

CHASING LEGACY

Written by

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In the biggest race of his life, a high school track star battles against his entitled rival and his own fears of living up to his father's legacy.

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - EARLY MORNING

The Sun begins to rise behind an old athletics track. JABARI SOLOMON (18), the only person there, finishes his last lap.

He bends over to catch his breath, wiping his face with a sweat-stained shirt. The only noticeable thing he wears is a very old and beat up Penn State hat.

Jabari hears the sounds of FOOTSTEPS and turns to see COACH K (55), a stout man who shivers in his thick Penn State coat. He holds his beanie in his hands, like an officer about to deliver bad news; Jabari gulps, then forces a smile.

JABARI

Hey Coach K. What are you doing here?

Coach K flashes him a grin, which is missing a few teeth.

COACH K

You mean besides freezing my ass off?

Jabari laughs, but it's a robotic one.

COACH K (CONT'D)

Solomon, I'm gonna give it to you straight. Me and the boys at Penn State are leaning in a different direction.

Jabari is silent, waiting for Coach K to continue.

COACH K (CONT'D)

You're a hard worker. But that Hunter kid, his numbers don't lie.

JABARI

H-Hunter?

COACH K

Yep. Very nice kid. But listen, this race coming up is gonna be your last chance to prove yourself. You beat him, we can reconsider.

Jabari's silent. Coach K shifts, clearly uncomfortable.

JABARI

So...if I lose...no scholarship?

COACH K

Afraid not kid.

EXT. LUNCH TABLE - MID DAY

CAMERON  
BULLSHIT!

Jabari has his head in his hands. He's just told CAMERON (18), his hot-blooded yet loyal friend, and REED (17), a much meeker and calmer friend about his conversation with Coach K.

JABARI  
How am I supposed to drop twelve seconds off my mile by tomorrow?

REED  
And that's Hunter's old time. I heard he's going for our high school's all-time record.

CAMERON  
Not helping Reed. But yeah, I still can't believe that the kid who shat his pants last year is gonna be a D1 runner.

Suddenly, Jabari feels two hands clasp his shoulders. He looks up to see HUNTER (17) smiling down at him. Hunter's hands press into Jabari's shoulders a little **too** hard.

HUNTER  
My boys!  
(To Jabari)  
What's up number two?

Jabari and Reed freeze. Meanwhile, Cam shoots Hunter a cold look of disdain.

HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Jeez, who pissed in your cornflakes Cam? Oh wait, are y'all still down from me clapping your cheeks last race?

CAMERON  
Yeah, you would be really good at pissing-

REED  
On the competition! Yeah, you got us good last race Hunter.

Hunter's eyebrows furrow in suspicion at the compliment. He begins to leave, but turns to Jabari.

HUNTER

Also, I hate to break the news to you Jabari, but you should start thinking about what McDonald's you want to work at. That spot is mine.

Hunter finally leaves; Jabari stares coldly his food.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

Jabari is about to round a corner when something stops him.

It's Hunter. He's looking at a list of the high school's top mile times, all put up on a bulletin board. Hunter holds the record for all of them, except for the first spot. That belongs to JADEN SOLOMON, Jabari's father.

There's a picture of Mr. Solomon next to his record; he wears a Penn State hat. Hunter reaches out and touches the picture before jerking back, realizing someone is watching him.

Jabari hides back behind the corner, but Hunter knows he's there. Suddenly, a slimy grin develops on Hunter's face. He slowly takes the photo off the wall.

HUNTER

(Loudly)

If only I was his son. But I guess the record will have to go in the dirt, just like the old man.

Hunter RIPS the photo into pieces, dropping them on the ground. He leaves, and Jabari picks up the pieces. His eyes burn with absolute hatred.

INT. THE SOLOMONS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jabari throws his backpack onto a chair and puts on his Penn State hat. He's about to head back out, when suddenly-

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Where do you think you're going?

Jabari grits his teeth. Caught by his mom, SADI SOLOMON (45). She has her hands on her hips, looking at Jabari quizzically.

JABARI

Practice.

SADI

Like hell you are J! Your race is tomorrow.

JABARI  
Exactly. I'll be back soon.

SADI  
You'll just run yourself ragged!

Jabari doesn't look at her in the face; he knows she's right.

JABARI  
I have to win.

SADI  
Is this because of the scholarship  
honey? Cause we can find another  
college-

JABARI  
No.

SADI  
Yes, we can. Tell me: why does this  
race matter to you so much? You  
don't talk to me about anything but  
that! Why do you need to beat this  
Hunter kid so badly-

JABARI  
BECAUSE HE'S STEALING MY LIFE!!!

Sadi is taken aback. Jabari isn't the type to yell.

JABARI (CONT'D)  
I'm supposed to go to Penn State,  
just like dad. **Not him.** I'm  
supposed to break dad's record. **Not  
him.** Mom, I can't be second again.  
I can't let him down anymore.

Jabari's voice quivers as his eyes become glossy.

JABARI (CONT'D)  
(To himself)  
I can't.

Jabari pauses for a moment, before rushing out the door.

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - NIGHT

Jabari finishes a lap around the track, grunting in pain. He  
takes off his shoe; his sock is stained red with blood.  
Jabari grimaces, puts the shoe back on, and keeps running.

EXT. SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Jabari steps towards the track, holding his hat in his hand. Taking a deep breath, he hangs it on a fence post and then leaves to join the other runners. A few fans stand on the sidelines; Sadi, Cameron, and Reed all cheer on Jabari.

Jabari hears a CLINKING sound, and sees Hunter strutting onto the track, wearing medals from his previous victories. His three cheerleaders all go into a frenzy, and he responds by blowing kisses and tossing his medals to them.

The boys arrive at the starting line, where Hunter yawns.

HUNTER

Another year, another gold medal. I think I'll dedicate this one to your Dad. How about that?

Suddenly Jabari starts to sniff a few times.

HUNTER (CONT'D)

Aw, gonna cry?

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Runners, take your places!

The four boys all get into position.

JABARI

No, it's just...something smells. Kind of like last year.

He shoots Hunter a knowing smile, and as Hunter registers what he just said-

BOOM! A racing gun is fired, and the boys are off. But instead of Hunter leading the pack, it's Jabari!

The first lap of the four lap race sees Jabari and Hunter almost immediately break off from the other two contestants. Jabari holds the lead as they go into the second lap.

JABARI (V.O.)

C'mon legs, three laps left.

During the second lap, Hunter closes the small gap Jabari had and starts making his move, passing him on the outside.

Jabari struggles to keep up, but stays right behind Hunter as they are about to enter the third lap. However, Hunter somehow starts moving even faster!

HUNTER

See ya!

Hunter hits yet another gear, and starts to make the gap between him and Jabari bigger and bigger.

JABARI (V.O.)

No! C'mon, win it for Mom! For Dad!

The last lap begins, and the gap is huge. Jabari is about to give up when he sees his mother out of the corner of his eye.

BEGIN FLASHBACK - INT. THE SOLOMONS' KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sadi and Jabari are sat down in chairs facing each other.

SADI

Your father would be so proud of you. You know how I know? Because he told me he was. Not after you won a trophy, but after you came home jumping up and down because you made your first friend. After you made a speech in 4th grade about how much you loved bean bags.

Sadi takes Jabari's hands into hers.

SADI (CONT'D)

Maybe you never become the runner your father was. So what? I promise, you'll become greater than he was in so many ways. Your life isn't your fathers. So when you race tomorrow, don't do it for him-

END FLASHBACK - EXT. SCHOOL TRACK

SADI

DO IT FOR YOU!!!

Something clicks in Jabari. He feels his legs move faster than ever, his feet burning with every step.

Hunter hears footsteps behind him, and turns to see Jabari right on his tail.

Hunter grits his teeth as the gap keeps getting smaller. The two are neck and neck as they reach the finish, and suddenly-

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
 Hunter Allen, 4:31.02!  
 Jabari Solomon, 4:31.11! Two new  
 school records!

Jabari collapses, and is surrounded by his friends and Sadi.

JABARI  
 I did it Mom...I did it for me.

SADI  
 I know J. I'm so proud of you.

REED  
 Oh my God. Look.

The group watches as Hunter is being lifted by his cheerleaders and carried away as he shouts:

HUNTER  
 Toilet! TOILET NOW!!

REED  
 You don't think he-

CAMERON  
 He totally shat himself.

The whole group laughs, but Jabari stops laughing as he sees Coach K on the sidelines.

JABARI  
 (Somber)  
 If I was just a second faster.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
 You seemed pretty fast to me.

The group turns to see a new coach approach them. She's tall and lanky, wearing an Iowa State jacket.

COACH C  
 Sorry to interrupt. When you're free, may I have a word?

Jabari looks to his Mom, who nods. He then turns back to the coach and smiles.

JABARI  
 Of course.

As he gets to his feet, Jabari and his group become smaller and smaller as the camera slowly zooms out, revealing Mr. Solomon's old hat hanging on the fence post.

FADE OUT.