's big. It's Bobby. One
thing that man can do is hustle.

83B OMITTED

83B

84 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY.

84

On the TV we see Margaret standing on the court. Bounces a ball. Twirls her racket. Looks around a little lost. Where's Bobby?

PEACHES

Do we like the dress?

JULIE

It's one of Ted's. Are we allowed
not to?

TED

Right behind you, darling.

JULIE

We love the dress.

TED

Thank you.

BILLIE JEAN

She looks spooked to me.

ROSIE

Yeah, I'm not liking this.

Without taking her eyes off the screen, Rosie holds out her hand to Gladys.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Gladys, cigarette.

GLADYS

Finally, one of my girls smokes!
Somebody ring American Tobacco.

PEACHES

We should've been there. You know,
to support her.

GLADYS

You got a tournament to play. I own
you, Peaches. Anyway she doesn't
want your support. Doesn't even
like you.

VALERIE

Really? Gladys? Really?

JULIE

The Arm's gonna be fine. She could
squeeze the life outta that little
twerp with one tweak of her bicep.

TV ANNOUNCER O/S

And here he is, Male Chauvinist Pig
of the Year, the man to beat, Bobby
Riggs!

GLADYS

Look at him. Like a frog with
constipation.

PEACHES

What's he carrying?

They peer at the fuzzy black and white image. There's his
racket in one hand and something else in the other.

85 EXT. DESERT MATCH COURT. DAY.

85

Bobby comes down the stairs carrying a bunch of red roses,
casual as you like. Jogs over to Margaret and hands her the
roses. She curtsies shyly.

TV ANNOUNCER

And what better gift on Mother's
Day, than a bunch of red roses!

86 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY.

86

Billie Jean puts her hands over her eyes.

ROSIE

I'm gonna kill him.

GLADYS

I'm gonna kill her. She shoulda stuffed those roses where the thorns mean business. What is she *thinking?*

87 EXT. DESERT MATCH COURT. DAY.

87

The Umpire gets out a coin. Tosses it into the air. The coin tumbles.

UMPIRE

Who wants to call it?

BOBBY RIGGS

Ah-ah. Come on, Umpire, where's your manners? It's Mother's Day. Ladies first. Your choice, Margaret, and my pleasure. I may as well take this end, okay?

And before anybody can complain, Bobby is jogging to the base line. Margaret takes up position.

UMPIRE

Missus Court to serve. Quiet please, ladies and gentlemen.

A hush settles over the crowd. Margaret serves hard, but Bobby takes all the power off it with a slice. She returns again, stays at the net. This time Bobby hits a high lob.

Margaret gets under it, but the sun is in her eyes. White-orange pain of staring directly at the sun. The ball is in and out of vision. She connects, but it is out.

A little smile from Lornie in the stands. Margaret rubs her eyes. Tries to focus.

87A INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY.

87A

BILLIE JEAN

The sneaky son-of-a...That's why he chose to play at midday.

MARILYN

I don't get it.

BILLIE JEAN

Right into the sun. He's gonna lob her to death.

87B MONTAGE.

87B

Margaret Court being undone by Bobby. Short shots, spin shots, slice after slice, lobs right into the sun.

CUT TO:

87A CONT INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY.

87A CONT

The Nine huddled around the TV screens, a look of shock on their faces. Ted is fanning himself with a menu, a picture of horror.

CUT TO:

88 TV SCREEN.

88

UMPIRE

Game to Mister Riggs. Mister Riggs leads one set to nothing. Change ends, please.

They switch sides, Bobby smoothly taking a broad-brimmed cap from Lornie as he passes. Jams it on his head.

JACK KRAMER V/O

...as I said, it's not that women can't play tennis, it's just they can't deal with the pressure. Business, sport, politics, you name it. Whatever they like to think, at the very top, it's a man's world.

89 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY.

89

There is an appalled stillness around the TV screens.

ROSIE

I'll give him pressure. Around the wind-pipe.

GLADYS

Wake up, Margaret, for god's sake! He's killing her.

BILLIE JEAN

He's already killed her. The moment she curtsied, right there, she was dead.

90 TV SCREEN.

90

Lob after lob go up into the sun. Margaret misses them time after time. The Umpire calls out the scores.

UMPIRE

Game, set and match to Mister
Riggs. Mister Riggs wins 6-2, 6-1.

Bobby leaps the net and gives a stunned Margaret a hug. Then he steps back, points at somebody in the crowd. Runs over and embraces Larry, his son.

91 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY. 91

Over the other side of the lounge, a group of men huddled around a radio at the bar let out yells and whoops of joy.

Silence around the TV screens as they watch Bobby strut around the court, arms raised in victory. Applause from the bleachers.

BILLIE JEAN

That was- that was a massacre.

92 OMITTED 92

92A TV SCREEN. 92A

Bobby is motor-mouthing to a throng of Reporters, his arm around Larry Riggs.

BOBBY RIGGS

This is my son, Larry. Lousy tennis player, great guy. Okay, so: Bobby Riggs is now officially the Number One Ladies player in the world. And if there's any lady out there wants to challenge me to that crown, they know where to find me. In fact, let me put down that challenge myself. You know the Bobby Riggs motto: double or nothing. Well I'll do better. I won't just double it, I'll double the double. And then I'll double it again. Yes, Ma'am, one hundred thousand dollars to the woman who can beat me. But I ask myself, is she out there? And if she is does she dare?

Bobby looking straight down the lens, right at....

93 INT. HAWAII AIRPORT LOUNGE. DAY. 93

...Billie Jean, staring back.

ROSIE

A hundred thousand dollars. Sheesh.

GLADYS

There isn't anything I don't hate about Bobby goddam Riggs. Not one thing.

Marilyn approaches, carrying two ice-creams. Holds one out to Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN

Not now.

Furious, she gets up and walks away.

PEACHES

What's got to her?

GLADYS

Fate, honey. Coming at her like a runaway train.

94 OMITTED

94

94A INT./EXT. MARGARET'S CAR/DESERT ROAD. DAY.

94A

Tight-lipped, Barry drives Margaret. The radio is on.

RADIO

...and in today's much-publicised tennis face-off between Senior Pro, Bobby Riggs and Women's Number One, Margaret Court, the self-styled Male Chauvinist Pig beat Mrs Court in straight sets, 6-2, 6-1 in what the press has dubbed 'the Mother's Day Massacre'-

Barry switches off the radio.

MARGARET COURT

Oh, for goodness sake. It was just a tennis match.

She looks over at Barry.

MARGARET COURT (CONT'D)

Wasn't it?

95 OMITTED

95

96

INT. BILLIE JEAN'S HOTEL ROOM. HAWAII. NIGHT.

96

Billie Jean is trying to wrap iced towels around her knees, but is making a mess of it.

BILLIE JEAN

This isn't tennis, it's a soap opera. I don't want anything to do with that!

MARILYN

Then don't.

BILLIE JEAN

The women's number one can't beat a fifty-five year old?! Are you kidding me?? She just made women's tennis look like a joke.

MARILYN

Nobody thinks you're a joke.

BILLIE JEAN

Hell, she just made *women* look like a joke.

MARILYN

Billie, since when did it become your job to defend the whole of womankind?

Billie Jean pushes the ice packs off, annoyed.

BILLIE JEAN

Who else is gonna beat him? Don't you get it? I don't have a choice.

MARILYN

You always have a choice.

Billie Jean grabs her racket and a bucket of tennis balls.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

BILLIE JEAN

I need to think.

She grabs her key and walks out.

97

OMITTED

97

97A INT. DESERT TENNIS CENTRE. CANTEEN. NIGHT. 97A

Bobby, Lornie and Larry sit in the only pool of light in the vast, empty dining hall. At the table is a half-finished meal, a bottle of Scotch and beside him, a cart with a telephone on it.

Ignored, Larry is watching Bobby obsessively play patience. Eventually, Larry gets up.

LARRY
Well, I'll- get some sleep.

BOBBY RIGGS
Oh. Okay.

And he goes back to his cards.

LARRY
Hey, Dad, you really did it.

BOBBY RIGGS
This? This was nothing. You wait, kiddo, you just wait.

Larry waits for more, but Bobby has disappeared back into the cards once again.

98 EXT. TENNIS COURT. HAWAII. NIGHT. 98

Darkness. One by one, the arc lights above the tennis court come on. Billie Jean carries a bucket of balls onto the court. She starts serving. And serving and serving.

99 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S HOTEL ROOM. HAWAII. NIGHT. 99

From the balcony, Marilyn watches.

100 INT. HOTEL LOBBY. HAWAII. NIGHT. 100

Billie Jean makes a call from a pay phone in the lobby.

101 INT. KING RESIDENCE. BEDROOM/INT. HOTEL LOBBY. HAWAII. NIGHT. (INTERCUT) 101

The phone rings in the dark bedroom. Larry wakes up, turns on a light. Discombobulated. He answers the phone.

LARRY
Hello?

BILLIE JEAN

Larry, I'm sorry to call so late,
but I need you and it can't wait.

LARRY

Quit apologizing. We're married,
you can call any time. What's
wrong?

BILLIE JEAN

Bobby Riggs beat Margaret Court.

LARRY

I was watching. It was a travesty.

BILLIE JEAN

You think I can beat him, right?

LARRY

Riggs? In a heartbeat.

BILLIE JEAN

Then call the bozo. Tell him it's
on. But nothing gets agreed on
without my approval. Venue, date,
TV rights. Everything. Which balls
we use. I know Bobby, he'll be
doing deals on his deals by now.

LARRY

I'll reach out first thing in the
morning.

BILLIE JEAN

No, now. He calls me at midnight.
If we're going, let's go.

LARRY

Billie Jean? You know the press are
going to be all over you, right?

BILLIE JEAN

Yes.

LARRY

About everything?

BILLIE JEAN

Larry. I know. Let's do this.

LARRY

All right. I'll call him now. Get
some sleep.

BILLIE JEAN

Larry? Thank you.

LARRY

What for?

BILLIE JEAN

This. And everything else.

LARRY

Do anything for you. You know that.

(Beat)

Good night, Billie.

BILLIE JEAN

Night, Larry.

They hang up. Billie Jean stands there for a moment, thinking.

102

INT. DESERT TENNIS CENTER. CANTEEN. NIGHT.

102

Alone in the canteen, Bobby is still playing Patience. The phone rings. He searches in his pockets until he finds what he's looking for- a hearing aid. Puts it in his ear and snatches up the phone.

BOBBY RIGGS

Larry!...Sleeping? No, no, we got a party going on here! To the victor, the spoils, right?

He waves the phone around vaguely in an attempt to create some atmosphere...

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

You spoke to Jerry? You should. He's the man. Uhuh, uhuh- of course we'll agree, you know me, I'm a gentleman...Well, that's just great news, Larry. Great news. Send my love to Billie Jean.

He puts down the phone, puts up both arms in victory.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Alright! Alright!

An echo. He looks around.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Maybe some dessert? Hello?

The hello reverberates around the empty hall.

103

OMITTED

103

103A OMITTED

103A

104 INT. BILLIE JEAN'S HOTEL ROOM. HAWAII. NIGHT.

104

Billie Jean opens the door. Marilyn is packing her bag.

BILLIE JEAN
What are you doing?

MARILYN
Don't like to stay where I'm not
wanted.

Billie Jean sits on the bed.

BILLIE JEAN
Come here.

Marilyn keeps packing.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
Please stop. Look at me.

Marilyn looks at her, arms held across her chest.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
It's not that I don't want you
here. The opposite, actually.

Billie searches for the right words.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
It's just not safe for me to carry
on like this. I've decided to play
Bobby. And the scrutiny I'll be
under... I can't risk people
finding out.

MARILYN
So, what? You're going to stay with
Larry and keep pretending for the
rest of your life?

Billie Jean looks down, trying to gather her strength.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Billie? Do I or do I not make you
happy?

BILLIE JEAN
...It's not about me right now. It
isn't even about tennis. This is a
chance to do something that could
really change things, something
everyone will take notice of.

(MORE)

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
Not just a few sports fans.
Everyone.

(Beat)
I can't let my personal business
get in the way of that. Do you
understand?

After a moment:

MARILYN
...I hope you have a happy life,
Billie Jean. I really do.

She starts to pack again.

BILLIE JEAN
You don't have to go right now. At
least stay the night.

MARILYN
No. I can't.

Marilyn continues packing. Billie Jean watches her.

105 OMITTED 105

105A INT. HOTEL. HALLWAY. HAWAII. NIGHT. 105A
Marilyn drags her suitcase down a long hallway.

106 INT. HOTEL. BILLIE JEAN'S ROOM. HAWAII. SIMULTANEOUS. 106
Billie Jean sits on the bed, alone, processing what happened.

107 EXT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. DAY. 107
Priscilla opens the door. Bobby stands there.

BOBBY RIGGS
Bobby's back!

PRISCILLA
Exactly what I was afraid of.

BOBBY RIGGS
Attagirl! Can I come in?

PRISCILLA
Would it make it any difference if
I said no?

She gives up and walks into the house.

108 INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. SITTING ROOM. DAY.

108

PRISCILLA

Okay. Say what you want to say.

BOBBY RIGGS

I'm on top again. I've never felt better. Fresh as a daisy. Barbecued Margaret Court and now I'm playing Billie Jean, for a hundred thousand dollars. How about that? ABC is showing it- prime time. It's huge.

PRISCILLA

You've got a nerve with that male chauvinist pig nonsense. Who's been bankrolling you all these years, Bobby Riggs? Me. A woman.

BOBBY RIGGS

You know what, you're absolutely right. And now I can pay you back. Isn't that fantastic?

PRISCILLA

I don't want it back.

BOBBY RIGGS

Do you want *me* back?

A jolt. As ever, he's caught her on the hop.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Larry's been staying with me, you know? Helping out with the training. He's all grown up. Great kid. He and Junior, maybe, could, y'know, hang out some. Be a family.

Priscilla stares at him, considering.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Jerry Perenchio's puffing it up like you wouldn't believe. I'm gonna be on the front cover of Time Magazine- I won the triple at Wimbledon and I never got the cover of Time- and when I've beaten Billie Jean, Jerry's put a million dollars on the table for a match against Chrissy Evert...

He's moving from boasting to fearful.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

A million dollars!

He stops.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
A million dollars. And then what?
Priscilla, it's a kinda scary ride
I'm on. I, well, I need you, honey.

PRISCILLA
We've been here before, Bobby...

BOBBY RIGGS
No, I'm a whole new person, now.
Ask the shrink.

PRISCILLA
I did.

BOBBY RIGGS
Voila! What did he say?

PRISCILLA
Nothing. He just gave me thirty
dollars.

Bobby looks puzzled.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)
What he owed you for your last game
of black jack.

BOBBY RIGGS
Oh. Yeah, he was a terrible player.

Priscilla laughs, shakes her head. Bobby laughs too- caught-
but there's a chance.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Right?

PRISCILLA
Bobby, I love you. Every since I
met you, you've made me laugh. Your
crazy ideas, your schemes, your
dreams, your scams...You fill any
room you walk into. God, I miss
that. But I need a husband,
sweetheart, someone steady, a man I
can rely on. And that's just not
you. That's okay, it's more than
okay, it's wonderful. You've got to
be who you are. But I can't be it
with you. Not anymore. I'm sorry.

BOBBY RIGGS
No, I'm sorry. Goodbye, Priscilla.

He turns and walks out.

PRISCILLA

Good luck with the match.

He waves a hand, but doesn't turn round.

109 INT. DINNER CLUB. DAY.

109

Bobby is on the payphone. He wipes away what looks suspiciously like a tear, puts on his best smile.

BOBBY RIGGS

Jimmy! Bobby here. How's it going, kiddo? Never better, never better. What are the odds right now...? Put fifteen grand on me to win, buddy. You heard me, fifteen big ones.

He puts the phone down.

109A ABC EVENING NEWS BROADCAST (STOCK FOOTAGE)

109A

HOWARD K SMITH

In other news, another battle in the never ending war of the sexes. This one on the tennis court for 100,000 purse... women's tennis champion Miss Billie Jean King who is 29 accepted the challenge of 55 year old Bobby Riggs, the match to be held the time and place still to be decided. Miss King said she will not play for the money but in her words to put women's tennis and women's lib back where it belongs. Riggs said he issued the challenge because I wanna prove women are lousy and they don't belong on the same court as the men.

110 LOCATION TBD. PRESS CONFERENCE. DAY.

110

Bobby and Billie Jean enter from opposite ends of a long table covered with press microphones. They meet in the middle and shake hands. Photographers and Journalists catch this first prematch meeting.

Bobby, intimidatingly close, chattering away like a madman.

BOBBY RIGGS

Don't get me wrong, I love women.
In the bedroom and in the kitchen.
But now they want to be everywhere.
Where will it end? Pretty soon us
boys won't be able to have an
evening of cards, go to the game,
go fishing, have a drink after
work...because that's what Women's
Lib really means. Well, it's got to
stop. And Bobby Riggs is the man to
stop it. This, ladies and
gentlemen, is Custer's Last Stand-

He turns to Billie and mumbles out the corner of his mouth:

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

- you're gonna love this one-

At the top of his voice:

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

- the Lobber versus the Libber!

Points at Billie who despite herself bursts out laughing.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Right?

BILLIE JEAN

Keep on talking, Bobby. The more
nonsense you spout, the worse it's
going to be when you lose.

BOBBY RIGGS

I'm the Ladies Number One. The
champ. Why would I lose?

BILLIE JEAN

Because dinosaurs can't play
tennis.

110A EXT. TOWN TENNIS CENTER -- COURT. MANHATTAN. DAY

110A

Larry waits on the court. Bobby appears dressed as Little Bo
Peep, a trail of photographers and hangers on behind him.
Lornie is the only one looking less than pleased.

BOBBY RIGGS

Sure. Little Bo Peep got's a
helluva slice on her. Come on, I'll
give you 40. You lose you buy the
drinks.

Larry exchanges looks with Lornie who just shrugs.

LARRY
Okay.

BOBBY RIGGS
Attaboy!

110B EXT. BEACH. DAY. 110B

Billie Jean running along the waterline, camera pans to reveal a news crew moving along side her, shooting out of a van.

110C TV SCREEN. 110C

Beginning of a 60 minutes story

MIKE WALLACE
At the age of 55 most people's dreams of glory are far behind them. But Bobby Riggs sees a pot of gold and glory just over the horizon.

110D INT. BOBBY RIGGS HOUSE 110D

Priscilla and junior watch the 60 minutes segment.

MIKE WALLACE
We caught up with Bobby Riggs in Las Vegas. It seemed like a fitting place...

Money changing hands. Going into Bobby's pocket. (At BJK center)

110E TV SCREEN. 60 MINUTES 110E

MIKE WALLACE
Do you do it for the money?

BOBBY RIGGS V/O
Nah, I do it for fun, I do it for sport, it's the thing to do. If I can't play for big money, I play for little money. If I can't play for little money, I stay in bed. Sometimes on my own.

110F INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE. DAY 110F

Priscilla sitting at home watching Bobby on TV. She glances over at Bobby's son who is enjoying his father's jokes.

PRISCILLA

Really? I mean, really?

Walks over to the TV and switches him off.

BOBBY'S SON

Mom...!

110G EXT. TENNIS COURT. DAY. 110G

Billie Jean on court, putting herself through a punishing work-out of kangaroo jumps, press-ups and sit-ups.

111 EXT. BETTY GRABLE'S HOUSE. TENNIS COURT. LA. DAY. 111

An empty tennis court. Lornie and Larry Riggs stand there, waiting. He hits a few desultory balls across the net. We follow him out of the court, down the steps to the pool.

111A EXT. BETTY GRABLE'S HOUSE. POOL. LA. DAY. 111A

A couple of women float in the pool. Poolside, an entourage of Angelenos are drinking cocktails. Bobby is on a lounge, cigar in hand, holding court.

Larry Riggs passes them all, stands in front of his Dad.

LARRY

Dad, I thought we were practicing.

BOBBY RIGGS

What I have to say to that? Six-two, six-one. Who needs to practice when I'm women's Number One? And I've got a secret weapon. Rheo Blair, meet the most important person in my life. Apart from me. My son, Larry.

Larry shakes hands with the impeccably coiffured Rheo.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Tell him, Rheo.

RHEO BLAIR

Two words, Larry. Super Nutrition.

He points to a tray on which there are dozens of small saucers, each containing colored pills.

LARRY

You taking all these?

BOBBY RIGGS

Four hundred a day.

LARRY

You're kidding.

BOBBY RIGGS

I'm rattling, but feeling better than ever.

RHEO BLAIR

The A to Z of Amino Acids. Vitamins, Protein pills, Fat Busters and some of Rho's Specials.

LARRY

And what's in *those*?

Rho takes a long, LA look at Larry.

RHEO BLAIR

Specialness.

BOBBY RIGGS

Forget training, I'm gonna live forever!

LARRY

Yeah, but-

BOBBY RIGGS

- relax, did I not slam Margaret into the ground? And she beat Billie Jean.

111B EXT. TENNIS COURT. HILTON HEAD. DAY.

111B

Billie is sprinting from side of the base line to the other, bending and touching the white line each time. Larry counts the reps.

LARRY

Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty.

She stops, exhausted. Pours water over her head.

111C EXT. FRONT OF BETTY GRABLE HOUSE. DAY.

111C

Bobby stands in front of a news crew.

BOBBY RIGGS

It's like being reincarnated. This is the greatest thing I've ever done. Bigger than winning Wimbledon, Forest Hills, bigger than the pro-tour. This is the highlight of my career. Maybe my life.

60 MINUTES PRESENTER

Your *life*?

BOBBY RIGGS

I'm sitting here with you, aren't I? Take a compliment. Next question.

111D MONTAGE

111D

A montage of Billie Jean and Bobby. Stills of Billie Jean and Bobby arm-wrestling together. Billie Jean feeling Bobby's bicep.

BOBBY RIGGS V/O

Worried? Look, she's got no forehand, she's a slice-and-net kinda player. Like all women, she's emotionally fragile. She just won't be able to take the pressure.

111E PRESS CONFERENCE LOCATION TBD. BJK CENTER?

111E

Back to the Press Conference on court. Billie Jean is laughing but there is tension in her.

BILLIE JEAN

Look, he can talk all he likes. It's one of the few things he's good at. It doesn't mean a thing. The only thing that counts- the one thing that will settle this- is the match. And who wins. That and nothing else.

112 EXT. TENNIS COURT. HILTON HEAD. LATER.

112

Quick cuts of balls coming out of the sky. Billie slams lob after lob. Bends over exhausted.

Quick cuts of Billie serving. Ball after ball. Sweat streams in her eyes. Larry watches, the other side of the net.

LARRY

Out. Out. In. Out.

Billie throws the racket down.

LARRY (CONT'D)

You okay?

BILLIE JEAN

Yes. Just give me a second.

She bends over like she might throw up. Larry watches her.

113 INT. PHOTO STUDIO. LOS ANGELES. DAY. 113

Bobby being photographed, dressed as Henry VIIIth, a Playboy Bunny on each arm. He pulls his hearing aid out and hides it in his pocket.

BOBBY RIGGS

Speak up, kiddo, I can't hear you.
With these two dolls on my arm, my
heartbeat's too loud in my ears.

BOBBY RIGGS V/O

...what do I think? Women should
keep their biscuits in the oven and
their buns in bed.

114 INT. PHOTO STUDIO. LOS ANGELES. DAY. 114

Bobby is reclining on a chaise-longue. Naked. A photographer and an assistant bustle around taking shots.

BOBBY RIGGS

*Delicious. Just like you, honey.
Bobby Riggs, putting the show back
into chauvinism.*

115 INT. LOCKER ROOM. DAY. (STUB HUB CENTER) 115

Pre-tournament, some of the Virginia Slims Gang are limbering up in the locker room.

PEACHES

I don't know. He really gave
Margaret a beating.

ROSIE

She played like an idiot. There's no comparison. Margaret folds. You know Billie, she loves pressure.

VALERIE

Yeah, but her game's off right now.

JULIE

It is. Hate to say it but my money's on Bobby.

VALERIE

Mine too.

ROSIE

Money that you've got because of Billie Jean.

JULIE

It's not personal. I don't want him to win. I just think he will.

The rattle of a toilet door. Billie Jean comes out. Silence as she walks between them up to the basins, washes her hands and walks past them all and out into a barrage of cheering and applause. The Girls look at each other.

ROSIE

Exactly what she needed.

116 OMITTED 116

117 OMITTED 117

118 OMITTED 118

119 INT. BETTY GRABLE HOUSE. DAY. 119

Lornie calls out to Bobby in the backyard.

LORNIE

Bobby, Channel Seven!

Bobby comes in from the backyard.

BOBBY RIGGS

What? Am I on?

On the screen, we see a REPORTER live from Forest Hills.

SPORTSCASTER

The breaking news from Forest Hills is that Billie Jean King has been defaulted in her third round match against Julie Heldman. Looking tired and dispirited, Miss King left the court after only one set, citing illness. Despite a press release reporting flu-like symptoms, speculation mounts that pressure from the upcoming match against Bobby Riggs is taking its toll.

BOBBY RIGGS

Taking its toll, baby! I knew it. She's crumbling. And I'm sitting by the pool. Now tell me about practicing. Flowers! We need to send her a bunch of flowers so goddam huge she can't ever forget me.

120

INT. HOTEL ROOM. HILTON HEAD. DAY.

120

Billie Jean is in bed. Gladys is smoking and pacing. Larry sits across the room.

GLADYS

Are you scamming me to get more practice time?

Billie Jean pulls the thermometer out of her mouth to protest.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm sick!

GLADYS

Lemme see that.

She grabs the thermometer. Examines it.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Well, you're not dying.

BILLIE JEAN

Try to sound pleased.

GLADYS

Are you kidding? I love the other girls- kind of- but you're my biggest draw. You're a giant.

BILLIE JEAN
A giant with the flu.

Gladys just stares at her.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
Gladys. I can't eat. I can't sleep.
My knees hurt, my shoulders hurt,
my chest hurts.

GLADYS
Your chest?

BILLIE JEAN
Like there's a weight. Right here.

She taps on her heart. Gladys sighs and sits on the bed.

GLADYS
Okay. Take two weeks off. Go
someplace. Practice, don't
practice, whatever you have to do.
But you've got a tournament the day
after this Riggs match and, win or
lose, you're gonna be there.

BILLIE JEAN
Thank you, Gladys.

Gladys gets up and goes to the door. Stops.

GLADYS
And just so you know. If you lose,
I will never forgive you.

She leaves. Billie Jean flops back on her pillow.

BILLIE JEAN
It's too much pressure. Larry. No
wonder my body's falling apart.

LARRY
Billie? If there's someone...you
need...who you want me to call... I
can call her.

Beat. Billie Jean looks down.

BILLIE JEAN
No. There's no one. Thank you.

Larry stands.

LARRY
I've been thinking. There's
something I want to tell you.

Billie Jean braces herself.

BILLIE JEAN

What.

LARRY

I love you. No matter what happens.
On the court--or off. You hear me?

They make real eye contact for the first time in weeks.

BILLIE JEAN

...Okay.

121 EXT. BETTY GRABLE'S HOUSE. TENNIS COURT. LA. DAY. 121

Bobby is entertaining a host of journalists, playing trick shots through his legs, jumping over chairs, dressed in a rain cheater and hat...it is ridiculous but brilliant. There isn't a shot he can't return.

122 EXT. BETTY GRABLE'S HOUSE. TENNIS COURT. LA. DAY. 122

Bobby is playing doubles with his leg tied to another man's leg. The crowd are loving it.

A brief pause while a beautiful young woman hands him a cocktail. He takes it, blows her a kiss and takes a big swig.

123 EXT. BETTY GRABLE'S HOUSE. TENNIS COURT. LA. DAY 123

TV News footage of Bobby on the court, this time with a baby lion on a leash.

TV REPORTER

...and anyone who mistakes him for a fool may well end up looking like one. Whether he's wearing a dress, playing with an umbrella or sporting these season's must-have accessory-a lion cub- Bobby hasn't lost a match yet.

Footage of another player paying out dollar bills to Bobby who flashes a fan of them to the camera.

TV REPORTER (CONT'D)

And as the Bobby Riggs circus moves on to the next town, people are beginning to wonder what has happened to the opposition? Has she choked? Has she fled the country?

(MORE)

TV REPORTER (CONT'D)

After withdrawing from Forest Hills with a virus, nobody has seen even the ghost of Billie Jean King.

124 INT. GENE SHAWCOVE'S HAIR SALON. DAY. 124

A small TV set in the salon is playing the footage. Marilyn stares at the TV, ignoring the complex coloring operation she is supposed to be performing. Bonny works next to her.

MARILYN

It's not right. It's just not right.

She rips off her rubber gloves and heads for the door.

HAIR CLIENT

Hey! Where are you going?

Marilyn keeps walking, right out the door.

HAIR CLIENT (CONT'D)

Where is she going??

BONNY

My guess? Houston.

125 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. OWNER'S SUITE. DAY 125

JERRY PERENCHIO, ROONE ARLEDGE Head of ABC Sports and Bobby sit in the palatial suite. We see the back of another man standing at the window. Silence. Bobby is jiggling his leg nervously.

ROONE ARLEDGE

She did know what time-

BOBBY RIGGS

(snapping)

- yes. Told you.

More silence.

126 OMITTED 126

126A TV SCREEN. HOWARD COSELL AND BOBBY RIGGS 126A

127 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. OWNER'S SUITE. DAY 127

The guys are gathered around the TV watching a promo for the broadcast.

HOWARD COSELL
On Sept. 20, at the Houston
Astrodome, 8pm Eastern Standard
time it's the Battle of the
Sexes... But Mother Riggs what's
going to happen?

BOBBY RIGGS
I predict that I will lob her to
death and chop her to death. She
won't have a chance, I'm gonna
psych her right out of her socks.

They're all enjoying the clip. Jerry checks his watch.

JERRY PERENCHIO
Has she pulled out?

ROONE ARLEDGE
She was ill...

Then the door bangs open and in strides Billie Jean, Rosie
Cassals and Larry. Billie is tanned, fit, ready for battle.

BILLIE JEAN
Apologies, Gentlemen.

BOBBY RIGGS
Hey! How's the flu, honey?

BILLIE JEAN
Flu?

BOBBY RIGGS
Heard you were ill.

BILLIE JEAN
You don't believe what you read in
the papers, do you, Bobby? But
thank you for the flowers. I gave
them to Rosie.

ROSIE
I put them in the trash.

Then Billie sees the figure standing at the window. Freezes.

BILLIE JEAN
Jack?

Jack Kramer who has been standing a little apart staring out
the window turns.

JACK KRAMER
Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN
What are you...?

BOBBY RIGGS
Jack's my choice of commentator for ABC.

BILLIE JEAN
Jack? No. That won't work.

ROONE ARLEDGE
Now, Billie Jean, nobody's complaining about Rosie doing the Play by Play.

BILLIE JEAN
Rosie hasn't single-handedly tried to dismantle women's tennis.

JACK KRAMER
You overstate my influence, Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN
You black-balled us from the USLTA.

BOBBY RIGGS
He did you a favour. Lousy organization. Jack's my choice.

JERRY PERENCHIO
Sure make for a punchy commentary.

BILLIE JEAN
No. I won't play.

ROONE ARLEDGE
Look, I've paid seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars for this event: you can't turn up on the eve of the match saying you won't play.

BILLIE JEAN
Says who?

Silence.

JACK KRAMER
I wonder if we could have a word? Just the two of us.

He gestures to the ante-room to the owner's suite.

128 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. OWNER'S SUITE. ANTE-ROOM. DAY. 128

Jack Kramer and Billie Jean stand facing each other.

JACK KRAMER

Billie Jean, I know we've had our differences, but that's behind us. This is between you and Bobby now.

BILLIE JEAN

Bobby? Bobby's a clown. The whole thing's a big act for him. With you, it's different. It's for real.

JACK KRAMER

What do you mean.

BILLIE JEAN

Your dislike of women.

JACK KRAMER

Happily married for thirty-two years.

He spreads his hands? Go figure.

BILLIE JEAN

Oh, you like us well enough in the kitchen and the bedroom, bringing up the kids and doing the dishes. I bet you're a real gentleman- and I mean that sincerely.

JACK KRAMER

I'll take my compliments where I can from you.

BILLIE JEAN

It's when we dare to want more, just a little bit of what you've got. That's what you can't stand. And to have you up there, telling the American public what to read into every serve, every point? I'm sorry, Jack, but if you're commentating, I'm not playing.

Jack drops the smile.

JACK KRAMER

How do you think that will make the great Billie Jean King look? Backing out at the last minute because she didn't like the commentator?

BILLIE JEAN
Pretty similar to how it would make
the great Jack Kramer look:
shutting the whole thing down
because he didn't get to
participate.

Stalemate. Jack considers, shakes his head.

JACK KRAMER
No. This means too much to you. You
and your Sisterhood. You'd never
throw it over this.

BILLIE JEAN
Remember the last time you thought
I was bluffing? One dollar.

He stares at her for a moment. Points to her hands. They are shaking.

JACK KRAMER
Know the difference between a good
player and a great? The great
players don't let emotion get in
the way. It messes with their game.

He walks out. She gets up and follows him into the main room.

129 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. OWNER'S SUITE. DAY 129

Jack walks straight past the waiting group.

JACK
Sorry, Bobby.

Billie Jean stands at the door, grips her hands together to stop the shaking.

130 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. CORRIDOR. DAY. 130

The gaggle of Camera Men and Reporters waiting at the door leap to their feet as Billie Jean and Larry come out of the entrance and hurry towards the car.

FEMALE REPORTER
Any last minute thoughts, Billie
Jean? Are you going to win?

LARRY
Of course she's gonna win.

The MALE REPORTER turns to his female colleague.

MALE REPORTER

Not if it goes long. Women can't
handle five sets.

Billie Jean stops. Turns to the Male Reporter.

BILLIE JEAN

Do you have a daughter? A sister?
You sure as heck have a Mother. Is
she not as good as your Father?
Because she's a woman? Do you
believe that?

MALE REPORTER

No...

BILLIE JEAN

But that's what you're saying.
Whether you think you are or not.
If I beat Bobby Riggs in five sets,
will you stop saying it?

MALE REPORTER

I- okay.

BILLIE JEAN

Sir, I'm going to hold you to that.

LARRY

Billie-

Larry takes her arm and hustles her into the car.

131 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAWN.

131

Billie Jean is walking up steps. She seems to be climbing
forever upwards. Finally, she stops and turns. She is in the
very top tier of the Astrodome looking down on the massive,
empty stadium.

She sits and stares at the small patch of green in the center
that is the tennis court. Silence.

131A OMITTED

131A

131B INT. CONTROL ROOM. DAY.

131B

Inside the TV Control Room, a tense hush. Jerry Perenchio
looks on as the DIRECTOR and Vision Mixer are cutting between
cameras, exploring the shots.

Over the radios.

RADIO

Thirty minutes to broadcast, sixty-five minutes to Game Time.

DIRECTOR

Zoom in, 4. Camera 2 and Camera 1.
Wide on 5. Is that a *Priest*?

Camera 5 finds a Priest in the stands standing between what is clearly a Bride and Groom.

JERRY PERENCHIO

If Bobby wins, she takes the groom's surname. If Billie wins, the groom takes her name.

132 OMITTED 132

133 OMITTED 133

134 OMITTED 134

135 INT. HOUSTON HOTEL. CORRIDOR/ESCALATOR. DAY. 135

Rheo, Lornie and Bobby's Entourage heading out at speed. Bobby is gulping down handfuls of Rheo's pills.

BOBBY RIGGS

Okay, wagons roll! Let's go, people, let's go.

136 INT. HOUSTON HOTEL. ESCALATOR. DAY. 136

Bobby is about to get on the escalator. Stops.

BOBBY RIGGS

Larry. Where's Larry? Larry!

Larry comes out.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Come on.

LARRY

I'm gonna watch it here.

BOBBY RIGGS

Whaddya mean, 'watch it here'? I booked an entire Astrodome for you.

LARRY
I'm sorry, I'm not coming.

BOBBY RIGGS
You're afraid I'm gonna lose?

LARRY
No.

BOBBY RIGGS
What?

LARRY
You don't need me, that's all. I
thought you did, but you don't.
Good luck, Dad.

He turns and goes back into the hotel.

BOBBY RIGGS
Larry!

He gives up.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)
Never understood that kid.

136A INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY.

136A

RADIO
...and we're live!

And now, a real carnival atmosphere.

Men in the crowds are wearing T-shirts proudly proclaiming themselves "Riggs Pigs". Others wear bras and aprons. An equal number of women have banners supporting Billie Jean, T-shirts with "I love Billie Jean" emblazoned on the front.

Others are in ball gowns drinking champagne. You couldn't get a more mixed crowd.

Frank Gifford, ABC's roving reporter, is out canvassing opinions. Various Pops: "I'm for Bobby". "Billie's gonna take it". "I've got a hundred dollars on Bobby"...

Everywhere, money is changing hands as the betting hots up.

Jimmy the Greek gives his opinion to Frank:

JIMMY THE GREEK
King money is scarce. It's hard to
find a bet on the girl.
(MORE)

JIMMY THE GREEK (CONT'D)

Court was number one and Bobby thrashed her. That's the stats.

137 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 137

Billie Jean stands in front of the mirror, wearing her tennis dress & a pair of BLUE SUEDE ADIDAS SHOES. She is surrounded by Rosie, Ted, Henry, Larry, a nervous THIRD AD, and Billie Jean's PARENTS. Everyone seems to be talking at once.

ROSIE

(Reading telegrams)

From Senator Macintyre. "Good luck, Billie Jean. We're all rooting for you." Annie from New York- "go, Billie, we know you're going to win..."

TED

(Fussing over her dress)

You've lost weight. I need to take this in.

BILLIE JEAN

We don't have time.

TED AND HENRY

We've time.

BILLIE JEAN'S DAD

How are you feeling, honey?

BILLIE JEAN'S MOM

Do you need anything? Water?

THIRD AD

Twenty minutes to Game Time.

TED

I have to ask: do you really intend to inflict blue suede shoes on ninety million members of the viewing public?

BILLIE JEAN'S MOM

How many? Goodness, Billie Jean...

BILLIE JEAN

If they're good enough for Elvis, they're good enough for me.

TED

Well something's off, and I think it's the shoes.

BILLIE JEAN
It's not the shoes.

MARILYN
Your hair.

They turn and see Marilyn standing in the doorway. A frozen moment. Then Billie Jean gathers herself:

BILLIE JEAN
Mom. Dad. This is Marilyn. My
hairdresser.

BILLIE'S MOM
Pleased to meet you.

They shake hands.

BILLIE'S DAD
Well, if I know one thing, it's to
never get between a woman and her
hairdresser. Come on, honey, let's
find our seats.

LARRY
I'll take you up there.

He puts a hand on Billie Jean's shoulder.

LARRY (CONT'D)
I'll be back to walk you down to
the court.

Billie Jean's parents hug her.

BILLIE JEAN'S DAD
(Hugs Billie Jean)
Good luck, sweetheart.

BILLIE JEAN'S MOM
Give him heck.

They all leave. Marilyn and Billie Jean stand looking at each other. Oblivious, the Third AD is busy mumbling into his radio.

MARILYN
"Your hairdresser."

BILLIE JEAN
What else was I supposed to say?

MARILYN
No, that is why I'm here. Sit.

Billie Jean sits. Marilyn gets her scissors out and starts snipping. Silence.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

I heard you were sick.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm better now.

Marilyn keeps cutting. Billie Jean stops her hand.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)

I've missed you.

MARILYN

Don't. Please.

(Beat)

I wanted to wish you luck. I know what this means to you. To a lot of people.

BILLIE JEAN

Thank you.

Marilyn eyes Billie's hair, runs her fingers through it.

MARILYN

Shake your head, see how it feels.

Billie Jean looks in the mirror. A tiny well-executed trim.

BILLIE JEAN

I feel...like a new person.

MARILYN

Really?

Billie Jean shrugs. She's suddenly emotional.

BILLIE JEAN

Stay for the match?

MARILYN

Are you sure?

BILLIE JEAN

Yes. Please.

137A INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. BOBBY'S LOCKER ROOM. DAY.

137A

In Bobby's changing room, a SUGAR DADDY PR GUY is holding a massive lollipop and prepping Bobby. The Sugar Daddy Girls are doing their make-up in the mirror.

SUGAR DADDY GUY
Make sure you get the face of the
lollypop to camera, Bobby, yeah?

LORNIE
Can we- do you mind, we're trying
to prepare for a match here.

SUGAR DADDY GUY
Okay, but you got that, Bobby?

LORNIE
Out.

He hustles the Sugar Daddy Guy and the Girls out the door.
Goes back to Bobby.

LORNIE (CONT'D)
You okay?

BOBBY RIGGS
Sure, sure. Ready for battle. Just
think, Lornie, after Billie Jean,
Chrissy Evert and a million
dollars...

LORNIE
One match at a time, Bobby, one
match at a time.

138 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. COMMENTARY BOOTH. DAY. (STOCK FOOTAGE) 138

A bank of TV monitors show the action from every angle. On
the screen, Jack Kramer talks.

JACK KRAMER
...but apparently Billie Jean was
very serious, and feels that I'm
completely opposed to what she's
trying to do in tennis. I wanna
make one thing clear: when I
realized that I was perhaps a
problem for Billie Jean, I thought
that she might want to use me as an
excuse for losing to Bobby Riggs.

139 OMITTED 139

140 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 140

Billie Jean watches the broadcast on a TV in the locker room.
Marilyn stands just behind her.

JACK KRAMER

To ABC's credit, they said you call the shots Jack, we'll go along with you, but I'm withdrawing voluntarily, and I'm wishing 100% luck to my pal Bobby Riggs.

Larry knocks and comes in.

LARRY

They want you down in the Holding Area.

Billie switches the TV off and stands.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I'll take you down there.

BILLIE JEAN

No. I need to do this on my own.

The Third AD makes to follow but Larry puts a restraining hand on him. Billie Jean heads out the door, a woman heading for her destiny. We follow her as walks away, down the corridor. Larry and Marilyn watch her go.

We see what they don't: that she's breathing heavily, nervous, emotional.

141	OMITTED	141
142	OMITTED	142
143	INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOLDING AREA. DAY.	143

A huge bunker-like area in the wings of the stadium.

Chaos. Bizarrely, three assistants are chasing a squealing piglet across the Holding Area. The piglet scatters the Marching Band who are just coming off the floor.

TV Assistants and Runners criss-cross the space.

Four male models in Egyptian garb, stripped to the waist, carry in a sedan chair decked out in gold fabric. Jerry Perenchio marches on behind it.

JERRY PERENCHIO

Where's Billie? Billie Jean King?

A lone individual in the middle of the chaos.

BILLIE JEAN

Here.

JERRY PERENCHIO

This is for you!

He indicates the sedan chair. She looks completely perplexed.

143A OMITTED 143A

144 OMITTED 144

144A INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOLDING AREA. DAY. 144A

Darkness. A deep rumble, but mostly quiet. We are with Billie Jean on the sedan chair as she is jostled down the dark corridor towards the blinding light at the end.

145 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 145

HOWARD COSELL V/O

And here she comes!

We are with Billie Jean as she is carried into the arena on the sedan chair. A wall of noise and light hits her. She tries to conceal her shock and waves to the crowd.

HOWARD COSELL

Sometimes you get the feeling that if she ever let her hair go down to her shoulders and took off her glasses, you'd have someone vying for a Hollywood screen test.

Bobby in a chariot pulled by Bobby's Bosom Buddies, four women in bikinis. Bobby hands Billie Jean the huge Sugar Daddy lollipop.

BILLIE JEAN

I've got something for you too, Bobby. The ultimate gift for a male chauvinist.

She presents him with a piglet tied up in a bow. Frank Gifford, ABC's courtside reporter, presses Bobby.

FRANK GIFFORD

A last word before the game, Bobby.

BOBBY RIGGS

This game is for all the guys
around the world who feel as I do
that the male is king and the male
is supreme.

FRANK GIFFORD

Billie Jean?

But Billie Jean is staring at Marilyn, sitting next to Larry.

FRANK GIFFORD (CONT'D)

Billie Jean? Anything to say?

BILLIE JEAN

I'm done talking. Let's play.

146 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 146

Billie picks up her racket and walks to the baseline. The
sound diminishes, the people diminish. It's just her and the
ball and the racket. She bounces the ball on the ground.

HOWARD COSELL V/O

...and the moment the country has
been waiting for has finally
arrived.

147 OMITTED 147

148 OMITTED 148

149 INT. MARGARET'S ND HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 149

Margaret Court and Barry sit in a hotel room in front of the
TV.

150 OMITTED 150

150A INT. FOREST HILL COUNTRY CLUB- LIBRARY. DAY. 150A

Whisky in hand, a small group including Jack Kramer and Bob
Sanders are gathered around a television.

151 OMITTED 151

- 152 INT. TOWN TENNIS CENTER -- LOCKER ROOM . MANHATTAN. DAY. 152
The Boys gathered round the TV fall silent. In the background, Rita is carrying a tray of drinks. She stops and stares.
- 153 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 153
In the stands near the court, the Nine are frozen in anticipation.
- 154 OMITTED 154
- 155 OMITTED 155
- 156 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 156
Billie Jean serves the ball. Boom. Bobby returns, one of his short, sneaky slices. Billie Jean gets to it. It's near the net. Bobby sends a high one. She backs off towards the base line.
- 157 OMITTED 157
- 158 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 158
The ball is high, coming right at her from the painful white of the stadium lights. She shuts her eyes and hits. The timing is perfect.
- 159 OMITTED 159
- 160 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 160
Battle has been joined. Bobby is serving up short spin shots, lobs, slices, trying to take the power from Billie Jean's shots. It's working, as the scoreboard reads 4-4.
But Billie Jean looks unperturbed, focused entirely on the task at hand, whereas Bobby is sweating hard, panting in his Sugar Daddy track suit.
She dinks a soft one over the net. Heaving hard, Bobby just gets to it. It looks like a winner- and the Riggs Pigs in the stands certainly think it is- but somehow Billie Jean snaps a back-hand return.

The Libbers cheer as Billie Jean returns to the baseline. Bobby just sits in one of the chairs on the sidelines. Catching his breath.

LORNIE

Take the damned jacket off.

BOBBY RIGGS

I can't. They paid me ten gees.

LORNIE

I don't give a damn. Get it off.

Bobby takes the jacket off.

Billie Jean stares at him. She knows now how to deal with him.

Billie Jean sends over shots that make Bobby run from one side of the court to the other. It's merciless. He's dying. The Umpire calls game after game.

She serves and volleys, powers balls past his increasingly tired legs.

UMPIRE

Second set to Miss King. Miss King leads two sets to none.

Bobby's hands are being massaged by Lornie.

BOBBY RIGGS

They're cramping, Lornie.

He pours Gatorade down his throat.

On the other side of the court, Billie Jean massages her sore calves, watching him falter.

UMPIRE

Time, please.

They take ends again.

A series of punishing serves. Punishing smashes. Bobby, increasingly out-gunned.

The repeated phrase.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Game to Miss King. Game to Miss King.

And the final shot from Bobby, limply into the net.

Billie Jean throws her racket high into the air.

Flashes of: dejected Riggs Pigs in the stadium. Ecstatic Libbers. Deafening cheering.

The Nine going absolutely crazy.

160A INT MARGARET'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 160A

Margaret Court goes to the television and switches it off. Walks out of the room. Barry watches her go.

160B INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 160B

Tears are running down Ted's cheeks. Henry passes him a handkerchief.

TED
Horrid little man.

161A INT. CHURCH. DAY. 161A

Bobby's Gamblers Anonymous friends stare at the TV, dumbfounded.

161B INT. FOREST HILL COUNTRY CLUB- LIBRARY. NIGHT. 161B

Jack Kramer stares at the TV.

JACK KRAMER
How'd *that* happen?

160C OMITTED 160C

160D OMITTED 160D

161 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY. 161

Back on court, Bobby jumps over the net, shakes Billie Jean's hand. Leans into her ear.

BOBBY RIGGS
I underestimated you.

BILLIE JEAN
You underestimated us all, Bobby.

Larry runs up and kisses Billie Jean. Marilyn is there, Gladys, the Nine, Billie Jean's parents, a throng of REPORTERS. Everyone surrounds her, wanting a piece of her. A few journalists shove microphones in her face.

REPORTER 1

Billie Jean! How does it feel to be the most famous woman in the world?

REPORTER 2

Billie! You showed them all! What are you gonna do next?

LARRY

Over here, honey. Frank wants you to do a piece to camera.

BILLIE JEAN

No, I- in a minute.

She ducks away, down the steps to the Locker Room.

162 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOME TEAM LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 162

Billie Jean sits in the empty space. She stares at her racket. Lets tears of relief fall down her face.

163 INT. HOUSTON HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 163

Larry Riggs switches off the TV. Silence. He picks up his suitcase, goes to the door and switches off the lights. Exits. The door shuts.

164 INT. BOBBY'S LOCKER ROOM. DAY. 164

Billie Jean walks in. Stands in the doorway and sees Bobby sitting on a bench, in a towel, staring at the floor, destroyed. She comes and sits next to him. He finally notices her and struggles to re-energise Bobby Riggs.

BOBBY RIGGS

Oh, great game, Billie. My serve was a bit off today but, you know, I'm thinking-

She puts an arm around his shoulder and he falls silent. They sit contemplating what has just happened. After an age...

BILLIE JEAN

Know something? You might just be the best thing to happen to feminism in ten years.

BOBBY RIGGS

Bobby Riggs, feminist. That's a thing.

The ghost of a smile from Bobby. Billie Jean walks through the rows of lockers, leaving Bobby staring at the floor.

A noise from the other end of the locker room. He looks up. Priscilla stands there. His eyes light with distant hope.

BOBBY RIGGS (CONT'D)

Priscilla.

PRISCILLA

Bobby.

(Beat)

Are you done here?

He looks around. After a moment, he nods.

164A INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. TENNIS COURT. DAY. 164A

A full-on party has exploded. There is music, drinking, lights, balloons.

165 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. HOLDING AREA. DAY. 165

Billie Jean comes up the stairs and into the arena of the Astrodome. But she stops. Watches Marilyn and Larry, standing near each other, laughing and talking with the Nine. Ted bustles towards Billie Jean.

TED

Billie, darling! Come on. We can't start the dancing without you.

BILLIE JEAN

One second. I'm not ready.

He follows her gaze down to Marilyn and Larry. Then:

TED

This is just the opinion of one devoted admirer. But I think you may be more ready than you know.

Billie Jean looks at him.

BILLIE JEAN

What am I supposed to do, Ted.

TED

Times change. As you've proven. I think they're going to keep changing.

(Quiet)

One day we will be free to be who we are and love who we love.

BILLIE JEAN
And until then?

TED
I don't know, dear. Right now, all
you can do is join the dance.

He gestures toward the crowd. She takes a deep breath, then
walks out of the Holding Area...

166 INT. HOUSTON ASTRODOME. DAY.

166

...out of the Holding Area and onto the court. Around her
there is music, lights, ticker tape.

We stay on her face as suddenly a huge roar of love comes
from the crowd.

THE END