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The Gabby Douglas Story

By Maria Nation

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You want to know
how to become a champion?
It's easy.
Turn your dream into your goal.
Plant it deep in your heart,
then for the next 10 years,
eat, sleep, breathe,
laugh, and cry
without ever taking
your eye off your goal.
Not even for a second.
You want to know how
to stop becoming a champion?
I actually tried that once.
Believe it or not,
that was a lot harder.
She's still bleeding.
Pulse ox 178.
Let me see her!
Doctor. Blood pressure.
Let me see her.
Take the baby out of here.
Right away, Doctor.
No, why can't I see the baby?
My mom nearly
died the day I was born.
The way I heard it later,
it was a collision course of everything
going wrong at the same time.
Tim, go with her!
Don't leave the baby alone!
But even then,
she wasn't thinking about herself.
You're gonna be fine.
What's wrong with her?
Why can't I see my baby?
Why can't I see the baby?
Why can't I see her?
It's called branched-chain
ketoaciduria.
It's a rare blood deficiency.
Tell me what that means.
It's a metabolic disorder.

A deficiency of the branched-chain
alpha-keto acid dehydrogenase complex,
which catalyzes the catabolism
of the branched-chain
amino acids...

These are all
just fancy words for,
"We don't know how to fix
"what's wrong with your baby."

All right, should
be just up ahead.

Mom thought a new city
would help my dad find a job.
But by the time we got to Tulsa,
the landlord had given our place away.
He kept our down payment, too.

And we had so many eviction judgments
against us, no one else would rent to us.
How soon?

By tomorrow.
Check out by noon at the latest.

We got him to give
us an extra hour.

Did you tell
him we have four kids?

Yeah, he knows.

Look, why don't
you call your mother...

I'm not gonna call her again.
We've done this enough to her
and to the rest of my family.

They don't need to know
it's gotten this bad again.

All right, baby.

Hey, honey.

Stop jumping on
the bed, sweetie.

Stop jumping on the bed.

Sit down.

Gabrielle's getting
better, isn't she?

Yes, she is getting better.

Mom?

Yes?

How come we had to leave again?
Daddy's not working.
But this is kind
of like camping.
If we're camping,
then where are the tents?
Don't worry.
Everything's gonna be okay.
Why don't you try
to get some sleep?
It's too cold.
Come on. Come here.
Let's get you warmed up
and get you thinking
about other things.
Let me hear you say your prayer.
Heavenly Father...
We thank you for all
of your many blessings,
and thank you for watching over us and
giving us sweet and peaceful sleep.
- Amen.
- Amen.
Very good.
Oh, I love you, sweetie.
You told me last week I was...
What did he say?
He said they can't lend
me any more money.
It's not what
he told me last week.
You know, Nat,
I should've never have asked.
I don't need
to sink to that level.
You know, I still got my pride.
I just got to wait
for my ship to come in.
That's all.
I'm calling my mom.
I thought we weren't gonna
crash at your mom's house.
We're not.
I am with the kids.

What?

I can't do this anymore.

You don't mean that, Natalie.

I'm gonna get on my feet.

You know that.

We don't have money for gas.

And when the kids wake up,

what are we gonna feed them?

We'll find something.

You know,

we'll go on assistance until I can get...

No, no, no, no.

Don't talk to me about food stamps.

That's one thing

I will never do.

I'm just tired of promises

that don't come true.

Natalie, where's your faith?

God is looking out for us.

Please.

Scripture says that we...

Please! Please.

God is not gonna come down from

his throne and give you a job.

I'm tired of waiting

for your ship to come in.

I'm gonna get

on my own two feet.

Hey!

Here my grandbabies. Hey!

Hey, John! Oh!

Look at my babies!

Hi! Hey, sweetie!

Hey, Arielle.

You guys go inside

and get some lemonade.

Hey, there, little Gabrielle!

John, come on

and go in the house.

You're not gonna be

my little bit for too long.

Wow, look at her!

She's putting on some weight!

Yeah, her blood count

is practically back to normal.
Hey, Mama.
She's not gonna be my little bit no more.
No.
Hey, baby.
Well, you know,
he can come inside.
Yeah, I think he's afraid.
Well, I'm not gonna bite him.
He's afraid of how
he looks in your eyes.
You look tired, baby.
You should have called me earlier. Come on.
Yeah. You hungry?
Hey, little bit!
Look at my little thing! What?
She's getting so heavy!
Hey, looks like you
got lots of options.
Mmm.
What's that mean? Mmm?
I'm gonna walk into these
places like, "Hire me!"
And what are they
gonna see first?
My failures or my desperation?
And if they ask for
a resume, then what?
No husband, four kids,
no address.
Don't do that
to yourself, Natalie.
You just freed yourself up so you
could make your life different.
That was the hard part.
Now go make your life different.
Hold your head up.
Let them see what I'm seeing.
Courage.
Nobody can stop you anymore.
Nobody.
I love you, Mom.
I know you better.
What you got?

Oh...

Miss Carolyn was right.

It took some time,

but Mom got a job as a bad-debt collector.

Here's a tip.

If you owe money,

you do not want my mom coming after you.

In no time, she was a star employee,

and we finally rented a house of our own.

Try this. One-handed.

I can do that. Watch!

Whoo!

Gabrielle! Did you see me, Mom?

One-handed!

Girl, you're gonna

break your neck.

Did you see it, Mom?

Did you?

Did you see my shrub?

One-handed!

But I can do it no-handed.

Want to see?

It's called an aerial.

I can still do it.

But I haven't taught you yet.

Doesn't matter! Watch!

Hey, hey, hey! Get in this house!

I know every single one of you

have homework to do, so let's go.

I can do an aerial.

Look at my shrub!

Why would you think the shrub

would be a landing pad?

Here we go. There.

"Today should always be

better than yesterday."

Why that one?

Because that, John,

is the secret to life.

A secret?

Mmm-hmm.

That's the reason why it's at

the top of our vision board.

It's like another way of saying,

"Don't look back. Move forward."
God helps those
who help themselves.
How do you think we got here?
We rented a truck.
All right, smarty-pants.
God helped us rent the truck.
There you go.
Put this on the vision board.
We are not getting a dog.
But, Mom!
It will make today better than yesterday.
All right, I'll put it up,
but only as a metaphor.
A what?
Um... A reminder
to follow your dreams,
even though we are
not getting a dog.
So where do you want to put him?
Right here.
All right.
You put it up there. Okay.
You broke it! Did not!
Tag! You're it!
That's unfair!
You're just a slowpoke! Slowpoke!
Hey, hey, hey, hey!
I'm on the phone. Take that outside.
Yes.
Hey! Hey!
Come back here!
Yeah. Yeah, I can do Wednesday,
too, if I really push it. For sure.
Okay. Thank you.
You're it!
Hmm.
Nice work, Arie.
You're moving fast.
Ooh!
What did she break now? I swear,
that child is gonna drive me crazy.
You should put her
in gymnastics class.

Who? Brie?

No, I always saw you as the gym star.
The leotards on and your hair in a
cute bun. We just couldn't afford it.
Mom, I've taught Brie everything I know.
She just eats it up.

Remember when I tried back
handsprings when I was nine?

Yeah, and I remember you
broke both of your wrists.
Brie's already doing them.

Mom! Look!

Whoa!

Ooh!

Sorry, Mom!

You should put her in gymnastics
class so she can learn the right way
before she hurts herself.

Okay, now hit the handstand.

You finally get here,
and now you want to be shy?

It wasn't that.

I couldn't believe my eyes.

Imagine all your Christmases
rolled into one moment.

That's what it was like.

And I knew right then I was exactly
where I was supposed to be.

Gabrielle!

Brie!

Brie, get back here!

She yours?

Uh... Yeah. I'm sorry.

We're here to sign up
for the Saturday rec class.

Yeah, I don't think so.

She's just a little excited.

That's all.

Oh. No, no, no.

What I mean is... I'm sorry. Mrs...

Hawkins. Natalie.

Natalie, hi. Dirk.

No, rec class is just tumbling.

It's for beginners.

How much training has she had?
None, unless you want to count climbing on
all the furniture and breaking half of it.
None?
Wow.
TOPs for six months, then Dev.
That's what I was thinking.
Elite in five years.
Mom, look!
What's her name?
Uh, Gabrielle Douglas.
Gabby Douglas.
Here's your lunch.
I want you to eat it all this time,
not just the snacks.
Coach said if I do good in TOPs,
I'll get invited to training camp.
Well. "If I do well."
Mom, training camp is with the Karolyis.
Mary Lou Retton's coach,
Bela Karolyi!
Okay, okay. But, listen, Breezy,
I want you to eat all your lunch.
How are you gonna get strong
if you don't eat all your lunch?
Here you go.
Are you coming?
Have I ever missed a competition?
Is John gonna be there?
John has basketball practice,
Arie has cheer practice, and Joy has
an ice-skating lesson in half an hour.
I got to get them there.
See you!
Love you, Mom! Bye!
I love you, too, Breezy!
Never seen a lady
in a robe before?
Yeah, I don't
think this prescription
is working any better
than the last one.
Yeah, the migraines
are getting worse.

Yeah. Nauseous,
light-sensitive.
I feel like one
is coming on now.
Oh. More sleep?
With four kids?
That's not gonna happen.
You got to concentrate.
This is one of the most
important skills in gymnastics.
Why? Because the kip involves coordination,
timing, and strength.
Now, some of you are
having problems with it,
but you'll get there.
Unless you're too short.
As long as you focus
on the fundamentals
and do your drills.
I want to see that...
Mom told me life wasn't
always gonna be a day at the beach.
She said I should let her know
if anyone said mean things.
But it all starts
with concentration.
Lucy, show us how it's done.
Okay. All right.
You need to work on that upper body.
Strong finish.
Gabby, you're up.
But I didn't tell my mom.
I had my own way.
Yes! Perfect.
Now, that's the kip.
So, again, if y'all don't have
what it takes to master the kip,
you don't have what it
takes to be a gymnast.
So explain this to me again.
You're charging the kids money
to watch Gabrielle do what?
Tricks, flips and cartwheels.
You can't take

their lunch money!
We're not taking it.
They're giving it to us.
I got \$2 for a back walkover.
I don't care. Tomorrow,
you take this back,
and you give them
every penny back.
What?
Mom!
No, it's not open
for discussion.
I need to lie down.
What's happening now?
Her lights are still off.
I think she's crying.
It's my fault for
taking the money.
No, it's not.
Is too!
Mom said she couldn't afford
to send me to gym camp.
John and I were gonna raise the
money ourselves, and now...
Hey. It's not your fault.
Mom isn't feeling well.
It doesn't have anything
to do with you.
Besides, if you need money,
Joy and I will give
up our sports.
John, are they tricking me?
You got a talent, Brie.
We all see that.
You've got to start
seeing it, too.
You could be the best.
She's like me, Mom.
Yes, she is.
Are you gonna be a superstar like her,
too?
Yeah?
Yeah.
Well, don't you worry.

I am gonna find the money
to get you to that camp.
Let Mary Lou Retton's coaches
see the next superstar.
Are you sick, Mom?
Mmm.
I'm as tough as nails.
Don't you worry
about me. All right?
Now, you go to sleep,
'cause the world is waiting
for you in the morning.
Good night, sweetheart.
Good night, Mom.
Time went by.
Mom liked us all to have focus and goals,
so she liked that the stronger I got,
the harder I worked to get even stronger.
As long as today was better than yesterday,
we were all doing okay.
Well, I mean, she's got the drive,
and she's getting noticed.
The next step is to get her
qualified for Junior Elite.
Junior Elite?
Yeah, she'd be in a higher level
and training for harder skills,
more competitions.
Britney's a Junior Elite.
Britney's dad runs a bank.
Well, I mean,
if you're serious about the sport...
What I'm serious about is that my
kids have something to believe in.
Well, perfect. Then we'll get
her qualified for Junior Elite.
You'll be on the
road a lot more.
Probably have to homeschool her.
Homeschool?
Yeah. Mmm-hmm.
93, 94, 95, 96, 97...
Coach! How am I supposed
to concentrate here?

...98, 99,100! 101,102...
A 14.350 for Gabby Davis, uh...
Douglas, rather,
the newcomer out of Virginia Beach.
Yes! Way to go,
Gabrielle!
Gabby Douglas continues to impress.
That's my girl.
And here comes Shawn Johnson,
and you can hear the audience reaction.
They love her.
Hardest vault
in the competition.
And dead-on!
And she is one
happy camper right now.
That's gonna be you
out there one day.
Competitions take you to exciting
places and closer to your dreams.
But they also
expose your doubts.
206. Here we go.
Wow! Breezy, you have
moved up in the world.
I suck at bars.
This is the nicest hotel
we've ever been in,
and you're too busy giving yourself a
pity party that you don't even notice.
Keep focusing on the negative,
and it'll come true.
Oh! Come look
at this view!
Mom! I came in 16th today.
I didn't make the National Team.
What if I never make
the National Team?
Not this year,
or the next year, or the next?
Do you think before she won Shawn
Johnson never had a bad day?
Well, I promise you, she did.
How do you know?

Because, sweetie,
anyone who's ever reached for something,
they've had a bad day.
Gabrielle, you are 12 years old.
Look around you.
Look at this place we're staying in.
You're at
a national competition.
But you know what?
If you're not having any fun,
let's forget about this,
go home,
sell your leos on eBay.
No!
Well, it doesn't look
like you're having any fun.
There you go.
So, what do you think?
A hotel like this probably
has a really nice bathtub.
'Cause I wasn't gonna say anything before,
but, hoo, girl, you're kind of ripe.
I earned it.
Yes, you did.
Let's go run you a bath.
Okay.
Is my nose too flat?
Did somebody tell you that?
Because you have my mama's nose.
Are you saying that Miss
Carolyn's nose is too flat?
No.
Okay.
'Cause she has a perfect nose,
just like you.
Did I really get
Miss Carolyn's nose?
Absolutely.
And you got my smile.
You're just like a little
jigsaw puzzle of all of us,
and somehow you got
all the best parts.
Mom?

Yes?
Can we get a dog now?
No.
Just a small one.
Do you have wax in your ears?
Let me see those ears.
Oh, yeah, there's some wax in here.
I got to wash it out!
Zoway!
Zoway, Zoway! Come here!
Don't get him excited!
You know he's already wild.
Are you wild?
Huh, boy? You wild?
All right, now,
you have to take him for a walk,
because I have to go to work.
You'll be back for tonight, right?
I will try.
Try? Mom,
it's the Olympics.
Olympic Trials, and I know.
You've had it circled on the
calendar for over a year.
I will be there.
Okay.
All right.
Bye, Mom. Love you!
Don't be late! Bye!
Love you, Brie!
Bye!
There she is, Shawn Johnson.
This is a
multi-layered story, Shawn Johnson.
You saw her coach there,
Liang Chow, came from China.
Opened up Chow's
Gymnastics, and one day, in walked Shawn.
At that very moment,
he knew they had a future.
I thought it
was smoother than the Nationals.
Yeah, phenomenal.
One of the most difficult

routines being done in the world.
Has the highest degree of
difficulty for anyone in this meet.
And on top of that,
coming in with brand-new choreography.
It takes time to own your own routine
and to feel really comfortable.
Gabrielle? Are you okay?
That's my coach.
What are you talking about?
I'm going to the Olympics,
and Liang Chow is gonna be my coach.
The Olympics?
I wanted to stand
on the Olympic platform.
I wanted to be
the best in the world.
I could close
my eyes and see it.
Problem was, who believes a little
kid could have a dream so strong
it would eat you alive
if it didn't come true?
No one. That's who.
But it was a dream
that wouldn't go away.
It just got stronger.
I knew it was time to make
everyone else believe in me, too.
All right, come on, everyone.
Let's clean up. Let's go.
Coach! I can do the Amanar vault.
I'm ready.
You're still not getting
enough height on your takeoff.
One wrong landing,
you blow your ACLs,
and that's it.
Your career's over.
Well, I can get more height.
Just show me.
Stop rushing everything, Gabby.
I don't think you're ready yet.
Well, if you don't believe in me,

how am I supposed to get anywhere?
Like the Olympics?
Ashley, grab those mats.
Gabby, be patient.
There's time.
Stop worrying about the Amanar.
You have a competition coming up.
Focus on that. All right?
You got it.
You got it, Gabby.
One of the rising stars of the sport.
Every competition, she seems to
come out a little more polished.
Absolutely. You know,
you can really sense the confidence here.
I think this is gonna
be one to watch.
Really good form here.
And she really
keeps those lines.
This dismount's got
a high level of difficulty.
Yes! What a strong finish.
Really sticks the landing.
Look at her.
Look at her. She knows it.
She is beaming.
Well, that was a surprise, huh?
I didn't think you were gonna
pull that off. All right.
What's that supposed to mean,
he didn't think I'd pull it off?
I'll get it.
He's my coach.
Isn't he supposed to believe in me?
But he's always like, "No,
you're not ready for this.
"You're not
ready for that."
- Well, I believe in you, Breezy.
- Hello?
You're not my coach.
I bet Coach Chow
doesn't say that.

Oh, boy.
Now we're gonna be talking about Coach
Chow for the rest of the night, huh?
Well, I bet he doesn't.
Mom, it's the pharmacy.
All right. Coming.
"Coach Chow.
Coach Chow."
Arie. Come on.
Leave her alone.
The pharmacy?
It's nothing. I just have to
have my prescription changed.
Is it hot in here to you?
Um...
Could you hold my place, please?
I'm gonna go sit
down for a second.
Uh-huh. Sure.
Right. Next, please.
How do you have a bad
reaction to medicine?
Isn't it supposed to help you?
I don't know, Gabrielle.
Well, what does it mean?
I'm not a doctor.
It means she has to stop
working so she can rest.
Mama tell you that?
Stop working for how long?
They're here.
John. Arielle.
Come help me get your
mother in the house.
I got it, baby.
I got it.
Take your time.
You okay?
Yeah, I'm all right, sweetheart.
Listen.
Your mom had a bad reaction
to her medication,
but she's gonna be okay.
I don't want y'all to worry.

But it could be a while before
she gets back on her feet.
She's not allowed to work.
So money is gonna get real
tight in the next few months
until her disability kicks in.
Okay?
John?
Brie, what are you doing here?
Don't you have
a practice to go to?
It's too expensive, Mama.
And we're poor.
Do you know what poor is?
Poor is when you
run out of hope.
And that's not us,
not by a long shot.
You want to make me feel better?
Then go to practice.
You got a competition coming up,
and you need to be ready for it.
'Cause I'm gonna be at that competition.
I don't know about you.
You plan on being
at that competition?
Yeah?
Well, go get ready.
You're on your own
In a world you've grown
Few more years to go
Don't let the hurdle fall
So be the girl you loved
Be the girl you loved
I'll wait
So show me why you're strong
Ignore everybody else
We're alone now
I'll wait
So show me why you're strong
Ignore everybody else
We're alone now
Suddenly, I'm hit
Is this darkness of the dawn?

And your friends are gone
And your friends won't come
So show me where you fit
So show me where you fit
I'll wait
So show me why you're strong
Ignore everybody else
We're alone now
We're alone now
I'll wait
We're alone now
We're alone now
I'll wait
We're alone now
We're alone now
Suddenly, I'm hit
Is this darkness of the dawn?
And your friends are gone
And your friends won't come
So show me where you fit
So show me where you fit
Mom, what is it?
They used to call
them food stamps.
It looks like a debit card.
Well, it's not.
When you guys were younger,
I vowed I would never,
ever rely on another handout.
Nice!
Come on, Kelly!
Keep your legs
straight this time.
Please, Mom!
What are the chances?
I mean, it's a sign or something!
Coach Chow right here.
It's fate or something,
or something meant to be, or...
Are you gonna peel that, or are you
just gonna keep waving it around?
Please, Mama.
I mean, I know it's more money,
but what if it is fate?

Mmm.

What are you gonna say
when you first meet him?

You mean I get to go?

Oh, my God!

I'm gonna tell him he's my hero,
and I've waited my whole
entire life just to meet him,
and I'm gonna show him
everything that I can do.

You're gonna breathe.

You're gonna breathe when you talk to him.

All right, now,

peel these carrots, girl.

And I'm gonna tell him I've
waited two whole years to meet him.

I'm gonna tell him there isn't
anything I don't want to learn
as long as he'll teach me.

Hello.

I am Liang Chow.

Hi. I'm...

I'm Gabrielle Douglas.

Hello, Gabrielle Douglas.

What do you hope to learn today?

Everything.

I don't know about everything,
but I'll try not
to disappoint you.

Hi. I'm Liang Chow.

I'm Ashley.

Hi, Ashley.

Let's talk about music, okay?

You're probably
thinking, "Music?"

"I thought Chow was going
to teach me gymnastics!"

Well, what if I told you
all gymnasts are musicians,
and these are your instruments?

Rhythm, and tempo,

the steady beats,

and then the crescendo!

Today I'm going to teach you

how to play these instruments.
How many of you do doubles?
How many of you are ready
to learn the Amanar?
You, step out.
You can do a double twist?
Sure.
Show me.
Okay.
Yes! Lots of power!
I like that!
The Amanar was named for the
first gymnast who did it,
Simona Amanar.
It's one of the hardest
vaults in the sport.
Not only is it two and
half twists in the air,
which was considered impossible
before Simona did it,
but it's a blind landing.
You cannot see the mat before you hit it.
The vault's sound is fast,
strong, short notes, power.
Think of a drum. Hmm?
Now, give me the double twist but
stay in for the other half turn.
Okay.
Mama! Mama!
He taught me!
Mama, Coach Chow taught me
how to do the Amanar!
I did it!
I did the Amanar!
Okay, okay! Calm down!
You act like the world's about to end.
All right. Tell me
again but slowly.
Mama, he taught me one of
the hardest vaults to do
in just a few hours.
Well, congratulations. It sounds like
you got something out of that clinic.
No! That's not the point.

If Liang Chow can teach
me that in two hours,
just think what else
he could teach me.
I have to train with him.
What?
I want to move to Iowa
and train with Coach Chow.
Good one.
For a second there,
I almost thought
you were serious.
But I am serious.
Brie, please.
Mama, please!
He lives in Des Moines, Iowa!
Do you know how far
away that is from here?
Go look it up on the map.
I don't think you realize that's
over 1,000 miles away from here.
Mama, I want to train
with Liang Chow!
And how would you
get there, Gabrielle?
Where would you live?
It's impossible.
It's not!
Oh!
And you have chutzpah.
Do you know what chutzpah is?
Go look that one up, too.
Mama, don't laugh at me.
I'm going to train with him.
I don't care what you say.
Gabrielle Douglas,
who do you think you are talking to?
You better watch
your mouth, young lady.
Talking under your breath
like you're some spoiled brat.
Get up there and
go wash up for dinner.
You done lost your mind.

All right, let's try that again.
Come on! Gabby!
Pick up your feet.
When you hit the mat
in the Pak salto,
that's five-tenths
off your score.
Try it again.
It's not working.
I've tried it 20 times.
Well, maybe you're not trying hard enough.
Let's go.
I wanted to jump up
and yell right back,
"Maybe you're not
teaching me right."
But I wasn't raised that way.
And then a mix-up with Chow's ride
to the airport gave me my last hope.
My mom offered to take him,
and I knew that by the end of the ride,
she would have gotten to know
him and realized I was right.
My daughter is very driven.
Better that than
her driven parents.
No offense.
Mmm. None taken.
I believe in letting all my
kids make their own choices.
So, who inspired you?
Your mother? Coach?
Neither.
I was taken out
of my school at five
and put into a state program
for gifted athletes.
In China, it's called
"juguo tizhi."
It means
"whole nation system."
I only saw my family
three times a year.
Hmm. You must

have missed them.
Of course.
But even at that age,
I knew I had to make my country proud.
Life isn't always easy in China.
It's not always
easy here, either.
I can tell you some stories.
What do you mean, small talk?
Like how he came to America,
about his family.
What about training me?
Gabrielle, he lives in Iowa.
We live here.
Mama, all that time together,
and you didn't mention the most
important thing in the world?
Help me fold these clothes, Gabrielle.
It isn't fair!
Gabrielle, we're not
gonna keep doing this.
Here.
You fold your leos.
Think about something else.
No, I'm not gonna fold my leos.
I don't need them anymore.
If I can't train with Coach Chow,
then I'm not gonna do gymnastics.
What's the point?
I quit!
And I don't want dinner ever!
Well, you know what?
You don't have to eat then.
A hunger strike?
Well, you got to give
her points for that drama.
She hasn't spoken
to me in a week.
Oh.
Gosh. When she gets her mind set to
something, it's like...
Where does she get that from?
Excuse me?
Are you kidding?

You better look
in the mirror, girl.
No. No, no, I'm stubborn, but Brie...
No.
That's a whole... She's just, like, beyond.
It's like she was put on
Earth for this one thing.
Sometimes I lay in bed,
and I ask God,
"Why? Why her?
Why my little Boo Tookie Boo?"
She was so sick and nearly
died that first year,
and out of all the little girls in this
whole, wide world, she was picked.
And is it a gift
or is it a burden?
You know, you're the only
one who can answer that.
Mom, I got four kids,
and I'm barely keeping it together.
Here she is, this force of nature,
with dreams as big as the sky.
Well, I remember walking in those
shoes myself not too long ago.
You wanted to be a lawyer,
and until Arielle,
it was what you lived for.
And you would have
made a great lawyer.
Hmm.
But I'm gonna tell you.
There's nothing
worse for a mother
than seeing her child's
dream go unanswered.
Mom, I can't afford
to send her to Iowa.
And you can't afford not to.
You see one yet?
No.
Some little ones over there,
but nothing's moving.
I bet there are

a lot of stars in Iowa.
You aren't going to Iowa.
You might as well stop thinking about it.
Why would you say that?
Well, 'cause for one,
we live here.
Two, you can't afford
to get out there.
Three, even if you could
afford to get out there,
you got no place to live.
Four, I mean,
if you went to Iowa,
no one would be able to take
care of you like I could.
Five...
Are you saying you're gonna miss me?
You would, wouldn't you?
Hey, now, cut it out.
Is that one?
No, that's just a plane.
Hmm.
As it turns out, my prayers were
being heard, and I didn't even know it.
1,000 miles away,
a family who didn't even know
me was about to change my life.
Some people don't
believe in miracles.
If you find a girl
who needs it...
And we've already got
the four girls, right?
I mean, what's one more if it means
helping someone reach their goal?
Got the room.
Thank you.
They call it
a coincidence or luck.
No, sir. Not me.
When an impossible array
of stars all line up
just so one puny, little human can
reach out and grab ahold of her dreams,

it isn't just luck or
a coincidence at work.
It's something much bigger
watching out for you.
Call him, Mom.
I just don't know
how we would do it.
I mean, money's already tight.
And then on top of that...
What are you doing?
I'm calling him for you.
Okay, we walk by faith,
not by sight.
Isn't that what you've
told us our whole lives?
Yes, it is what I've taught you...
It's ringing.
Hi. Yes, this is
Natalie Hawkins.
I'm calling to speak
with Coach Chow.
Sure, sure.
I'll hold.
Yes, of course I remember her.
Hmm.
Mmm-hmm.
No, I understand, not everyone could
just pick up and move to Iowa.
Your daughter's an exceptional athlete.
I would...
Mrs. Hawkins, if you...
Can I just stop
you for a minute?
Believe it or not,
I think I might have a solution for you.
They would let Gabrielle
stay with them?
For two years?
A family might host her.
She would have a place to live.
Um, yeah, I'll talk to her about it
when I pick her up this afternoon.
Okay. All right.
Thank you.

Seriously?
Some family wants
to do something nice.
Oh, my God.
Wow.
That's incredible.
What did I just do?
That whale's never gonna fit.
Okay. So, do you like this sweater,
or do you like this one better?
I don't know, Brie.
Just pick one.
You are not gonna be able
to pack all this stuff.
Ah! I can't believe it.
Breezy, you're really going.
Iowa!
Don't look at me like that.
You're gonna make me cry.
I'm really gonna miss you.
Come here.
I love you.
I love you.
Are you bringing that sweater?
I told you not to pack that.
What do you pack when you're leaving
home for the first time in your life,
and no suitcase in the world is big enough
for what you want to take with you?
You're living my dream.
Do you know that?
So, go up there
and be your best, okay?
Come here.
Bye, Joy.
Gonna miss you.
I'm gonna miss you more.
John.
Oh, come on.
Don't be like that. Brie. Brie.
He'll call you later.
This is tough for him.
We got to go.
We don't want to miss our flight.

Bye, Zoway.
Don't forget me
when I'm gone, okay?
Where is everything?
Zoway's gonna forget me.
He won't forget you, sweetheart.
Two years is a long time.
Yes, it is.
Coach, watch this!
Nice!
How was my line?
Come on. You did it in competition.
You can do it again.
- Don't step forward.
- Got it, Coach.
Ella, you're about
to dismount. Concentrate.
Gabby. This is my wife, Li.
She'll be coaching you, too.
Welcome, Gabby.
My husband has told me so much about you.
Now that you're here,
what do you think?
Oh, it's...
I can't even say.
But it's what you wanted, right?
I want to go to the Olympics.
And I want to win.
You haven't given us much time.
London is just 22 months away.
I'll give you 100% every day.
I'd like to speak candidly.
Do you mind?
Please.
Every single person you see here has
the same dream, to go to the Olympics.
That little girl,
she's been with me three years now.
Her parents told me that the
first sentence she spoke
was that she wanted
to win at the Olympics.
I believe she'll
get there one day.

And me?

I see the possibility of you getting to the Olympics, but I can't guarantee it. Your difficulty level and physical condition need a lot of upgrading.

I don't know how hard you're really willing to work.

Oh, hard. I promise.

Just...

Just believe in me.

We'll start tomorrow.

You'll be doing

28 hours per week.

At home, I do 36,

and I'm willing to do a lot...

I have my way.

Believe in me.

You must be Gabby.

I'm Sally, and this

is my husband, Brent.

Welcome to Iowa.

We are so grateful that you are gonna let us be your host family.

Is that her, Mommy?

Yes, it is, princess.

This is Jessica, one of our girls.

And this is Jill,

and our oldest, Connie,

and our youngest,

Beth-Anne,

and you met Jessica, right?

So, how was the...

You have a love...

Oh, you first.

I was just gonna say,

you guys have a lovely home.

Thank you.

Okay, so, who's hungry?

Me!

You guys are always hungry.

All right, to the kitchen.

Come on in. Come in.

Already beating us there.

We are grateful

for bringing us together.
And we want to thank you,
Lord Jesus,
for bringing Gabby
into our home.
And, God, please bless our food.
In your name we pray.

Amen. ALL:

You girls are gonna give
them some time alone, okay?
Is this a good idea?
'Cause it's not feeling
like I thought it would.
It's what you wanted, Brie.
Mama, nobody said Iowa doesn't
have any black people.
I'm sure there's more
of us somewhere.
Don't go.
It's too late for you to have
a change of heart now, baby.
This will be the hardest part,
sweetie.
Tomorrow, you'll be in your element,
where you belong.
I'm so proud of you,
I could pop.
I love you, my Boo Tookie Boo.
Mama.
Oh...
One more hug before I
start bawling my eyes out
in front of all
these nice people.
I love you, sweetie.
I love you.
Study this closely.
These are the dates that are going to
control your life for the next two years.
This is today.
And this is the London Olympics.
But you can't get there
unless you win here,

the US Olympic Trials.
There will be competitions
throughout the year.
They're all important.
But the road to there really starts here,
the Visa Championships.
And starting now,
you have to forget everything
you thought you knew.
Because I'm going to rebuild
you muscle by muscle.
Yeah, you can be the greatest
You can be the best
You can be the King Kong
banging on your chest
You could beat the world
You could beat the war
You could talk to God,
go banging on his door
You can throw your hands up
You can beat the clock Yeah
You can move a mountain
You can break rocks
You can be a master
Don't wait for luck
Dedicate yourself
and you gonna find yourself
Standing in the
hall of fame Yeah
And the world's gonna
know your name Yeah
'Cause you burn with the
brightest flame Yeah
And the world's gonna
know your name Yeah
And you'll be on the walls
of the hall of fame
You can go the distance
You can run the mile
You can walk straight
through hell with a smile
You could be the hero
You could get the gold
Breaking all the records they

thought never could be broke
Yeah, do it for your people
Do it for your pride
How you ever gonna know
if you never even try?
Do it for your country
Do it for your name
'Cause there's gonna be a day
When you're standing in
the hall of fame Yeah
And the world's gonna
know your name Yeah
'Cause you burn with the
brightest flame Yeah
And the world's gonna
know your name Yeah
Mom was right.
Saying goodbye to her was the hardest part.
Before I knew it,
months had passed.
I gained 10 pounds,
and it was all muscle.
Every skill I thought
I knew was rethought.
Routines I never believed I
could do became second nature.
With Chow,
I competed against the best gymnasts
in this country and internationally.
Then it was time
to put it all together.
The Olympics were
just a year away.
The Visa Nationals were
the first of the competitions
that would decide
who makes the team.
As Chow said,
it was make it or break it time.
Right here, Gabby.
Your body shouldn't be hollow here.
You need to open up a little
more in your rib cage.
When you push off here,

your ankles will be springs,
but your spine reaches,
like this.
Hmm?
Mmm-hmm.
And don't be so serious.
Don't force your body
to do what it already knows.
Relax, right?
Focused but relaxed.
So grace can enter the skill.
Right?
Let me see.
Yes, Gabby!
Like that! Again.
Gabby!
Gabby!
Don't move. Don't move.
Don't move. Get some ice.
It's her hamstring.
In my mind, I kept hearing
the sound of my hamstring popping.
It was the sound of my
dreams starting to unravel.
Gabby?
I can't fall behind.
Coach Chow told me to rest tonight.
Don't tell him, okay?
What is it?
Pure determination,
dressed up like a teenager.
I don't want
to foreshadow anything here,
but she has not just this week,
but in warm-ups today,
really had a tough go on the beam.
Come on, Breezy girl.
Come on.
Let's go.
Gabrielle,
we're not gonna keep doing this.
Unless you're too short.
But it's what you wanted, right?
And the momentum

is really not going the right way
for her tonight as well.
Another big skill.
This is one of those meets that is,
quite frankly, very hard to recover from.
It's not just a matter of,
you know, having some problems.
This is letting it
really get to you
and letting the emotions
completely control your actions,
and just badness all around.
Another competition,
and you'll get your confidence back.
It's not that.
It's just...
It was make it or break it time,
and I let everyone down.
No, you did not let anyone...
I saw it in Chow's face.
After everything
everyone's done for me.
My sisters, they gave up their
sports just so I could do mine.
And my mother...
We were on food stamps,
and she always found a way
for me to keep training.
They're all real proud of you, honey.
Nobody...
And my brother...
I'm, like, his best friend,
and he's mine, and I left him.
I let everyone down.
Sports isn't always
about winning, Gabby.
It's about finding out
who you really are.
Sometimes the only way to get
stronger is to get knocked down.
Your mom is gonna be
here in four months.
Isn't that something
to look forward to?

She's pretty darned excited.
It's all she talks about.
Heck, we're all
pretty darn excited.
We're really proud
of you, Gabby.
As those four months went by,
I had the aching awareness that who
I really was did not belong there.
And after a while,
I couldn't think of anything else.
Who I really was
wanted to go home.
Concentrate, Gabby.
Think of the skill
piece by piece.
The key is to keep
your hips square.
Hmm?
Again.
Where are you going, Gabby?
Don't do this. Gabby! Gabby.
I know how hard it can be.
For two years, you've trusted
everything I've told you, right?
Now trust this.
The only thing harder than what
you're feeling now is quitting.
It's not working.
What isn't working?
Everything.
You can be the best
in the world.
Did you hear those words?
"Best in the world."
But you have to block out all of the
distractions and believe in yourself.
Stay and work this out,
and you will be an athlete
who inspires nations.
Walk away, and you'll be
sitting on the couch
watching someone else
win your Olympic medal.

You'll regret this
the rest of your life.
Following my dreams was supposed
to lead me to who I really was.
But who I really was, was lost.
Gabrielle, Coach Chow said
you were looking for me,
said you wanted to talk
to me about something.
Uh-uh.
Uh-uh?
You weren't looking for me?
No. Talk.
I can't talk about it.
Is everything okay?
Can we go someplace quiet?
What's going on?
I didn't have the nerve
to tell you, so I wrote it.
The Olympics are exactly 210 days away,
and you want to quit?
Is this a joke?
No, I want to go home.
Gabrielle, is there something going on
here that you're not telling me about?
Then you're gonna have to do better than,
"I want to go home."
Because this is not
making any sense.
I just want to be normal, Ma.
Baby, you weren't
born to be normal.
Everything you've done your
entire life has been exceptional.
No. No.
You are not gonna quit. No.
You have worked too hard for this,
Gabrielle.
We have sacrificed
so much for this.
And now you want to quit?
Exceptional people
don't just quit.
I don't want to be exceptional!

I don't want to go
to the Olympics!
Does Coach Chow know?
No. Can you tell him?
Oh! Oh! Oh!
Gabrielle!
You signed a contract.
What you're doing
is dishonorable.
If you want to quit,
you tell Coach Chow yourself,
and after that, you tell everybody
else whose heart you're gonna break.
And I've told her, look at all the
people that have sacrificed for you,
Sally and Brent,
your brother and sisters,
your entire life,
Miss Carolyn, me.
I know, Mom!
I can get a job and pay you back.
No, Gabrielle,
you cannot pay me back!
Paying me back would be following
through on your life's dream,
and you just want
to throw it all away!
You think there aren't other little
girls out there who miss their families?
She is gifted.
One of the best in the sport.
I know that.
And she knows that, too.
But an Olympic athlete is
more than talent and muscle.
If she doesn't have it in her heart,
it isn't there.
We can't teach it.
You can't force it.
And even Gabby can't
make it any different.
A champion isn't made of muscle.
A champion is made of heart.
We'll give her some

time to figure this out.
If she wants to quit, she will.
Meanwhile, she's been accepted
to the AT&T American Cup.
She's just an alternate,
so the points won't count.
There won't be
any pressure on her.
Stupid.
What did you just say?
Did you just call me stupid?
Yeah, what do you think it's called
when you give up for nothing?
It's not for nothing.
I want to come home.
You're living your dream.
You can't give up now.
I know, but...
No buts, okay?
I mean, athletes don't
whine and complain.
My coach brings me
through hell and back,
and you know what?
I love it.
'Cause it makes me better.
Now, you got to tough it out.
It's the life of an athlete.
John, I want to come home.
I want to be with everyone.
Brie, listen to me.
Are you listening?
Mmm-hmm.
You are with everyone.
I mean, we're right
there with you.
And when you go up there
to get your medals,
we're gonna be right
up there, too.
Can't you see that?
You're winning for all of us.
You didn't think you were doing
it all on your own, did you?

Look, you get that
thing that I sent you?
The thing I'm not allowed to open?
Yeah.
You can open it now.
"Today should always be better
than yesterday."
It's our family saying, Brie.
If you live by that,
then we'll always be together.
'Cause no matter where you are,
you can take us with you.
You get that other thing?
All right.
Now put it on the board
where you can see it.
Don't quit on us, Brie.
And again.
Okay, and point the toe more.
Good.
What's the most important
thing about gymnastics?
Beautiful!
The most important thing about
gymnastics is, it's fun! Yes!
And what we're seeing here tonight,
well, 21 weeks
before the Olympics,
Gabby Douglas isn't even
officially competing.
Right now, she's leading the top two
US gymnasts in this competition.
She's attempting the two and a half here.
It's also called the Amanar vault,
one of the hardest in the competition.
It's her first time
trying it in exhibition.
Ooh!
She nailed it! Gabby Douglas!
And right from
the first workout here in New York,
we knew there was something
very different about Gabby.
The growth in this

young lady is absolutely spectacular.
Watch this dismount.
Leading the top two US gymnasts
by a full two tenths
as an alternate,
this is one for the storybooks.
And here it is, her final pass.
You can feel
the excitement in here.
Well, it all comes down
to the Olympic Trials in three months.
Can she do this again
when the points count?
Good.
Good.
Less kick here.
You were a little late
on the release.
What if I can't?
The bars have become
your best event.
You've done the high
release a million times.
No. What if they're right?
What if I do cave under pressure?
What if the bar
just wasn't there?
You can't think of it like that.
I'm going to tell you
the secret of gymnastics.
Now?
Why not two years ago?
You weren't ready then.
You can't think of it as release the bar,
catch the bar.
There's no release.
There's no catch.
Because it's all one.
When you are in your moment,
when you are doing exactly what
you're supposed to be doing,
it's all one.
You are not reaching for the bar,
because you've already got it.

Know that in the deepest
part of your being.
There's no past, no future.
You are the bar. You are the air.
You are the catch.
You are the eyes on you.
It's all one reality.
Every moment of your
life has led to this.
It's all part of this.
You are not separate from the skill.
You are the skill.
And it's all part of
the same perfect moment.
Sounds like fate.
Maybe.
I call it gymnastics.
Four skills.
Four chances to show
they've got what it takes to represent
the USA in the Olympic Games.
For each of these athletes,
it's a lifelong dream.
There's no past, no future.
It's all one reality.
You are not separate from the skill.
You are the skill.
Every moment of your
life has led to this.
Gabby Douglas
takes the top spot in these Trials
and will be representing
Team USA in the Olympics!
USA! USA!
You did it.
We did it.
We love, Gabrielle!
We love you, Gabby!
This girl is on fire
Fire, fire
This girl is on fire
She's walking on fire
Fire, fire
This girl is on fire

Oh
Everybody stares
as she goes by
'Cause they can see
the flame that's in her eyes
Watch her when
she's lighting up the night
Nobody knows that
she's a lonely girl
And it's a lonely world
But she gonna let it burn,
baby, burn, baby
This girl is on fire
Fire, fire
This girl is on fire
She's walking on fire
Fire, fire
This girl is on fire
She's just a girl
and she's on fire