

CHANG CAN DUNK

Written by

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Based on countless true stories

CARD OVER BLACK: **THE "SLAM DUNK"**

NO FRILLS OLD SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL VIDEO

Standing under a hoop in an indoor basketball court, an OLD-SCHOOL BASKETBALL COACH (50s) in high-waisted slacks and a polo shirt. Next to him, an OLD-SCHOOL BASKETBALL PLAYER in short shorts and tall socks.

BASKETBALL COACH

(to camera)

This next move is called the "slam dunk". It's when a player jumps and throws the ball directly into the hoop from close range. Often using a "dunking" motion.

The Player jumps and dunks with two hands. No flair.

BASKETBALL COACH (CONT'D)

Well done. How did that feel?

PLAYER

Pretty good coach.

BASKETBALL COACH

(to camera)

It may look simple but when it happens in a game, it can sure be exciting.

MUSIC UP: a very hype track

SMASH CUT TO:

MONTAGE - HISTORY OF THE SLAM DUNK

- Wilt Chamberlain dunking on film.
- Dr. J rocking the cradle.
- Jordan, tongue out, double clutch.
- Stadium fans screaming in delight.
- Iconic facials: Kemp on Lister, Pippen on Ewing, Starks on Jordan, Vince Carter OVER Fredric Weis, Kobe on Howard.
- Teammates on the bench erupting in awe.
- Zion Williamson annihilating high school children.

- High school crowds going insane.
- cellphone footage of randoms dunking in pickup games
- TikToks, IG stories of kids dunking in their backyard.

Dunks happening EVERYWHERE. Everybody. Wants. To. DUNK.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - MORNING

INSERT ON: A TOY HOOP hanging on a closet door frame, weathered by years of abuse.

CHANG (O.S.)

Chang with the rock. Between two defenders!

BOOM. CHANG (16) Chinese-American, dunks on the poor toy hoop while still in his underwear, his boyish energy a little young for his age. Chang's bedroom is small, cluttered, but somehow pulled together by a massive KOBE BRYANT poster.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Uh oh, double team. What's that?
Bam. Behind the back. Eurostep!
ARGGHH!

BOOMSHAKALAKA. Chang slams it. This kid loves basketball.

Between basketball moves, Chang styles his hair, modeling it after multiple reference photos, pulled from youtube, tik tok, instagram and now posted on his bedroom mirror. He tweaks and re-tweaks with perfecting diligence.

BZZZT, an incoming Facetime from BO. Chang answers. BO (16), Asian-American, a bit on the chunky side, exclaims...

BO

Wowww.

CHANG

I did it.

BO

I barely recognize you.

CHANG

I know! It's awesome!

Chang checks the mirror again, beaming.

CHANG (CONT'D)
I feel it. This is what I needed.
Right now I'm here.

Chang gestures with his hand. *Near the bottom.*

CHANG (CONT'D)
After this, I'll get some fire
clothes. Then I'll be more
confident and I'll start expanding
my social media presence. Make a
viral video or two. Boom.
Girlfriend. Boom. Parties. Boom.

Chang gestures again. *At the top.*

CHANG (CONT'D)
I'm up here.

BO
You really think so?

CHANG
I know so.

BO
But what if you end up trying too
hard?

CHANG
Trying too hard? That's just a
concept that haters came up with.

Chang points behind him at the Kobe poster.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Do you think Kobe ever asked
himself, "oh gee, am I trying too
hard?" Hell no.

Through his phone screen, Chang stares into his best friend's
eyes. Powerful words are about to be uttered...

CHANG (CONT'D)
What would Kobe do Bo. What. Would.
Kobe. Do?

Bo squints, searching for the correct answer.

BO
Uh, be himself?

CHANG

No! I mean yes, obviously be himself. But be better than himself.

Chang checks out his hair one more time. *Awesome.*

CHANG (CONT'D)

You'll never get anywhere, if all you do is stand still.

BO

I don't know. You know I get tired when I move around too much.

Chang groans. Bo grins, cheeky.

CHEN (O.S.)

Lan Lan!

CHANG

I gotta go. See you at practice?

BO

Yeah. Hey, it looks good man.

CHANG

Thanks homie. I really feel like it's gonna change things.

Chang hangs up. He grabs his things. As he scrambles out, he picks up the basketball and takes one last shot.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Kobe!

BRICK.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is modest, filled with aged furniture that seems rarely used. The rooms are cluttered with stuff that should be put away but is instead organized and placed into a temporary neatness.

Waiting impatiently by the door in hospital scrubs is Chang's Mom, CHEN (45), serious, her forehead wrinkled by years of frowning. An immigrant, Chen has been in America longer than not. Chang hustles down the stairs, a bit wary. Her eyes lock on his head like a targeting laser.

CHEN
(a slight accent)
What that?

CHANG
What?

Chen reaches for Chang's head, a disapproving frown on her face. He dodges her hand like Neo.

CHEN
Why you do this?

CHANG
I'm just trying it out. It's a new style. It's cool.

Chen considers it...

CHEN
No, it look weird on you.

Chang's loses some wind in his sail.

CHANG
Whatever, let's just go.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is modest, Ranch style, typical of North Jersey. Protruding from the side of the home is the weathered skeleton of a house extension project, long abandoned. Really, the whole house needs a makeover.

Chang and Chen hustle out and hop into an old minivan.

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH FRONT - A BIT LATER

The minivan pulls up to the curb. Students loiter on the steps waiting for the bell. The school is mostly white with a dash of melanin here and there. Chang hops out.

CHEN
Are you coming to the hospital on Saturday?

CHANG
I was actually thinking about that. I know volunteering at the hospitals is like a good look for colleges but most of the other kids have jobs and...like, money.

CHEN

Why you need money now? You will have lots of money after you go to a good college.

CHANG

First of all, that's not necessarily true in today's economy and secondly, it's been shown that having a high school job better prepares a kid for college success.

CHEN

Lan Lan. You always change your mind. You need to find something and stick to it.

CHANG

I will. When I find the right thing.

Chen gives Chang a disappointed look. Chang relents.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. I get it. Volunteering it is.

CHEN

I'm working late. Cook something for yourself okay?

CHANG

Okay Mom. Have a good day.

Chen drives off. Chang turns to the school and suddenly his confidence gives way to nervous anticipation. He takes a deep breath and proceeds forward.

INT. GYM CLASS - LATER

Students in athletic wear line up in two teams for basketball drills. On one team, Chang. On the other, three jocks. MATT (17), tall, White, dreamy blue eyes, OWEN (17), cocky Black kid, and SYD (17), White, jacked bro of bros. The leader, MATT, has the SAME hair as CHANG - but pulled off way better.

MR. BENNEVIDO, the Gym teacher, a literal square of a man, (35), gives out instructions.

BENNEVIDO

...foul shot, then through the cones, lay-up, sprint back, score however you want.

(MORE)

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)

First team through gets a pat on the back. Okay?

Benneviedo eyes Chang's hair.

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)

That's a fresh look Chang. I dig it.

The other students look at Chang, most in agreement. He nods back modestly.

OWEN

Why you gotta swaggerjack Matt though!

Laughter. Matt gives a cackling Owen a shove.

BENNEVIDO

Okay okay. Ready?

Benneviedo blows the whistle. Off to the races. The teams cheer and clap on their comrades. Some of the kids are decent, some are horrible. It's lighthearted fun.

Not for Chang. He breaths deep and wipes his clammy hands on his shorts. He's last on his team. The closer. He looks across at his match-up. *Matt*.

Ball comes to Chang first. He explodes from the start line. First, the foul shot. Chang sets his feet, bends his knees and shoots. Clean follow through, perfect arc and spin. *SWISH. Okay, Chang.*

Matt gets the ball as Chang sprints through the cones. Cross, cross, behind the back. Matt chases, his long gait quickly closing the gap.

Chang hits the lay-up and sprints back, Matt now right behind him, about to pass. Suddenly, Chang makes a full stop. Pull up three! On target. It's GOO--

BOOOOM!!! Matt throws down a thunderous tomahawk jam, knocking Chang's ball out of the hoop at the last second. The whole class erupts in Ooo's and Aah's.

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)

Whoooo! Team 1 wins!

Matt high-five his bros while the other students look at him in awe. Chang, panting, puts his hands on his hips.

INT. BOY'S LOCKERROOM - LATER

Chang changes while Matt's boys reenact Matt's dunk. On their way out, Matt pats on Chang on the back.

MATT

Almost dude. Next time dunk it.

Matt's friends snicker and walk out. Chang looks up at himself in the mirror. He reaches for his hair...

INT. GYM CLASS - A BIT LATER

Chang walks out alone, his hair now flat and bland. A new look already abandoned. As he heads for the exit, he notices a forgotten ball. He picks it up and turns to one of the hoops. A wishful thought crosses his mind for just a moment.

He drops the ball and leaves.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - AFTER SCHOOL

Flags twirl and fly through the air as loud big band music sounds out into the evening. The fabled Mount Davis Marching Band stomps in rhythm and formation. A well-oiled machine. In the back, part of the drum line, are Bo and Chang, banging away on the massive bass drums slung over their shoulders,

MR. RYAN

Stop. STOP!

The band freezes. The band instructor, MR. RYAN (32) balding, intense, shakes his head at this pitiful interpretation of Seven Nation Army. He stomps out onto the field towards the cause of his displeasure - MELISSA (16), the awkward, slightly chubby Tuba player. As Mr. Ryan scolds her mercilessly, Chang and Bo take a breather.

BO

So, what happened with the hair?

CHANG

(shrugs)

Eh. I wasn't really feeling it.

BO

I thought you would stick with it for at least a day.

CHANG

I will. When I find the right cut.

Bo nods. Something catches Chang's attention. Coming from the bleachers, a vision in black. KRISTY (17), slender, with long black hair and draped head to toe in black clothing. She leans against the fence, observing the commotion.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Who is that?

BO
I don't know but I need her insta,
her snap, her tik tok. Everything.

Mr. Ryan returns to the front. He steps onto his podium.

MR. RYAN
Okay, can we not completely ruin it
this time please?

Mr. Ryan raises his hands. And...

EXT. BLEACHERS - LATER

Exhausted band members put away their instruments. Chang chugs a bottle of water. Adjacent, sitting alone, Melissa the clumsy Tube player. Chang leans over

CHANG
Hey. Keep going. You'll get it.

Melissa looks up, surprised. She nods.

MR. RYAN
Chang!

Ryan waves Chang over, KRISTY next to him.

RYAN
This is Kristy, she's gonna be our
new snare player.

KRISTY
Sup.

Kristy gazes over at Chris. Her hair sways like black waves over her pale freckled face. Her soft brown eyes glistening, copper coins dropped in a mountain spri --

RYAN
Chang, hello!

CHANG
(snapping out of it)
Sorry.

RYAN

Take Kristy to the storage locker
and get her a kit.

CHANG

Okay.

INT. BAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lights flick on in the dark band room. Championship banners
from Marching Band competitions hang proudly from the walls.

KRISTY

Wow. You guys take this pretty
seriously.

CHANG

Yeah. I don't know if you noticed
but Mr. Ryan is pretty intense.

KRISTY

I like intense. Means you're
passionate about something.

Chang unlocks a storage locker, revealing spare instruments.

CHANG

So you're like new in town?

KRISTY

Yeah. Just moved here with my Mom.

CHANG

You like it?

KRISTY

Good so far. Kinda white though.

CHANG

Yeah, but most of them know how to
use chopsticks so.

KRISTY

Ohh. So they can stay.

CHANG

Yeah, for diversity.

Kristy giggles. Chang beams, suddenly invigorated. She points
at the spare drum.

KRISTY

This it right here?

CHANG

Yeah. Let me help you--

Before Chang can help her, she yanks it out by herself. She taps the head, adjusting the tamber.

CHANG (CONT'D)

You play a lot?

KRISTY

I do.

Kristy picks up the sticks and give them a twirl before unleashing them on the dusty drum, accelerating into a blazing speed pattern. Then, on a dime, she flows into a groovy riff. She closes her eyes and sticks her tongue out the corner of her mouth like Michael Jordan. Chang is crushing, hard.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Chang walks Kristy home. Kristy talks favorite bands. It's mostly rock and grunge. Chang knows none of them but he plays along.

CHANG

I wouldn't say I'm the biggest music head. I'm a dabbler.

KRISTY

How'd you get into drums then.

CHANG

I play bass drum. It ain't exactly rocket science.

KRISTY

So you like doing things that are easy.

CHANG

Uhh...

Kristy smirks. She enjoys tilting Chang.

KRISTY

I'm just giving you shit.

They stop in front of a condo complex.

KRISTY (CONT'D)
Thanks for walking me home.
(beat)
See you at school?

CHANG
Bet.

KRISTY
(mockingly)
Bet.

Kristy grins and turns away. Chang searches for a follow-up.

CHANG
What would Kobe do. What would Kobe
do. What would -
(to Kristy)
Hey. You wanna...*chillax* this
weekend?

Uggggh. Kristy turns back, amused.

KRISTY
Uh, okay. What day?

CHANG
Saturday?

KRISTY
Maybe. I was gonna check out this
basketball game.

CHANG
Basketball game? Where?

KRISTY
(shrugs)
I dunno. This guy Matt invited me.

Chang's heart falls to his feet.

CHANG
Oh. Yeah I know Matt...

KRISTY
Why don't you come? I don't know
anybody else there.

Chang thinks about it, searching for some courage...

CHANG
Yeah, sure. Meet there?

KRISTY

Cool. Nice meeting you Chang.

CHANG

Same.

Kristy goes inside. Chang exhales, suddenly remembering to breathe. He looks around, lost.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Where...am I?

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

Chang digs through the fridge, pulling random ingredients and putting them into a boiling stew. Propped on a bowl, is Bo on Facetime, himself busy in a game of Fortnite.

BO

Dude. She's suuuper hot man.

CHANG

Sooo hot.

BO

But like in a sad, tragic way.

CHANG

Like a painter with not enough colors.

BO

Save her man. Save her from her eternal melancholy.

Chang ladles his concoction of meat and veggies and something into a bowl. Waiting as a side, some Pop Tarts.

CHANG

This is would be like the Lakers getting Pau Gasol. Instant contenders.

BO

I'm not following.

CHANG

Think about it, Kristy is new to the school. She's hot, she's cool. All the guys are gonna be fighting over her. If I get with her first, I'll get all the clout AND a really cool girlfriend.

Chang's mind wanders wistfully into a Kristy-filled future.

BO

Okay. But what are you going to do about Matt? He's obviously got his beautiful blue eyes on her.

CHANG

Yeah but I don't think he's her type.

BO

Say that when he's in front of her flying through the air like a Greek God.

CHANG

Yeah, but I'll have more one-on-one time. And, I, you know, respect her or whatever.

(concerned)

Right?

BO

I don't know dude, I'm just a virgin. But you know who definitely isn't. Matt.

(gets killed in Fortnite)

WHAT THE! You Motherfu--

Bo curses at a offscreen enemy. Chang bites into his pop tart, worried. *Shit*.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - MATT'S TIK TOK/IG

- At school. Matt looks into the camera phone, giggling.

MATT

Oh, there's Thompson. Watch this. He has no idea.

He approaches an innocent kid, THOMPSON (15) in the hallway.

MATT (CONT'D)

Yo Thompson. You like facials?

THOMPSON

What do you mean?

Thompson smiles, sheepish. From behind, Syd creeps up, a miniature basketball hoop in his hand.

He holds it above Thompson's head as Owen suddenly appears, smashing a rubber ball viciously through the hoop, right off Thompson's head.

MATT
CUZ YOU JUST GOT FACIALED!

- Matt approaches another kid, ROBERT. The kid looks at Matt suspiciously.

MATT (CONT'D)
Yo Roberts. You like facials?

ROBERT
No! Get away from me!

Roberts tries to run away. He's too slow. Owens and Syd appear and DUNK on his head.

MATT
CUZ YOU JUST GOT FACIALED!

- Matt approaches a group of cool girls, who look at him longingly. He singles one out, TIFFANY.

MATT (CONT'D)
Yo Tiffany. You like facials?

TIFFANY
Depends. Is it from you?

Tiffany bites her lip suggestively. Matt turns to camera, his mouth agape.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark, save for the glow from Chang's phone. Chang rewatches Matt's TikTok starring Tiffany.

TIFFANY (O.S.)
...Is it from you?

Chang recoils, his face phasing between shock, disgust, curiosity, envy and horror. Doom creeps up his spine. He closes his eyes, trying to think of what to do...

He rolls over and begins a search: *How to show a girl you respect her*. He scrolls to the top result. *Pay attention to her interests...*

Suddenly, headlights flash outside his window triggering the rumble of a garage door opening. Chris sticks his phone under his pillow and rolls over.

Steps creak up the stairs. The door opens, revealing the silhouetted face of Chen, worn from a 14 hour shift.

CHEN
(quietly)
Lan Lan?

Chang, lies stiff, eyes still open. After a beat, Chen closes the door. Chang breaths a sigh of relief. He pulls out his phone, continuing his research...

CUT TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

Two AAU (high school amateur) teams battle in a gym packed at max capacity. The score is close. Attendees scream and holler with each basket.

Matt, drenched in sweat, makes a nice move, blowing past his defender. The opposing center meets him at the rim. Matt misses and is knocked to the ground. No foul.

The crowd protests. Chief among them, Matt's parents, MRS. O'NEIL (40) and MR. O'NEIL (46), their tanned Hamptons look a contrast to their current red-faced fury.

MR. O'NEIL
ARE YOU BLIND REF! THEY'RE TRYING
TO MASSACRE MY BOY!!!

Matt climbs to his feet and argues with the ref.

MRS. O'NEIL
IT'S OKAY HONEY, THIS REF IS AN
IDIOT. AN IDIOOOOOOT.

Whistle. The Ref gives Matt a tech. The crowd howls.

MR. AND MRS. O'NEIL
ARE YOU KIDDDING ME!!!

ON BLEACHERS

Chang pumps his fist, subtly celebrating Matt's misfortune. Beside him, Kristy watches, a bit lost.

KRISTY

What happened?

CHANG

Matt was whining too much so the
Ref T'ed him up.

(shakes his head)

Unsportsmanlike. Just play dude.

KRISTY

You seem pretty into basketball.

CHANG

Oh yeah, I'm a huge basketball
head. I used to be at the park 5
hours a day.

KRISTY

Really? How come you're not out
there then.

CHANG

Uh because I swore a blood oath to
Mr. Ryan that all my free time
would be entirely dedicated to
Marching Band.

Kristy smiles. Chang perks up. *Prepared.*

CHANG (CONT'D)

Actually, I heard there's a show
for some local bands. I think you
might like it. Everybody seems real
angry on the poster.

KRISTY

Yeah? That sounds cool. I'm super
down.

Chris beams. Matt's team calls a time-out. Play stops.

CHANG

Actually we should leave now. Don't
wanna get caught in the throng.

They stand and begin inching towards the exit, passing by the
bench of Matt's team. Big mistake.

MATT

Yo Kristy!

Heads swivel towards Chang and Kristy. They stop, frozen by
the sudden attention.

MATT (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

CHRIS
Uh, we were actually about to
leave.

MATT
No you're not. Not with a minute
left.

Matt locks onto Kristy with his hypnotic dreamy blue eyes.
Chris is left out of the staring contest.

MATT (CONT'D)
You don't want to miss this.

Kristy looks back at Chang. With no choice, Chang relents.
Whistle. The teams retake the floor. Matt smiles at Kristy
one last time.

ON COURT

1 minute left. Home team down three. Matt gets the ball and
with a quick move, scores. The crowd erupts. 1 point game!

BLEACHERS

The visitors inbound the ball.

CHANG
C'mon. Score.

Matt's team double-teams a visiting player. TURNOVER.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Damnit!

KRISTY
Who are you rooting for?

Home team ball. The crowd stands, including Kristy and
reluctantly, Chang.

ON COURT

Matt gets the ball. 30 seconds on the clock. He waves off his
teammates. *I got this.*

10...9...8... Matt makes his move. He drives, but then on a
dime, stops. Pull up jumper. The ball flies through the air
in seemingly slow motion. SWISH! HOME TEAM UP 1!

KRISTY (CONT'D)

Ohhhhhh!!!

The crowd is going nuts. 7 seconds left. The visitors, completely flustered, rushes another inbound pass. TURNOVER AGAIN! The ball finds Matt, streaking downcourt all alone. He rises...and SLAMS IT! AT THE BUZZER!

The gym explodes. People rush the court and envelop Matt, their local deity. Matt ignores the adulation, scanning the crowd for someone. Kristy.

MATT

I told you!

Kristy nods her head, in impressed agreement. Chang can only stand by as this tragedy unfolds in front of him.

CHANG

(to himself)

You have got to be kidding me.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - LATER

Teenagers pile into the massive McMansion. Solo cups litter the place, adjacent to pictures of a happy O'Neil family, both vibrating from the loud music. It's a rager.

By the doorway, Matt regales his recent triumph to guests. His mother appears above him, at the top of the spiral staircase.

MRS. O'NEIL

Honey!

MATT

(annoyed)

Yes, Susan?

MRS. O'NEIL

We're going to bed. You and your friends have fun okay? Let us know if you need anything.

MATT

Just some condoms!

Matt's yes-men giggle like fools.

MRS. O'NEIL

(amused)

Oh, you.

Mrs O'Neil retires. Matt pulls over Syd and Owen. He whispers instructions and nods over to the kitchen. In their line of sight: Kristy and Chang.

LIVING ROOM

Amongst the revelry, Chang and Kristy, sipping from solo cups. Chang, head bobbing awkwardly to the music, tries to look like he belongs. He takes too big of a sip and gags.

KRISTY

You know people here?

CHANG

Yeah, most of them are from school.
Sup Todd!

Todd walks by, zero acknowledgment. *Yikes*. Chang checks the time on his watch.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Hey, we should go soon if you still
wanna check out that show.

KRISTY

Okay. Let me just use the bathroom
real quick. Do you know where it
is?

CHANG

Yeah, down the hall, 2nd door on
the right.

Kristy breaks away. Chang pours the remnants of his drink into a plant. BZZT. A phone call from Chen. *Shoot!*

OWEN (O.S.)

Chang with the Thang!

Owen and Syd. Chang puts his phone away. They put their arms around Chang, sandwiching him with their muscular frames.

SYD

Who invited you?

CHANG

(flustered)

Uhh. I--

SYD

I'm just playin! C'mon, let's go do
a shot.

They drag him into the...

KITCHEN

Owen browses the lineup of bottom-shelf booze as Syd keeps Chang in place. Owen picks a handle of Tito's and pours a shot. He turns to Chang, his hand in a fist.

SYD

Rock, Paper, Scissors. Winner has
to down this shot.

Chang looks at the fist and sighs. *Fine, whatever.*

SYD (CONT'D)

I only throw rock.

CHANG

What?

SYD

Rock is my only move.

OWEN

It's cuz he's got a rock for a
brain.

Syd crushes a can with his forehead. Chang squints at the two of them. *Okay...* They line up their hands.

OWEN AND CHANG

Rock, Paper, Scissors!

Chang throws paper. True to his word, Syd throws rock. He downs his shot and then immediately pours double shot.

SYD

Double or nothing.

CHANG

Uhh.

SYD

C'mon man, you gotta give me a
chance to get one back.

OWEN

You already know what he's going to
throw!

People are beginning to gather around the commotion. Chang relents. He lines up his hands.

OWEN AND CHANG
Rock, Paper, Scissors!

Chang, paper. Syd, rock. Syd covers his face as the onlookers break into laughter and mockery. Owen downs the double shot, recoiling at the taste. Chang spots out the corner of his eye, Matt and Kristy outside by the pool. Alone. *Oh no*. Just as he moves, Syd grabs his arm.

OWEN
C'mon. Last round.

CHANG
No, no, no. I gotta go.

Owen pours again. It's a long pour.

OWEN
Quadruple or nothing!

A crowd gathers. Thirsty for a show.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Don't be a quitter Chang.

SYD
You already know what I'm gonna throw.
(taunting)
...Rock

Chang looks outside. Matt's hand lightly touches Kristy's elbow. *NOOOOO!*

OWEN
Chang!

Chang hesitates, suddenly unsure. He searches in Syd's half-drunk eyes for a clue. There's nothing, just empty testosterone. The crowd jeers impatiently, eager for blood.

SYD
You gonna pussy out?!

CHANG
Fine. Let's go.

SYD
I'm definitely throwing rock.

OWEN
Ready? Rock! Paper! SCISSORS!

Owen's hand comes down, clenched in a fist. ROCK. Out of Chang's hand, shoot two fingers. SCISSORS. *Disaster.*

OWEN (CONT'D)
I TOLD YA'LL! ROCK BABY!
(kisses his fist)
WOOOOO! Drink up Chang!

The crowd celebrates. A dumbstruck Chang looks into the cup, half-full with clear liquid. *He's losing time!* He downs it two gulps.

CROWD
Ohhhh!

OUTSIDE

Kids dance around a glistening pool. In the far corner, Matt whispers in Kristy's ear. Chang makes his way over but as he does, it hits him. A rush of warmth waterfalling down his face and into his body. The world blurrrrrrrrrrs.

Chang approaches, a goofy grin stretching ear to ear. Matt and Kristy pause their conversation.

CHANG
Hey guys.

MATT
Yo.

KRISTY
(concerned)
You okay?

CHANG
Perfect.
(slurring)
You know Matt. You're pretty cool.

MATT
Thanks. We were like having a private conversation though so --

CHANG
-- But I can't figure out why. I mean yeah you're tall and good looking and you wear dope clothes. But other than that. What are you? Like what's your identity. Your values? Where's your soul bro?

Kristy hides a smile. Chang notices and laughs obnoxiously. Matt is irked now.

MATT

Dude, you're wasted and you're
pissing me off.

CHANG

I got it! You can dunk. That is
pretty cool. But WHOOP-DEE-DOO
Matt, so can a lot of people!

MATT

Not you.

CHANG

Not me? Says who?

Matt laughs.

MATT

Dunk then.

Chang's smile disappears.

CHANG

I could if I tried.

MATT

What? Listen man --

CHANG

I could if I tried.

Chang gets in Matt's face. Matt is at wit's end.

MATT

No. You could not.

CHANG

Why not?

(angry)

Why not?!

KRISTY

Okay, okay, let's go.

CHANG

I bet you I can.

MATT

I'll take that bet all day.

CHANG

Yeah? What are the stakes?

MATT

I don't care. It does not matter
because you'll never, EVER be able
to dunk. It doesn't matter how hard
you try. You. will. never. DUNK.

Chang and Matt glare at each other, neither backing down.
Kristy pulls Chang away.

KRISTY

C'mon.

Jaw clenched, Chang utters one last parting remark.

CHANG

We'll see. We'll se--

Chang's ankle catches on the corner of a lounge chair. Before
Kristy can grab him, he stumbles back, right into the pool.
SPLASHHH!

PARTY CROWD

Ohhhh! Chang overboard!

Chang paddles water, trying to clear his eyes. He looks up to
see Matt, pointing a cameraphone at him.

MATT

Yo Chang, you like facials?

Chang floats backwards, revealing a pool hoop directly behind
him. Out of nowhere, a flying OWEN slams a basketball in the
hoop on top of Chang's head just before powerbombing into the
pool. A wave of water smacks Chang right in the face.

CUT TO:

INT. O'NEIL SUV - LATER

Chang, hair and clothes still wet, sits in the passenger side
of a nice SUV. Mrs. O'Neil is driving while Kristy sits in
the back. They pull up to Kristy's condo.

MRS. O'NEIL

Good night Kristy. It was nice
meeting you.

KRISTY

Nice meeting you too Susan. Thanks
for the ride.

(to Chang)

See ya.

CHANG
(weakly)
Bye.

Mrs. O'Neil pulls away. Chang reaches into his pocket for his phone. It's waterlogged. *Broken*. He reaches for something else. Two soggy tickets to: *A NIGHT OF GRUNGE*. He balls them up and sticks it back in his pocket.

MRS. O'NEIL
It's been so long Chang. How come
you don't come around the house
like you used to? We miss you.

CHANG
Just been a bit busy. With school
and stuff.

MRS. O'NEIL
Oh. I bet. Smart kid like you.

Mrs. O'Neil smiles warmly at Chang. Chang does his best to smile back.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Chen watches the Home and Gardening Network (HGTV) in her pajamas. She hears a car roll up on the driveway. She leaps to her feet.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS.

Mrs. O'Neil pulls up to Chang's house. The kitchen light is still on. Chang gulps. The front door swings open.

CHEN
Lan Lan?

CHANG
Yeah.

CHEN
Where have you been!

Mrs. O'Neil sticks her head out the window.

MRS. O'NEIL
Hi Chen!

CHEN
Hi. Susan?

MRS. O'NEIL

Hey! Sorry to worry you like this.
Matt had some friends over and they
were having too much fun and lost
track of time.

Mrs. O'Neil turns and winks at Chang as he gets out and walks
towards the house. Chen notices water dripping from his
clothes.

CHEN

You're all wet!

MRS. O'NEIL

Oh yeah, they were horsing around
and Chang fell in the pool. You
know how boys are.

CHEN

Oh I'm so sorry. Thank you for
drive him back.
(to Chang in Chinese)
Get inside.

MRS. O'NEIL

Not at all. Good seeing you! Good
night.

CHEN

Okay, good night.

She turns, a scowl on her face. *Uh-oh.*

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They enter.

CHEN

Don't move you're making a mess.

CHANG

Mom, I can clean up myself.

Chen ignores him. She starts drying him with towels.

CHEN

Why you make me worry? You say you
come volunteer today. You don't
come so then I call you. But you
don't pick up.

CHANG

Well I couldn't because...

CHEN
Because why?

Chang is at loss for words. Before he can even react, Chen reaches into his pocket and retrieves his broken phone.

CHANG
It was an accident.

CHEN
Lan Lan. Phone is a lot of money!

CHANG
I'll pay for a new one.

CHEN
You don't have money.

CHANG
Because you won't let me get a job!

Chang looks down. Chen clocks his frustration.

CHEN
Somebody push you?

CHANG
No, why would you even say that?

CHEN
Lan Lan. I'm your mother. I know when you upset.

CHANG
Well I'm not!

Chang breaks free and rushes upstairs, leaving Chen alone in the dark. She sighs, tired.

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - LATER

Chang, cleaned up, in bed on his laptop. He watches a recent tik tok posted on Matt's account.

ON SCREEN: Chang in the pool. Owen dunking on him. Kids laughing. Matt looks into camera.

MATT
Cause you just got FACCIALLLLED!

Below, hundreds of likes and thousands of views. Chang slams his laptop closed, head spinning with vengeful thoughts.

Something pulls his eyes up to the just above the foot of the bed. A poster. Kobe. Flying through the air. Fire in his eyes. The BLACK MAMBA.

The proverbial clouds part. A golden light shines down on Chang. A gift of inspiration. Courage. Chang's mouth curls into a defiant snarls. His eyes, alight.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH - CONTINUOUS

Chang marches up the school steps. Other students whisper and glance as he walks by. He keeps his chin up, determined.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Bo catches up to Chang in the hallway.

BO

Hey man, I saw what happened. Are you okay?

CHANG

No, I was humiliated.

BO

You're taking this well. Did you talk to Kristy yet?

CHANG

Not yet.

Chang stops abruptly.

CHANG (CONT'D)

The Mamba spoke to me. I finally know what I need to do.

BO

What?

CHANG

I need to dunk.

The bell rings. Bo doesn't know what to say. Chang marches on, his destiny awaiting.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

Chang approaches the doors to the school gym. He peeks in. Horsing around on the bleachers, Matt, Syd and Owen, oblivious to the woes of others.

Suddenly Chang's courage shrinks. He reaches for the door handle but then turns away. It's a retreat.

As he is about to turn the corner, something comes over him. He grits his teeth, trying to steel himself.

INT. GYM CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Chang heads for his target Matt like a guided missile.

CHANG

Matt!

The class goes silent. Matt looks up, amused.

MATT

What is it Chang?

CHANG

Stand up when I'm talking to you.

OWEN

Yo, you trippin'.

CHANG

Shut up. Sidekick.

Matt holds Owen back. He stands. He's taller than Chang by almost a foot. The phones come out.

MATT

You coming in with some strong energy today.

CHANG

You said I couldn't dunk. Well I bet you I can.

MATT

Are you joking? You're still on this?

CHANG

On the night of the last home football game, I bet you that I will dunk on that hoop right there.

Chang points to the center hoop of the gym.

MATT

That's the dumbest thing I have
ever heard.

CHANG

Is it Matt? Or, are you just afraid
cuz you're a little BITCH?

The crowd hollers. Chang is turning them. Matt doesn't like
his position challenged. He laughs it off.

MATT

Okay Chang. You want it you can
have it. What we puttin' down?

Chang looks up at Matt's luscious locks.

CHANG

Loser has to shave their head!

...The crowd is unimpressed.

ONLOOKER

That's it?

MATT

Nobody gives a shit if you shave
your head Chang.

CHANG

Well, then...Loser ALSO...has to
run around the track. Butt. Ass.
Naked.

Nods in the crowd, that build to cheers in favor. Matt scoffs
and shakes his head. Chang stares back, dead serious...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS STUDENTS' IG/TIKTOK

Different POVs of Chang's lunchroom challenge. The moment is
already immortalized. At the end, Chang and Matt shake hands.
The deal is sealed. The crowd reacts. Shit is LIT.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLEACHERS - LATER

Bo watches the montage of clips while the Marching Band gets ready for practice. He's in disbelief.

BO
(hyped)
Bro, I'm getting chills just
watching this!

CHANG
My legs were shaking like crazy!
Could you tell?

BO
Hell no. You held it down!

They pound fists. Chang turns and sees Kristy, approaching while playing a snare roll on her drum. Chang straightens up. Kristy stops right in front of him.

CHANG
Hey.

KRISTY
Hey.

CHANG
I, uh, just wanted to --

KRISTY
-- Yeah, yeah. You better dunk this
god damn basketball.

Kristy gives Chang a look that could sail a thousand ships. Chang, devoid of words, nods. Bo sticks his head in.

BO
Oh, he will.

Kristy smiles.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK - 12 WEEKS UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

EXT. STREET - DAY

Chang flies through the air, dunking repeatedly on a personal basketball hoop, the kind that are portable. He double pumps, he 360s, he throws it off the backboard to himself. He looks graceful, strong. It looks easy.

We pull back to see that the hoop is only 8 feet tall. Chang is playing against some neighborhood children and showing no mercy at all. He slams it one last time, hanging on it and yelling like Tarzan. The little kids scream with him.

Across the street, Bo watches awkwardly.

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chang and Bo watch a video on youtube.

ONSCREEN: The video is labelled 5'5" *WHITE BOY TEACHES YOU HOW TO DUNK*. 1.2 Million views. MikeyG (24), white, short but athletic expounds on his "dunk journey". We see a quick montage of MikeyG throwing down a series of very impressive dunks intercut with some tips and workouts.

Chang jots down notes, enraptured. MikeyG wraps it up.

MIKEYG (O.S.)

-- some people are just born with bounce. For the rest of us, we gotta grind a little bit more. But I promise you, if you put your mind to it, you too can dunk. --

MikeyG turns and dunks it two handed. *Fin*. Bo and Chang are fired up.

BO

5'5"!

CHANG

I've got 3 inches on this dude. If he can throw a reverse two-hander...

BO

You could probably do a windmill!

Chang gets up. He grabs the ball for his toy hoop.

CHANG

A tomahawk!

BO

Between the legs!

CHANG

On Matt's stupid head!

Chang slams it.

CHANG AND BO
Let's goooooooooo.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - POUNDING PLATES

- Chang fired up. He does jump rope. He does box jumps.
- Bo cheers him on.
- Chang does lunges with weights. He checks his notes.
- Chang finishes a set and screams. He high fives the shit out of Bo.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The alarm wakes Chang up. He groans, his body sore everywhere. Finally, he sits up and tries to stand...only to collapse to the floor, his legs two limp noodles.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

The marching band reaches the climax of their last song. The formations are tighter, the music is crisp. The band is looking good.

Playing from a chair on the sidelines is Chang, banging away on his drum.

A BIT LATER

The band wraps up. Chang chews on some kind of jerky. Bo comes over.

BO
How you feeling now?

CHANG
I think I'll walk again soon.

BO
What is that?

CHANG
Deer jerky. You want some?

BO

Psh. Duh.

Chang hands Bo some deer jerky.

CHANG

Joe Rogan says deer are the super-athletes of animals. 90% fast-twitch muscle. It's like if you ate Usain Bolt.

Bo chews. *Not bad.* Kristy comes over.

KRISTY

Bo says your butt hurts.

CHANG

It's better now.

KRISTY

C'mon, walk me home then.

Kristy turns. Bo gives Chang a thumbs up. Chang jumps up and awkwardly hobble steps behind Kristy.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Kristy and Chang walk and talk. Their chemistry is easier, more familiar now.

KRISTY

...You don't know the song *Rape Me*?

CHANG

I...do not. How does it go?

KRISTY

(sings)

Raaaaape meeeeeee. Raaaaape meeeee.

CHANG

Wow. Catchy.

Kristy laughs.

KRISTY

So how's the dunking going?

CHANG

Good. If I add like 1/3 of an inch per day, I'm all set.

KRISTY
All this over a beef...

CHANG
Somebody's got to shut Matt's
stupid face up. He thinks he can do
and say anything he wants.

CHANG (CONT'D)
That why you came over that night
then? When Matt and I were talking?

CHANG (CONT'D)
Uhh...

KRISTY
Were you afraid he was gonna seduce
me?

CHANG
No...

Chang tenses up, afraid to say the wrong thing. Kristy smiles
mischievously.

KRISTY
You're such a kid.
(beat)
You pull it off though.

CHANG
Thanks. I guess.

They stop in front of her condo.

KRISTY
Wanna see my drum set?

INT. KRISTY'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

Kristy and Chang enter the duplex. The living room is filled
with moving boxes, waiting to be unpacked. They hustle up the
stairs to...

INT. KRISTY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kristy turns on the lights. It's a mess of rock band posters
and clothes, lit by colored string lights. At the center, a
shiny, black full drum kit.

CHANG
Wow.

KRISTY

My Dad got it for me. He used to play too. In a band.

CHANG

He doesn't play anymore?

KRISTY

He's dead. Cancer.

CHANG

Oh, I'm sorry.

KRISTY

Don't be, it happens.

CHANG

Were you...close?

KRISTY

Yeah.

(beat)

I used to fight a lot with my Mom and my sister but now that he's gone we're all kinda close. Funny how that stuff works.

Chang takes a quiet beat.

KRISTY (CONT'D)

How about you? What's your family like?

CHANG

Um, my parents divorced a while ago. I live with my Mom now. We're cool I guess.

KRISTY

You don't talk to your Dad anymore?

CHANG

Not really. Whatever though, I'm over it.

KRISTY

How about your Mom? You ever wonder if she's lonely?

The question freezes Chang. He hasn't. He looks up and the two lock vulnerable eyes, their faces inches away from each other. Chang, nervous, looks away.

CHANG
Let's hear something.

KRISTY
Okay.

Kristy gets up and gets behind her drum kit. She starts to play. She's amazing. Butterflies flutter in Chang's chest.

OVER BLACK - 10 WEEKS UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Bo and Chang, wearing hospital Volunteer shirts, push meal trolleys down the sterile hall. They stop at each room to hand out meals to waiting patients.

CHANG
I can't reach rim.

BO
How is that possible? Last week you could.

CHANG
I know.

BO
Maybe you're tired.

CHANG
I'm only 16, how can I be tired?

BO
You know what might work?

CHANG
Steroids?

BO
Not jerking off.

CHANG
What?

BO
It's called No-Fap. You refrain from jerking off and it's supposed to give you heightened clarity and strength.

CHANG

So what, I turn into Beast from X-Men?

BO

He does jump really high.

Chang scoffs. They turn towards opposite directions.

BO (CONT'D)

You wanna hang later?

CHANG

I can't, I'm finally getting my new phone.

They nod goodbye. Chang continues down the hallway. Suddenly he stops. Further down, an annoyed NURSES SUPERVISOR reprimands Chen with patronizing body language. Chen just takes it before being sent off. As Chen walks away, the supervisor turns and shakes her head at some colleagues. They snicker. Chang catches it all.

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Chang, wearing a hospital Volunteer shirt, leans over a patient, TOM, (82), effusive despite his frail appearance, and sets down a hot lunch. Chang lifts the cover revealing a very unappealing meal.

CHANG

Ta-da.

TOM

Now this. This is a 5-star meal right here.

(to Klaus)

Look Klaus. Look upon this feast.

Tom's visitor, KLAUS (75), cold but dignified, fixes the napkin tucked under Tom's chin. He gives Chang a look.

KLAUS

It looks cold.

TOM

Like your heart.

Tom looks at Klaus and pointedly chews some food like a rabbit. Klaus rolls his eyes, much to Tom's amusement.

TOM (CONT'D)

As fun as it is to deliver meals to us old people, don't you think you should be outside young man? It's Saturday.

CHANG

I don't know how to break this to you but kids don't hang out outside anymore.

TOM

That's absurd. Klaus, I order you to take Chang up in that little plane of yours immediately.

CHANG

(impressed)

You have a plane?

KLAUS

(modest)

It's small. 4 people max.

CHANG

I would be super down!

(beat)

I don't think my mom would be okay with it though.

TOM

Nonsense. I'll have a talk with her. In fact --

A knock on the door. In walks Chen, dressed in nurse's scrubs. She gives Chang a look, before pulling back the curtain.

CHEN

Hi Tom. How are you feeling today?

(to Chang)

Ready to go?

Chang nods.

TOM

Chen, every time I see your son, he looks more and more like you. And so handsome and tall.

CHEN

(modest)

Oh, you're too nice. I wish he was taller.

Chang diddles his thumbs. *Nice.*

TOM

Well he deserves a reward for working so hard on a Saturday. So we have decided that Klaus is going to take you and your son up on his plane for a nice little tour of our great state.

CHEN

Plane? Oh no no no. Too scary.

TOM

You'll be fine. Klaus was an ace pilot for the Germans.

Klaus gives Tom a dirty look.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm joking.

CHEN

I don't want to trouble Klaus.

TOM

It's no trouble. Your son already expressed his enthusiasm. It would be our pleasure.

Chen gives Chang a scolding look. Klaus clocks it.

CHEN

Thank you so much but we really cannot accept. It's too much trouble.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

Chang waits as Chen says good bye to Tom and Klaus. Chen grabs Chang's arm as she steps out.

CHEN

Tom and Klaus are old. Why do you want to trouble them?

CHANG

They invited me. All I said was that it would be cool.

CHEN
You don't understand what is
manners. Let's go. I already in
trouble for leaving with you.

Chen turns to leave. Chang, frustrated, follows her.

INT. AT&T STORE - CONTINUOUS

Chen enters the strip mall phone shop, Chang in tow.
Immediately, DEVIN (32) the African American sales rep,
confident with glasses and a crispy fade, comes over. He even
makes the AT&T staff shirt look good.

DEVIN
Good afternoon! My name is Devin.
How can I help you guys?

CHANG
Hi. I need a new phone.

DEVIN
Well we got the newest models right
over --

CHEN
He don't need too new.

DEVIN
Oh. I hear that. Let's take a look
over here.

Devin shows them some mid-tier phones. He's got the whole
pitch down. Never have phones been so enthusiastically sold.
Chen gets a page on her hospital beeper. Something stressful.
She takes out her credit card and gives it to Chang.

CHEN
I have to go back to work. Can you
get yourself home?

CHANG
Yeah.

Chen excuses herself. Chang looks at Devin.

CHANG (CONT'D)
(points to nice phones)
I guess it's time...to go back over
there.

DEVIN
Word? You not gonna do your Momma
like that are you?

CHANG
(plays it off)
Of course not. Heh heh.

A BIT LATER

Devin rings up Chang's new mid-tier phone up. Chang catches a glimpse of Devin's desktop background.

ON SCREEN: A younger Devin in a basketball kit, soaring through the air, ball cocked back, two helpless defenders below him.

CHANG (CONT'D)
That's you?

DEVIN
Yessir. Check this out.

Devin takes out his phone. He plays a video on youtube labelled DEVIN ADAMS HIGHLIGHT REEL. Clips play of Devin breaking ankles, splashing jumpers and lastly, dunking on heads, over a cheesy hip-hop track. Neither the production value of the video nor the competition he's playing against are particularly high quality but Devin's passion and love for the game are obvious. The video ends with Devin lifting an MVP trophy.

CHANG
What league was this?

DEVIN
Romania. Back to back champs baby.

Devin pulls out a chain with two rings on it. Chang is impressed.

CHANG
Sick.

DEVIN
You hoop? You look like you hoop.

CHANG
Really?

DEVIN
I know a baller when I see one. You
play for a team?

CHANG
I just play for fun.

DEVIN
Well, let me know if you wanna get serious and need some training. I got this youtube channel where I teach some skills or what not.

CHANG
That's cool.
(beat)
Do you teach how to dunk?

DEVIN
Why? You trying to dunk?

Devin laughs. He catches himself when he sees Chang's face.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
Word? Okay.
(thinks)
How much height you need?

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH - LATER

The school is empty. Chang and Bo wait by the outside entrance to the gym. No one is around. A beat up Ford Taurus pulls up. Devin steps out.

DEVIN
Sup.

CHANG
Hey, this is Bo.

Bo and Devin greet each other. Devin checks his watch. Suddenly the back door of the gym is open by a JANITOR (52), bald with a grey beard.

JANITOR
My man Doc Devin!

INT. GYM - A BIT LATER

Chang, eyes focused, gets low and explodes into a sprint. He takes two big steps and LEAPS, cocking the ball back and stretching his body as high as he can...

The ball grazes the net, giving it a gentle tickle. Bo makes a face. *Yeesh*. Devin processes the task at hand.

DEVIN

Well first of all, your jump mechanics are all wrong. You're not really generating much power from here and here.

Devin points to Chang's hips and core.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

You're also only bringing the ball halfway up. Try this.

Devin corrects Chang's dunking motion. Chang lines up again and jumps! This time, the ball hits the rim. It's a first.

BO

Holy crap!

CHANG

That was like a 6 inch difference!

DEVIN

Yup.

CHANG

So what do you think, could I dunk?

DEVIN

(shrugs)

I mean you're probably still growing, so if you're consistent with working out, half a year, a year, I don't see why not.

CHANG

I need to do it in 10 weeks.

DEVIN

Say what?

Chang looks at Bo. Bo takes out his phone and plays the cafeteria clips for Devin. Chang laying down the gauntlet, Matt accepting, people cheering. Devin's eyes grow big.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Damn.

CHANG

I need help man. I'll do anything.

Devin looks at Chang sympathetically. He scratches his chin.

DEVIN
You know what. I like experiments.
I'm in.

CHANG
Really?!

DEVIN
How much you gonna pay me?

Chang and Bo look at each other. The thought did not cross Chang's mind.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
You thought I was gonna coach you
for free?

CHANG
Yeah for your youtube channel.

DEVIN
My brother. If you wanna dunk in 10
weeks. We gotta do this right. That
means mornings, evenings, Saturday
and Sunday. And I can't do all that
for free.

CHANG
I don't have any money.

DEVIN
Well, unless you wanna be butt ass
naked in front of the whole
school...you need to get a job.

CHANG
Yeah but...my mom won't let me.

Devin is in disbelief.

DEVIN
Your mom won't let you get a job?
That doesn't even make sense.

BO
It's an Asian thing.

DEVIN
Well. If you want me to be
committed, I got to know you're
committed too.

Chang weighs his options. He sticks out his hand.

CHANG
I'm committed.

They shake.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE FROM BO'S CAMERA

1) EXT. STREET - PRE-DAWN

Bo's camera phone is framed up on Devin, in the middle of an empty suburban street.

BO
Okay. I'm rolling. Start walking.

Bo follows Devin, coming around very cinematically. Devin's breath mists in the cold morning air.

BO (CONT'D)
Oooo your breath looks great. Now
rub your hands together.

Devin rubs his hands together.

BO (CONT'D)
Perfect.

2) EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Outside Chang's house. Devin looks into camera and points at his watch. It reads: 5:05 AM.

DEVIN
It's day one. And my dude already
late.

Devin shakes his head.

3) EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Chang finally emerges, groggy as hell. Bo zooms in on a Pop-Tart in his hand.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
Well look who decided to join.

Chang eyes the camera, self-conscious.

CHANG
 Hey can I talk to you about
 something? Since I'm paying you do
 we have to do this youtube thing?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The three stand in the middle of the street. We see Bo's
 camera setup, a go-pro on a handheld stabilizer.

DEVIN
 It's for my VLOG. We're gonna
 document your whole journey.

CHANG
 Yeah but I don't want Matt and his
 friends to see this. They're gonna
 trash me.

DEVIN
 If you can't be in a little youtube
 video how are you gonna dunk in
 front of actual people under all
 that pressure.

CHANG
 That's different. I'm gonna be able
 to dunk by then. Right now I'm just
 gonna look dumb.

DEVIN
 That's the point. To see your
 progress. Comparing yourself to an
 ideal future self that hasn't
 happened yet doesn't get you
 anywhere. What does is comparing
 yourself to who you were yesterday.

Chang looks wary.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
 The haters are always gonna hate
 but you, you gotta recognize your
 own growth.

CHANG
 You're right.

DEVIN
 You're gonna show Matt he doubted
 the wrong dude right?

CHANG

Yeah.

DEVIN

Alright, then. Let's put your desire out in the world. Who are you and what are you trying to do?

CUT TO:

POV FROM BO'S CAMERA

Bo frames up Chang who is obviously camera shy.

CHANG

Hi, I'm Chang. I'm 16. 5 foot 8 inches. And I, uh, I'm trying to dunk a basketball. Hopefully.

DEVIN (O.S.)

Cut. Cut. Where's your swag man?

Chang cracks a feeble smile.

CHANG

Long gone.

Bo pans to Devin who looks into camera.

DEVIN

We gonna work on that.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF DEVIN'S WORKOUT PLAN

We intercut into each scene some bits of footage from Bo's camera, injecting each scene with some candid moments.

- Chang and Devin doing a morning run. They do a playground workout. Sit-ups, push-ups, dips etc. At the end, Chang hands Devin some cash. He counts it.

- Chang and Kristy walk and talk, while Chang holds on the leash of over 6 dogs. He returns one to its owner and gets paid some cash.

- Bo edits their first video. They upload it and wait for their first comment. Its: lol. Chang throws up his hands. Devin and Bo try to make him feel better.

- They go lift weights. Devin fixes Chang's technique.

- They go to the supermarket. They buy a ton of chicken breasts. Chang sneaks some deer jerky in there.

- We see Chang struggle. He struggles to lift the weight. He struggles to reach the rim. He can't eat anymore chicken. He throws up after overworking himself. He wants to quit. Devin gets in his face. Bo gets in his face.

BO

WHAT. WOULD. KOBE. DO??

Chang digs deep. He finds something. He gets up.

- Bo directs and edits. He's getting real slick. He uploads the videos on Devin's channel. They're getting more views. More positive comments.

- Marching Band practice. Chang falls asleep while marching. Bo pushes him awake, which startles him into randomly banging on his drum. Mr. Ryan chews him out, while Kristy has a laugh.

- Chen, on the couch, watches HGTV after work. Chang comes home carrying his duffel bag. He pops in for a hello before retiring to his room. Chen watches him curiously.

- We track Chang's progress through Bo's videos. He's preparing his own meals. Following his training plan. Lifting higher weights. More views. More positive comments.

- Kristy and Chang at a grunge concert. Kristy is going crazy, headbanging to the music while Chang awkwardly tries to match her energy. Kristy grabs him and violently shakes him. He loosens up. They jump up and down, thrashing as hard as they can to the music.

- Crack of dawn. Chen, just out of bed, looks outside her window. She sees Chang doing stretches before breaking off into a run.

- People are starting to notice at school. He has a more confident air about him. In the locker room, Chang takes off his shirt, revealing a new six pack. Matt and his friends see. Chang meets their gaze. He FLEXES on 'em.

- At school Chang stops to look at something posted outside the gym. It's a signup sheet for the BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND COURTS - DAY

Chang readies himself. He explodes and leaps, his muscles flexing tight, his form now graceful and powerful. He grabs the rim and hangs on it for a celebratory moment as Devin claps and Bo records. Chang drops down, beaming.

Behind them on the main court, a group of adults play pick-up full court. The competition is solid. One of the players comes over.

PICK-UP PLAYER

Yo, ya'll wanna run? We need two.

Devin eyes a wary Chang. He nods.

DEVIN

Lets do it.

(to Chang)

C'mon bruh. I got your back.

Chang reluctantly follows Devin. They get in the game. Chang is the smallest on the court and quickly gets lost in the flow of the game. His defender bullies him. The other team is dominating.

Devin decides that he's had enough. He begins to take over like the Two time Romanian League MVP that he is. He makes a point to keep feeding Chang the ball. Chang gets the ball behind the three point line. He shoots...and finally makes one.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Nice bucket!

Chang is injected with some confidence. He wakes up. He starts to make more nice plays. We see that he can ball. Devin and Chang's team come back and win the game. Devin daps Chang and gives him a knowing look.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Told you! I know a baller when I see one.

Chang is beginning to understand.

CUT TO:

OVER BLACK - 1 WEEK UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

A CLIP FROM DEVIN'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

A sweaty Chang sits under a tree. Devin acts as an interviewer.

DEVIN (O.S.)
One week out. How you feeling
Chang?

CHANG
I feel good.

Chang's aura feels totally different. Relaxed, more comfortable in his own skin.

DEVIN (O.S.)
You've come a long way.

CHANG
Yeah. Not there yet though. Still
off by this much.

With his fingers, Chang gestures a distance of about 2 inches. He smiles and stands up.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Almost there.

ON SCREEN: we see a dramatic increase in views, followers and comments from previously.

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is quaint but warm and welcoming. Trophies, shoes, jerseys, team photos, are proudly displayed around the house. The entirety of Devin's hoop dreams.

Chang and Devin watch old highlights of Devin.

DEVIN
Watch this, this is my go-to right
here.

ON SCREEN: Young Devin crosses his man and explodes to the basket and slams it.

CHANG
Ooooooooooh!

DEVIN
In yo face!

CHANG
Man, that must feel so good to do
in a game.

DEVIN

It's unbelievable. It's a spiritual experience man. Everybody in the room gets hit with this energy. They're all feeling the same thing. And it's from you.

Chang nods, trying to imagine.

CHANG

Did you ever try to make the league?

DEVIN

You know I did. After college I had a try out or two. I worked my ass off. Nobody worked as hard as me. But it didn't work out.

CHANG

Why not?

DEVIN

I don't know. Sometimes no matter how bad you want something, you just can't quite get there.

Chang nods, contemplatively. Devin notices.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

But, you won't know unless you try. And a lot people don't try or give up before they realize how close they were. But the most important thing to remember is that no matter what happens, to keep going.

(beat)

Just look at me. You think I'm gonna be a sales rep at AT&T forever? Hell no. I'm gonna be manager by next year and that's if I haven't successfully monetized my youtube channel to the point of it paying all my bills. You know what I'm saying.

CHANG

Yeah.

DEVIN

Let me ask you a question. Why do you want to dunk so bad? And don't tell me it's just to stick it to Matt.

Chang ponders it for a long time.

CHANG

(honest)

I don't know. I just know that I
have to do it.

DEVIN

Word.

The front door opens. It's Devin's Mom, MAE (60), witty,
gregarious with a unique sense of style.

MAE

Why are you still in my house?

DEVIN

Because I love my Momma and I wish
to spend more time with her.

MAE

And that's why you still working at
AT&T and hanging out with high
school kids.

Boom, roasted.

MAE (CONT'D)

Hey Chang. You hungry?

CHANG

I'm okay Mrs. Adams. Thank you.

DEVIN

I'm starving.

MAE

Nobody was talking to you.

Mae leans down and Devin gives her a kiss on the cheek. Chang
smiles, a bit envious.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chang cooks dinner for two. It's an upgrade from his usual
stew. The front door opens. Chen, coming back from work.

CHANG

Hey Mom. You hungry?

Chen comes over and takes a look.

CHEN
When you'd learn how to do this?

CHANG
Been practicing.

Chen sits down, she shrugs her shoulders, trying to release the tension. It's obvious it's been a rough day. She takes a bite.

CHANG (CONT'D)
You like it?

CHEN
It's a little salty. But it's good.
Thanks.

Chen smiles. Chang takes what he can get.

CHEN (CONT'D)
How's school?

CHANG
Good.

CHEN
You seem very busy these days.

CHANG
Yeah. I felt like I could take on
some new things, so I have.

CHEN
Like what?

CHANG
Like you know. Band. Volunteering.
Working out. Making some money here
and there.

CHEN
You have a job?

Chang hesitates. *Shit.*

CHANG
Yeah, but it's just a part time
thing. Just to make some money.

CHEN
For what?

CHANG

I dunno, myself? Is it that big of a deal?

CHEN

I'm just asking questions.

The tone of the conversation shifts. Chang is already flustered.

CHANG

(getting agitated)

Yeah but what are you getting at?

CHEN

I just want to know what are you doing. Is that okay?

CHANG

Yeah, but it sounds like you're implying something. Like whatever I'm doing is a waste of my time.

CHEN

I didn't say that.

CHANG

But that's what you meant!

Chen looks up at her son who is suddenly heated.

CHEN

Why are you getting angry. I'm just asking you.

CHANG

Because everything you say feels like a judgment.

CHEN

How can I judge you. I am your mother. I know you.

CHANG

Oh really? Tell me then, who am I?

CHEN

Lan Lan. Every since you little, you always so sensitive about what other people think --

CHANG

-- What does that have to do with anything!

CHEN

Because it make you very easy get upset! You always focus on what other people think, not yourself. If you care too much about other people thinking about you, you always be disappointed!

Chang is speechless. Finally...

CHANG

What are you even talking about?

CHEN

I'm just look out for you, okay?

Chang looks down at the food he's cooked. He shakes his head.

CHANG

Whatever.

Chang storms upstairs.

CUT TO:

OVER BLACK - 1 DAY UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Big painted banners hang, commemorating the last home game of the season. On the court, Chang, now muscular and lean, leaps with the ball in hand. He misses the dunk but its close. He goes again and again, but each time it's a close failure.

Chang's got a number of fans. Kristy, Bo, Devin, some of his bandmates. They cheer him on, but it's not enough to quell his frustration.

It's time to go. Devin stands up and hands Chang a box.

DEVIN

We got you something.

Chang open its up. It's a gold and purple lakers jersey but instead of BRYANT it says CHANG on the back. Chang is grateful. Devin puts his hand on Chang's shoulder.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

You're there. Tomorrow, the adrenaline is gonna give you that extra bounce that you need

Chang nods and hugs his friends.

BO

I can't wait to see Matt's face.

Chang locks eyes with Kristy. She nods.

CUT TO:

CHANG'S VLOG - LATER

Chang finishes one last recording from his bedroom. Chang is reflective. Trying to be brave.

CHANG

Tomorrow's the big day. I'm still not hitting it. But I'm really close. Whatever happens. I'm really grateful for everything that's happened because of this. It's been an incredible journey. Wish me luck.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chang uploads the video. He takes a moment to process. Suddenly a new comment. "You ain't dunking, bruh."

Chang clenches his jaw, turmoil in his eyes.

EXT. SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Chang, face obscured by his hoodie, sneaks towards the empty school. He lifts himself up a wall and climbs in through a window.

After a moment, he opens the gym door to the outside. He retrieves a step ladder and brings it into the gym.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

The Mount Davis Marching Band performs their final home halftime show. It's near flawless. The crowd loves it.

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

Chang looks up at the clock. The game is almost over. It's time.

He gets up. His fellow bandmates wish him good luck. Even Mr. Ryan gives him a handshake of encouragement. Finally he passes Melissa, the Tuba player.

MELISSA

Hey Chang. Don't worry. You'll get it.

Chang nods. He turns one last time to his bandmates and salutes them.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - A BIT LATER

Devin is already waiting. As are Syd, Owen and Matt.

DEVIN

(smiles)

You ready big man?

Owen comes over with his phone out, already recording.

OWEN

Yo Chang. It's not too late to back out man. Matt says he'll let you go scott free. All you got to do is say to camera you're a quitter.

DEVIN

Man get the hell --

CHANG

-- I got this.

(to Owen)

I'm not quitting. And your boy is getting his head shaved.

Owen nods and goes back to his side. Chang takes off his band uniform. Underneath, his friends' gift, his custom purple and gold jersey. As he changes, curious people start to filter in. Chang starts to do his warmup stretches, while his eyes wander.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Where's Kristy and Bo?

DEVIN

They'll be here.

SYD
Yo, lets go already!

The gym is half full now. There's an impatient murmur in the crowd. People have their phones out. Unsure of what to do, Chang takes a deep breath and approaches the hoop, looking up at it one last time. Matt meets him at the center.

MATT
I'll give you three tries.

CHANG
I'm only gonna need one.

Matt nods and takes his place in the crowd. It's almost quiet. Chang looks at Devin who nods back. He lines up and...

He pauses. In the distance, the faint sound of a snare drum roll, coming closer and closer. Heads turn. Suddenly the unmistakable opening riff of Seven Nation Army is heard, building and building until the doors of the gym swing open, revealing the entire marching band, led by Kristy and Bo.

The crowd parts as music fills the entire gym. The band lines up in block formation as the song concludes. Collectively, they salute Chang. Chang looks at his fellow bandmates, glowing with appreciation. He looks at Bo and Kristy, his best friends. They nod at him.

An energized Chang looks back to the basket. *I can do this.*

KRISTY
...Chang. Chang. Chang.

The crowd begins to join in.

CROWD
Chang. Chang. CHANG. CHANG!

The whole crowd is on his side now. Everyone is chanting except for Matt and his friends. They shrink. Chang focuses on the rim, recalling everything Devin taught him. He sprints forward.

Time slows. Its quiet. Chang explodes forward, his now muscular frame firing with maximum power and efficiency. He hits his final step and leaps. He raises the ball high, with one hand...

And SLAMS IT!!! He drops to the ground in disbelief. The gym explodes and he's surrounded. Kristy and Bo embrace him. Owen and Syd are slack jawed.

Chang pushes his way through the crowd to meet Matt in the middle. Matt looks down at Chang, looking up at him with a smirk. Matt smiles, and offer his hand. They dap.

MATT

Props.

Chang nods in appreciation.

ONLOOKER

Shave his head. Shave his head!

CROWD

Shave his head! Shave his head!

SHAVE HIS HEAD!

A chair and clippers are brought. Matt sits down and the clippers are handed to Chang. The phones are out. He teases Matt with clippers, bringing them close and backing away, close and then backing away. Chang is really savoring this moment.

CHANG

Oh does little baby Matt want the
Airplane?

Finally in one fell swoop. He buzzes the entirety of Matt's head, right down the middle of the scalp, Full Metal Jacket style. The crowd erupts as Chang buzzes haphazardly across Matt's head. Chang lifts the clump of hair like a barbarian lifting the decapitated head of a vanquished foe.

CHANG (CONT'D)

RAAAAAA.

Matt gestures to the crowd to bring it on. Even he looks like he's enjoying himself.

Chang finishes. Matt gets up. We hear more than a smattering of whistles. With tantalizing intent, he lifts his shirt, exposing his lean, muscular chest. He starts to unbuckle his belt, pushing through the crowd as he drops his pants and then as he nears the exits, his drawers. Girls cheer and give chase, eager to get a good look, or even better, a good snap. Matt sprints out into the darkness.

Center court, Chang gets his props from everybody. He's glowing. Devin approaches. They hug.

DEVIN

My man.

CHANG

I don't want to stop. I want to try
out for the basketball team.

DEVIN

(nods)

Let's do it.

Lastly, Kristy. The two look at each other. Suddenly
something comes over Chang.

CHANG

You wanna get out of here?

Kristy nods. He grabs her hand and pulls her away from the
crowd.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They run through the dark hallway, laughing.

INT. BAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They enter the dark room, hormones raging. Chang pulls Kristy
close.

CHANG

My heart can't stop pounding.

KRISTY

I can tell.

They look into each others eyes. Even now, Chang is nervous.
But he's different too. He knows what he should do.

CHANG

I'm really into you.

KRISTY

Prove it.

Chang closes his eyes and leans in. They kiss. Fireworks.

CUT TO:

SOCIAL MEDIA MONTAGE - CHANG'S DUNK

A series of clips from different angles, different accounts
of Chang's dunk. The drama is all there. The crowd, the band
entrance, the chant, the dunk, the haircut. It's wild.

We see in the final clip, that it's from Bo's camera. We see Devin and Kristy celebrate as Chang is rushed. They push through the crowd to get to Chang. Finally we see the kid of the moment at the center, surrounded, a huge smile on his face.

The views and comments rise on Devin's account at a rapid fire pace.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM

Chang is blissfully asleep. Next to him, his phone buzzes repeatedly from notifications and messages. Finally, he comes to. He looks at his phone and jumps up. His video already has tens of thousands of views.

He opens his dunking video and scrolls to the comments. It's a flood of positive messages: *The kid did it; I'm inspired, no cap; yo he get bounce for real; I'm crying right now.*

Chang raises his hands in the air.

CHANG

YES!

Chang can't stop smiling.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Chang struts through the school like a king. As he passes, other students shout props and give him pats on his back. This is everything he's ever wanted.

Bo catches up to him.

BO

Dude! Did you see the stats on yesterday's video?

CHANG

Yes! Do you think it's gonna go viral?

BO

Bigger than viral bro. Look at this.

Bo takes out his phone and shows a snapshot from the video of Chang surrounded by his classmates who are adoring him. Captioned below: *Me when I take out some gum in school.*

BO (CONT'D)
You're gonna be a MEME!

CHANG
Did I do it? Am I actually, finally
cool?

BO
You've been cool Chang. Now just
everyone else sees too.

Chang grins, playfully.

CHANG
Especially Kristy.

BO
Nooo! Give me the deets.

CHANG
Sorry man, I don't kiss and tell.

BO
Ya'll kissed?!

The bell rings.

CHANG
I'll tell you later.

BO
Bet!

The two friends dap. Chang continues on.

INT. GYM CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Chang enters. Everyone starts to clap. Even Matt and his
friends.

BENNEVIDO
Chang. I heard about your great
feat. I'm proud of you man.
(to class)
Look at this dude. Look at him! All
muscle.

Bennevido pokes Chang on the shoulders and arms, playfully.

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)
You gonna try out for the team this
year or what?

CHANG
Thinking about it.

BENNEVIDO
(to Matt)
You better watch out Matt. He
already snatched all your hair.

Chang gives Matt a look. As class starts, Chang turns his attention to the center hoop, perhaps to relive his crowning moment. But then a reminder comes flashing into his memory. The rim.

Bennevido takes out basketballs for shooting practice. Matt grabs a ball and starts to shoot. CLANG, back rim. He shoots another, another CLANG. Other students shoot, everybody is missing.

MATT
Damn I'm off today.

OWEN
Must be the hair.

Owen and Syd burst out laughing but Chang is sweating bullets. A frustrated Matt misses again. He grabs a ball and runs in for a dunk. He slams it HARD...and pulls the rim right off. The class gasps. Bennevido runs over.

BENNEVIDO
Are you okay?!

MATT
Yeah. I think so.

Matt gets to his feet.

SYD
Yo Chang, I think you dunked too
hard yesterday bro!

The class laughs. Chang cracks a smile. Relieved. Suddenly, the door to the gym opens. It's the PRINCIPAL ELLIOT (45), professorial and a bit intimidating. Her eyes lock on Chang.

PRINCIPAL
Chang! Can you step outside for a
second?

Chang runs over, slightly concerned. He steps into the hallway. Waiting outside with the principal, a LOCAL NEWS CREW.

CUT TO:

LOCAL NEWS REPORT

A snippet of Chang's dunk plays, above a headline banner:
 LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL BET GOES VIRAL. The video cuts to a
 REPORTER standing in front of MOUNT DAVIS HIGH.

REPORTER

...Not willing to back down from
 his classmate's challenge, he began
 a rigorous three month training
 regime in hopes of achieving his
 life long ambition of dunking.

We cut to the REPORTER interviewing Chang.

CHANG

...It was really tough. There were
 a lot of times I wanted to quit but
 every time I did, I'd say to myself
 "what would kobe do, what would
 kobe do."...

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM

We pull back from the news report to show it playing off a
 TV. Watching are Chang, Tom and Klaus. Tom grabs Chang's arm
 and gives it a squeeze.

TOM

Look at you! You're a star. Such a
 natural on camera. Right Klaus?

Klaus nods.

CHANG

You're not gonna believe this but
 ESPN saw the video too. They want
 me to come for a special segment!

TOM

ESPN! That's amazing!

Klaus nods.

CHANG

In New York!

TOM

New York! Klaus!

Klaus nods.

TOM (CONT'D)
KLAUS! NEW YORK!

Klaus cracks a smile. Tom and Chang laugh.

TOM (CONT'D)
(shakes head)
Forgive him, he needs an oil
change.
(beat)
Your mother must be ecstatic.

CHANG
Actually I haven't told her yet.

TOM
Why not? She'll be so proud.

CHANG
I don't know. I don't think so.
She'll probably think its silly.

TOM
What? No way. She talks about you
all the time. She's very proud of
you.

CHANG
(surprised)
Really?

Klaus takes in the boy's reaction. A knock at the door. Chen.

CHEN
Hello, everybody!

TOM
Chen! Do you know what amazing
thing your son did?!

Chen raises her eyebrow. Chang shrinks.

TOM (CONT'D)
Tell h--

Klaus jumps up and squeezes Tom's hand.

KLAUS
-- don't take all of Chang's glory
now. I'm sure he wants to tell his
mother on his own. Right Chang?

They turn and look at Chang.

CHEN
Tell me what?

CHANG
I'll tell you later.

She gives Chang a look, a bit suspicious.

CHEN
Okay.

TOM
You'll be very, very impressed.

CHEN
(joking)
Tom you are too nice. Now he don't
want to go help other patients!

CHANG
I guess that's my signal. Bye guys.

Chang walks out as Chen checks on Tom. Klaus follows Chang out.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHANG
Thanks for that.

KLAUS
Of course.

Chang smiles and turns to leave.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
Your mother does talk about you a
lot.

Chang turns to look at Klaus, who smiles warmly. Chang nods.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chang on Facetime with Kristy.

CHANG
...their producer said I'd be on
the Tuesday segment. Principal
Elliot already gave me permission
to skip!

KRISTY
Your Mom going to take you?

CHANG
Nah, Devin.

Chang grins, extra cheeky.

KRISTY
What? What are you geeking out about.

CHANG
...You wanna come?

KRISTY
(smiles)
I don't wanna get in the way of your big moment.

CHANG
How could you get in the way, I'm here partly because of you.

KRISTY
(touched)
Oh is that so?

CHANG
Yeah, you and Bo.

Chang is an oblivious lad. Kristy smiles to herself.

KRISTY
I'll ask my Mom.

CHANG
Tell her Chang requested your presence.

KRISTY
Oh you requested my presence?
You're the king now?

CHANG
President. Kings summon.

Kristy laughs and shakes her head. The front door opens.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Mom's home. Talk to you later?

KRISTY
Yeah. Bye.

The two smile at each, a new tenderness between them. Chen enters the kitchen.

CHEN
You're very smiley today.

CHANG
It was a good day.

CHEN
Something to do with what you want
to tell me?

Chen looks down at Chang, her lie-detector eyes bearing down on him as usual. This time, he meets her gaze.

CHANG
Yeah. Actually. I, uh, I got asked
to...
(beat)
...to represent the school at a
conference in New York. For Math
and Science.

CHEN
Oh. Really?

CHANG
Yeah, it's cool but it's not that
big of a deal. I don't have to go.

CHEN
No. I mean. You should go. Do you
need me to take you?

CHANG
Nah, one of the teachers will
chaperone me.

CHEN
I see. Well have fun then.

Chen stops and looks at her son, stroking his hair.

CHEN (CONT'D)
Good job. I'm proud of you.

Chang smiles, appreciative

NEW YORK DRIVING MONTAGE

- Devin, Bo, Kristy and Chang drive in Devin's old sedan through the Holland Tunnel.

- They pass by MSG and then Times Square
- They get Pretzels off the street. They take pictures.
- They walk up to a large tower. Plastered on the side, the logo of ESPN.

INT. ESPN STUDIOS - LATER

A PA leads the awestruck Chang, Bo, Devin and Kristy through the fabled halls of the studio. She points out the different sets as the crew geek over people they recognize.

PA

You guys can wait in here.

She leads to the group into a green room, complete with a dressing mirror, snacks and some ESPN swag.

PA (CONT'D)

We'll have someone come and touch you up 30 minutes before and then a 5 minute warning. Anything else, let me know.

CHANG

Thanks. Oh! Actually.

Chang points to the ESPN hoodie slung over his makeup chair.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Could my friends get a set

The PA smiles.

PA

Shouldn't be a problem.

Chang nods as she leaves.

BO

"Shouldn't be a problem."

KRISTY

"Whatever you need Mr. Chang."

Chang smirks and pops a fizzy water.

CHANG

What? I'm just trying to take care of my entourage.

DEVIN, KRISTY, BO
Oooohhhhhh.

A knock on the door. In enters, ESPN analyst JAY WILLIAMS with a million dollar grin. Chang straightens up.

JAY
Mr. Chang!

CHANG
Hey, Mr. Williams.

JAY
Please, call me Jay. I thought you'd be taller. But I guess that makes your story even more inspiring.

CHANG
Thank you.

Chang beams.

JAY
Well, today is gonna be a lot fun. We're gonna play the clip. Me and Richard might do a bit as if we were judging a dunk contest.

CHANG
That's funny, I like that.

JAY
Good!. So then, we'll introduce you. I'll ask you some basic questions. What was the inspiration, how'd you do it, what's your message. Etc. Etc. Easy. Just like a conversation.

CHANG
Whatever you need. I gotchu!

JAY
Cool man. Cool. One last thing, the producers like to keep things fresh so sometimes they'll throw out a curveball. You're okay with right?

CHANG
Like I said. Whatever you need.

JAY
My man.

Jay and Chang dap.

JAY (CONT'D)
If you and your friends aren't
doing anything after the taping.
We're actually having a bit of a
party tonight if you'd like to
come.

CHANG
Cool! Yeah for sure. What's it for?

Jay searches his memory. He shrugs.

JAY
I don't know. Tuesday?
(smiles)
See you later!

Jay smiles and closes the door. Chang looks at his friends,
ecstatic.

CHANG
(mouthing)
JAY WILLIAMS. OH MY GOD!

ESPN SHOW: "THE GET UP"

Three panelists, former NBA players JAY WILLIAMS, RICHARD JEFFERSON and anchor MIKE GREENBERG, are in a heated but good-natured debate on one of last night's basketball games. Playful barbs and exaggerated reactions abound.

MIKE GREENBERG
...And lastly, a really inspiring
story, especially for us vertically
challenged folk...

INT. "THE GET UP" STAGE - SAME TIME

The hosts play Chang's clip and commentate. Behind the cameras, Chang and the gang wait. Chang is nervous. Kristy squeezes his hand reassuringly.

WILLIAMS
...Chang!

Chang steps onto the stage. Williams stands to greet him.

CHANG
Hey guys.

GREENBERG

So tell us a little about yourself.

WILLIAMS

Who is Chang?

CHANG

Uh, well...

Chang is searching for words. Kristy, Bo and Devin are feeling the cringe come on. But then...

CHANG (CONT'D)

(confident)

I'm just a kid who got told he
couldn't do something...but I
disagreed. Guess who was right.

The hosts nod, vibin' with Chang's energy.

WILLIAMS

What was your training regimen.
Because at the beginning of your
videos...you made a big jump.

JEFFERSON

(sarcastic)

Nice one Jay.

WILLIAMS

Man, be quiet.

CHANG

You know in magic, they say the
trick is only good if there's
mystery in how it's done.

WILLIAMS

Wow. I like it.

CHANG

What I will disclose is that it was
a lot of hard work, a lot of
dedication...

Devin puts his arms around Kristy and Bo.

CHANG (CONT'D)

But I told myself early on that the
only I was going to do this no
matter what, even if no one was
going to help me.

Chang's friends are a bit stung by this.

GREENBERG

Well respect to you kid. I think we
all see in you how far some
commitment can get a person.

(beat)

Before you go. We have a request,
something to inspire our viewers.

Out of the darkness, the producers push a portable 10 foot
tall basketball hoop. Another producer tosses Williams a
basketball. Chang swallows the lump in his throat.

WILLIAMS

Chang. You know it was coming. Do
you mind?

CHANG

Ha ha. You gonna throw me an alley-
oop?

WILLIAMS

Hey, if that's what you want.

Williams hands Chang the ball. He looks out at the cameras
and the crew. His friends recording him on their phones.
Suddenly the lights feel hot. They're all waiting.

Chang rolls up his sleeves and backs up. The producers play a
snare drum roll. Chang sprints for the basket, takes two
steps and LEAPS...

Chang gets high, high enough for part of the ball to rise
above the hoop. But it's not enough. The ball bounces off the
edge of the rim. Rejected.

GET UP ANALYSTS

Ooooooh!

WILLIAMS

Is it the shoes?

The analysts and crew burst out into laughter. Chang panics
for a second.

CHANG

I didn't get to stretch!

More laughter.

GREENBERG

Well, that's all the time we got.
Pardon the Interruption is next!

Chang is mortified. His cover is blown. The lights dim.

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Kristy, Bo and Devin try to comfort Chang.

DEVIN

Don't trip man! It was funny!

BO

You're lucky dude, this is like your 2nd chance of becoming a meme in a week! That's more than other kids in their entire lifetime!

CHANG

I guess. But it's gonna look like I can't dunk.

KRISTY

Yeah but you can.

Kristy ties her arm in with Chang's. Changs calms a bit.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - CONTINUOUS

Elevator doors open to reveal Chang and the Gang. Their eyes widen in awe.

BO

Whoa.

Vibey hip-hop echoes out into the glittery Manhattan skyline as sports royalty crack jokes and recall past stories. This is the cool of the cool. A waiter immediately greets them.

WAITER

Drink?

Champagne, Wine, Beer. The three teens look at Devin.

DEVIN

I ain't yo momma.

They help themselves. Bo lifts his glass to Chang.

BO

You did it man, just like you said you would. From here.

Gestures low with his hand.

BO (CONT'D)

To here.

Gestures to everything around them. Chang is moved.

DEVIN
Man of his word. Cheers!

They raise glasses. Chang downs it in one go.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
Whoa easy!

WILLIAMS (O.S.)
My man Chang!

Williams. Chang is a bit embarrassed.

CHANG
Hey. I'm sorry for you know...

WILLIAMS
What? You were amazing!

CHANG
Really?

WILLIAMS
Yeah! You were funny. You were charming. We were all talking about how cool of a kid you are.

CHANG
Oh. Thanks. I just wish I made it.

WILLIAMS
You were on TV for the first time. Got a little nervous. We all miss sometimes.

DEVIN
Like you did against Indiana?

Jay gives Devin a look. Devin shrugs.

WILLIAMS
C'mon. I'll introduce you to some people.

Chang turns to his friends. They wave him to go on.

ESPN PARTY MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

- a beautiful, stylish crowd, mix and mingle.

- Jay introduces Chang to some friends who recognize him. He's shy. He grabs another drink.
- Kristy and Bo comparing the different hor d'oeuvres they've amassed.
- Chang tells a funny joke. His confidence and drunkness grow.
- Devin handing out AT&T business cards and pitching anyone who will listen.
- Chang gets challenged to a dance battle. He's reluctant but then he gets in there. The crowd goes nuts!
- Kristy and Bo sit in the corner, bored. Bo yawns while Kristy looks at the time.

ON CHANG

Chang kicks it with GILBERT ARENAS and his entourage.

ARENAS

Look at this little dude. Thinks he can do anything.

CHANG

Cuz I can!

ARENAS

Oh word? You should come with us to the strip club. I'll introduce you to a woman who can do anything.

CHANG

So down.

Arenas and Co love it.

ARENAS

Ay yo, we taking Chang to the strip club! We out!

CHANG

Wait, wait. Can my homies come?

ARENAS

Yeah, whatever.

Chang pushes his way through the crowd. He finds Kristy and Bo in the corner, talking close. A flashback to Matt's party.

CHANG
What's going on here.

KRISTY
Hey. Somebody's sauced.

CHANG
Just enjoying myself. How about you guys.

BO
We're kind of tired to be honest.

CHANG
Really, cuz you look like you're having a good time.

Kristy crosses her arms.

CHANG (CONT'D)
That came out wrong. I'm going out with Agent Zero. Ya'll wanna come?

KRISTY
I think I'm okay.

CHANG
Bo?

BO
Uhh. I dunno man. Don't we gotta go back?

CHANG
Really, ya'll gonna turn down a night out with Gilbert Arenas? Agent Zero?! In the big city? What kind of small town attitude is that?

Bo shuffles awkwardly. Kristy is mucho annoyed at this point.

KRISTY
I guess we're not cut out for the big city.

Chang looks at the two and nods.

CHANG
Okay. See ya.

He turns and coldly marches back through the crowd. He passes right by Devin, who excuses himself to follow.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Yo Hibachi! I got my permission
slip. Lessgooo.

Arenas, Chang in tow, jump in the elevator with his entourage. As the doors close, Devin pushes through the crowd towards them.

DEVIN
Chang!

Too late.

MUSIC UP: Kid Cudi "Pursuit of Happiness"

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS MONTAGE

- Chang in Arena's SUV, as they speed through NYC
- The entourage pull up to a strip club, back entrance. The bouncer looks at Chang. Chang grins. The bouncer waves him in, nonchalant.
- Chang enters the neon, black light lit house of pleasures. It's a dream world. He's absolutely enraptured. This is the happiest night of his life.

CUT TO:

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Chang opens his eyes. He immediately recoils. His head is pounding. There's glitter all over his face. Devin enters.

DEVIN
Well look who it is.

CHANG
(holds head)
Ah. What is this?

DEVIN
It's a hangover. Here drink this.

Devin hands Chang a gatorade. Suddenly Chang jolts up.

CHANG
My mom!

DEVIN
Bo called her. It's cool.

Chang breathes a sigh of relief. Devin looks at the kid.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
You got good friends Chang.

Chang suddenly feels guilty.

CHANG
Where was I?

DEVIN
The strip club. My ass had to come
and get you. You owe me 50 dollar
cover man.

CHANG
Damn, really. Sorry.

DEVIN
You're not gonna ask me how I knew
which one?

CHANG
(concerned)
How.

Devin takes out his phone. He opens IG to Chang's stories.
It's a stream of videos. Chang at the strip club. He somehow
documented everything.

CUT TO:

CHANG'S IG: CHANG'S STRIP CLUB ADVENTURE

- Chang and Arenas making it rain.
- Chang's POV. Getting a lapdance.
- Chang, completely obliterated. Arenas recording.

ARENAS
Ay yo Chang what you doing bro?

CHANG
Dunkin' on these hoes.

CUT TO:

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chang watches in disbelief. Devin laughing.

DEVIN
You were wilin' bro.
(shakes head)
I gotta get some coffee and your
ass got school.

He searches desperately for his phone. Somehow, he still has it. His lockscreen is littered with IG DMs. *You crazy bro! AGENT ZERO!!! You can dunk on me anytime ;)*. He goes to his post. There's thousands of views. He looks at who has viewed. At the top. Kristy.

CHANG
Shit!

He looks at his watch. 8:00 am. Chang jumps up, rushing past Devin who has coffee.

DEVIN
You just gonna -- You owe me 50
dollars!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

Chang rushes through the hall looking for Kristy. Other students give him props as he rushes by.

STUDENT
Chang you crazy bro!

Chang' too focused on finding Kristy to react. Finally, he sees her. She's with Bo and a few of her band friends.

CHANG
Kristy!

Kristy turns, a cold look on her face.

CHANG (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry. I don't know what
happened last night. I guess I got
a little excited. I mean Gilbert
Arenas wanted to hang out with me!

KRISTY
I know. That's cool Chang. I'm glad
you had a good time.

Kristy pushes past Chang.

CHANG
Kristy! I'm sorry!

Kristy ignores him. Chang throws up his hands.

CHANG (CONT'D)
It was GILBERT freaking ARENAS!

An exasperated Chang turns to face Bo.

CHANG (CONT'D)
Gilbert Arenas man.

BO
I know.

CHANG
Don't tell me you're mad at me too.

BO
Well. You kinda ditched us.

CHANG
What are you talking about? I
wanted you to come!

BO
Yeah I know but we didn't really
want to.

CHANG
But I did! Yesterday was supposed
to be my day! Why can't you be less
selfish and more supportive.

Bo is taken a back. Offended.

CHANG (CONT'D)
What?

BO
(scoffs)
Whatever man.

Bo walks away. Chang waves him off.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

Chang sits on the bleachers surrounded by classmates as they wait for class to start. He recounts his experience last night while simultaneously flirting with a girl on IG. *I think you're cute too...especially your smile.*

CHANG

(cocky)

...so Arenas was like "Yo Chang you wanna go to the strip club?" Like it was a joke. But I kept it cool. So I was like, "yeah let's do it!" And they were all shocked, like who's this kid!

Matt, Syd and Owen enter. They march towards Chang, confrontational. Chang looks up unfazed.

CHANG (CONT'D)

What?

Matt seethes. Owen and Syd egg him on.

OWEN & SYD

Go off Matt.

MATT

I knew you couldn't dunk.

Chang stands. He gets in Matt's face.

CHANG

I know you're a meathead but is your memory that short? I threw it down right over there. In your FACE.

MATT

Yeah, but you cheated.

Chang pauses. The class goes quiet. Matt takes out his phone. He opens to a youtube video. The smoking gun. Titled "*CHANG CAN'T DUNK: EXPOSED*". The class pulls out their phones.

ON PHONE SCREENS: A random youtuber, in the style of a "breakdown" video, dissects Chang's dunk attempts using the failed ESPN footage, a picture from Matt breaking the rim and finally a freeze framed image from the actual dunk. The youtuber begins to drawing lines. He's about to drop some trigonometry.

DUNK EXPOSER (O.S.)

...If Chang's reach is X and his vertical is Y, and Y is .29 of X, then $X + Y = \text{total height reached}$. Plugging in Chang's standing reach of 7'4", we get a total height reached of 9'10"! Well below regulation height. Ladies and Gentlemen, Chang can't dunk!

The class gasps. Chang poorly tries to play it off.

CHANG
Who even is this?!
(incredulous)
You're gonna get in my face because
some rando on the internet made a
video? Do you also think the Earth
is Flat??!!

Owen tosses Matt a basketball. Matt fires the ball into
Chang's chest.

MATT
Do it again then.

The class looks up at Chang, suspicious.

CHANG
I don't have to prove anything. I
already did it!

MATT
Yeah but you cheated!

CHANG
What is your problem man? Why can't
you accept that I can dunk?!

MATT
Because you can't!

CHANG
(screaming)
Why not?! Cuz I'm shorter than
you?! Cuz I'm not "cool"? Cuz I'm
ASIAN?!

Matt scoffs and shakes his head.

MATT
Man, that's weak!

CHANG
Why can't you just let me win for
once?! Why do you always have to
have it all! I know WHY. Because
you're an insecure, privileged,
overrated jerk! You hate that
someone like me can be cooler than
you. You hate that I have more
followers than you ever did. You
think you're all that?
(MORE)

CHANG (CONT'D)

You're not even that good at
basketball. You're not even RANKED!

This one hits Matt different.

MATT

You wish you were me. You're so
desperate to be me you had to trick
everyone into even liking you.
You'll never dunk you lying ass
poser.

Chang leaps up and spears Matt. They go flying onto the
court. They roll around, a mess of fists and limbs.

CHANG

I CAN DUNK!

MATT

NO YOU CAN'T!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Chen, worried, lost and still in scrubs, roams the school
hallway. She finally arrives. The Principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Chen enters. The Principal sits behind her desk, a stern look
on her face. Across from her, separated on two sides are
Chang and Matt and his parents. Mr. and Mrs. O'Neil do not
look happy at all..

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Chang. Hi.

CHEN

Hello. I'm sorry I am late.

Chen looks at Chang, who has a black eye then at Matt, who is
similarly dinged up. She looks back at Chang.

CHEN (CONT'D)

(in Chinese)

What did you do?!

CHANG

(in Chinese)

What did I do?!

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Chang. Please have a seat.

Chen sits and glares at Chang.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

So your son got into a fight today with Matt during gym class. Apparently it was about the social media, which is unfortunately very common.

MRS. O'NEIL

Common?! My son had his head shaved and was forced to strip! NAKED. In front of the whole school!

MR. O'NEIL

There's even video.

MRS. O'NEIL

FROM EVERY ANGLE.

MR. O'NEIL

This could affect his college recruitment.

MRS. O'NEIL

He could have PTSD!

MATT

Mom, that's a bit --

MR. O'NEIL

No one asked you! Now we don't want to get the lawyers involved but we will if we need to.

Chen whips around, her eyes piercing through Chang's soul.

CHEN

Is this true?

CHANG

It was a bet. If I lost, I would have had to do the same!

MATT

You did lose!

CHANG

Says you!

Chen leers at Chang with vengeful eyes.

CHEN
 (in Chinese)
*How can you act like this? Tell
 them you are sorry right now!*

CHANG
 (in Chinese)
*Why are you automatically taking
 their side?!*

Mother and son bicker in Chinese. The O'Neils and the Principal observe cluelessly for a beat. Chen faces the O'Neils, her hands together as if she is praying for mercy.

CHEN
 Please. I am begging you. This is my fault. I don't raise my son properly. We will do whatever you want.

CHANG
 Oh my god!

PRINCIPAL
 Mrs. Chang. Look, we already discussed a solution okay? Matt and Chang are gonna be suspended for a week each. Chang has to take down his Vlog. In addition, Matt has asked that Chang make an apology video. If all that happens, we end this right there okay?

CHEN
 (confused)
 Vlog?

PRINCIPAL
 Yes, about the dunking.

CHEN
 Dunking?

Chen is utterly baffled. She has no idea.

INT. CHANG'S MINIVAN - LATER

The car pulls up to a strip mall parking lot. It parks in front of Devin's AT&T store. Chang pleads with his Mom.

CHANG
 Please, don't do this! Mom!

Chen ignores him and jumps out the car.

INT. AT&T STORE - CONTINUOUS

Devin is closing on yet another sale. Chen barges in, a desperate Chang in tow.

CHEN
Are you Devin?

DEVIN
Yes Ma'am, can I --?

CHEN
Why you trick my son and get him in trouble?

CHANG
Mom! That's not what he did!

DEVIN
I think you have the wrong impression. I was helping your son with something that he was passionate about.

CHEN
No! You use him for your youtube videos! Get himself in trouble! Fight other kids!

Chang is on the verge of tears.

CHANG
That's not what he did! It was my choice! He just wants to help me!

CHEN
If he help you then why he take your money?

CHANG
Mom! That's --

DEVIN
(to Chang)
It's okay man. Listen to your Mom.
(to Chen)
Ma'am I'm sorry. I was trying to help your son. He's a good kid.

CHEN
He is not good kid anymore! You
make him a liar and a cheater!

Devin looks at Chang, unsure of what Chen means. Chang's face says it all. It clicks. Devin is disappointed.

DEVIN
I'm so sorry.

CHEN
You stay away from my son!

DEVIN
I will.

Chen drags a broken Chang out of the store.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

An exhausted Chen and Chang sit at the kitchen table. Chen rubs her tired eyes. Chang stares off into space.

CHEN
(in Chinese)
*What did I do wrong for you to be
like this?*

CHANG
Nothing Mom. I'm just a screw up.

CHEN
I thought Matt is your friend? Why
you fight him?

CHANG
He's not my friend. We haven't been
friends since elementary school

CHEN
Why? What happen?

CHANG
You wouldn't understand.

Chen's brow furrows into a familiar expression.

CHEN
Why you treat me like this? You
listen to a stranger but you don't
even want to talk to your own
mother huh? Your Mom is so useless?
(to herself)
(MORE)

CHEN (CONT'D)
*It's because you don't have a
father. I don't know what I can do.
I really don't know.*

Chang bangs his fists on the counter.

CHANG
Stop guilt tripping me!

That gets Chen's attention.

CHANG (CONT'D)
You're always upset about
something. I can't tell you
anything because I don't know if
you'll snap at me or tell me it's
stupid. I want to tell you stuff,
ask you things, but I can't.

CHEN
Why?

A flood of emotion crashes over Chang. The floodgates are open.

CHANG
Because I'm scared of you!

Chang's words smack Chen across the face, pushing her back against her seat. She can see he's being honest. Desperate to fend off the pain of her son's words, she leans back on her primary method of defense. Anger.

CHEN
You're scared of me? You don't know
scared! My mother beat me! When I
do something bad, she say I can't
eat!
(furious)
You scared of me? I give everything
to you! I spoil YOU!

Chang fights off tears. He stands to leave. Chen grabs his arm.

CHEN (CONT'D)
Maybe you want another mother, but
you can't! I am your mother!

Chang yanks his arm free, too strong for her to control anymore.

CHANG

I get it now. I finally see it. Why
you can't support anything I do.
Why you're always putting me down!

(near hysterics)

Because you're miserable! You're so
unhappy you need me to be unhappy
too! That's why Dad left! That's
why you can't stand it when other
people want to help me.

(vengeful)

Well I don't want to be like you! I
don't want to always be alone!

Chang grabs the car keys and storms out.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chang starts up the car and backs out. Chen runs out of the house.

CHEN

(in Chinese)

Lan Lan! Get back here now!

Chang ignores her, tears running down his face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Chang sits in his car, in the dark. His phone buzzes, another call from his Mom. He ignores it. He looks in the mirror, checking that his eyes are no longer red from crying.

He takes a deep breath and gets out.

INT. LI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The chime of a doorbell interrupts the squeal of kids, a barking dog and a computer blaring the catchy riff of the latest dance craze.

MARY (7), Chinese-American with dimples and a pony tail runs to the answer the front door. She opens it to reveal, a reticent Chang.

MARY

Who are you?

Chang looks down her quizzically, surprised by her existence.

CHANG

I...

LI (50), Chinese-American, with a rough, macho aura, saunters in wearing a wife-beater and Lakers shorts. Chang locks eyes with his father. It takes Li a moment, but he recognizes his son.

LI

(in Chinese)

Lan Lan? What are you doing here?

Li's reaction is one of bemused surprise, one more befitting of seeing a past coworker. Chang doesn't know what to say.

LI (CONT'D)

Come in. Come in. We are just about to have dinner.

Chang enters. He looks around the quaint unfamiliar house, focusing on the photos hanging on the wall. Li with his new wife, daughter Mary and a young son. His half-siblings.

MARY

Who is that Daddy?

LI

This is your Uncle *Lan Lan*. Say hello.

MARY

(in Chinese)

Uncle Lan Lan, hello! I'm Mary.

Chang smiles as best he can.

CHANG

Hi. Mary.

As they enter the kitchen, Li picks up JOHNNY (5), energetic kid with a mischievous grin.

LI

Johnny, say hello to your cousin.

JOHNNY

Hi.

Chang waves. COCO (40), bubbly and a more recent immigrant, finishes cooking dinner.

LI

(in Chinese)

Coco, we have a guest.

(MORE)

LI (CONT'D)
 (to Chang)
 This is my wife Coco.

CHANG
 Hi.

COCO
 (thick accent)
 Hi, nice to meet you.

Coco smiles warmly. Chang smiles back, awkward.

INT. LI'S DINING ROOM - LATER

The table is full of yummy Chinese dishes. With their chopsticks, Johnny and Mary fight over their favorite dishes. Chang chews his food quietly while Li pontificates to the table.

LI
 (in Chinese)
...I could if I wanted to! My boss is so stupid. If I was him, the company would do much better. He knows this, that's why he never promotes me.

COCO
Mmm. How can this idiot be the boss.

LI
Exactly.

Li turns his attention to Chang.

LI (CONT'D)
 So, how's school? You have a good GPA?

CHANG
 Yeah.

LI
 That's good!
 (to Coco)
He was smart ever since he was a little kid. He could read when he was 2. He loved to read.

COCO
Smart and handsome. He must have many girls who like him.

Coco and Li chuckle. Li pats Chang on the back.

LI
Of course he does. Mary and Johnny
 are very smart too. They even know
 some Chinese poems.
 (to Mary, Johnny)
 Mary, Johnny recite for Uncle the
 poem you learned.

Johnny and Mary stop eating, eager to perform.

MARY AND JOHNNY
 (in Chinese, loudly)
*Moonlight reflects off the front of
 my bed; Could it actually be the
 frost on the ground? I look up to
 view the bright moon; And look down
 to reminisce about my hometown!*

Coco and Li clap loudly, as Mary and Johnny beam. Chang can only smile and nod.

INT. LI'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Li and Chang sit and watch a basketball game on TV. Li follows enthusiastically, a true fan. Chang is subdued.

LI
 Hey. Was the new section of the
 house ever finished?

CHANG
 No. Why?

LI
 Oh, nothing. I was hoping you might
 know a good contractor.

CHANG
 I don't.

Li goes back to his game.

CHANG (CONT'D)
 I should go.

LI
 Huh?

CHANG
 Thanks for dinner.

Chang gets up and walks out.

INT. CHANG'S MINIVAN - LATER

Chang drives in silence. It starts to lightly snow. He stops at a traffic light. His eyes wander until they stop on something in the distance. An empty park with a basketball hoop.

EXT. CHANG'S ROOM - LATER

Chang enters in complete darkness. He opens his closet and fumbles around. Finally he retrieves what he is looking for: a basketball. He hustles quickly out as a light from Chen's room turns on.

EXT. PARK COURTS - LATER

It's still snowing. There's a light coat of snow on the grass, but the asphalt court is still warm, melting the snow on impact.

Chang approaches, a resolute look on his face. He bounces up and down, warming himself up, his breath clouding the air around him. He breathes deep to collect himself.

He lines up at the elbow and takes off. With two big steps, he leaps, using all of his muscle and technique. It's a MISS.

Chang lines up again. He recites Devin's tips to himself. *Explode from the hips, jump through your core, grip tight but not too tight...* He runs, leaps and...another MISS.

He lines up again. MISS. Again. MISS. He slams the ball onto court, splashing slush everywhere. He wipes the ball and lines up again. And...MISS.

Desperation begins to creep in. MISS again. Chang's hands are red from the cold, his sneakers wet. He takes off again. Before he can jump, he slips on the wet pavement and falls hard on his butt. He screams at the hoop, at the ball, at Matt, at his Mom, at himself. Still, he stands back up.

At the edge of the park, a hastily dressed Chen walks up. She watches as her son desperately tries not to fail. It breaks her heart.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

A shivering Chang, wrapped in a blanket, sips on a hot soup. His eyes are blank and expressionless. Across from him is Chen, her face full of helpless worry.

CHANG

You were right. I should have
listened to you from the beginning.
Then I wouldn't be in this
situation.

(beat)

I'm sorry I'm a bad son.

Chang clenches his fists, desperate not to cry. Chen caresses her son's hair.

CHEN

It's okay. I know deep down you are
a good boy.

CHANG

From now on, I'm going to do what
you tell me, okay?

Chang looks up at Chen, a defeated, tired look on his face. Emotions well up from deep within Chen.

CHEN

I love you okay?

CHANG

I love you too.

This is not what she wanted from her son. She has no words so she pulls Chang close. They embrace.

CUT TO:

CHANG'S VLOG: THE APOLOGY

It's day. Chang sits remorsefully in front of his webcam in typical "apology video" style. He looks like he's had the air sucked out of him.

CHANG

This is going to be my last vlog.
As a lot of you know, someone
accused me of cheating on my dunk.
I'm here to say...that's it's true.
I trained really, really hard but I
was still short so I lowered the
rim by an inch or so.

(MORE)

CHANG (CONT'D)

(long shameful beat)

I should have just admitted to losing the bet and taken the L. But for some reason, I just couldn't. Maybe I never really cared about dunking. Maybe what I really wanted was for people to think that I could. That's not cool.

(beat)

I'm sorry I let down everyone who has been following me. I'm sorry to Matt for cheating the bet.

(soul-crushing beat)

And I am especially sorry to all my friends who really believed in me. Chang out.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: 1 WEEK LATER

EXT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chang lies in his bed, staring into space. By the wall at his feet, the dusty outline of where Kobe's poster used to be. A knock at the door.

CHEN (O.S.)

Lan Lan. I'm going to work. I made you some breakfast okay?

CHANG

Thanks Mom. Have a good day.

Chen takes a beat outside Chang's door before moving on. He rolls over to go back to sleep. It's too late, he's awake. Frustrated, he rips off the sheets and jumps up.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

Chang eats breakfast and watches HGTV. He gets a text from Bo.

Look outside.

Chang walks to the front door and opens it. The sun blinds him momentarily. Standing on the street are Bo and Kristy.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chang walks over, looking disheveled.

CHANG

Hey.

KRISTY

You look terrible.

CHANG

It's called depression.

Chang, on max sulk. Kristy tries to push down a laugh. She fails. Bo smiles. And then, Chang too.

CHANG (CONT'D)

What do you guys want?

KRISTY

You're not suspended anymore, why aren't you at school?

CHANG

I've retired. My career as a teen is over.

KRISTY

Oh my god. So extra.

BO

C'mon man, the band needs you. We need you. If you don't come back, Matt wins. You can't let that douche win.

CHANG

He did win. He always wins.

KRISTY

We miss you dude. Just come back.

Chang is touched by his friends.

CHANG

I miss you guys too. I'll be back, I promise.

Kristy nods and gives Chang a hug. Bo and Chang do their secret handshake.

KRISTY

See ya.

CHANG

See you.

Bo takes a USB drive out of his pocket. He hands it to Chang.

BO

See ya.

Bo and Kristy walk away. Chang turns the USB stick over. On the other side it reads: *W.W.K.D.?* Chang sticks it in his pocket. Not yet ready to look at it.

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Tom lies quietly in bed, his eyes closed. He has passed. A doctor notes the time. Before he's taken away, Klaus leans over and whispers in Tom's ear before kissing him on his forehead.

Chen observes solemnly from the foot of the bed.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Klaus and Chen sit and have a quiet coffee together.

KLAUS

We were stationed together near Seoul, I was a pilot in the navy and he was a communications specialist in the Army. Can you imagine? Tom, a soldier?

CHEN

(chuckling)

No.

KLAUS

We kept in touch afterwards. He was married for a while.

CHEN

How about you?

Klaus shakes his head.

KLAUS

One day, Tom calls me and asks me where I am because he's going to visit me.

CHEN

And then he don't leave.

KLAUS
(smiles)
And then he didn't leave.

CHEN
That's why you two are a match. You
are tough but he is even more
stubborn.

KLAUS
He did always get what he wanted.

CHEN
That's why he so happy. No regrets.

Klaus smiles in agreement.

CHEN (CONT'D)
I envy him.

Chen's thoughts drift. Klaus reads it.

KLAUS
You know Tom used to say something
to me all the time. "Klaus, you're
so grumpy. You should smile more."
And I would say back, "what's there
to smile about?" And then he would
say, "well you won't know unless
you're smiling."

Klaus looks at Chen. She nods, understanding his message.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

Chang watches TV and eating snacks. The front door opens.
Chang springs up, trying to clean up his mess. Chen comes in.

CHANG
Hey. You're home so...early.

CHEN
I took the rest of the day off.

Chen looks around.

CHANG
Sorry, I know it's a mess.

CHEN
Don't worry. Get dressed. I want to
take you some place.

Chang is a bit hesitant.

CHEN (CONT'D)
C'mon hurry up!

Chen grins excitedly. Chang loosens up, he runs up to his room.

EXT. PRIVATE AIRFIELD - LATER

Chang and Chen approach the small landing field as small propeller planes buzz overhead. Chang looks out the window in excited wonder.

EXT. RUNWAY - A BIT LATER

Klaus, dressed in his old pilot jacket and rocking classic aviators, is completing final prep for his 4 person prop plane. Chen and Chang approach. Chang, excited; Chen, mortified.

KLAUS
Ah! My passengers have finally arrived.

CHANG
This is yours!?

KLAUS
Yeah. Name's Ellie, after my mother.

CHANG
She's beautiful.
(beat)
I'm sorry about Tom.

Klaus smiles warmly.

KLAUS
He told me he'd haunt me if I didn't take you and your mom up.

Chang grins. Klaus looks up at Chen.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
Ready?

CHEN
(not ready)
No. Too small! How can fly?

CUT TO:

FLYING WITH KLAUS MONTAGE

- Chang and Klaus sit up front, Chen in the back. The plane roars alive.
- It taxis to the runway, where Klaus tells Chang to clear them for takeoff.
- The plane takes off, bouncing off the runway. Chen holds on for dear life. Chang is loving it.
- They reach cruising altitude. Klaus points out points of interest as Chang and Chen look out, enjoying the waves of green forest, rolling over the round Appalachian mountains.
- The sun begins to set in the horizon, casting an amber glow on all that they can see. It's beautiful beyond words. Chang looks over his shoulder and gives Chen a thumbs up. She grabs his hand and gives it a squeeze.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - LATER

Chang, Chen and Klaus enjoy a meal. They recount their flight, especially how nervous Chen was. They laugh happily together.

KLAUS
Excuse me for a second, I've
laughed too hard.

Klaus gets up and heads for the restroom. Chang looks up at his Mom.

CHANG
This was really fun Mom.

CHEN
For you maybe! Me, I'm so scared!

CHANG
I know.
(beat)
I appreciate it.

Mother and son look at each other, a new connection and understanding between them.

CHEN
I'm trying.

Chang nods.

INT. CHANG'S ROOM - LATER

Chang finishes cleaning his room. It feels like it's almost a clean slate. Sitting on his desk is Bo's USB stick. It's contents still a mystery. Chang plugs it in.

CUT TO:

CHANG'S HIGHLIGHT REEL

The video cuts into the first clips of the Can Chang Dunk Vlog. Devin walking up to Chang's house at 5am. Chang being late. Chang giving his weak intro.

CHANG
Hi, I'm Chang. I'm 16. 5 foot 8 inches. And I, uh, I'm trying to dunk a basketball. Hopefully.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chang cringes. The video continues, skipping through funny moments and important milestones. Frustrations and victories. Growth. Condensed in this quick montage, we truly see how far Chang has come. His vertical, his muscles, his confidence. His very being. As he watches, a new determination begins to burn in his eyes.

INT. AT&T STORE - DAY

Devin, now a manager, says goodbye to a satisfied customer with his sales trainee (17), KEITH.

DEVIN
You saw how I hit that at the buzzer.

KEITH
Yeah cuz I set you up with that alley-oop.

DEVIN
You right. You right.

They gas each other up some more. The door opens and they return to professional mode. Devin turns. It's Chang.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
Aw snap.

CHANG
Thanks for uploading the video.
Hope all the controversy didn't
kill your channel.

DEVIN
Eh. You can't make money on Youtube
anyway. TikTok is where it's at.

CHANG
Still...My bad.

DEVIN
You owed up to it. That's the
important thing. You good?

CHANG
Yeah.

DEVIN
What's up then? You got no money so
I know you ain't here for a new
phone.

Chang stands tall, with a new assuredness.

CHANG
I'm not gonna stop. And I could use
some help.

DEVIN
Oh word?

The two grin.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chang pulls a long cardboard tube from his closet. Rolled up inside, aged and crusty is a familiar Kobe poster. He pulls it taught and looks upon it, a hint of sadness in his eyes.

CHANG
I miss you man.

Sadness gives way to a look of fierce determination. He puts the poster back on the wall.

CHANG TRAINS MONTAGE

- Chang shaves his head in his bathroom.
- Devin and Chang at playground courts. Devin puts Chang through some dribbling drills. Between the legs, behind the back, one ball, two balls. Faster. Faster! FASTER!
- Chang returns to school. People still leer at him, but he ignores them. Bo and Kristy are happy he's back. He sees Matt and his friends in the hallway, but he doesn't avoid them. He walks past, chin up.
- Chang and Devin work on his shooting form. Bo shoots a Tik Tok of them while they work.
- Chang shoots by himself. The court lights turn off, but he keeps going.
- Kristy's birthday. Presents are being opened. Chang's is last. She tears off the wrapping to reveal a slim wooden box - inside a pair of custom black drumsticks. *Sicccck*. Kristy and Chang lock eyes, their chemistry still intact.
- The Marching Band dumps water all over an ecstatic Mr. Ryan's head. They lift him up on their shoulders as he holds up a trophy that the band has just won. Kristy, Bo and Chang bang on their drums in celebration.
- Chang hitting weights. He screams as he hits a new personal best on deadlift.
- Chang watches HGTV with his Mom. It's yet another episode of a DIY home gardening projects. Chang shares some deer jerky with her.
- A bulletin is tacked up outside the gym. It's a try-out sheet for the Boy's Basketball Team. It's already overfilled with names. Chang reaches up and writes his name down. *Chang*.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Sneakers squeak and balls pound on the hardwood. Scores of hopeful boys run drills and scrimmages. Among them, a sweaty Chang.

The coach calls everyone to sit. He sets up a shooting drill. It's a one v. one drill.

COACH

Alright let's do Matt and uh, you.

He points at Chang. Chang lines up next to Matt as Coach begins to explain the drill. The two avoid looking at each other for a beat before Chang turns to Matt.

CHANG

Bet you I hit more shots than you.

A smile curls up on Matt's face. A small gesture of respect.

MATT

I'll take that bet.

COACH

Okay here we go!

WHISTLE. Chang and Matt zoom off.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: **TWO MONTHS LATER**

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

The area around the unfinished wing of the house has been cleared up. Within it's unlaidd foundation, a thriving garden has been planted with flowers and vegetables.

Chen, hacks at the soil, tending to her crop. Chang walks over carrying a duffel bag and basketball shoes. Chen looks at her watch.

CHEN

Going already?

CHANG

It doesn't hurt to be early right?

(beat)

Okay maybe it's too early.

Chen laughs and shakes her head at her goofy son.

CHEN

Come help me.

Chang puts down his bag and hops over.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

It's a home basketball game for the MOUNT DAVIS MOUNTAINEERS. They're destroying their opponent by 30 points. Matt cuts through five defenders and slams it. The home team bench erupts. Cheering at the end of the bench, still in warmups, Chang.

ON BLEACHERS

Chen sits with Bo, Kristy and Devin in the bleachers. An impatient Kristy stands up.

KRISTY
PUT IN CHANG!

People turn and look. An embarrassed Chang waves for her to stop. Bo jumps up.

BO
We want Chang!

DEVIN
We want Chang!

BO, DEVIN, KRISTY
We want Chang! We want Chang! We
want Chang!

Kristy tries to get a shy Chen to join them. They laugh as Chang shakes his head and covers his face.

ON BENCH

The opposing team calls a timeout. Coach makes subs. He calls down the bench.

COACH
Alright. Jimmy, Steve you're in.

Jimmy and Steve rip off their warmups and run on court. Coach looks down at his roster. He's clearing the bench.

COACH (CONT'D)
...and uh...Bernard you too.

The team looks at each other. *Bernard?* Matt sits and elbows an oblivious Chang.

MATT
Yo Chang, coach says you're in.

COACH
Bernard! You wanna play or what?!

Chang hops up and rips off his warmups. He rubs his clammy palms on his shorts and runs on court.

ON BLEACHERS

The Chang gang jump up in exuberant celebration. The game starts up. They start to chant.

CHANG GANG

Chang. Chang! CHANG! CHANG!

The ball swings around. Finally Chang gets it. He makes a move and immediately loses the ball. He fouls to stop play.

CHANG GANG (CONT'D)

Ohhhhhhh.

Chang shakes his head, angry at himself.

DEVIN

Hey! Keep ya head up!

Chang looks up and nods. His eyes drift to his Mom. She nods, encouraging him. He nods back. Play resumes. Chang is focused, sharp. He hounds his man on defense. Relentless. The other team gets flustered and makes a bad pass. Chang steals it at the top of the key.

He sprints downcourt all alone. Bo, Kristy, Devin and finally Chen all stand up. Matt and the home team get off the bench. Chang streaks towards the hoop, full head of steam. He takes two big steps and LEAPS, the ball at his fingertips, his arm stretched high as can be.

He sails up, up towards that round circle of metal and mesh, invented over a century ago. He flies through the air, graceful, powerful and free...

CUT TO:

TITLE UP: **CHANG CAN DUNK**