

45

CONTINUED:

["old" draft #]

43.

(45) Newly Revised Scene #

AKEELAH

You'd let me do it.

A long moment as she sits there fuming. Then, she gets an idea.

From her notebook she pulls out a "Parental Consent Form" for the Southern California Regional Spelling Bee. Studies it, looks at her dad's picture. A moment. Then slowly signs his name at the bottom of the form.

"Exterior"

start here

EXT. LARABEE'S HOUSE - DAY

SLUG LINE

Akeelah stands in front of Dr. Larabee's house. She takes a big breath, then approaches the front door and rings the buzzer. After a few moments, Larabee answers the door. They just stare at each other for a moment, then:

46

Scene directions

AKEELAH

Dialogue

1979, "Maculature." M-A-C-U-L-A-T-U-R-E. Origin is Latin. 1990, "Fibranne." F-I-B-R-A-N-N-E. French. 1996, "Viviseulture." V-I-V-I-S-E-P-U-L-T-U-R-E." Latin.

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She takes a breath. He looks at her like she's a little nuts. \*\*\*

AKEELAH (CONT'D)

I learned all the winning words since 1925. Just like you said I should. I'm sorry for being so insolent last time. That's not gonna happen no more -- any more. I promise.

(beat)

So I was wonderin' if you might... reconsider coachin' me for the State Bee. 'Cause I need a coach. Bad.

A long beat as Larabee considers her hopeful demeanor. Then he lets out a long deep breath.

LARABEE

Badly. You need a coach "badly."

(beat)

Come in.

He steps back into the house, leaving the door half-open.

"Interior"

47

INT. LARABEE'S HOUSE - DAY

47

Akeelah hesitantly steps into the foyer of this extremely well-kept house.

Akeelah & The Bee Scene "A"

(CONTINUED)

(2)

47

CONTINUED:

44.

47

LARABEE  
Wipe your feet.

She steps back onto a floor mat and does as told. Dr. Larabee disappears into an office door at the end of a hall. Akeelah hesitates, then follows him.

48

INT. LARABEE'S OFFICE - DAY

48

She swallows back nervousness and enters the impressive room flanked by two towering bookcases. On the wall, framed university degrees from Yale and UCLA -- and photos of Larabee as a younger man, on the Yale football team, and with a PRETTY WOMAN.

Larabee moves behind his desk, where he finishes typing something into a computer.

Actor directions

LARABEE  
(without looking up)  
So how can I trust you?

AKEELAH  
'scuse me?

LARABEE  
I don't want to squander my time on someone who's not committed.

AKEELAH  
Well, I'm committed.

LARABEE  
(looks up)  
How do I know that? You're a very unpredictable little girl.

Akeelah almost takes the bait, but responds calmly:

AKEELAH  
All I can do is give you my promise. And if that's insufficient, well I'm sorry. Sir.

She holds Dr. Larabee's steely gaze. After a beat, he sits down behind the desk. Akeelah sees a more recent photo of Larabee with the pretty woman.

AKEELAH (CONT'D)  
That's a pretty lady. She your wife?

(1st time a character is in the script... CAPITAL LETTERS)

(same character continues to speak)

Underline = Emphasize the word.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARABEE

(ignoring the question)  
Listen -- you got lucky at that district bee. The competition's much stronger at the state level. So if we were to prepare for that, we'd do it on my schedule. I write in the early mornings and do consulting work in the afternoons -- so you and I would work mid-mornings. Can you handle that?

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AKEELAH

Well, I got summer school, but Mr. Welch said workin' with you could take the place of it.

LARABEE

Summer school? Isn't that for students who fail to perform satisfactorily during the year?

AKEELAH

(evasive)  
... Well sometimes it's for kids who wanna get ahead for next year.

She smiles. He's not buying it.

LARABEE

So do you have any goals in life?

AKEELAH

Huh?

LARABEE

Goals. What do you want to be when you grow up? A doctor? Lawyer? Stand-up comic?

AKEELAH

I dunno. The only thing I'm good at is spelling.

Larabee studies her again.

LARABEE

Go over there. To that plaque on the wall. Read what it says.

Akeelah hesitates then walks across the room to a small brown plaque with an engraving on it.

(CONTINUED)

4

48

CONTINUED: (2)

46.  
48

LARABEE (CONT'D)

Read it out loud.

AKEELAH

Uh... "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

(considers this, then:)

"We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? Your playing small doesn't serve the world. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same."

(Note: Nelson Mandela was quoting Marianne Williamson when he said this!)

Underneath the quote: "Nelson Mandela, inaugural address."

LARABEE

Does that mean anything to you?

AKEELAH

I don't know.

LARABEE

It's written in plain English. What does it mean?

AKEELAH

... That I'm not supposed to be afraid.

LARABEE

Afraid of what?

AKEELAH

Afraid of ... me?

She looks back at him. A beat.

LARABEE

Come here.

(she comes to his desk)

This Bee, this National Spelling Bee - it's a tough nut. I've seen it chew kids up and spit 'em out. And if you want to get there, you can't be a shrinking violet. You gotta stand up and show people what you can do.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

(Character continues talking on the next page.)

CONTINUED: (3)

LARABEE (CONT'D)

Allright?

(Akeelah nods)

And I'll brook no nonsense. You show up every day. On time. With no attitude. Otherwise it's over.

(beat)

Agreed?

AKEELAH

Agreed.

A beat, as Larabee seems to be giving this his final consideration, then:

LARABEE

We start tomorrow. Nine AM sharp. You'll to learn to visualize words. Because words are not ethereal. They're pictures. Pictures of ideas. And if you can see the picture -- you can see the word.

STOP HERE

STOP HERE

49

INT. TANYA'S CAR - DAY

49\*\*\*

Kiana drives a nicely dressed Akeelah through Woodland Hills. Georgia sits in the back seat, and she and Kiana SING along with the RADIO, while Akeelah monitors passing street addresses.

AKEELAH

Here it is! Stop!

They stop outside Javier's house, festooned with balloons.

KIANA

Mama'd trip if she knew we borrowed the car for this.

AKEELAH

That's why Mama ain't gonna know. C'mon, Georgia.

Akeelah gets out of the car, but Georgia's not budging. She's looking warily at Javier's house -- and the backyard party full of mostly white kids.

GEORGIA

... I think I'll go to the mall with Kiana instead.

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(CONTINUED)