

The Dream Mile
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SUPER OVER BLACK: NORTH CAROLINA, 1955

FADE IN:

EXT. SOME CHURCH - DAY

A memorial service, everything is quiet and peaceful. All eyes are locked on the picture of a very young girl, fixed on the table in front of the priest.

Around thirty people in the church, everyone is black, but one white girl. Mid thirties, she looks devastated, full black dress, sits next to the dead girl's mother. She is HELEN MANDS.

Within her palm, another black and white photo, rubs it gently with her fingers.

In that photo we see Helen and a black girl, in sports track outfits, celebrating alongside, in the middle of a stadium.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER OVER BLACK: FIVE YEARS LATER

FROM THE BLACK WE HERE:

DAWKINS (V.O.)

Three championships, three Pan Am records. I really miss those days you know.

HELEN (V.O.)

You're not the only one.

FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Helen Mands, curly hair, athletic body, stares apprehensively at the trophy stand. Around fifteen small ones on the lower row, another three at the top. On the wall next to the stand, black and white photos of her younger self, gold medalist on the podium.

DAWKINS (50s), seated behind his desk, smokes cigar. Looks like he's daydreaming.

DAWKINS

You were the goddess of the dream mile girl. Still don't know why you didn't stay.

HELEN

Stay and do what exactly? Most of those young girls out there are more cheerleaders than track athletes.

DAWKINS

That's not true. You know, Perkins is just five seconds off your own record.

Helen shakes head.

HELEN

Yeah, Perkins..

DAWKINS

All I'm saying, is to give her a chance.

Helen turns abruptly, smirks.

HELEN

Thank you for your time Mister Dawkins, always a pleasure.

Dawkins nods, looks disappointed. Helen retires.

EXT. COLLEGE - TRACK - AFTERNOON

Sun slowly disappears. Few athletes still run along the synthetic track surface, fight against exhaustion.

Helen, alone in the stands, tiny notebook in hand, takes notes every now and then. She does not look impressed by any of the athletes around the track.

A group of three girls draws her attention. PERKINS (20), blonde, sexy, is the leading female of that group.

Outside lane, graceless AKINA (20), African-American, skinny top with massive strong legs, worn out track shoes, follows Perkins' steady but non-spectacular pace.

Perkins kicks hard for the first time, explodes forward, the other two girls from her group struggle really hard to hold on to her.

Akina responds, looks like she accepts Perkins' challenge.

Helen knits her brows, looks intrigued, focuses on Akina's long and clumsy stride.

Into the back straight, Perkins is twenty meters away from her teammates, leads Akina just by two.

Just before the finish line, Akina slows down.

Perkins finishes. Stops. Celebrates.

Akina lowers pace, goes on for another round.

The other two girls cross the finish line, catch up with Perkins, congratulate her. Yes, she is the star.

Coach DICKINSON (50s), looks much older than she really is, approaches the girls. She is calm and impressed.

Helen scratches her head, gets up, looks ready to leave. Her eyes dart back and forth between Akina and her notebook.

Every single athlete on the track retires. Not Akina though. She keeps on running.

Perkins and her friends stare at Akina, mumble, laugh loudly.

The girls walk away, Helen rushes away too.

Near the track exit, ANDY (60s), African-American, bunch of keys in hand, respectfully salutes Helen.

ANDY

Good evening Mrs Mands.

HELEN

Andy! How's the family?

ANDY

Everything is great Mrs Mands,
thanks for asking.

HELEN

Stop calling me that, for you I'm
just Helen!

Andy lowers head.

HELEN

Night shift again?

ANDY

No, not really, I'm just here for
Akina.

HELEN
Who's Akina?

Andy points towards Akina.

HELEN
You know her?

Andy nods in affirmation.

HELEN
Why doesn't she train with the
other girls?

Andy smirks.

ANDY
Did you miss the fact that she's
black?

HELEN
So? My best friend back in the
day--

ANDY
Coach Dickinson is no Helen Mands
Mrs Helen.

Helen shakes head in disgust.

HELEN
(mumbling)
Hail the master race..

Andy frowns.

Helen stares at Akina.

HELEN
Well, she looks fast.

ANDY
She doesn't dream of winning, she
trains for it. However, no one ever
gave her the chance to prove it.

Akina kicks hard once again, we see a tremendous increase in
her pace. Her face remains expressionless, determined
nevertheless; her stride looks precise, professional.

Helen's eyes bulge, checks her pace, looks stunned, marvels.

HELEN
(mumbles)
Really? That's very interesting.

ANDY
Twenty years, never seen such a raw
talent..

HELEN
Have a good night Andy.

ANDY
Good night Mrs Helen.

Helen walks away, stops before the track exit.

Hand into her pocket, gets out the photo we saw at the
memorial service. Rubs it softly with her fingers.

Her gaze is cold. Turns, flicks glances at Akina.

Akina crosses the finish line, doesn't look tired at all.
She slows down, backs down to a slower pace.

Helen disappears.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A) INT. COLLEGE - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Helen slams a paper file onto the desk. Dawkins, seated,
examines the file. Ecstatic, rubs his face. Looks
indecisive, skeptical.

Helen, arms crossed onto her chest, strong and resolute,
stares at Dawkins.

Dawkins gets up, shakes her hand. Looks like they have an
agreement.

B) EXT. AKINA'S HOUSE - DAY

Helen stands hesitant in front of the door. Stares at the
house, which looks ready to collapse, like a typhoon just
passed by.

The neighbors eye Helen curiously. Her white skin makes her
feel utterly unwelcome.

Door opens, Akina's father and Helen share a rare moment
without words. He invites her inside.

C) EXT. COLLEGE - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

The field is split in half; white players on the left, black ones on the right.

Helen approaches one of the black coaches. She has a whispering chat with him.

The coach, shocked face, compresses smile. Shakes head. Looks like they have a deal.

A handshake follows.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. COLLEGE - TRACK - DAY

Akina, grave, track suit, laces her new shoes.

Helen, serious, strict, is all over her, gives advice.

Dickinson on the other side of the track, Perkins next to her, faces full of arrogance, flick glances at Helen.

Perkins and her teammates start their run.

Akina launches away. Alongside her, another black male athlete around twenties. He doesn't look like a pure sprinter, but more like a football player.

After the first hundred meters, the young male gets in front of Akina, continuously changes his pace. He looks fast.

Akina forces herself in and out of the inside lane. Struggles with the guy's pace changing.

She goes for the outside, the guy gets in front. Akina tries the inside. He shuts the door. Repeat.

One lap is almost complete. Helen nods both of them to stop. They get close to her. Orders given and affirmed.

A new lap. Same procedure.

Akina and the male athlete are touching and battling all the way around the track. He muscles her out of the inside lane repeatedly.

Helen's face looks so serious.

Perkins is in a hot lap, passes by Helen, looks strong, fast, determined. Helen does not look impressed.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER OVER BLACK: REGIONAL TRIALS

FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR:

The sports caster's voice (SPORTSCASTER ONE), so boring,
slow as hell.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Nineteen awesome females,
fast, beautiful, confident.
Ready for the Pan Ams. Perkins
is unquestionably our star, no
way she loses this one.

FADE IN:

EXT. COLLEGE - TRACK - DAY

Twenty female runners behind the start line, Perkins and her
team mates at the front, inside lane, Akina last one at the
back behind every other white girl.

They are ready to go.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
I just hope that negro at the back
runs a solid first lap. She will do
the pace making for Perkins, I just
don't know why they chose her to do
the job.

Off they go.

Perkins launches away, the rest follow. Akina is last.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
(slow boring voice)
And they're on their way. Perkins
is out there first, but that was
expected I guess.

Perkins' pace is mediocre, rest of the girls stay close to
her. They don't dare to challenge her.

Helen looks pretty calm, focuses on Akina.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
No doubt our girl will take this
one. And no need for a black rabbit
whatsoever.

First lap is almost done. Perkins increases pace.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
There she is, Perkins shows her
strength. It's domination time.

Second lap, Perkins and her two team mates break away from the rest, just two other girls stay close.

Helen raises her arm, Akina eye-checks.

Akina increases pace, gets through the girls at the back, closes on the leading group.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
(sarcasm)
Oh, there she is, that negro thinks
she can run the whole mile. Laugh
along people!

Perkins holds on to her pace. Down the back straight, just her two team mates follow her close.

Just two girls stick with her pace, a few meters away.

Akina gets behind the five girl-leading group. The two of them see her, move alongside each other, try to box her out.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Look at those girls, touching and
battling. You can't get through, go
all the way around you idiot!

Akina goes for the outside, stays away the duo.

She smokes them, effortless. Kicks hard for a moment, closes up on the three front runners.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
(vivid)
Perkins looks so strong and
healthy, look at her at the front!
She is our champion!

Third lap, Perkins in front, her team mates behind her over a line, Akina at the back.

Rest of the field, is now fifty meters behind.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Two hot laps and now we will see
Perkins' true strength! We all know
how good her group is, but Perkins

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
is no match for anyone at the home
straight.

Perkins' team mates shoot worries looks at the back, notice
Akina holding on to them.

They move side by side, block Akina from going through.

With a little more than a lap to go, Perkins goes away.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Perkins steams away! She is going
for home!

With Perkins having a five meters lead over the rest three
girls, Helen nods Akina to break away too.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Those girls are giving Perkins a
big start. They can't hold on to
her.

Akina goes for the outside, Perkins' team mates move in
front of her fast. They give everything.

Akina closes on the inside, we see a tremendous pick up in
her pace, she gets through quite easily.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Who would have thought. That black
girl does not suck after all.

The bell rings. Perkins starts the final lap.

Akina closes on her fast. None of the two looks gassed.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Final lap, Perkins provides some
serious pace here. This in not
gonna be a slow last lap and this
is gonna suit Perkins no doubt.

Akina moves next to Perkins, they both run fast.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Everyone below four thirty will get
through, but I cannot imagine that
negro will do it.

Down the back straight, Perkins and Akina are still head to
head. No one jumps in front.

Akina stares at Helen who remains expressionless.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Perkins is going down the back
straight, but she is unable to
shake that Akina girl.

Last corner, Perkins on the inside, Akina on the outside.

Helen raises both arms.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Coming down the home straight,
Perkins is about to make the first
move, and we'll soon see who's
gonna crack.

Perkins steps on it, Akina responds.

They're still side by side.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
What the hell is this? That negro
is all over Perkins.

Dickinson looks furious, nods in despair towards Perkins.

Perkins gives everything left in her, she looks in panic.

Home straight, Perkins takes the lead by a meter, Helen
shakes her raised hands.

Akina moves on the inside lane, just behind Perkins.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
Thank God! Perkins blew her off!

Akina doesn't look willing to even try a pass on Perkins,
just sticks close to her.

Perkins crosses the finish line, Akina follows shortly
after.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
A great win for Perkins and an
impressive time for her, four
minutes, twenty two seconds and
she's in the Pan Am finals!

Dickinson runs towards Perkins, celebrates.

Helen approaches Akina, hugs her tight.

Dickinson flicks glances at Akina, like she knows she could
do even better.

SPORTSCASTER ONE (V.O.)
 Oh my dear God! Helen Mands is
 coaching that black girl? No
 surprise she is going to the Pan Am
 finals too, with almost the same
 time as Perkins.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOME TRACK - DAY

The stadium is full of people, eighty percent white on the
 most part of the stands, twenty percent black stacked at the
 corner.

The race is on.

A professional sportscaster (SPORTSCASTER TWO), voice full
 of excitement --

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
 Perkins is the favorite, never
 missed a fifteen hundred. Abrahams
 has come here with an impressive
 time, but our eyes are fixed on
 Akina who had Perkins at her sights
 for the most of the preliminary.

ABRAHAMS (20s) in the lead, Perkins and Akina just behind
 her, everyone else follows short.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
 Interesting question is who's gonna
 lead, there are no natural front
 runners here. Perkins' coach
 Dickinson demanded for an
 incredibly fast paced first two
 laps, so my guess is Abrahams will
 lead.

The pace is fast. The girls look like spreading all over the
 track.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
 But if it comes down to the final
 kick, and the three girls are
 alongside, Akina can take it, and I
 would favor her over the rest. She
 is coached by the legendary Helen
 Mands after all, queen of the kick
 down.

Third lap, Abrahams steps on it.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Abrahams stretches them away,
Perkins and Akina look extremely
strong, the rest are now under
pressure.

Perkins and Akina respond.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
There is a serious ejection of
pace, Abrahams leads, Perkins and
Akina sense the danger. They have
to stick close to her. Rest of the
field can't quite go.

Abrahams, flat out, struggles to break away.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Abrahams should have broken Perkins
and Akina by now, I don't think she
can take it at the end if the other
two are so close behind her.

Abrahams fails to break away from Perkins and Akina. She
looks gassed.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Down on the back straight, the gold
medal for the dream mile is up for
grabs for everyone.

Perkins glances Dickinson, Akina stares at Helen.

Both Dickinson and Helen scream towards their athletes. None
of them listens to their screams.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Hundred meters to the bell. The
penultimate lap, decision time.
Who's gonna go first.

Coming down the back straight, Perkins attacks Abrahams.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins is putting her foot down.
Attacks!

Akina responds, stays on Perkins' shoulder.

Perkins and Akina steam around Abrahams.

The bell rings. Final lap.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Dear Jesus! Two fifty six! Inside
the Pan Am record tempo!

Perkins and Akina are on the lead. They're running flat out.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins kicks away, Akina in
second.

Perkins is on a meter lead over Akina.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
She can almost taste success. She's
going for gold. One meter clear,
two meters clear, is she going to
maintain it?

A three meter lead.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
This is what she's practicing all
season, and this is what she's been
waiting for.

The gap between the two locks at three meters.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Akina is in pursuit. She will not
give in.

Same gap, same speed.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Akina is still there. She's not
able to narrow the gap yet but now
she's coming back.

Akina closes the distance.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
With two hundred meter to go, it's
Perkins against Akina. Akina looks
so strong, Perkins breaths heavily.

Akina gets just behind Perkins.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins has to dig deep. She's
struggling! She can't hold off to
Akina's challenge.

Akina changes gear. Her face turns angry, enraged.

The sportscaster's tone and manner change, it's pretty obvious who he supports.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Yes! the champ is in despair. Has
Akina the legs we think she has? Go
for it girl! Go for it!

Akina moves to the outside.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins may have attacked a little
too late, Akina is the fastest
sprinter I believe.

Perkins moves a bit to the outside, tries to push Akina out of lane.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Hundred and fifty to go, the race
is on, it's Akina versus Perkins.

Perkins looks in despair.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins is pushing hard throughout
the race, but there is still a
shadow behind her and that shadow
is in the form of our girl, our
beauty!

Akina kicks hard for the first time. Steams into the lead.

Helen mumbles, smiles. She knows Akina will take this.

SPORTSCASTER TWO
The race is on folks. The battle
between the big two. Akina
leads for the first time.

Hundred meters to go. Akina has a three meters lead over Perkins.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Akina kicks hard again, and the gap
widening on Perkins.

Perkins struggles really hard to follow. Akina flies to the home straight.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Perkins has no answer. Akina is
going for home! This is gonna be an
emphatic victory.

Akina on the home straight, ten meters away from Perkins.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Once Akina changed the gear, she
smoked Perkins. Over her own
favorite distance!

Once silent, the black crowd explodes.

Helen screams her guts out in excitement.

HELEN
Go! Go!

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
It's all over! Akina looks so
strong! Perkins can't even hold on
to her!

The gap between the two grows.

Akina crosses the finish line, first!

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
Three fifty nine eighty nine! An
amazing under four minute run! What
a race!

Perkins is second, instantly approaches Akina.

Handshakes her.

SPORTSCASTER TWO (V.O.)
What an incredible run from Akina,
the Pan Am champion!

Dickinson is in shock, remains speechless.

Akina smiles, her first smile ever.

Helen smiles ear to ear, kisses her beloved photo.

FADE OUT.