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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT, PHILADELPHIA -- NIGHT

In front of a computer sits a YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN. Silently tears run down her cheeks. She types...

"January 1, 2005

I'm so tired. I just feel like I've been climbing uphill so long, overcome so much, and yet accomplished so little."

In the distance the faint CHEERING of the New Year's celebration is over shadowed by the loud POPPING of fire crackers.

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. HOUSE ON OAKDALE ST, 1993 -- NIGHT

The POPPING of the fire crackers morphs into the TAPPING of an old fashioned manual type writer.

In front of the type writer sits a YOUNG AFRICAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENT GIRL with with bad acne.

She hunches over the key pad typing excitedly, a smile on her lips. She comes to the end of the page, pulls it out and quickly inserts another. She continues to type at a furious pace.

EXT. BEEBER MIDDLE SCHOOL YARD, -- DAY

The TAPPING of the type writer morphs into the SLAPPING of a double dutch rope against the concrete.

A girl jumps into the rope.

The two girls turning the ropes-the ENDERS-sing to the beat of the rope.

ENDERS  
Challenge, Challenge  
1...2...3...4....

At four the girl misses.

The girl with the bad acne approaches the rope. Her name is SHERELL. At this point in her life story she is 13.

She jumps into the rope and all the girls sing.

EVERYONE  
P-I-M-P-L-E-S! P-I-M-P-L-E-S!

Sherell stops jumping. She marches away from the group.  
ANGEL yells after her.

ANGEL  
Where you think you goin? You betta  
get these ends.

Sherell doesn't turn around. She continues to a deserted  
area of the school yard and stands by herself.

INT. BEEBER MIDDLE SCHOOL, CLASSROOM -- DAY

An English teacher, MS. GREEN addresses a classroom of eighth  
graders.

MS. GREEN  
These papers were a disgrace to the  
academics plus program. And I know  
some of you...

She makes eye contact with several students, including  
Sherell.

MS. GREEN  
...actually worked hard on this  
assignment, but the rest...

The BELL RINGS cutting off Ms. Green's speech. The classroom  
instantly fills with commotion as the students pack up their  
belongings.

Ms. Green yells over the noise.

MS. GREEN  
For the rest of you who received a  
C or lower, I want rewrites by  
Friday.

A universal "MOAN" emits from the class.

SHERELL looks down at her paper. She has an "A." She smiles.

GINA, one of the girls whom Sherell played Double Dutch  
with, leans over and pushes Sherell's paper on the floor.

GINA  
P-I-M-P-L-E-S!

Angel steps on Sherell's paper just as she leans down to pick it up. She continues to stand on the paper and makes eye contact with Sherell, daring her to say something. Sherell doesn't say anything.

ANGEL  
Come on Gina.

Angel stands on the paper until Gina walks over and joins her. When Angel walks away Sherell picks up her paper. It has a large footprint on it.

INT. HOUSE, OAKDALE ST -- NIGHT

Tiny BATHROOM. Everything is broken or worn. The shower curtain hangs off its rod. There's no top on the back of the toilet.

Sherell leans over the sink and studies her face in a cracked mirror. She squeezes the pus out of the largest pimple. Afterwards she washes her face and then pats it dry with toilet paper and then tosses it in the toilet.

She takes the tube of toothpaste and then squeezes a large amount on her pointer finger. She spreads it across her palm then spreads it all over her acne plagued complexion.

INT. BATHROOM -- LATER

Sherell rinses the dry toothpaste off her face. She unrolls a wad of tissue and pats her face dry then throws the tissue into the toilet bowl.

She sticks her hand into the open part of the back of the toilet. She lifts the chain up causing the toilet to flush. Once all the water has emptied she lets the chain go and the water refills.

She turns the light off and exits the bathroom.

EXT. OAKDALE ST -- DAY

Street with row-homes. On one side of the street the houses have porches. On the other side there are none. The sun illuminates the side of the street without the porches.

On the sunny side of the street sits Sherell 13, along with SANDY 13, with naturally red hair, SANDRA 16, with very large breasts.

Both Sandy and Sandra are dressed skimpily despite the cool weather. VANESSA 17, mixed race with long wavy hair pulled back into a ponytail. She's dressed like a tomboy but she's pretty nonetheless.

The girls sit on the steps listening to Vanessa's story. She holds her thumb and pointer finger about an inch apart.

VANESSA

I kid you not. His dick was this big. He steady tellin me this is the best pussy he ever had and I'm thinking this is the littlest dick I ever had.

Everyone laughs except for Sherell.

SANDRA

Did you bust?

VANESSA

Come on now.

SANDRA

Well while u was wit little dick last night I was gettin my freak on wit John-John. His dick was like this.

She holds her hands about a foot apart.

SANDRA

That nigga worked it so good, when I bust I saw the stars.

SHERELL

Bust?

Everyone laughs.

Sandy talks to Sherell like she's stupid.

SANDY

Cum. Have an orgasm.

Sherell sucks her teeth.

SHERELL

You don't have to say it like I'm stupid.

SANDY

Who you talkin to bitch? Just  
cause you go to a special school  
don't mean shit. Don't nobody  
still wanna fuck ya ugly ass.

SHERELL

(sucks her teeth)  
What do you know about doin it?

VANESSA

My little sister ain't no virgin.

SANDY

That's right. I already fucked two  
guys. And one of 'em was twenty-  
four.

SANDRA

We would try to hook you up with  
somebody, but ain't nobody  
interested in your no titty, little  
butt, bumpy face ass.

Sherell's FATHER, a short man with a slight build and large afro walks swiftly past on the opposite side of the street.

Everyone notices him.

VANESSA

(to Sherell)  
I see your father's still smoking  
that crack-rock.

SANDRA

Your mother and father are making  
my family rich.

The girls bust out laughing.

Sherell jumps up and heads in the opposite direction of her father.

INT. HOUSE ON OAKDALE ST -- NIGHT

Tiny BEDROOM with twin bunk-beds, a window with a board nailed over it and a dresser. On the top bunk sleeps Sherell's two brothers, STEVEN 11, and ALEX 7. On the bottom bunk sleeps her sister AFRICA 10. Next to her sits Sherell. She writes in her diary, a black and white marble copy book.

"I hate them. They're not the only ones that guys want to have sex with. Before I turn fourteen I'm doing it and I'm doing it to more than two guys."

Sherell closes the diary but as another thought occurs to her she opens it back up to write it down.

"It would be nice if I could married and get as far away from here as possible"

Sherell smiles and then gets up and sticks her diary under the mattress.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

Sherell looks at her face in the bathroom mirror. She smooths her hand over her dramatically improved complexion.

EXT. LEHIGH AVENUE -- DAY

Sherell walks down the street. She wears a little tank top that accentuates her little breasts and a pair of tight jeans that accentuates her newly developed curves. On her back is a large book bag.

At the corner across from the light stands a group of guys between eighteen and their late-twenties. They're all dressed in the latest hip-hop gear.

Sherell waits for some cars to pass. When the street is clear she crosses. On the other side of the street all the guys watch Sherell.

DANTÉ 23, breaks from the group and falls in step with Sherell. The oldest guy, REGGIE 29, yells out.

REGGIE

Jail bait!

All the other guys laugh.

DANTÉ

Mind yours nigga.

He continues to walk with Sherell. Sherell fidgets nervously. Midway down the block Danté stops and leans against a car.

Sherell stands in front of him. She looks down avoiding his eyes.

DANTÉ  
What you shy?

Danté takes her chin and turns her face to him so he can look in her eyes.

DANTÉ  
You a pretty little young jaun.

Sherell blushes hard and looks down. Danté's mouth continues to move but Sherell doesn't hear what he's saying.

In her head she repeats over and over again. "He thinks I'm pretty." Danté tilts Moorel's chin up again so he can see into her eyes.

DANTÉ  
So you got a number I can call you at?

SHERELL  
No- I mean you can't call my house.

DANTÉ  
Can't have boys callin you huh?  
That's cool. Take my number.

Sherell takes off her book bag. She pulls out a notebook and rips out a sheet of paper. Danté writes his phone number down and hands it back to her.

DANTÉ  
When you gonna call me?

MOOREL  
I don't know.

DANTÉ  
You got that many dudes huh?

MOOREL  
I got homework.

DANTÉ  
You a good girl. I like that. Call me when you finish your homework awight youngbuck?

REGGIE (O.S.)  
Leave that lil girl alone and come on!

DANTÉ  
(yells back)  
I'm comin!  
(to Sherell)  
I'ma talk to you later awight?

SHERELL  
Okay.

Sherell turns to go. She smiles and then sticks the number in her pocket.

Danté walks backwards a few feet as he watches Sherell's butt as she walks away. Then he turns around and runs back to the corner.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

No furniture, just a mattress on the floor. The only light in the room comes through a single window.

Sherell follows Danté into the room. He closes the door. She puts her book bag down in the corner next to the door. When she leans over Danté stands behind her and grabs her butt.

She turns around to face him.

He continues to rub her butt then takes her hand and places it on his crotch area. He undoes his jeans and lets them fall to the ground. His erect penis sticks out from the opening of his boxers.

Sherell's eyes open wide and she turns her back to him quickly.

DANTÉ  
I scare you or somethin?

She turns around carefully avoiding his genitals.

SHERELL  
Please. You ain't got nothin I  
ain't never seen before.

DANTÉ  
Well come on then.

Sherell hesitates and then starts to unbutton her shirt.

INT. BEDROOM -- LATER

Sherell lays on the mattress with only her socks on.

Danté stands with his back to her at the window.

DANTÉ

You sure you wasn't a virgin?

SHERELL

(sucks her teeth)

Come on now.

He turns to face her. He holds his penis in one hand and wipes it off with a washcloth.

DANTÉ

Then what is all this blood on my dick?

SHERELL

I haven't done it in a while.

Danté looks at her with disbelief.

DANTÉ

Put your clothes on. Ain't somebody gonna be lookin for you?

Sherell gets up and dresses.

SHERELL

I'll just say the bus was late. It always is anyway.

DANTÉ

As long as you don't get in trouble.

Sherell bends over to pick up her book bag. Danté comes behind her and rubs her butt.

DANTÉ

You's my little young jawn now. Don't be fucking nobody else.

Sherell looks him in his face and smiles.

SHERELL

I'm your young jawn?

DANTÉ

That's what I said.

EXT. LEHIGH AVENUE -- DAY

Sherell walks up to the group of guys on the corner. She looks for Danté but doesn't see him. AARON 19, walks over to her.

AARON  
What's up pretty?

SHERELL  
Is Danté around?

Aaron turns to the group?

AARON  
Yall know where Danté went?

The guys give each other this look. Reggie answers.

REGGIE  
He at the house.

AARON  
(to Sherell)  
You know where the house at?

SHERELL  
No.

AARON  
Come on. I'ma take you.

Aaron puts his arm around Sherell and then leads her through the group.

AARON (CONT'D)  
(points at Sherell)  
We going to the house.

The guys give each other a look. CHRIS 21, joins them.

CHRIS  
I'ma go too.