

UNIFIED

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CLERMONT HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Defending state sprint champion, FANTASIA DUPREE, 17, platted hair, bedazzled spikes and long jumper, SIMONE SIMMONS, remove their warmups. Clermont's men and women's TRACK TEAM MEMBERS stretch in the background.

FANTASIA
Track scholarships here I come!

SIMONE
Any offers yet?

FANTASIA
Several schools are looking, but
they want my times faster.

SIMONE
I would love to jump in college.

Across the infield, special needs teacher and UNIFIED Track Coach, PEGGY WELLS, 34, slender, shapely, cradles a clipboard. She blows her whistle.

COACH WELLS
Everyone! On the line!

A group of special needs students move to the starting line. BRADY HUGHES, 18, autistic, towering, stares, stands motionless. GRETCHEN PAUL, 17, with Down Syndrome waves toward the stands.

GRETCHEN
(yelling)
Momma! Look!

TREVOR RUSK, 16, mentally impaired gets into a runner's crouch.

TREVOR
(speech impediment)
I faster than every one.

Brady, wildly flaps his hands.

BRADY
Fun, fun, fun!

Fantasia and Simone snicker.

FANTASIA
Embarrassing!

SIMONE

Why are they on our track.

Fellow teammate, and hurdler, MARCY GOODWIN, 18, removes her warmup top, she stands.

MARCY

It's not their fault.

FANTASIA

Whatever.

Coach Wells shouts instructions.

COACH WELLS

On your mark...

Trevor takes off. Gretchen throws her hands up.

GRETCHEN

(stuttering)

He's cheatin'.

Brady, points, laughs. ANNA PRUITT, 16, visually impaired and STEPHEN HAYES, 15, deaf, chase after Trevor.

COACH WELLS

Trevor! Come back, now!

ANNA

Slow down!

STEPHEN

(signing)

Come back.

FANTASIA

Ooh! He's so fast. I'm scared.

SIMONE

Just keep them away from me.

Men's All State hurdler, CHARLES DAVIS, 18, and high jumper, T.J. MCLEAN, 17, jog up to Fantasia.

CHARLES

Show some class.

FANTASIA

We got plenty!

T.J.

They're athletes too.

FANTASIA
You're kidding.

MARCY
You might need their help one day.

FANTASIA
Not a chance!

Trevor stops, turns. Yells!

TREVOR
See, I fast!

Trevor runs across the infield. Coach Wells drops her clipboard in hot pursuit.

COACH WELLS
Trevor!

Other TRACK TEAM MEMBERS begin to point and chant.

TRACK TEAM MEMBERS
Run, Trevor, run!

Head men's and women's track coach, MIKE SINCLAIR, 40, trim and handsome walks up.

COACH SINCLAIR
Knock it off!

Coach Sinclair sprints off, catches up to Trevor.

TREVOR
Hey, Coach!

COACH SINCLAIR
You're pretty fast!

TREVOR
That what I keep sayin'.

Coach Wells jogs up. Out of breath.

COACH WELLS
Trevor...you can't take off...like that.

TREVOR
(remorseful)
Sorry.

COACH WELLS
Now go join the others.

Trevor runs toward his cheering, Unified teammates.

COACH SINCLAIR

You okay?

COACH WELLS

I wonder if I'm the right person?

COACH SINCLAIR

These kids need you.

COACH WELLS

I don't know.

COACH SINCLAIR

Don't second guess yourself.

Coach Wells starts to jog away. She turns.

COACH WELLS

...Thanks.

EXT. CLERMONT HIGH SCHOOL - TRACK - DAY

Clermont's track and field athletes huddle around Coach Sinclair. Coach Wells conducts drills for the Unified team in the background.

COACH SINCLAIR

We've got three weeks before our first meet.

Fantasia and Simone point, giggle at the Unified runners.

COACH SINCLAIR (CONT'D)

Got something to say!

FANTASIA

Uh, no, Coach.

COACH SINCLAIR

Workouts have been good, but stay focused.

(beat)

Coach Mays.

Assistant Coach, BRAD MAYS, 34, muscular and tan steps forward.

COACH MAYS

We need some volunteers to run with our Unified athletes at various meets this season.

Long distance runner, CODY MCKAY, 17, wiry, glasses raises his hand.

CODY
Coach, I will.

MARCY
Me too.

Multi athlete, ANDREW WHITAKER, 18, volunteers.

ANDREW
Count me in, Coach.

COACH MAYS
Thank you. We need a couple more.

Fantasia whispers to Simone.

FANTASIA
You'll never catch me volunteering.

SIMONE
Me either.

Coach Mays scans the team. Coach Sinclair points.

COACH SINCLAIR
How about Fantasia and Simone?

The team begins to clap.

T.J.
Great idea!

FANTASIA
But I'm trying to get my times down
for a scholarship!

COACH MAYS
You can adjust.

SIMONE
We're not really trained to help
those type of people.

COACH MAYS
Nonsense. I'll let Coach Wells know.

COACH SINCLAIR
Everyone, take two warmup laps.

The track team takes off around the track. Fantasia and Simone jog together.

FANTASIA
I can't do this.

SIMONE

Why us!

FANTASIA

Someone is going to regret this!

As the team rounds the first curve, Gretchen and the rest of the Unified athletes wave and cheer.

GRETCHEN

Yeah, team!

FANTASIA

I'm going to barf.

INT. COACH WELLS CLASSROOM - DAY

Coach Wells sits, grading papers at her desk. A slide-show plays in front of her special needs students. Brady stares blankly out the window. Trevor claps at each slide.

Gretchen, raises her hand, clutching a stuffed animal with her other.

COACH WELLS

Yes, Gretchen?

GRETCHEN

Coach Sinclair is hot!

Brady laughs then pounds his desk. Coach Wells rises. Clapping, joyous groans, and laughter erupts among the students.

COACH WELLS

Class! Settle down.

ANNA

He sure is!

TREVOR

How you know? You can't see!

ANNA

I can tell!

GRETCHEN

Coach Wells, ask him out.

A ringing school bell sounds off in the hallway. Coach Wells turns off the projector.

COACH WELLS

You've got five minutes to gather up your things.

TREVOR
I tell Coach you like him.

Brady bounces in his chair.

COACH WELLS
That's enough!

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A college age, female BARISTA takes Coach Wells order as couples talk, laptop keys clank, and book pages turn.

BARISTA
Our special today is Chai Tea and
bagel for six ninety nine.

COACH WELLS
I'll have a tall Carmel Macchiato
instead.

BARISTA
Be right up!

Coach Sinclair, in track warmups enters staring at his phone.
He approaches the register.

COACH SINCLAIR
Teachers should sleep in on Saturdays.

COACH WELLS
What about you?

COACH SINCLAIR
Just got through with a run.

The Barista approaches the register.

BARISTA
Hey, Coach! The usual?

Coach Sinclair nods.

COACH SINCLAIR
Grab us a table.

Coach Sinclair pays for his drink. He joins Coach Wells at a
corner two-top.

COACH SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
Nice to have some company. My dog
loves to sleep and my fish just stare.

COACH WELLS
You don't come across as being lonely.

COACH SINCLAIR
It's just a disguise.

COACH WELLS
Coming home to uninterested pets
actually sounds nice.

COACH SINCLAIR
You sound a little stressed?

Coach Wells takes a drink.

COACH WELLS
Emotionally it's tough. Teaching
special needs students.
(beat)
I should have stuck with history.

COACH SINCLAIR
You're making a huge difference in
those kids lives.

COACH WELLS
Yeah, I'd like to believe that.
(beat)
How's the team look?

COACH SINCLAIR
Barring injuries, we should be on
the podium again at State, unless--

COACH WELLS
Something wrong?

Coach Sinclair leans back in his chair.

COACH SINCLAIR
A couple of months ago my doctor
found a lump on my neck. He ran
some tests. It was benign.

Coach Wells takes a sip of her coffee.

COACH WELLS
That's a relief.

COACH SINCLAIR
He found another lump two weeks ago.
(beat)
I'm scheduled for surgery right after
the State Meet.

COACH WELLS
Scared?

Coach Sinclair bows his head.

COACH SINCLAIR
I'm trying to stay positive. The
team doesn't know.

COACH WELLS
I won't say a word to anyone.
(beat)
Anything I can do?

COACH SINCLAIR
Pray. It might help?

EXT. CLERMONT HIGH SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Coach Wells leads the Unified team through stretching drills.
Arms, legs, and bodies flail wildly.

Coach Mays leads the varsity team members through dynamic
drills.

Coach Sinclair glances over at Coach Wells and the humorous
stretching display.

COACH WELLS
Team. Stand up straight, and slowly
reach down and touch your toes.

Trevor proceeds to touch his knees in a rapid fire sequence.

TREVOR
Like this?

COACH WELLS
Slower.

Brady watches a nearby squirrel scamper along the infield.

Gretchen raises both hands above her head, loosing her balance.
Stephen shuffles over to help her.

Anna performs her stretch without incident.

COACH WELLS (CONT'D)
Very good, Anna!

Coach Sinclair walks over to Coach Wells.

COACH SINCLAIR
Like some help?

COACH WELLS
Maybe stretching wasn't such a good
idea?

COACH SINCLAIR
Your intent is good. We might need
to adjust their technique.

Brady waves at Coach Sinclair.

TREVOR
Hi, Coach Sin...clair!

COACH SINCLAIR
Hello team! Everyone sit down and
look at me.

Each Unified member sits. Brady claps his hands. Coach Wells
stands off to the side, watching.

COACH SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
I want each of you to slowly stretch,
and see if you can touch your toes.

TREVOR
This easy.

COACH SINCLAIR
Stretch five times.

Coach Wells smiles as she writes on her clipboard.

TREVOR
I all done!

GRETCHEN
No you not!

Brady and Stephen finish. They fist bump each other. Anna
waits for further instructions.

COACH SINCLAIR
Everyone to their feet.

Each Unified athlete high-fives Coach Sinclair.

COACH SINCLAIR (CONT'D)
That was an excellent job!

TREVOR
More. Show us more!

COACH WELLS
Coach Sinclair has his athletes too!

COACH SINCLAIR
I'll show you more at another time.