

MR. BENIHANA

Written by

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(more or less) Based on the life of Rocky Aoki

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FADE IN:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BAY - DAY (1979)

Seagulls squawk. A rare sunny day in the bay.

VRRRR! A POWERBOAT slices across the crystal blue water.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
YEEEEEE-HAAAAAW!

Trailing behind, a short JAPANESE MAN water skis. He wears stars-and-stripes trunks. Huge aviators reflect the sun.

This is ROCKY AOKI (41), over-sized personality, a wild jheri-curl mop of hair and a perpetual smile.

ROCKY (V.O.)
America. Home of the hamburger.
Sex, drugs, and disco. Nixon.
Burning bras. Farrah Fawcett.

QUICK CUTS illustrate his words. And different Rocky moments:

BIKINI MODELS caress Rocky. He sprays them with a bottle of Dom Perignon. They all frolic and laugh with sexy glee.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Before I came here, my father said
to me: "You don't know how to live
if you don't know how to die."

Rocky in a powerboat, this time at the helm. Throttles it to the max. The boat flies like a missile across the surface. Daredevils would have second thoughts.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I had no idea Papa-san was spouting
some old Buddhist teaching. At the
time I thought, shit man! That's
advice for living in America.

BOOM! The boat hits a massive wave, bounces ten feet up in the air and -- CRACK! -- the hull crumbles like a biscotti.

Rocky's ejected through the air -- arcs and CRASHES into the churning water -- SMASHING his body to mashed potatoes.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Holy asshole! Did you see that? Now
that's the way to go out. With coke
in your blood and a disco stick in
your pants.

Pieces of boat knock up against the Golden Gate Bridge. Rocky floats face down on the surface like a drowned rat.

ROCKY (V.O.)
So yeah. That's me. Or was me.
Rocky Aoki.

The Bikini Models now screaming, pointing out the accident. Crying. Horrified. Pandemonium on the dock.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Now before you praise Papa-san for his great taste in names, he didn't pick "Rocky." I did.

Ambulances. Paramedics. Medivac choppers. Whole nine yards.

ROCKY (V.O.)
When I came to this country, I wanted a new start. I wanted to be Rocky. Like the movie. But not Rocky 1. That was boring. He lost in that. I'm talking about Rocky 2. That was the new me.

LOCAL NEWS REPORT with footage of the power boat accident.

The segment cycles through PHOTOS of Rocky with CHIZURU (wife), GRACE (12) and KEVIN (11). Their 29-room mansion. Fleet of luxury cars. Yeah, they're the OG Crazy Rich Asians.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And just look at me. I'm fucking awesome! I'm hot. Here's my hot wife and hot kids. My hot mansion.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE of Rocky's life...

ROCKY (V.O.)
I lived a full life. Olympic wrestler. Backgammon world champion. First to cross the Pacific in a hot air balloon.
(then)
Oh, and I also started this little restaurant. Benihana. Heard of it?

INT. BENIHANA RESTAURANT - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

WHOOSH. ONION VOLCANOES shoot FLAMES high into the air.

Yeah, you know Benihana...

CLINK-CLAK. Spatulas dance. SHRIMPS somersault like acrobats.

CHEFS in red costumes crack jokes. CUSTOMERS seated around the grilltop ooh and ahh, APPLAUDING like it's the circus.

TOURISTS from Arkansas take photos with their iPhones.

Rocky sits at a grilltop, wearing an immaculate WHITE TUXEDO. He holds a golden cigar in one hand. A phone in his other hand, where he texts someone a GIF of Dramatic Gopher.

He looks up, into camera, speaks directly to it.

ROCKY

Now I know what you're thinking.
Not another fucking biopic. About
another rich asshole. Oh, I'm
sorry. Is Scorsese the only one
allowed to do that?

A HOT WAITRESS walks by with a flute of bubbly. He takes it and downs it like a duck.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

You think the Wallstreet Wolf was a
badass? Last time I checked, my
business didn't go under. Yeah,
sorry, but that guy talked shit
about me. He didn't even know me.
(calming down)
So, um... what was I talking about?

Camera drifts away from Rocky to a corner where there's a --
SAMURAI ARMOR display.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Oh yeah. Me. My family. We
descended from samurai.

The armor display fills in before our eyes, materializing --

EXT. FEUDAL JAPAN - DAY

-- into a SAMURAI DESCENDANT in the heat of battle.

ROCKY (V.O.)

The Aokis were warriors. Fearless.
Always ready for death.

As the Samurai decapitates his opponent --

INT. AOKI HOME (TOKYO) - DAY (1953)

Young Rocky (15) strikes the same pose. Shaved head. No shaggy jheri curls yet.

ROCKY (V.O.)

And I was *chonan*. First-born. Four boys. Destined to be a fighter.

He wrestles his three younger BROTHERS on the tatami mat.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Not that I had much choice. You know the stereotype about Asians being short? Well our family was the stereotype of the stereotype.

EXT. KEIO HIGH SCHOOL (TOKYO) - DAY

The three younger Aoki brothers walk through the schoolyard. Guarded. Each one shorter than the other. When --

[All italicized dialogue subtitled in Japanese.]

UTA THE BULLY (O.S.)

Look, it's the shrimp ball gang!

UTA THE BULLY and his LOSER PALS surround the brothers. They all tower over the shorter Aokis.

UTA THE BULLY (CONT'D)

Show us those shrimp balls, Aokis!

Uta the Bully yanks down the shorts on SHIRO, the youngest. Instant LAUGHTER. Shiro stands there humiliated.

YOUNG ROCKY (O.S.)

Shiro! Pull your shorts up!

Young Rocky leaps over the fence, tosses his book bag on the grass. Gets between his brothers and the bullies.

UTA THE BULLY

*Big shrimp ball! Glad to see you.
We're gonna fuck you up so bad --*

WHOMP! Young Rocky clocks Uta the Bully across the face. A tooth goes flying. Uta's pals jump in on Rocky. 5 against 1.

It's not even close to a fair fight. But Rocky holds his own.

EXT. KEIO HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A shiny new Honda S500 roadster pulls up. SCHOOLKIDS stare in awe. In post-war Japan, this is the nicest car they've seen.

YUNOSUKE AOKI (aka PAPA-SAN) steps out. Slick-back hair, pencil mustache. The cool composed fury of Sonny Chiba. He's an OG badass. Crushing skulls with just his glare.

INT. KEIO HIGH SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Rocky, black eye. Hangdog. Papa-san addresses the PRINCIPAL.

PAPA-SAN

*I'm very ashamed. My son will
receive a cane lash for every punch
he threw. He'll never fight again.*

PRINCIPAL

(weary smile)

*Aoki-san, we deeply appreciate your
donations in rebuilding our school.
But the other students claim
Hiroaki is a bancho. I'm afraid we
have no tolerance for gang leaders.*

A KNOCK. COACH KITADA enters, stands at military attention.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Coach Kitada, I'm in a meeting.

COACH KITADA

*Very sorry to interrupt. But my
office looks out on the yard, and I
happened to witness the fight.*

(to Papa-san)

*Do you mind if I ask, Aoki-san...
has your son ever wrestled?*

Off Papa-san, surprised...

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM (TOKYO) - DAY

Young Rocky, scrawny in his wrestling singlet, looks comically out of place. His fellow STUDENT WRESTLERS on the sideline point and laugh.

Rocky brushes them off and steps onto the mat to face his opponent: Uta the Bully. Rocky glares at Uta, his eyes flash red. With surprising speed, Rocky takes down his opponent. His fellow wrestlers are stunned into silence.

A smile curls on Rocky's lips as he sees the pained submission on his opponent's face -- who isn't Uta, but actually just some random kid.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I was a natural.

INT. STADIUM (TOKYO) - DAY

Young Rocky makes his way down a long hallway, gaining confidence and momentum. He enters out on the main floor. A ROAR goes up. It's a high school wrestling tournament, but Rocky commands the crowd like a WWE Smackdown spectacle.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I destroyed all my opponents.

Packed house of screaming Japanese STUDENTS. Cheering on Rocky, as he escapes a full nelson and pins his OPPONENT.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Unbeatable. In one season, I was district champion.

EXT. STADIO OLIMPICO (ROME) - DAY

Archival TV Footage: 1960 Olympics. Banners emblazoned with the Olympic rings and "ROMA MCMLX" wave in the summer breeze.

Team Japan marches in the Parade of Nations.

ROCKY (V.O.)
At Keio University, I qualified for the Olympic team. I got to represent Japan in Rome.

And there's Young Rocky (21). Waving to the world.

INT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE (ROME) - DAY

On a sunny lawn of the residential complex, AMERICAN ATHLETES in red-white-and-blue Ralph Lauren.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I met my first Americans. They were big, strong, and beautiful.

An 18-year-old American BOXER shows off his GOLD MEDAL.

ROCKY (V.O.)
They were winners. And who didn't
want to be a winner?

BOXER
(extends a hand)
Cassius.

Young Rocky shakes the American's hand in awe. He doesn't realize it yet, but he's just met Muhammad Fuckin' Ali.

INT. TOKYO AIRPORT - DAY

Young Rocky hugs his crying MOTHER (KATSU AOKI) good-bye. His brothers bow to him, in a sign of respect.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Wrestling was my ticket to America.
I secured a college scholarship.

Young Rocky goes to Papa-san, who stands with arms crossed.

ROCKY (V.O.)
One thing to know about *chonan*.
Being the firstborn son means
responsibility to family. It means
taking over the family business.

YOUNG ROCKY
I'm sorry, father.

Young Rocky bows and leaves. Papa-san watches. Stern gaze.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Papa-san thought I was going to
America to run away from my duty
and chase my own selfish desires.

EXT. SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE (MA) - CAMPUS - DAY

Young Rocky breathes in that sweet American air.

ROCKY (V.O.)
He was a thousand percent correct.

In a sea of whitebread COLLEGE STUDENTS, Rocky sticks out like a sore thumb. Many keep a suspicious distance from him.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I knew many Japanese still hated
Americans. I didn't realize it was
also the other way around.

INT. SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE - REGISTRAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Rocky places his Japanese passport and forms on the counter.
The REGISTRAR glares at him. Reluctantly takes his papers.

REGISTRAR
(reading)
"High-rocky?"

ROCKY
Hiroaki.

REGISTRAR
You're a long way from Nagasaki,
aren't you, son?

ROCKY
(confused)
Sorry?

REGISTRAR
My advice? Stick with "Rocky."

INT. SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE - TRAINING ROOM - DAY

Young Rocky, with the college wrestling team. Running drills.
He's a foot shorter than everyone. But he keeps up well.

COACH
Good pin, Rocky! Atta boy!

ROCKY (V.O.)
Of course, my focus was on the big
tournament. A.A.U. National. The
best college wrestlers across USA.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Large banner: AMATEUR ATHLETIC UNION NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

On the mat, Rocky pins his OPPONENT. The American crowd
watches. Gobsmacked. Rocky throws his fists in the air.

ROCKY (V.O.)
In case you had any doubt, I won
the A.A.U. Title. Broke all the
records. First Asian. Zero defeats.
Everyone was excited.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Young Rocky, gold medal around his neck, approaches two other COLLEGE WRESTLERS.

YOUNG ROCKY
Howdy. Good match.

Rocky puts his hand out to shake. They just glare.

COLLEGE WRESTLER #1
We beat your Jap asses already.

COLLEGE WRESTLER #2
Yeah man. Stick with karate.

They laugh.

Rocky laughs along.

They stop laughing.

And in one swift movement -- SNAP -- Rocky breaks one kid's leg and -- CRACK -- another's nose.

They go down, howling.

YOUNG ROCKY
Good tip.

Rocky steps over the two assholes writhing on the ground.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Okay, so maybe not everyone. Not the losers. Am I right?

INT. SPRINGFIELD COLLEGE - DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Rocky sits at attention. The COLLEGE DEAN takes off his glasses, rubs his temple.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I was ready to move on. I always wanted to make my way to New York.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

GREYHOUND BUS stops in front of Union Station.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Why New York? I smelled money.

Rocky (24) looks out at the city of skyscrapers with awe.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And it wasn't in wrestling. Maybe
as a 400-pound sumo I could make
bank. But there's no money in 110.

EXT. NEW YORK - TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

Rocky walks the gritty streets of '60s New York.

Gazes up at the towering buildings. The bright flashing
advertisements. The center of capitalism.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Papa-san once told me the streets
of America are lined with money.

Rocky looks down, sees garbage and needles.

HOMELESS crowding the sidewalk hold out cups for change.

ROCKY (V.O.)
He was half-right. You had to know
where on the streets to look.

Rocky passes a CROWD gathering in front of a theatre. Ticket-
holders waiting for a show.

ROCKY (V.O.)
First lesson I learned in New York?
Americans love to be entertained.

Rocky walks past a PORN SHOP. Neon lights flashing XXX.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Anywhere you look. TV. Billboards.
In theaters. On the street.

Another crowd has gathered. Rocky cranes his neck to see --

A STREET PERFORMER. Juggling trash picked out of the garbage.

ROCKY (V.O.)
No matter who you are. You wanna
get ahead? Entertain, motherfucker.

Rocky checks his pockets. Just a few coins. He tosses them
into the collection hat.

EXT. THE FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT - DAY

Swank eatery of Manhattan's elite. A tuxedoed BUSINESSMAN exits the restaurant with his mink-coated MISTRESS.

ROCKY (V.O.)
It wasn't easy to get work as a
foreigner. I had to take many odd
jobs. Dishwasher. Busboy. Valet...

At the valet podium, Rocky, now in a valet uniform, juggles sets of keys before handing off the correct set to the Businessman. Rocky gets a smile and a generous tip.

ROCKY (V.O.)
At least in that job I got to drive
sexy cars.

An Aston Martin pulls up. Rocky salivates.

INT. RUN-DOWN BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

The BOSS hands out the weekly pay to all the VALETS. Rocky examines his suspiciously thin envelope of cash.

ROCKY (V.O.)
It was my time to start looking on
the streets.

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Rocky in a white paper hat. Behind a large steering wheel.

TINNY MUSIC blares over loud-speakers. Yep, Rocky's driving --

EXT. LOWER MIDTOWN - MANHATTAN - DAY

An ICE CREAM TRUCK. Parked on a nice street corner.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I rented a Mr. Frostee truck.
Twenty-five bucks a day.

Rocky waits. No customers. He sees white CHILDREN across the street buying from other ice cream trucks with white DRIVERS.

ROCKY (V.O.)
But no one bought from me. Too many
ice cream trucks in Lower Midtown.
Like hookers. One on each corner.

EXT. EMPTY STREET - DAY

Rocky slowly drives the truck. Scanning the rundown streets.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I drove all over the city. Finally
found one neighborhood with zero
ice cream trucks.

Rocky pulls up under a marquee sign: HARLEM LIQUOR & WINE

A group of Black YOUTHS loitering around a fire hydrant see Rocky, approach his truck.

YOUTH
Yo man. You parking on our street.

ROCKY
Hot day. Ice cream? Free sample.

The Youths look at each other. Then back at Rocky.

YOUTH
What flavors?

EXT. HARLEM - DAY

Kyu Sakamoto's hit single "Sukiyaki" PLAYS OVER:

Neighborhood KIDS racing down the street. Reaching the end of a line of RESIDENTS. Which we continue following... as it snakes around store corners. Down a block of apartments. Across a street. Through a park. And finally up to --

Rocky's truck. Radio blasting. Rocky puts a paper umbrella in a cup of ice cream. Hands it to a happy CUSTOMER.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Japanese music. Tiny umbrellas. Big
smile. I found my way to entertain.

The side of his truck is plastered with images and clippings from Rocky's wrestling days.

ROCKY (V.O.)
All of Harlem wanted my ice cream.
In three months, I made ten K. A
fortune. I was unstoppable.

PRELAP SOUND of a cop siren's WOOP-WOOP --

EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

A COP steps out of his car. Ambles up to Rocky's serving window, cutting in front of the line. Rocky smiles big.

ROCKY
Afternoon, Officer. Cup or cone?

COP
You're double-parked.

ROCKY
(confused)
Double-parked? I don't think so.

COP
Hey charlie. Open up those slits.

Rocky's eyes flash.

ROCKY
My eyes are open. I'm legal parked.

The Cop writes up the ticket. Shoves it in Rocky's face.

COP
Not from where I'm standing.
(to customers)
Okay, everybody scram. Show's over.

The Customers boo and jeer. Rocky senses the crowd's energy. He holds up the ticket for everyone to see...

Then slowwwwly tears it in half. Over... and over...

With each tear, cheers grow louder, Cop grows madder.

Until Rocky tosses the tiny pieces in the air like confetti.

COP (CONT'D)
Fuckin Jap sonofabitch --

Cop reaches over the counter, yanks Rocky out of the truck --

And it's on! The crowd forms a circle, shouting "*Pig!*" and egging on Rocky to fight back. Cop forces Rocky's hands behind his back, but Rocky easily twists out of his hold. Cop double-takes. *What the hell?*

Rocky maintains a calm Buddha smile. The Cop tries again, but Rocky slips out of it like a vaselined fish.

Now the Cop is fucking pissed. He forcefully shoves Rocky down. Knee in his back. *OOF!* But Rocky takes it in familiar stride. Cop roughly handcuffs him.

COP (CONT'D)

Yeah, fuck're you gonna do now,
tough guy?

Rocky smirks, then lightning quick contorts his body -- swings his arms over his head -- pivots around behind the cop and takes him down like a rag doll.

The crowd goes nuts. Chanting "*ROCKY! ROCKY!*"

Until -- *WOOP-WOOP* -- another cop car SCREECHES up --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Rocky sits in the holding tank. Sporting a shiner.

ROCKY (V.O.)

So I lost my ice cream job. But now
I had a taste.

He licks dried blood around his mouth. His eyes sparkle.

ROCKY (V.O.)

I was hooked. I wanted more. Not
just a truck. My own restaurant.

EXT. BENIHANA RESTAURANT - DAY

GOLDEN SCISSORS cut a RIBBON at an opening ceremony.

ROCKY (V.O.)

I invested my ice cream money. And
boom. Benihana was born.

PULL BACK to reveal PAPA-SAN cutting the ribbon. Rocky turns and speaks to the camera.

ROCKY

Yeah. Maybe I should back up. See,
Papa-san actually held the rights
to the Benihana restaurant. Let me
think, how do I explain this?

INT. TOKYO BUILDING - DAY (1940)

Papa-san looks straight into camera. He wears a traditional *hakama*, trousers stitched in black and gold silk. Boss.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Before I was born, Papa-san was a tap dancer. He was known around Tokyo as "Asian Fred Astaire."

Papa-san breaks into an impressive TAP DANCE routine...

ROCKY (V.O.)

But once World War II happened, his vaudeville career fell apart. He opened a coffee shop with my mother when I was born.

...And tap dances right up to a table of JAPANESE DINERS. He bows and takes their order.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Which they grew into a successful restaurant named Benihana.

Pull back to reveal **BENIHANA** emblazoned on the wall. Then -- POOF -- the letters switch into Japanese characters.

ROCKY (V.O.)

So how did he fit into all this? Shit man, my memory's not what it was... Gimme a second. Go get some more popcorn. Or take a piss break. Let's see... Okay. It was 1964...

INT. ROCKY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MANHATTAN - DAY (1964)

Room's so tiny, the twin bed touches three out of four walls.

ROCKY (V.O.)

I had a gorgeous studio apartment. Chizuru was living with me.

Rocky lies in bed with CHIZURU (24), in negligee. He smokes. She thumbs thru a LIFE magazine. Marilyn Monroe on the cover.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Chizuru? Oh yeah, she's my wife. Future wife, at the time.

EXT. TEA HOUSE - DAY

Chizuru looks straight into camera. Wearing a white kimono, face painted like a geisha. Koto music serenely plays.

ROCKY (V.O.)

We met while she was working.

REVEAL Chizuru is posing with two WHITE MEN in biz casual. It's definitely odd. CAMERA FLASH. They break their pose.

The Men wear badges: ATTENDEE, WORLDS FAIR, NEW YORK.

The unseen Photographer hands back the camera. As the Attendees thank him and move on, we see that man is Rocky.

He's staring with furrowed brows as he approaches Chizuru.

ROCKY

You're not a geisha.

She flashes a fake, tight smile.

CHIZURU

Real sharp.

ROCKY

No -- I mean, I know you. From
Tokyo. Your eyes. I recognize them.
(snaps his fingers)
Wait a minute. Your father. He owns
a coffee shop. On Gijido Street.

A spark of recognition in her eyes.

CHIZURU

Hiroaki?

ROCKY

(mischievous grin)
Not me. My name is Rocky.

She smiles. Tries out the American name on her tongue.

CHIZURU

Rocky.

Their eyes connect. Rocky is about to say something, when --

CLASSMATE (O.S.)

Rocky! Come on, let's go!

Rocky glances over at an ADULT CLASSMATE waving him over.

ROCKY
(to Chizuru)
I'm on a class field trip.

CHIZURU
Don't keep teacher waiting.

Rocky smirks, then bows. He sprints away to catch up...

ROCKY (V.O.)
I enrolled in the top restaurant
management program in New York.

INT. NYC COMMUNITY COLLEGE - NIGHT

A hodgepodge CLASS of dropouts, middle-aged women and
convicts stare ahead, eyes glazed over.

But Rocky sits in the front row. Paying full attention.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Back then, I could only afford
night classes. Still, it was a
premium American education.

The INSTRUCTOR goes over a CHART for the components of a
McDonalds cheeseburger.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I had the best restaurant ideas.
Steak houses. Fancy bistros. All-
you-can-eat pizza buffets.

INT. DINER - DAY

Rocky at a booth table, wearing a cheap suit. He's passionate
and animated as he pitches an impatient RESTAURANTEUR.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I took my business plans all over
town. But the response was always
the same...

We see the Restaurateur speak with Rocky's voice:

ROCKY (V.O.)
"You're Japanese, right? Why don't
you stick to what you know best."

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Rocky at sushi bar, still in his cheap suit. Still passionate and animated, but now pitching a Japanese RESTAURANTEUR.

This one also speaks with Rocky's voice:

ROCKY (V.O.)
 "Americans don't eat Japanese food.
 Why don't you try McDonalds?"

EXT. LITTLE TOKYO - NIGHT

Rain pours. Rocky exits the restaurant, frustrated. He slogs past Japanese restaurants filled with Japanese customers.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 So. Catch 22. Being Japanese, I can
 only open a Japanese restaurant.
 But the only place to open Japanese
 restaurants is in Little Tokyo.

Rocky chucks his business plans into the mud.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 And it was full. More raw tuna than
 the pimps on 42nd Street.

Rocky stops in front of a dive bar. Neon beer signs flash.

INT. DIVE BAR - LITTLE TOKYO - NIGHT

Rocky, soaking wet, sits at the bar. Flags the bartender.

ROCKY
 Sapporo.

He wipes his sopping face with a bar napkin. A frosty mug of beer lands in front of him.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Arigato.

Rocky gives a little head bow, and looks up to see a familiar face: Chizuru. Behind the bar. Rocky smiles.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 (teasing)
 Geisha. You fell from grace?

CHIZURU

Can't a girl also tend bar? Some nights, I'm looked at as an object. Some nights, I just pour beer in peaceful silence.

ROCKY

I must be mistaken. I thought geishas need to be experts in the art of conversation.

CHIZURU

What did you think we're doing? Warming the air with our breaths?

ROCKY

(brow raises)

Now that sounds more like a geisha.

CHIZURU

Wrong night.

A flash of sexual tension between the two.

ROCKY

You hungry?

EXT. NEW YORK - STREET - NIGHT

Rocky and Chizuru holds hands as they walk through the drizzle. The city lights sparkle magically in the droplets.

They walk by a GREASY SPOON, line around the corner. Rocky suddenly stops and stares inside. Chizuru's surprised.

CHIZURU

Here?

ROCKY

(intently staring)

Yeah.

CHIZURU

You want our first date to be... hamburgers?

ROCKY

WHOA!

(off her confusion)

Look! See that guy? Wait for it...

Rocky points inside to the LINE COOK at the grill. Who takes a burger patty and -- FLIPS it in the air. It somersaults.

And -- lands back perfectly on his spatula. WILD APPLAUSE.
The customers eat it up.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Oh baby! Don't you love that?

Chizuru smiles. She watches him watching the line cook. The pure and simple joy in his eyes. She can't stop watching him.

He finally senses her eyes on him.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
What?

CHIZURU
You're like a child.

ROCKY
You think I'm a child?

They stare at one another intensely.

CHIZURU
I like children.

Rocky leans into Chizuru, and they passionately kiss.

CHIZURU (PRELAP) (CONT'D)
*My mother always said a home full
of children is a happy home.*

INT. ROCKY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MANHATTAN - DAY

Back to the tiny bed. Rocky and Chizuru lie naked together.

CHIZURU
She always wanted a big family. But
after having Nick, she wasn't able
to get pregnant again.

ROCKY
It was just you and your brother?

CHIZURU
(nods)
I always dreamed of having many
sisters. Teach them how to bake.
Open my own cake shop. Did you have
siblings?

ROCKY
Three younger brothers. All
useless. I wish I had sisters too!

CHIZURU
Ever think about having children?

ROCKY
Yes, many! More kids the better!

Chizuru laughs, embraces Rocky. He takes advantage of the good mood to bring up --

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Did you speak with Hikaru?

CHIZURU
About?

ROCKY
Donating the tappanyaki grills.

CHIZURU
I thought that was a joke.

ROCKY
Why'd you think that?

CHIZURU
You really wanted me to ask my boss to give us the grills from work?

ROCKY
World's Fair is over. What else will they do with them? Ship them back to Japan?

CHIZURU
Or, I don't know, sell them?

ROCKY
Okay. Fine. Tell Hikaru we'll buy them at discount. But big discount. And we need three of them.

CHIZURU
For one kitchen?

ROCKY
Kitchen? No, they're for the main room. They'll be the dining tables. We'll cook in front of the guests!

She gives him a look that's both amused and bewildered.

CHIZURU
Just like hamburger man?

ROCKY

Yes! Exactly.

(then)

I see that look. You think I'm crazy? Well this is what it takes to start a business. It's the only way to gain respect here. To not be seen as just another dirty Jap. And that takes focus. And spirit.

(gravely serious)

I don't know how to explain it, but somehow I know that destiny has assigned me for greatness.

She looks deeply in his eyes.

CHIZURU

I don't know how to explain it, but somehow I believe you.

Rocky's eyes well with gratitude. He leaps on top of her and she screams in delight.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Kurosawa's "Yojimbo" plays. As Toshiro Mifune slices bandits with his samurai sword on screen, Rocky watches with childlike glee. Chizuru smiles, gently touches her belly.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Those early days with Chizuru felt like a dream. But there was a reason I was telling you all this...

INT. THE COLONY RESTAURANT - DAY

Rocky and Chizuru at a table with a candle and a flower. She looks stunning in a low-cut black cocktail dress. He cleans up alright. The tuxedoed SERVER stops by.

SERVER

May I offer you the wine list?

Rocky points to his glass of water and gives a thumbs up.

ROCKY

Water here is excellent.

The Server thinly conceals his disdain and walks away.

CHIZURU
 (leans forward)
 I can't believe you got a table
 here. This isn't too expensive?

ROCKY (V.O.)
 Ah! That's right! Now I remember:
 Money money money...

Rocky's distracted, he spots someone entering --

ROCKY
 Papa-san! Over here!

Rocky waves over Papa-san. Ever the sartorial gentleman, he's in a black suit. He tips his fedora to the host, walks over.

Chizuru, shocked to see Rocky's dad here, still bows.

CHIZURU
Konbanwa, Aoki-San.

He's equally surprised to see her, on what looks like a date.

PAPA-SAN
*Chizuru-chan. I'm interrupting the
 two of you.*

ROCKY
 Nonsense! Sit down, sit.

Chizuru politely lowers her gaze and gestures for Papa-san to sit. She continues bowing, trying to hide her embarrassment.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 Papa-san. I'm so happy you came.
 Did you look over my restaurant
 proposal? What do you think?

Papa-san's piercing eyes penetrate his son.

PAPA-SAN
*I think if you want a profitable
 restaurant in America, you should
 serve sukiyaki.*

Rocky stares at his dad, mouth open. Then lets out a laugh.

ROCKY
 Suki-yaki? Suki-yucky! No way jose.

PAPA-SAN
Suki-yaki is fine Japanese cuisine.

Rocky rolls his eyes, then abruptly turns to the DINERS at the table next to them.

ROCKY

Excuse me. Ever try Japanese food?

(then)

Oh, don't worry. You can tell me.

I'm Chinese. Not Japanese.

The Diners, not sure how to respond, just shake their heads.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Why not?

DINER

I don't know. Because it doesn't sound appetizing, okay?

ROCKY

Yes, good. Thank you. Very helpful.

Enjoy your meal.

(turns back to Papa-san)

See? Americans still don't like Japanese. People and food. They think it's slimy and icky. Raw fish. See?

Rocky opens the fancy restaurant menu. Points to the main sections: *Steak. Poultry. Seafood.*

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Beef. Chicken. Shrimp. That's what Americans eat. Doesn't matter rich or poor. McDonald's. Kentucky Fried Chicken. Howard Johnson's.

(then)

Beef chicken shrimp. Holy trinity.

PAPA-SAN

(nostrils flaring)

If I am going to invest, it will only be in a Japanese restaurant.

ROCKY

And it will be.

PAPA-SAN

With beef chicken and shrimp? What kind of Japanese food is that?

ROCKY

Just add rice. Boom. Chicken stir fry. Beef teriyaki. Shrimp tempura.

PAPA-SAN

You've never cooked a day in your life. You don't know good food.

ROCKY

(smiling)

And you don't know Americans. They don't pay to eat good food. They pay to have a good time.

PAPA-SAN

"A good time"?

ROCKY

Yes. They want entertainment. So we give them exotic decor. Chefs cooking in front of them. Teppanyaki grills. Which Chizuru will get for us. Right, baby?

PAPA-SAN

Who wants to sit there and watch their dinner get made?

ROCKY

That's why we put on a show. Have them perform. Do tricks.

PAPA-SAN

Tricks? Huh! Like clowns?

ROCKY

Like vaudeville. Papa-san, you know better than anyone here.

Papa-san bristles at that, then gives Rocky the dreaded look.

PAPA-SAN

Hiroaki. It was a mistake for me...

The Server returns, pushing over a cart with a silver pan.

ROCKY

Oh here it is!

Server pours liquor over the pan, lights it on fire. Flambé.

The neighboring Diners watch the leaping flames in awe.

DINER

Wow. Honey, we have to get that.

Rocky looks back at Papa-san with animated eyes.

ROCKY

Cherries. Brandy. Ice cream. Total cost of ingredients? 50 cents. But they charge 5 bucks. These people are paying for the show.

(lets that sink in)

This place is known for their cherry jubilee. Only dessert. Now... Imagine the whole meal. Please, Papa-san.

Papa-san relents and imagines. Then looks at Rocky with a different look. Rocky just might be onto something.

INT. GEDULDIG & ASSOCIATES LAW FIRM - DAY

Rocky sits at a boardroom table. Fidgety in his cheap suit.

Across from him: Papa-san and his dapper lawyer, AL GEDULDIG.

GEDULDIG

(clinical reading)

Upon incorporation, stock issuance of Benihana will be --

PAPA-SAN

Benihana of Tokyo.

GEDULDIG

I'm sorry, yes. Benihana of Tokyo. Will be as follows... Yu-no-su-ke Aoki, retaining 95%. Hi-roa-ki, a.k.a. Rocky, Aoki, the remaining --

ROCKY

Five percent?! Is this a joke?

PAPA-SAN

Why would you think that?

ROCKY

Ten thousand dollars. I worked my ass off. In the summer heat!

PAPA-SAN

And who is supplying capital for construction? And personnel with experience? And if your restaurant fails, whose gyozas will the collectors come for?

ROCKY
 You're gouging me! Your own *chonan*.
 (then)
 Forget it. I'll find someone else.

Rocky shoots out of his seat, storms to the exit.

PAPA-SAN
Hiroaki!

Rocky pauses, still seething. Papa-san turns to his lawyer.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
 Al, say I offer you ten percent of
 the company. For half of Rocky's
 investment.

ROCKY
 What?!

Geduldig chuckles uncomfortably, not wanting to get involved.

GEDULDIG
 As your lawyer, I couldn't. Not
 only is it a conflict of interest --

PAPA-SAN
 If you weren't my lawyer. Knowing
 the whole operation. Would you?

GEDULDIG
 (beat)
 It wouldn't last six months.

Wowed silence. Papa-san looks at Rocky. Iron-faced samurai.

PAPA-SAN
 So. You want my money or not?

Off Rocky, swallowing his pride --

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - JAPAN - DAY

Sweeping vista. Papa-san's S500 roadster cruises down a dirt road. Through verdant rice fields by Kyoto.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 It was a shit deal. No question.
 But what choice did I have?

Papa-san parks his roofless car in front of a beautiful old Japanese FARMHOUSE. The fields have been ruined from the war.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Papa-san wanted to use old Japanese
farmhouses to build the restaurant.
He liked to say:

Papa-san turns to camera, speaks in Rocky's voice:

ROCKY (V.O.)
"Authenticity is priceless."

Papa-san approaches a penniless FARMER, who bows deep.

ROCKY (V.O.)
It turned out authenticity did have
a price. And it was way cheaper
than American raw materials.

QUICK POPS:

Japanese CONSTRUCTION WORKERS dismantle the farmhouse walls.

A giant crate gets loaded onto a FREIGHTER BOAT.

A TRUCK-BED with crates crawls along the New Jersey Turnpike.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Once I learned that, I supported
Papa-san's plan. Thank god Japan's
economy was in the toilet.

EXT. WEST 56TH STREET - DAY

An out-of-business Chinese restaurant. Faded letters: BAMBOO
HOUSE. Cheap red paper lanterns decay on the walls.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I found a steal in prime midtown.
Only three hundred bucks a month.

Chinese WORKERS clear the place of every last soy sauce
bottle. What's left is a tiny hole-in-the-wall storefront.

INT. BENIHANA - MAIN DINING SPACE - DAY

Japanese CARPENTERS re-assemble the farmhouse walls, using
tongue-and-groove *inaka* construction. Teppanyaki grills are
bolted into the floor, right in the middle of the room.

ROCKY (V.O.)
With only a tiny budget to hire
workers, they had to be chef,
waiter, bus boy, all-in-one.

INT. BENIHANA - ROCKY'S OFFICE - DAY

Chizuru helps fit Japanese CHEFS into their iconic red and white uniforms. They're all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

Rocky demonstrates to one chef how to juggle his spatulas.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Papa-san sent me young assistants
from his Tokyo kitchen. Another
bargain Japanese export.

Moves on to next chef --

ROCKY (V.O.)
Baby brother Shiro was the best
bargain: free.

SHIRO AOKI, now grown. The softer, more dopey version of Rocky. Especially with the floppy red toque on his head.

SHIRO
(thick accent)
Mejum Lair.

ROCKY
Rare. Me-di-um Rare.

EXT. BENIHANA - DAY

Rocky and Chizuru, dressed in their finest, wait by the front door. They stand under a hand-painted sign: GRAND OPENING.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Finally it was Opening Day.

People walk past without even looking.

ROCKY (V.O.)
We opened to thunderous silence.

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

Empty restaurant. A line of Chefs wait idly, no longer standing at attention. Shiro sneezes. It's depressing.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Success in the restaurant industry?
Also medium rare. According to
Professor Kolwoski at NYCCC, 85
percent of restaurants in this city
don't make it past the first year.

Rocky. Dejected. He checks in the back area. A pregnant woman washes dishes. She looks up. It's Chizuru.

Rocky wraps his arms around Chizuru. Holds her large belly. Like it's a life saver. She gives an exhausted smile.

A BELL JINGLES. The front door opens, surprising everyone.

ROCKY (V.O.)
We had only one regular.

An OLD JAPANESE MAN ambles in. Looks around the empty space.

ROCKY
(deadpan)
You have a reservation?

Old Japanese Guy laughs a toothless wheeze. No one else joins in, clearly having already heard this many times before.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And if he didn't come? Zero sales.

Rocky customarily bows, then leads his sole customer to his usual seat. Rocky beelines for the prep table.

ROCKY
Shiro, take care of Kido-san.

SHIRO
But I haven't finished the onions --

ROCKY
Are you kidding me? Useless! Just
go, get out of my sight!

Rocky grabs the knife from Shiro, gets to chopping onions. Shiro glares, throws down his chef hat. He storms past --

Papa-San, who's been in the corner, watching like a hawk.

PAPA-SAN
*Where are your customers? Only
three last night. Including this
old geezer. Unsustainable.*

ROCKY
Yes, Papa-san.

PAPA-SAN
*Your brothers are working for you
without pay. Your mother? Now
moonlighting at another restaurant.
All to help you.*

Rocky continues chopping harder. Shame reddening his face.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
I think it's time, Hiroaki.

Rocky lets that sink in. But before he can respond, he's interrupted by the sound of a PLATE SHATTERING on the floor.

Chizuru wails. Grabs her pregnant belly.

CHIZURU
 I think it's time!

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Dead silence. Ghostly fluorescent. Rocky's eyes look hollow.

He stares through a glass partition. A newborn BABY cries, picked up by a NURSE. She walks the baby over to --

Another FATHER, who holds his baby for the first time.

Rocky watches this all with a catatonic numbness.

Behind him, the rest of his family sits on a bench in the hallway. Everyone solemn.

His Mother silently weeps. Papa-san's eyes are cast down.

PAPA-SAN
 (to no one in particular)
A boy... It was a boy.

Rocky wills himself to keep from falling apart.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 In Japanese culture, showing grief in public is frowned upon. And we never speak about our tragedy. So the same applies here.

INT. ROCKY'S STUDIO APARTMENT - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Rocky wordlessly leaves his apartment. Chizuru is holed up in the corner, surrounded by new baby toys and furniture. She clutches onto a blue teddy bear like a life preserver.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 I channeled all my pain and anger into my restaurant.

INT. BENIHANA - BATHROOM - NIGHT

A BLOODCURDLING SCREAM. Rocky's curled up on the floor of the storage room/bathroom. A sobbing mess.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I never left. I would eat, sleep,
and breathe my restaurant.

EXT. WEST 56TH STREET - DAY

Rocky stands on a busy street corner in the freezing cold. He tries handing out Benihana coupon flyers to passing TOURISTS.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And I refused to give up on my
restaurant.

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

Rocky tosses the stack of flyers on a grilltop.

ROCKY
Light it all on fire.

Chizuru looks up from her cleaning. They're both exhausted. Worked to the bone. And both still very alone in their grief.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
No one will even give us a chance.

Chizuru is quiet, numb. Finally, she surprises even herself when she speaks --

CHIZURU
People in this area are tourists.
They'll never try Japanese. You
have to reach beyond here.

ROCKY
We have no money to advertise.

CHIZURU
Must be other ways for people to
learn about us. Right?

Rocky pauses, straightens up. His eyes focus on the OLD NEWSPAPERS Chizuru is using to clean the glassware.

ROCKY (V.O.)
She was onto something. Not a
single critic offered to review us
when we opened. We weren't the kind
of place they wanted to showcase.

EXT. NEWSTAND - DAY

Chizuru browses the publications. Grabs one of each.

ROCKY (V.O.)
But if I personally reached out to
them, maybe I could convince them
to give us a shot.

INT. BENIHANA - BACK ROOM - DAY

THUD. Chizuru drops a stack of publications on Rocky's desk.
Rocky is on the phone, feet propped up. In full pitch mode.

ROCKY
(into phone)
Eatertainment! You heard me right.
Picture our restaurant as kabuki.
Japanese theater. I want you to
close your eyes. Yes, I'm serious!

CUT TO:

Rocky now on his feet, excitedly making sound effects --

ROCKY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
WHOOSH! Onion volcanoes like Mt.
Fuji! FWHIP-FWHIP-FWHIP! Acrobatic
shrimp flying through the air!

CUT TO:

Rocky now on top of his desk, like P.T. Barnum to a crowd.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
(into phone)
The chefs cook in front of you.
They entertain, like a comedy and
magic show. BAM! Before you know
it, your food's ready. You almost
forgot you came here to eat.

CUT TO:

Rocky splayed out on the floor, losing energy. Phone cord wrapped around furniture as he's still glued to the phone.

ROCKY (V.O.)
A hundred calls. Finally one bite.

Suddenly Rocky perks up. His eyes shine.

INT. CAR BACKSEAT - NIGHT

A frail OLD WOMAN. Stares ahead blankly, bug-eyed glasses.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Clementine Paddleford. Some food editor for *The Herald Tribune*. A random paper I've never heard of.

She yawns. Her dentures fall. She readjusts them.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Still, I prepared everything like she was the Empress of Japan. I worked like a crazy guy. Ordered extra food. Got my staff to come back. All for a one-night banquet.

EXT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

Cadillac pulls up in front of the restaurant. There's a red carpet. Rocky is there to open the car door for Clementine.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I even rented the fanciest car I could find to pick her up.

Rocky greets her like a super star. She gives zero shits.

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

Clementine enters. Shows the first sign of surprise.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I told my old classmates I'd comp their meals. The place was packed.

Chefs juggle shrimp. Onion volcanoes erupt. Rocky's former classmates applaud. All laughing and drinking.

INT. BENIHANA - DAY

CLOSE ON a framed copy of her REVIEW on the wall.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Turns out The Herald Tribune had
twelve million subscribers. And
with one glowing review, just like
that...

PULL BACK to find CUSTOMERS swarming in like locusts. The
staff looks overwhelmed. Some chefs even seem terrified.

But Rocky's loving it.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Word spread like syphilis. Benihana
was the piece of ass everybody
wanted to hit. An experience like
nothing else.

Rocky greets the sea of guests like they're family.

INT. CHASE BANK - DAY

Chizuru approaches the teller window. Plops two giant bags of
cold hard CASH onto the counter.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Money was rolling in faster than we
knew what to do with it.

BANK TELLER looks at Chizuru suspiciously.

CHIZURU
Benihana. You should check it out.

INT. BENIHANA - BACK ROOM - DAY

Rocky picks up stacks of THOUSAND-DOLLAR BILLS. Places them
in a LARGE SAFE, already filled with stacks.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Demand was so great, I had to
install more tables in the back.

EXT. BENIHANA - ENTRANCE - DAY

Rocky sweet-talks impatient CUSTOMERS waiting outside.

ROCKY (V.O.)
But it wasn't enough. I constantly
turned away customers. And, well,
they needed to go somewhere.

IMPATIENT CUSTOMER
Look pal, this ain't Peking or
whatever Oriental town you're from!
In New York, you can't keep us
waiting over an hour. I'm starving!

ROCKY
So sorry, I didn't realize. There's
a hot dog stand right over there.
Hurry! Before you starve to death.

The Customer bites his lip, as Rocky moves on --

EXT. BENIHANA EAST - DAY

NEW BENIHANA LOCATION. Packed with well-heeled customers.
Park Avenue socialites. Midtown East power lunchers.

ROCKY (V.O.)
So I opened a second location. In a
much nicer part of town.

Rocky helps smartly-dressed CUSTOMERS into a Rolls-Royce.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I even got a Rolls-Royce shuttling
customers in between locations.

INT. BENIHANA EAST - NIGHT

Rocky gladhands and schmoozes with UPSCALE CUSTOMERS in the
lobby, who sip martinis as they wait.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And Papa-san? He was happy as sake-
steamed clam.

At a grilltop, Papa-san holds court with his Japanese
FRIENDS. They poke at their food, confused.

JAPANESE FRIEND
*What is this? Butter on rice? This
is as Japanese as apple pie!*

They burst into laughter. Papa-san sits there, stewing.

PAPA-SAN
*Come on. We're going to get some
 real Japanese food.*

JAPANESE FRIEND
*But Yunosuke, isn't this your
 restaurant? Your Benihana?*

PAPA-SAN
*This isn't Benihana. Just a cheap
 American knock-off.*

Papa-san leaves in a huff. His friends shrug, follow him out.

ROCKY
 Papa-san? Where are you all going?
 Wait --

But Papa-san is out the door. Rocky sighs loudly into his hands, gathers his composure -- turns around, bumping into --

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 Oh! Sorry... Al?

It's Papa-san's lawyer, Al Geduldig, looking sheepish --

GEDULDIG
 Rocky, I thought it over. And I'd
 love to invest. Ten K, was it?

Rocky lets out a good-natured laugh, slaps Al's back.

ROCKY
 Are you kidding? That won't even
 cover the air conditioning.

Rocky moves on. Checks on another table --

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 Mr. Hilton? How is everything?

BARRON HILTON, billionaire hotel chain owner, wide smiles.

BARRON HILTON
 I like what I see. Rocky, I know
 what plays on the road and what
 doesn't. And I'd like you to come
 to Chicago. I want to open one of
 these in my next hotel.

Off Rocky, eyes popping out of their sockets --

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - CHICAGO - DAY

Papa-san takes in the stupidly nice view from the penthouse floor. Hilton has a beefy arm around Rocky.

BARRON HILTON

Rocky, can I call you Rocky? I'm a very rich man. And the way I stay rich is by recognizing good opportunities. Now I don't care what others say, I always believed that your kind were reasonable. If you woulda told me ten years ago that I'd own a property with an Oriental name, I woulda said to go fuck yourself.

Rocky laughs too hard.

ROCKY

Mr. Hilton. This is beautiful. And such a magnificent view.

BARRON HILTON

You like it? It looks over all of Chicago. A shiny beacon. I want to call it...

(pause for effect)

"Hilton's Benihana In The Sky."

Papa-san winces at the name.

BARRON HILTON (CONT'D)

Glamorous, right? What do you say?

ROCKY

What can I say but --

PAPA-SAN

No.

Rocky and Hilton both blink.

BARRON HILTON

I'm sorry?

PAPA-SAN

The name is "Benihana of Tokyo." It will never change.

BARRON HILTON

Even a name has a price. Our lawyers can work out that detail --

PAPA-SAN
It's not up for negotiation.

Not the response Hilton wanted. He turns to Rocky.

BARRON HILTON
Think about what you could do. This
is a take-it-or-leave-it offer --

PAPA-SAN
Why are you talking to him? He only
holds 5% interest in the company.

Hilton slowly turns to --

BARRON HILTON
Mr. Aoki. I'm afraid we've gotten
off on the wrong foot. I see that
you're a reasonable and smart man --

PAPA-SAN
And you're a rich asshole. You have
no respect for Japanese culture.
And you will never own a Benihana.

Hilton's face goes beet red.

EXT. STREET - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Rocky chases a fast-walking Papa-san down the street.

ROCKY
You just blew up a golden hen.

PAPA-SAN
It wasn't a good deal.

ROCKY
What part of expanding into the
number one hotel chain in the world
isn't a good deal? All because of
your Japanese pride?

PAPA-SAN
Have you not looked in the mirror?

Rocky has no comeback. Papa-san heads to the waiting limo.

ROCKY
Where are you going?

PAPA-SAN
Back to Tokyo.

ROCKY

We haven't finished here. Even if we don't get in business with Hilton, we need to expand.

PAPA-SAN

How?

ROCKY

I'll find another location. Like I did in New York.

PAPA-SAN

But this is Chicago. What do you know about middle west America? The zoning laws? Clientele?

(scoffs)

My son goes to community college and now he's a business tycoon.

ROCKY

I already have two successful restaurants --

PAPA-SAN

We do. And right now, we may be the new and exciting flavor. But when the novelty wears off, how do we sustain a real business?

(off Rocky's silence)

Listen to your father. Focus on the restaurants we already have. Be responsible for once.

Papa-san slams the limo door shut. Off Rocky, defiant --

EXT. BENIHANA - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

Rocky walks alone through busy downtown Chicago.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Despite what Papa-san wanted to believe, my concept was pure gold.

Rocky stops at a vacant hole-in-the-wall. He stares at it with fiery determination as it transforms before his eyes...

EXT. BENIHANA - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

...Into another exciting Benihana restaurant. Suddenly a crowd of CUSTOMERS materializes. Lines form out the door...

ROCKY (V.O.)
It didn't matter where in America.
People couldn't get enough.

INT. BENIHANA - DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - NIGHT

...inside is packed. Even more than the New York locations.

Rocky, in a tux, is in the middle of it all. Reveling in the success. His eyes fill with joy and dollar signs.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I had stumbled on a money printer.

QUICK POPS:

CITY NAMES in BENIHANA RED FONT zoom toward us on screen:

SAN FRANCISCO

DALLAS

LAS VEGAS

MIAMI

BEVERLY HILLS

Accelerating faster, cycling through more and more cities...

ROCKY (V.O.)
I was getting calls from all over.
I couldn't keep up. So I started
franchising.

MAN'S VOICE (PRELAP)
Rocky? It's Kenny Rogers.

EXT. BACKYARD LAKE - WEST LA - DAY

KENNY ROGERS sits in a fishing boat, on a cordless phone.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Yeah. KENNY fucking ROGERS wanted
to franchise a Benihana in LA. But
there was already one in Beverly
Hills. Even when dealing with Kenny
Rogers, you've got to know when to
hold 'em, know when to fold 'em.

EXT. ROCKY'S MANSION - ENGLEWOOD, NJ - DAY

A SOLD sticker on a real estate sign. On the lawn of the luxurious mansion we've already seen. It dwarfs Versailles.

ROCKY (V.O.)
For the first time in my life, I
had more money than I knew what to
do with.

INT. ROCKY'S MANSION - DAY

Rocky and Chizuru marvel at the size of their new house. Their two children, KEVIN (5) and GRACE (6), run in --

KEVIN
There's an indoor pool!

GRACE
Dad, how many bedrooms are there?

ROCKY
Twenty-nine. Go count them. Find
each one!

The two kids go running off, laughing.

CHIZURU
That's almost a new bedroom for
every day of the month.

ROCKY
That's a lot of beds to defile.

Rocky grabs Chizuru, spins her around. She screams, laughing.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Can you believe it? I always
dreamed of having a mansion.

CHIZURU
That's not the dream, Rocky. The
dream is the family inside the
mansion.

They kiss. Living the dream.

INT. ROCKY'S MANSION - GARAGE - DAY

Fancy cars pop up, filling up the warehouse-sized garage.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 I started collecting exotic vintage cars. Pierce-Arrows, Maseratis, Ferraris. Any car you can think of-- well, except for a Japanese car.

CLOSE ON Asian hands wiping down a Rolls-Royce. The vanity plate? BENIHANA. Duh.

The BUTLER escorts over a REPORTER. Who approaches behind.

REPORTER
 Rocky Aoki? Lyle Fuller from LIFE Magazine. Now a good time to talk?

Head looks up from the car: It's an ASIAN CHAUFFEUR.

He looks baffled. Waves his hands apologetically, when -- Rocky appears, in a suit. They do "kind of" look similar.

ROCKY
I'm Rocky.

As Rocky masks his annoyance with a big smile --

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

A salon chair spins to REVEAL -- Rocky now in his signature jheri-curl perm.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 Media requests were rolling in. I wanted to make sure I stood out. And not for my cauliflower ears.

INT. UPSCALE TAILOR - DAY

Rocky updates his image. Dons a fur coat. Looks at himself.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 I wore three-and-a-half-inch heels on my shoes to make me look taller. And my signature?

A \$12,000 star-sapphire RING he slips onto his finger.

EXT. HAWAII - BEACH RESORT - DAY

Same ringed-finger hand lifts up a mai tai at a beach table. Rocky cheers with STEVE MCGARRETT.

ROCKY
Okole Maluna. Bottoms up, pal.

But before Rocky takes a drink -- BOOM! -- the table next to them goes up in FLAMES. Rocky looks around, frantic --

INT. STUDIO SET - THE MERV GRIFFIN SHOW - DAY

ON LARGE TV SCREEN: Steve McGarrett yanks Rocky out of his seat as they run -- dramatic music on the act out --

CLIP ENDS. Studio audience APPLAUDS.

ON STAGE: Rocky sits in a lounge chair opposite MERV GRIFFIN. Rocky applauds his performance too.

MERV GRIFFIN
 Rocky Aoki, folks. So Rocky, how was it to cameo on *Hawaii 5-0*?

ROCKY
 Never thought I'd be a movie star.

MERV GRIFFIN
 I heard you became friends with Flip Wilson and Pat Morita.

ROCKY
 You know, Merv, having celebrities as friends is nice. But for a kid from Tokyo, being a celebrity is even nicer.

LAUGHTER. The AUDIENCE eats it up.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 After that interview, actors swarmed to Benihana, like I was handing out Oscar-bait roles. Sidney Poitier. Angie Dickinson.

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

OVER DIFFERENT NIGHTS: We see each celebrity. And Rocky glad-hands and chats each one of them up. He's a natural.

Rocky personally greets SEAN CONNERY with a martini.

ROCKY
 Shaken, not stirred.

Sean lets out a hearty Scottish laugh. Rocky moves on --

ROCKY (V.O.)
I reconnected with an old friend.

-- checks in on MUHAMMAD ALI at a table with his ENTOURAGE.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Muhammad Ali. We hit it off in the
1960 Olympics. Remember? I told him
how much Japanese people love him.
Next thing you know, I'm sitting
down with Don King.

INT. KORAKUEN STADIUM - TOKYO - NIGHT

Packed stadium. Muhammad Ali fights MAC FOSTER in the ring.

ROCKY (V.O.)
We set a match between Ali and Mac
Foster in Tokyo. Why did I do this?
To help a good friend, of course.

The arena is wrapped in BENIHANA signage.

In the front row, Rocky sits with Papa-San.

ROCKY
What do you think? Your *chonan* got
Muhammad Ali to come to Japan.

PAPA-SAN
(shrugs)
He's no Elvis.

Rocky steams. Meanwhile the guy next to him mutters to
himself. Balding with a red beard, this is DONALD KESSLER.

KESSLER
Gimme a break... idiotic...

Rocky throws a glare at him. The fuck's this guy's problem?

ROCKY
Everything okay?

KESSLER
It's a fuckin' waste. All the ads
around the arena. No one at home's
looking at that shit. It oughta be
in the ring. Man, the asshole who
put this together should be kicking
himself.

Rocky considers this. Guy's right. Rocky's kicking himself.

ROCKY
Who are you?

KESSLER
Donald Kessler. Consultant.

ROCKY
What do you consult?

KESSLER
Stocks. Ventures. Anything and
everything. You name it.
(then)
Who are you?

ROCKY
I'm the asshole.

Kessler sits up half-an-inch.

KESSLER
Get the fuck out. You're Rocky
Aoki? Know what my buddies and I
call you? The yellow whale.

ROCKY
Why?

KESSLER
You know, 'cause you're Moby Dick.
But like Oriental.

Rocky cocks an eyebrow, turns to camera --

ROCKY
Kessler was a racist dickhead. Even
if he was right about the ads.

INT. BENIHANA PRIVATE JET - NIGHT

Rocky with Papa-san, who stares out the window. Across from
them, Donald Kessler guzzles champagne and caviar.

ROCKY
(to camera)
But we became inseparable. He was
like a puppy I rescued off the
street. A deformed inbred puppy
with a mother raped by a weasel.

Rocky pours more champagne, happy to enjoy it with company.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

No one else could stand him. I get why. He had a wart on his neck that he sometimes pushed like a button. He had way too many crazy theories.

KESSLER

(mouth full of caviar)

I'm telling you. The reason Jews eat at Chinese restaurants is to fuck with you Japs for siding with the Nazis. Same goes with Italian. Ever seen a Jew eating carbonara?

INT. EL MOROCCO CLUB - MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Old money Palm Beach ambience. Rocky at a table, to camera --

ROCKY

And he loved playing backgammon.

Kessler lifts his head from the backgammon board. Nose like a powdered donut.

KESSLER

WHOOOOOOO!

ROCKY

As much as he loved doing coke.

Rocky's turn to do a line. Kessler downs his drink, then SPEWS it like a geyser -- all over the poor SERVER.

KESSLER

You call this sloe gin, motherfucker? I want you to go back there and make me a fucking fizz.

The Server wipes his face and calmly walks off.

ROCKY

Why bother with fancy drinks? Me? Whiskey neat. Can't mess that up.

KESSLER

This club's a dump. The chicks are skanks. Service sucks. And this music, fuck are we listening to?

ROCKY

Sounds like octopus sex. If it were up to me, only disco music.

KESSLER
(light bulb)
Holy shit, why not? Rocky. Ever
think of opening your own club?

Off Rocky, now thinking --

EXT. CLUB GENESIS - NIGHT

The in-crowd gathers around a swanky entrance on East 48th.

ROCKY (V.O.)
One year and one million dollars
later, Club Genesis was open to the
midtown crowd of Manhattan.

INT. CLUB GENESIS - NIGHT

Disco fever on the dance floor. Rocky roller-skates as a
conga line of skimpy ROLLERGIRLS hang on to his waist.

ROCKY (V.O.)
French restaurant on first floor.
Disco on next. Game room and paddle
tennis on the roof.

EXT. CLUB GENESIS - ROOF - DAY

Two guests pretend to play paddle tennis while gawking at a
PHOTOSHOOT of FEMALE SUPERMODELS at a backdrop screen.

ROCKY (V.O.)
I even started a softcore porno
magazine. Kessler tried to get
everyone to call me "Asian Hugh
Hefner." I didn't stop him.

Rocky's in a director's chair that reads: ASIAN HUGH HEFNER.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And it came with my Benihana-style
deal: two centerfolds for the price
of one!

A FEMALE PA in skimpy outfit approaches. Lips pursed.

FEMALE PA
Here's your Coca-Cola, Rocky.

Rocky lifts up his sunglasses to make eye contact.

ROCKY

Thank you, Pamela. You even
remembered the straw. Smart girl.

She winks and continues on. Rocky drinks his Coke, sneaking a peek or two back at her.

PRELAP: *BUM BA-DUM DUM BUM BA-DUM DUM...* Rhythmic tribal drumbeats takes us into...

INT. NEW BENIHANA LOCATION - NIGHT

Grand opening. A giant banner covering an entire wall reads:
CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 100TH BENIHANA LOCATION

A dozen TAIKO DRUMMERS perform on ceremonial drums, their wall-shaking beat in unison. The white crowd takes it in with exotic fascination.

Papa-san, dressed in dapper suit, sits in a stylish booth. The WAITRESS laughs at his joke as she leaves.

Rocky slides into the seat across from his father.

PAPA-SAN

One hundred locations. *Kanpai*.

Papa-san lifts his champagne. Rocky remains frosty.

ROCKY

The only time I see you anymore is
when I open another restaurant.

PAPA-SAN

I've noticed the last few have
veered from the standardized look.

ROCKY

It's modern. My design. Not old-
school Japanese.

PAPA-SAN

My design. You've refused the
Japanese farm buildings I've found.

ROCKY

Shipping old barns across thousands
of miles is a huge waste of money.

PAPA-SAN

It's also a breach of our bylaws.

ROCKY

Then sue me.

PAPA-SAN

Sue you? You really have become an American.

ROCKY

Let me ask you. If I had stayed behind in Japan like you wanted, do you think any of this would happen? This is all because of me.

PAPA-SAN

(laughs, shakes his head)

You really are my flesh and blood.

ROCKY

I'm nothing like you. I'm huge. My life is a fucking success.

PAPA-SAN

Really? How are things at home?

Off Rocky, no answer for that --

INT. ROCKY'S MANSION - DAY

Chizuru checks on her sleeping kids in bed.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Maybe I was an absent father. The more time I spent at work, the more Chizuru was alone with our kids.

Chizuru, wearing a knockout dress, exits Kevin's bedroom.

ROCKY (V.O.)

But I provided for my family. More than anyone could provide for theirs. That was my presence. My love. Their entire fantastic and comfortable life. You're welcome.

She pads down the hallway. Finds Rocky in the kitchen, eating leftovers out of containers. Her expression is a blank slate.

CHIZURU

You're home.

ROCKY
(double-takes)
Look at you, all dolled up! What's
the occasion?

Chizuru totally loses it. A range of emotions cycle through
her all at once. Finally she lets it all out --

CHIZURU
It's our anniversary.

Rocky stops chewing. Oh shit. He puts down his food.

ROCKY
Let me take you out. I want to take
you out.

CHIZURU
You already promised to take me
out. I showed up at Le Pavillon
wearing this. Six hours ago. I
waited until the kitchen closed.
Then I came home and waited.

ROCKY
Baby, I'm sorry --

CHIZURU
What happened to us? This family?
We're not just another one of your
stores you can open and then forget
about. I -- you know what? I can't
stay here anymore.

ROCKY
Don't go. I love you, Chizuru. You
know I do. I promise to change.

Rocky grabs Chizuru to stop her from leaving. She SLAPS him.
Then again and again. He holds her tight.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And did I change?

EXT. CLUB GENESIS - NIGHT

ON STAGE, California BLONDES move their bodies to disco.

ROCKY (V.O.)
To be fair, I did buy a calendar
and circle our anniversary.

At a booth, Rocky plays backgammon with a RUSSIAN PRINCE, surrounded with a stable of YOUNG SHOWGIRLS.

ROCKY (V.O.)
When I wasn't working, I was out
playing in my own private playpen.
I'd stay up till dawn.

Kessler, in the next booth, snorts cocaine with a GIRLFRIEND.

KESSLER
Hey Rocky! You're playing with
Prince Vladimir? Well I'm playing
with Prince Albert.

Kessler stands on his seat and drops trou. Swings his pierced schlong for the whole club. Rocky laughs uproariously.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Of course, not everyone enjoyed my
playpen as much as I did. Certainly
not my brother-in-law. Who also
happened to be my VP of Operations.

INT. ROCKY'S OFFICE - DAY

Rocky with his Benihana exec NICK KOBAYASHI (37), Chizuru's brother, once a handsome go-getter. His burnout is palpable.

NICK KOBAYASHI
Rocky, I've noticed you've been
using the company account to pay
for your club's operations.

ROCKY
Yep. Is that an issue?

NICK KOBAYASHI
(seriously?)
A strip club is not part of our
company's business.

ROCKY
It's a gentleman's club.

The other exec in the room, SUSHA, laughs. Total brown-noser.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Susha knows.

SUSHA
That's right, boss.

NICK KOBAYASHI
(sighs)
Trying to level with you here, man.

ROCKY
Okay, look. It's a place to discuss
and generate more business.

NICK KOBAYASHI
Then take them to a restaurant.
Fuck, we own a hundred of them.

SUSHA
Hey, that's right. Good point.

Door opens. It's Rocky's ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT
Call for you, Rocky. It's the club.

Rocky shoots out of his seat.

ROCKY
Good meeting. Keep up the good
work, boys. And remember, money
isn't everything.
(then)
Just 99 percent.

Susha laughs way too hard. Before Nick can get a word out,
Rocky's out the door. Nick exhales, aggravated.

INT. CLUB GENESIS - BAR - NIGHT

Rocky rushes in, finds the club's burly manager, SHIN.

SHIN
You gotta talk to her, Rocky. I
can't get her to stop.

He points to a COCKTAIL WAITRESS in a booth. Crying, shaken.

ROCKY
Can we get a drink here?

Rocky goes over, sits down in the booth next to her.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Hey, you okay?

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
(alarmed)
Mr. Aoki?

ROCKY
Call me Rocky.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
Oh no, I don't want you to see me
like this.

ROCKY
It's okay. Really.

A drink is rushed over to Rocky. He hands it to her.

COCKTAIL WAITRESS
Hah. They forgot the straw.

Rocky looks closely at her.

ROCKY
Pamela?

PAMELA
Gosh, you remembered.

ROCKY
Of course! How could I forget a
smart girl like you? Now please.
Tell me what happened.

Pamela takes a large gulp of her drink. Calms a bit.

PAMELA
Okay. I was serving this customer.
I've seen him around. He told me he
was a movie director. And he wanted
me in his next picture.

ROCKY
Who wouldn't?

PAMELA
(takes in the compliment)
He asked me if there was somewhere
quiet we could talk, so I took him
to one of the private rooms, you
know? Where the girls give dances?
(Rocky nods)
Well, he wanted to see my body.
Then he took photos of me with this
camera he was carrying. And he
started getting handsy. And -- I
realized -- I was so stupid...

She breaks down into tears. Off Rocky, a raging bull --

INT. CLUB GENESIS - LOADING AREA - DAY

A MALE CUSTOMER is forced down into a chair. He's already been roughed up a bit. His eye swollen, cheek banged up.

ROCKY (O.S.)
Where's the film?

MALE CUSTOMER
What film? I don't know what you're talking about.

KESSLER (O.S.)
You lying piece of shit!

Rocky sits in front of him, his chair turned around. Behind Rocky is Donald Kessler, coked-up, pushing his neck wart, ready to launch the nukes. Giant Shin stands by, arms folded.

Rocky continues with the Customer.

ROCKY
You were horny, things got out of control, I get it. Just give me the film of the stupid photos you took and we'll forget the whole thing.

MALE CUSTOMER
Please. I swear, I have no idea what this photo stuff's about.

KESSLER
I'll rape your mother, cocksucker!

MALE CUSTOMER
Your girl musta been confused.
Please, Rocky.

Rocky gives him a look like "you asked for it." He gets up from his chair. In one move, he crosses to the Customer and grabs him in a chokehold and YANKS him out of his seat.

KESSLER
Yeah! Kill that lying fuck! Squeeze his head off like a zit!

Rocky throws the Customer on the ground, twists him into a full nelson. Bends his body to the point of snapping.

MALE CUSTOMER (O.S.)
AHH! Okay! I'll give it to you!
I'll give it to you!

CLOSE ON Rocky's face. On an adrenaline high. He looks alive.

INT. CLUB GENESIS - BAR - NIGHT

Rocky slaps a roll of FILM on the table.

PAMELA

You got it back? Rocky. I don't
know what to say.

Pamela's lashes flutter. She looks up at Rocky with blue eyes
that sparkle like his sapphire ring.

He suddenly can't take his eyes off her.

She smiles, full lips parting over white teeth. Perfectly tan
skin. Soft blonde curls. Full breasts. They lock eyes.

ROCKY

You hungry?

INT. COPACABANA SUPPER CLUB - NIGHT

Over a bottle of '48 Musigny, Rocky with Pamela, mid-story --

ROCKY

So this guy's on my street. Selling
pictures. Of women. Naked.

PAMELA

Oh my gosh.

ROCKY

I ask him how much. He tells me
5,000 yen. I tell him go to hell.
That's a month's allowance for me.

PAMELA

That's crazy.

ROCKY

He says, now I see pictures, I have
to pay. Pulls out a big knife. Like
I'm a giant tuna to slice in half.

PAMELA

Oh my gosh! No, did he --

ROCKY

He sees panic on my face. Like I
pee-pee my pants. I make sure.
Because that means he doesn't see
my leg sweep him. Boom. On his ass.

PAMELA
Oh, Rocky. Wow.

ROCKY
I take all his nudie pics. Sell
them to classmates. Only later do I
find out: Guy I beat up is Yakuza.

Pamela laughs. Rocky flags a passing WAITER.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
We're ready. I'll get the filet
mignon. Medium rare.

WAITER
And for the lady?

PAMELA
Um. Could I have the tuna tartare?

WAITER
Of course. Wonderful choice.

Waiter takes the menus and leaves. Pamela sees Rocky giving
her a look. She gives a look like "what?"

ROCKY
You know that's raw fish.

PAMELA
Yeah I know. I love raw fish.

Rocky chuckles. Pamela giggles.

INT. ROCKY'S LAMBORGHINI - NIGHT

In the back seat, Rocky sits thigh to thigh with Pamela. She
leans forward to the DRIVER.

PAMELA
One more block. Second on the left.
(to Rocky)
Honestly, you didn't need to give
me a ride back.

ROCKY
Why not?

PAMELA
I mean... what about your family?

ROCKY
They know I work hard. Sometimes
very late.

They lock eyes. The car pulls up to a brownstone.

PAMELA
Well. This is me.

She looks at Rocky. His heart pounds.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Meeting Pamela was like meeting
Chizuru again for the first time.

INT. PAMELA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rocky and Pamela have wall-pounding sweaty sex.

ROCKY (V.O.)
It was because I loved Chizuru that
I continued seeing Pamela.

Pamela screams with pleasure. Rocky cums with a loud moan.
The two collapse in each other's naked bodies.

PAMELA
Are you still...?

ROCKY
Ready for seconds?

They grin. Go at it again.

ROCKY (V.O.)
Yes, I had a mistress! Of course I
had to have a mistress. Show me a
successful man who doesn't have a
mistress and I'll show you a lying
sack of sea urchin.

INT. CLUB GENESIS - NIGHT

Nick Kobayashi is out with some other young Benihana EXECS.
It's December and the COCKTAIL WAITRESSES all wear santa hats
and revealing candy cane slips.

EXEC
Hey look. The chief's making out
with some chick.

EXEC #2

And it's not his wife. She's white.

They all gawk. Rocky makes out with Pamela in a booth.

EXEC

Yeah, she's got the "cock" in front of the "asian."

They laugh. Nick seethes.

INT. ROCKY'S MANSION - KITCHEN - DAY

Christmas morning. Nick is in the kitchen, watching Rocky in the living room. The kids excitedly open their presents.

NICK KOBAYASHI

He's cheating on you. With one of the cocktail waitresses. I saw it with my own eyes.

He turns around. Chizuru prepares hot chocolate with big marshmallows. She doesn't even look up.

CHIZURU

Thank you for telling me.

She continues preparing. Unfazed.

NICK KOBAYASHI

You going to do anything about it?

CHIZURU

Like what?

NICK KOBAYASHI

I don't know. Confront him? Divorce him? Chop his dick off? Something.

CHIZURU

It's Japanese custom to have a girlfriend. Dad had one. Mom just put up with it.

NICK KOBAYASHI

Yeah, but we're not in Japan anymore. You don't have to follow that bullshit.

CHIZURU

I don't know, Nick.

NICK KOBAYASHI

(angry)

Why are you being so passive?

CHIZURU

Why are you so angry? You're not the one being cheated on.

NICK KOBAYASHI

You should be angry.

CHIZURU

I have too much responsibility to be angry. I'm thinking of my kids. I don't want them to be without a father. If I divorce Rocky, he would never take care of them. All he cares about is his work. I'd be raising them alone.

NICK KOBAYASHI

You pretty much already are.

CHIZURU

At least now he still has to come home every once in a while.

Chizuru takes the hot chocolates into the living room. Nick stands there, incredulous --

INT. MARRIOTT HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

The Aokis host a large Japanese gathering for *Setsubun*. An old celebrated Japanese tradition. Candy and money are thrown into the cheering crowd, as kids try to catch small gifts.

Papa-san dons a demon mask. Rocky throw soybeans to drive away the "evil spirit," chasing him out the door to the hall. Shiro slams the door shut.

CROWD

(shouting in Japanese)

Out with evil! In with fortune!

Cheers and laughter.

MOMENTS LATER:

Rocky's kids play with the demon mask, taking turns wearing it and chasing the younger kids.

Papa-san addresses the banquet tables with a mic.

PAPA-SAN

*Happy Setsubun! I pray this year
brings health and good fortune. I
am grateful for being so fortunate.
My business. My family. Wife and
four sons. My grandchildren.*

Papa-san turns to his two grandkids, Grace and Kevin.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)

*Grace. You are the smartest
granddaughter. And Kevin. My own
chonan's chonan. Very special
relationship. I dote on you both.*

Then to Chizuru.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)

*And Chizuru, the stabilizing force
behind my son. You are a beautiful
camellia. Radiating life and --*

Rocky charges up to Papa-san --

ROCKY

*What are you doing hitting on her?
You old pervert! That's my wife!*

PAPA-SAN

*Quit making a fool of yourself.
You've had enough drinks --*

Rocky smacks the mic out Papa-san's hand. The crowd gasps.

Shiro beelines over -- stands up to his older brother.

SHIRO

Have you no shame?

ROCKY

*Stay out of this, Shiro. No one
cares about you.*

SHIRO

*Still talking down to me. Like I'm
your servant.*

ROCKY

More like my little bitch.

Shiro seethes. He charges at his brother. Rocky grapples him, wrestles Shiro to the ground. The crowd is aghast.

SHIRO
Unghh! Apologize --

ROCKY
Fuck you --

SHIRO
Bakayarou!

ROCKY
You're the *bakayarou* --

The family finally pulls Rocky and Shiro apart.

SHIRO
Can't even say a simple "sorry" --

ROCKY
Don't need to apologize to family.

SHIRO
We're not family!

The other two brothers stand by Shiro. Rocky sees the judging eyes in the room on him. He lashes out --

ROCKY
You'd be nothing without me! All of you! Nothing!

Chizuru looks at her husband with pity and embarrassment.

ROCKY (V.O.)
You may think I'm an asshole, but let's put this in context. If I'd tried to start Benihana in Japan, I never would've gotten off the ground. In Japan no one moves up until someone dies. But here, you gotta fight. You gotta put business ahead of friends, ahead of family.

EXT. FORMULA 1 RACETRACK - MILAN - DAY

VROOM! Race cars blur across the screen.

ROCKY (V.O.)
And so, I focused on my businesses. I was obsessed with looking for new opportunities.

In the stands. Donald Kessler, with his ARM CANDY du jour. Pamela is also there, wearing a Benihana cap, cheering.

Rocky drives a red **BENIHANA** Ferrari 312P. Looks to camera --

ROCKY

I won the Moscow-to-Milan rally.

Rocky zooms past the finish line. The crowd goes wild.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

I took my celebrity by land, air
and sea. Slapping Benihana on all
my vehicles. Literally. All of 'em.

EXT. OPEN SKY - PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

A **BENIHANA** HOT AIR BALLOON transports Rocky and three other
CREW MEMBERS, covered in thick parkas. He looks to camera --

ROCKY

I became the first person to cross
the Pacific in a hot air balloon.

Rocky stops and stares out at the sky. Specifically a CASTLE
IN THE CLOUDS. And a FIGURE emerges, walking towards him...

ROCKY (CONT'D)

At 21,000 feet over the Pacific
Ocean, frostbite's not your only
concern. The lack of oxygen can
make you hallucinate.

It's a NUDE WOMAN. Walking on pink cotton candy. Her slow-
motion gait like she's in a heavenly bouncy castle...

Miss Bouncy hands Rocky a black plastic tray. It's shrimp on
rice. Side of teriyaki sauce in a plastic container.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Thank you, sexy naked muse. THANK
YOU!!

EXT. POINT PLEASANT, N.J. - DAY

Speedboats and catamarans line the dock. Rocky and Nick
Kobayashi walk past nouveau rich DOUCHEBAGS. Rocky to camera--

ROCKY

I got into the offshore powerboat
circuit, the ultimate sport for the
new rich. There's South American
coffee money here, real estate
tycoons, fast food franchises. In
short, my kind of people.

(MORE)

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 (shouting out)
 Eduardo! Love the new yacht!

EDUARDO enthusiastically waves while chugging from a champagne bottle. As Rocky continues along, Nick scoffs --

NICK KOBAYASHI
 This a sport or a retirement hobby?

ROCKY
 People play hard here. They get killed and battered. High speed, high risk.

NICK KOBAYASHI
 Why can't you stick to backgammon? Nobody ever falls off a chair and breaks his neck.

ROCKY
 (to camera)
 My first race I won. Miami-to-Nassau. After that I was hooked. I decided to take over the Hennessy Grand Prix. Make it my own.

Rocky and Nick finally walk under a giant banner boasting:

THE BENIHANA GRAND PRIX

NICK KOBAYASHI
 How much did this cost again?

ROCKY
 Twenty-five grand.

NICK KOBAYASHI
 And how is this helping business?

ROCKY
 Nick, if you have to ask, you won't understand the answer.

Rocky jumps into his boat, plastered with **BENIHANA** logos.

NICK KOBAYASHI
 You're right. But try me.

ROCKY
 Here's your answer!

Rocky REVS up the boat and throttles it, as the crowd cheers. Nick shakes his head, resigned.

EXT. HORSE STABLES - DAY

HORSE HOOVES pound on dirt. Rocky leans against a fence, watches a JOCKEY ride around in a lap. Rocky to camera --

ROCKY

Then there was horse racing.

Kessler's next to him, swigs from a flask, passes it to him.

KESSLER

God, she's beautiful.

ROCKY

Benihana's fucking fast, huh?

KESSLER

Gotta pick another name. Jockey Club won't allow commercial ones.

ROCKY

Okay. How about Rocky's Dream?

Horse gallops past them, slows to a stop.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Or Red Flower?

KESSLER

I like Red Flower. Sounds sexy.

ROCKY

Sexy? You fuck flowers?

The jockey's helmet comes off, revealing a 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Kathy was the 17-year-old niece of Governor Hugh Carey. My dream was an all-girl racing stable. A field of maidens ridden by maidens.

Rocky and Kessler walk-and-talk on their way over to her.

KESSLER

Hot tip. My guy tells me Spectrum Information's gonna hire Sculley.

ROCKY

Who?

KESSLER

John Sculley. Chairman of Apple Computer? That's like the Mets signing Joe DiMaggio. You feel me?

ROCKY

How do you know this?

KESSLER

I told you, I'm a stock promoter. Now you want in or not? This is a once in a lifetime chance. I'm talking 400% ROI here.

Rocky looks intrigued, turns to camera --

ROCKY

I'll be the first to admit that these are all very nontraditional business investments. Some are a real stretch to be even considered business-related.

EXT. CLUB GENESIS - NIGHT

Club Genesis with all its flashing neon lights.

ROCKY (V.O.)

I've been accused of using company money for my own enjoyment. But I'll let you in on a secret to success: You have to act like rules don't apply to you.

Suddenly the lights go out.

ROCKY (V.O.)

But you win some you lose some. That's life. The club was a sinkhole. One year in, it was done. And I was out a little money...

PAPA-SAN (PRELAP)

Two million dollars!?

INT. ROCKY'S OFFICE - DAY

Papa-san SLAMS down the accounting books in front of Rocky. Nick Kobayashi is silent on the couch, a fly on the wall.

PAPA-SAN

And half of it with company funds.

ROCKY
Where's Susha?

PAPA-SAN
Your so-called CFO? I fired him.

ROCKY
Without consulting me?

PAPA-SAN
I uncovered all sorts of crazy
investments you made with the
company's money. A documentary?

ROCKY
Yeah. About my buddy Muhammad Ali.

PAPA-SAN
For three hundred thousand dollars?
And this play -- half million loss?
Who were you paying, Shakespeare?

ROCKY
It was Broadway. And it starred
Joan Rivers --

PAPA-SAN
Fuck Joan Rivers! And you can
forget about this rock tour.

ROCKY
But we're headlining The Beatles.

PAPA-SAN
You signed The Beatles?

ROCKY
Not yet. But the next time I see
Yoko in the restaurant, she'll get
them on board.

PAPA-SAN
Your list of failures is as long as
your ego.

ROCKY
What about my other ideas? The fish
lake restaurant -- you catch it, we
fry it? Or the cooking show? Or the
frozen dinners? Why don't you ever
look at my successes?

PAPA-SAN
 What successes? Frozen dinners?
 Where on earth did you come up with
 that ridiculous idea?

Off Rocky, confidence not shaken --

SMASH CUT TO:

ON TV: A grainy commercial. The lights come up on Rocky, wearing the iconic red and white Benihana chef uniform.

CHYRON ON SCREEN: "ROCKY AOKI, Founder of Benihana"

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
 This man is responsible for the
 most successful Oriental restaurant
 in America. For the past decade, if
 you wanted great Oriental food,
 you'd go to him.

ROCKY (ON SCREEN)
 (to camera)
 Now, I'll come to you!

Holds up a frozen dinner package slapped with Benihana logo.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
 With eight Benihana frozen
 Oriental... frozen Oriental... Jap
 slanty-eyed slimy fishfucker --

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR (O.S.)
 Cut, cut!

INT. STUDIO SET - SAME TIME

Rocky is on set, taping. COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR jumps up.

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
 Rocky, what was that?

Rocky glares. Then snaps out of it. Grins good-natured.

ROCKY
 Sorry. Forgot the line.

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
 You forget the line, then just
 yell, "Line." No need to improvise.
 (then)
 Let's reset, everyone.

CREW swarms onto set as Rocky turns away. Brooding. He spots Nick Kobayashi in the wings, summons him over.

ROCKY

What do we need to get Papa-san on board for this frozen dinner line?

NICK KOBAYASHI

Nothing. We don't need his signoff.

ROCKY

(brows furrowing)

But doesn't he hold 95%?

NICK KOBAYASHI

Of "Benihana of Tokyo." Which only owns the first three locations. We created a new company for all the franchises and subsidiaries. "Benihana National Corporation." You're aware of that, right?

ROCKY

Of course. Just making sure you were too. Keep it up, brother.

Off Rocky, wheels spinning --

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

Ginormous BIRTHDAY CAKE is wheeled out. Benihana employees and corporate sycophants all sing "Happy Birthday" to Rocky.

ROCKY (V.O.)

My 40th Birthday. No one from my family was there. Not Chizuru or my kids. Not my brothers or my mom. Not even Papa-san.

The cake top POPS open to reveal -- Pamela in a skimpy slip.

The crowd cheers. Rocky feigns surprise.

EXT. STREET - DENVER - DAY

Rocky, shades hiding drunk sadness, hair flying in the wind as he cruises down the street. He's with COCKTAIL WAITRESSES in a HOT TUB on a STRETCH ROLLS-ROYCE. Pamela is also with Rocky, peeved at the competition. She offers him --

PAMELA
 Champagne?
 (Rocky waves it away)
 What's wrong, baby? You always have
 a glass before an opening.

ROCKY
 Not in the mood.

PAMELA
 Maybe it's too crowded in here.

ROCKY
 Not now, baby. Please.

PAMELA
 I got something might cheer you up.
 (leans in, whispers)
 I'm pregnant.

ROCKY
 Don't joke. I told you I'm not in
 the mood.

PAMELA
 I'm not joking. If it's a boy, I
 like Kyle. A girl, Echo. You like
 that name? Echo... echo echo...

Before Rocky can respond, they stop at a restaurant. Rocky
 slides his shades down as he reads the name on the place --

PAMELA (CONT'D)
 "Gasho?" Why are we stopping here?

Rocky's face curdles as he glares at the words: **GASHO**.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 "Gasho." Papa-san pulled a fast
 fuck on me. With the shrimp ball.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. BENIHANA - MANHATTAN - DAY

*Rocky is busy setting up his first location. Shiro, in his
 red chef costume, approaches Papa-san.*

SHIRO
 Wouldn't it be more efficient if
 each chef prepared one thing, then
 we split it all up?
(MORE)

SHIRO (CONT'D)

So I prepare veggies. Haru preps the meat. And Yoshi preps the rice and noodles?

Papa-san gives Shiro a look, considering...

INT. BENIHANA - CHICAGO - NIGHT

Opening night. Papa-san waves down a busy Rocky.

PAPA-SAN

Where is your location manager?

ROCKY

Poached by Hilton. Thanks to you.

PAPA-SAN

Why don't you use Shiro? He's a quick learner. He's family. And most important, he's here.

INT. BENIHANA - NIGHT

100th location celebration. Rocky spies Papa-san with Shiro.

SHIRO

You're looking too thin these days.

PAPA-SAN

Dealing with Rocky is killing me. But don't worry about me. You saved the Chicago location. Let's talk about your future.

As Papa-san leads Shiro away to a private corner --

RETURN TO:

EXT. GASHO RESTAURANT - DENVER - DAY

*Back with Rocky, as he leaps out of the hot tub. Dripping wet, in a **BENIHANA** speedo, he charges into the restaurant.*

PAMELA (O.S.)

Baby! Where you going like that?

INT. GASHO RESTAURANT - DENVER - CONTINUOUS

Rocky in speedo, storms through the restaurant. Drawing wild stares from GUESTS all in FORMAL DRESS.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 Of my three brothers, Shiro was
 most like my father. He even copied
 my old man's business approach:
 slow, dull and devious.

Rocky finds Papa-san in a tux, handing out cigars to his
 JAPANESE friends and being congratulated. Rocky explodes --

ROCKY
 This is supposed to be a Benihana!
 What the fuck is Gasho!?

Papa-san calmly regards Rocky. Drops the bomb --

PAPA-SAN
 It's my new chain.

ROCKY
 (processing)
 You're competing against me?

PAPA-SAN
 Not competing. Complimenting.

ROCKY
 The hell does that even mean?

PAPA-SAN
 Success spawns many imitators.
 Haven't you noticed? The cheap
 knock-offs popping up everywhere?

Shiro approaches, in a tux, inserts himself into the convo --

SHIRO
 Why not protect our flank with our
 own imitation?

PAPA-SAN
 We're looking out for the company.

ROCKY
 By forming a new one behind my
 back? With this traitor?

PAPA-SAN
 Shiro is capable, with many ideas.
 Surely you can appreciate that.

ROCKY
 Bullshit. You should have put your
 energies behind Benihana. Instead
 of secretly sabotaging me.

PAPA-SAN
 Stop being an ungrateful child.
 Everyone revolves around you, huh?

ROCKY
 Guess what, old man? You've been
 acting like you hold the strings.
 But you've got jack shit. You can
 take your three restaurants.
Sayonara! You're done.

PAPA-SAN
 (furious)
 No. You are done. You are not my
chonan. You are not my son.

It's the ultimate disgrace. But Rocky burns through the hurt.

ROCKY
 Who is your *chonan* now?
 (pointing to Shiro)
 Mushroom dick?

PAPA-SAN
 Yes. And the new President of
 Gasho.

Rocky glares, burning a hole through his father.

PRELAP: A PRIMAL SCREAM -- AHHHHHHHH!

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a projector screen, showing lyrics with a white
 bouncy ball hopping over each part of: **OH-HOH-HOH-HOAH...**

REVEAL Rocky on stage with a bottle of whiskey in his hand as
 he drunk screams into a mic.

Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting" plays on karaoke player, and
 Rocky half-sings, half-screams the song:

ROCKY
Everybody was kung fu fighting!
HYAH!

The room of Benihana Employees try to keep straight faces as
 they dutifully cheer. Nick buries his head in his hands.

Rocky's wild rendition continues over a series of moments:

INT. ROCKY'S OFFICE - DAY

Rocky trashes his office. Throws an epic tantrum.

HYAH!

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - NIGHT

Rocky partakes in a drug-fueled drunken orgy.

HYAH!

INT. CASINO - ATLANTIC CITY - NIGHT

Rocky bets \$100K on black. The roulette ball lands on red.

HYAH!

INT. ROCKY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rocky with a SUPER MODEL wearing nothing but an "ICELAND" sash. They bury their noses in a crystal bowl full of coke.

Someone opens the door.

ROCKY

Go away! I'm with Miss Iceland!

GEDULDIG (O.S.)

Rocky, it's your lawyer.

Rocky pops up, white-faced gopher. Sees Geduldig, his lawyer.

GEDULDIG (CONT'D)

The U.S. Attorney's office is
charging you with insider trading.

Oh fuck.

INT. GEDULDIG & ASSOCIATES LAW FIRM - DAY

Geduldig at his desk with Rocky. Speaks softly and calmly.

GEDULDIG

It's serious. As liver cirrhosis.

ROCKY

They're mistaken. I have no idea
what this is about.

GEDULDIG

Rocky, they have Donald Kessler
behind bars. And they've cut a deal
with him. He's cooperating.

The walls are closing in. Rocky's a trapped tiger.

ROCKY

That slippery slimy sashimi fuck!

GEDULDIG

You're facing at least a million in
fines. And prison time. Like grab
your ankles and cough. Understand?

Rocky's face falls, somber...

INT. FEDERAL COURT - BROOKLYN - DAY

Rocky, in pinstripe suit, sits next to a grim-faced Geduldig.

The U.S. ATTORNEY makes his case against Rocky as the JUDGE
presides, giving Rocky side eye.

GEDULDIG (V.O.)

In light of a pending conviction, I
highly advise you to step down as
chairman. I also would advise you
to place all your Benihana assets
in the corporate trust.

EXT. ROCKY'S MANSION - DAY

Rocky returns home in his Rolls-Royce. Drained. He sees an
ASTON MARTIN in his circular driveway pull away. That's odd.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Who would control the corporation?

INT. ROCKY'S MANSION - GARAGE - DAY

Garage door clickety-clacks up --

REVEALING his gigantic stable of LUXURY CARS. Like a museum
of exotic and vintage Ferraris, Cords, and Maseratis.

GEDULDIG (V.O.)

Your children are still listed as
officers of the company, and are
thus members of the trust. They'll
be taken care of.

Rocky beelines past car after car, checking his inventory, until he arrives at --

Remains of a BIRTHDAY PARTY. Streamers, Star Wars decor. A banner reminds him it's KEVIN'S 11TH BIRTHDAY. Fuck.

Chizuru in a smocked dress cleans up plates of half-eaten birthday cake. She looks up, more resigned than upset.

ROCKY

I meant to get back sooner --

CHIZURU

It's your *chon*'s birthday. What excuse could you possibly have?

Rocky can't bring himself to tell her.

ROCKY

I'll make it up to Kevin.

CHIZURU

How?

KEVIN (O.S.)

Hey Dad...

Kevin (11), in a black t-shirt, black pants with his hair greased back, saunters up. Rocky wraps him in a hug.

ROCKY

My birthday boy! So big now. And who are you dressed up as?

KEVIN

John Travolta.

ROCKY

John Travolta? He's eaten many times at Benihana.

KEVIN

I know. Everyone has.

ROCKY

Why the stinky face? Didn't you have fun at your party?

(Kevin shrugs)

Hey you have one more birthday gift you didn't open.

KEVIN

Where?

ROCKY
San Francisco Bay. I'm taking you
to my power boat race tournament.

KEVIN
(lights up)
Really? You mean it?

Chizuru shoots him a "what the fuck" look.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TV SCREEN: A BENIHANA commercial. Shots of different families gathering around grilltops.

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Benihana is the perfect spot for
your next birthday party. Your next
family reunion.

Land on a shot of Rocky with a FAKE JAPANESE FAMILY. All actors. He's laughing and hugging, playing with them.

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Fun, magical, and delicious. The
full Japanese experience with the
Rocky Aoki promise:

Rocky turns to camera.

ROCKY (ON TV)
No slithery, slimy fishy things.

MALE NARRATOR (V.O.)
Benihana: Bring the whole family!

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - HOTEL - SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

PULL BACK to REVEAL a large screen TV set, Kevin watching. Alone in the penthouse bedroom, a view of the Bay.

Kevin watches his dad on TV enjoying his fake family with a touch of resentment and confusion.

There's a KNOCK at the door in the other room. Sounds of Rocky answering. Pamela's voice. Shouts. Arguing. Chaos.

Kevin gets up, curious. Walks into to the other room, just as Rocky slams the front door shut, cussing in Japanese --

Finds Rocky with a hapa BOY (5). This is KYLE AOKI, Rocky's son with Pamela.

KEVIN
Who's this kid?

Rocky, deer in headlights. Tries to recover.

ROCKY
Oh, him? He's my friend's boy. He
wanted to see the power boats.

KYLE
Daddy, daddy! I want to see the
boats.

ROCKY
No, there's no daddy here. He's
somewhere in New Jersey.

But Kevin's not buying it.

KEVIN
He's your kid? Geez, Dad...

ROCKY (V.O.)
That was the first big mistake of
the day. And not even the worst.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO BAY - DAY

Benihana Grand Prix. Kevin stuck with babysitting his
illegitimate half-brother. Annoyed as he watches:

Rocky on a 38-foot POWER BOAT emblazoned with BENIHANA.
Arguing with his MECHANIC.

ROCKY
I'm driving, so I'm testing the
boat myself before the race.

MECHANIC
Hey, you're the boss.

CUT TO:

Rocky behind the wheel, frustrated, wanting to escape all the
problems mounting in his life, as he cranks up the speed --

60 mph... 70 mph... 80 fuckin' mph!...

BAM! The boat suddenly hits a wave at the wrong angle --

CRASHES into the choppy waters -- SPLINTERS into pieces --

Rocky gets crushed like a cockroach.

Kevin, on the dock, drops his soda in shock. Covers Kyle's eyes, as Bikini Models around them scream bloody murder.

ROCKY (V.O.)

That was the worst accident of the day. My speedboat disintegrated. And so did I.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK:

ROCKY (V.O.)

But you've already seen that, huh? I feel like I'm talking in circles now. Like I'm on a record player. And it's the worst disco song.

Rocky, in his white tuxedo, steps through the darkness. His FOOTSTEPS echoing. He looks around, a lost child.

Suddenly, a BEACON OF LIGHT appears along the horizon. As Rocky gets closer, he sees it's a...

BENIHANA RESTAURANT

INT. BENIHANA - DREAMSCAPE

Rocky wanders into his Benihana restaurant. Chizuru greets him at the door as an honored guest, bows deep.

CHIZURU

Irasshaimase! Welcome to Benihana.

She excitedly sits him down at a grilltop. Before Rocky can process this trippy mindfuck --

The chef arrives with his ingredients cart -- it's Papa-san.

PAPA-SAN

Irasshaimase!

He greets Rocky with a bow and begins flipping spatulas. He parses an onion into thirds and stacks it into a cone. After dousing it with oil, he sets it ablaze.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)

Onion volcano!

APPLAUSE. Rocky looks around, doesn't see anyone else.

Papa-san sweeps veggies, chicken, and mushrooms onto the hot metal. Adds additional ingredients, narrating --

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
 Soy sauce! Garlic! Sesame seeds!
 Everything *oishii*!
 (then)
 Look! Butterfly!

Papa-san tosses up a stick of butter from his spatula.

DRUM SFX: BA-DUH-DUM!

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
 Who wants egg roll?

Papa-san rolls an egg along the grilltop. BA-DUH-DUM!

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
 How about one more joke?
 (then)
 A Japanese boy named Rocky.

BA-DUH-DUM!

ROCKY
 (muttering)
 That wasn't funny.

Other important people in Rocky's life appear around the table, dining and serving. There's Pamela. And Kenny Rogers.

Shiro arrives with a tiki drink with cocktail umbrella.

SHIRO
 Benihana Punch. In collectible
Hotei mug. Face looks like Uta the
 bully, after you beat him up.

BA-DUH-DUM! His Mother appears in the seat next to him.

MOTHER
 Can you take picture?

She hands him a camera, smiles big. CLICK. She takes the camera back with a bow. Then shows him a photograph.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Look. It's my *chonan*. Remember?

Rocky looks. A photo of him running track in high school.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
 You refused to participate in the
 relay race. Why?

ROCKY
(shrugs)
Didn't want to share the glory.

BA-DUH-DUM!

MOTHER
Leaves you lonely and unhappy.

ROCKY
I like to win. Is that a crime?

BA-DUH-DUM! Rocky, annoyed with the sound, looks around, finds Donald Kessler behind a drum set.

KESSLER
Go through life searching only for
glory? Won't find it til the end.

Rocky's eyes bulge in realization...

ROCKY
I'm dying.

He gets up, but everyone grabs onto him. Zombie-like.

SHIRO
But you didn't touch your drink --

ROCKY
Get off me! I gotta get outa here!

MOTHER
You still need green tea icecream --

PAPA-SAN
Ginger for shrimp, yum-yum for beef
and chicken --

Rocky wrestles his way out of the Benihana restaurant with Herculean effort -- and as he opens the front door to brilliant white light, he crosses the threshold --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - ROCKY'S ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON Rocky's eyes shooting open -- Rocky gasps for air like he's surfaced from the bottom of the ocean.

Rocky adjusts to the harsh fluorescent light. The faint beeps of the EKG bring him back to reality.

Rocky sees he's in a hospital bed. He looks down at his naked body. Scar runs down the front of his torso like a jacket zipper. His penis is in a tube.

He's in terrible fucking shape.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Rocky?

He turns his head, painfully. Surprised to see Miss Iceland.

ROCKY

Baby? Oh baby, where am I?

MISS ICELAND

The hospital. You were in a coma.

ROCKY

Really?

PAMELA (O.S.)

Yep. For three days.

He turns to the other side of him, finds Pamela. Scowling.

ROCKY

Pamela! Baby, I can explain...

CHIZURU (O.S.)

Take your time. We're all waiting.

He looks straight ahead. At the foot of the bed is Chizuru.

ROCKY

Ohhhh shiiiiiiiiiiiit...

Girlfriend, mistress, wife, all glare at Rocky, pissed.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROCKY'S ROOM - LATER

Rocky looks exhausted, defeated. DOCTOR at his bedside.

DOCTOR

Your aorta ruptured. Liver was lacerated. Your left leg and right arm each sectioned into four pieces. My team of surgeons had to remove your spleen and gallbladder to work on your liver. We also performed a 10-hour coronary bypass operation, stitching up the aorta.

(then)

Rocky. It's a miracle you're alive.

Rocky stares blankly at the ceiling.

ROCKY

Lucky me.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROCKY'S ROOM - LATER

Chizuru looks out the window. Pamela's in the courtyard, looking after Kyle (5) and ECHO (3), her two kids with Rocky.

ROCKY (O.S.)

I've had a lot of time to think.
And I don't want to go on with this
two-girl situation.

CHIZURU

Just two?

ROCKY (O.S.)

Okay. Three.
(then)
Multiple-girl situation.

Chizuru turns. Sees Rocky still hooked up in his bed.

CHIZURU

That's all you've thought about?

ROCKY

I've been lying here for days. With
a tube in my penis. I wanna die.

CHIZURU

Do you now.

ROCKY

I wanna rip out these goddamn
tubes. Just end it all. Right now.

CHIZURU

Please. Be my guest.

Rocky makes a weak effort, but he can barely move his hand. He strains, grunts. It's comically pathetic.

ROCKY

Fuck this.

CHIZURU

Rocky. It's okay for you to have
girlfriends.

ROCKY
(skeptical)
Really?

CHIZURU
It's Japanese custom. Both our
fathers had girlfriends.

ROCKY
That's true. Thanks for being
reasonable.

CHIZURU
But to have children with them?
(then)
That's why I'm divorcing you.

ROCKY
What? Hold on --

CHIZURU
You once told me you wanted many
children. Stupid me.

ROCKY
Chizuru --

CHIZURU
I've already found a house in
California. The next time you hear
from me will be through my lawyer.
Goodbye, Hiroaki.

ROCKY
Baby. Now wait. Let's talk about
this... Chizuru!

But Chizuru's out the door. Rocky weakly punches the bed.

INT. CLINIC OF SPORTS MEDICINE - MANHATTAN - DAY

PRO FOOTBALL PLAYERS and NY YANKEES train on state-of-the-art
exercise contraptions and weird Nautilus machines.

An ATTENDANT pushes Rocky in a wheelchair through a posh
hallway, decorated with artwork and orchids.

The FACILITY DIRECTOR walks alongside.

FACILITY DIRECTOR
Our facility caters primarily to
professional athletes. But you're
Rocky Aoki. Mr. Benihana.
(MORE)

FACILITY DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

We need you back so you can break
some more world records, right?

ROCKY

Thank you. I'm very grateful.

LATER:

Rocky works with an attractive PHYSICAL THERAPIST. He takes
his first step. It's enormously difficult.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Come to me, Rocky. You can do it.

She motivates him.

LATER:

Rocky on the leg exercise machine, beyond exhaustion. Sweat
pours down his face. Jheri curls matted down.

ROCKY

One more.

He catches his breath. Then does another set of reps.

LATER:

Rocky is holding himself up along a guarded rail. Taking
ginger steps.

PRO ATHLETE in a wheelchair rolls by. Watches in awe.

PRO ATHLETE

Damn, Rocky. Slow down. Before you
make the rest of us look bad.

Others watch, impressed at his unbelievable recovery.

INT. PHYSICAL THERAPY FACILITY - NIGHT

The *pitta-patta* of PING PONG as Rocky is kicking ass. He's
laughing, more in his usual spirit. Rocky slams the ball for
a point. Amid cheers --

ATTENDANT

Rocky! Phone call...

ROCKY

Take a break. Catch your breath.

Rocky grabs crutches, hobbles over to the phone.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Hello?

MOTHER (OVER PHONE)

Hiroaki. It's your mother.

ROCKY

Mom? What's wrong?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AOKI HOME (TOKYO) - NIGHT

Mom's a mess, eyes bloodshot. But she holds it together.

MOTHER

Your father is scheduled to have surgery this week.

ROCKY

Surgery?

MOTHER

The doctors need to remove a tumor from his liver.

The news hits Rocky like a ton of bricks.

ROCKY

He has cancer?

MOTHER

I think you should see him. I know he would want to see you. But you know your father. He's too proud to tell you that.

Rocky steadies himself against the wall. A storm of emotions.

INT. JAPAN AIRLINES PLANE - DAY

Rocky in the window seat. Downs a tumbler of scotch.

Stares out at the blue sky...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. AOKI HOME (TOKYO) - 1944

Needle-drop on an old record. American jazz. Duke Ellington. A young and spry YUNOSUKE (Papa-san) tap dances to the music. TIPPITY-TAPPITY-TAP... glides across the tatami floor to --

KATSU (Mom). Bright, vibrant, with aspirations of becoming a stage dancer. She left her small farming town against her father's wishes. The two dance together. Like Fred and Ginger. Kindred spirits.

Watching in the corner is LITTLE ROCKY (6-YEARS-OLD). Watching his parents dancing. A perfect, charmed family. Little Rocky laughs at his father hamming it up, when --

BOOOOOOM!!!!

The ground shakes. Needle scratches. Furniture topples.

Rocky cries out in fear. His mother runs to him and scoops him in her protective arms.

Papa-san glances out the window in terror. As --

American B-29s fill the sky -- raining bombs down on Tokyo.

INT. AOKI HOME (TOKYO) - 1944

The SIREN in the town WAILS. Explosions in the distance.

The Aokis hunker down. Obligatory civil defense drills. Rocky's stomach growls. They watch themselves starving. Mom gets up and rummages through an old family chest.

PAPA-SAN

No, Katsu. Not your wedding kimono.

MOTHER

Good memories can't fill a belly.

EXT. BACK ALLEY (TOKYO) - 1945

Papa-san in the black market. Barter with a MERCHANT. He trades Katsu's wedding kimono for a bag of rice.

EXT. STREET (TOKYO) - DAY - AUGUST 15, 1945

All the NEIGHBORS, dressed in ceremonial kimonos, sit around a communal RADIO. Everyone listens to the voice of their emperor for the first time.

EMPEROR HIROHITO (OVER RADIO)
*I am asking you to bear the
 unbearable and give up the fight.*

*People are crying and moaning, ready for American soldiers to
 rape and plunder. Young Rocky sees them, face hot with shame.
 With a knife, he whittles a crude arrow out of bamboo stalk.*

ROCKY
*Why are you giving up? Fight! Come
 on, Dad. We're samurai! Hahhh!*

Papa-san looks at his son with pride and despair --

EXT. STREET (TOKYO) - 1945

*Papa-san with Young Rocky, who is grasping his bamboo arrow.
 They trudge through the bombed-out ruins of post-war Tokyo.
 10,000 acres destroyed. 100,000 dead. 1 million homeless.
 Among the corpses and rubble, Papa-san spots something...*

RETURN TO:

INT. JAPAN AIRLINES PLANE - DAY

DING. Rocky comes out of his memories.

JAL FLIGHT ATTENDANT (OVER PA)
*Ladies and gentlemen, we are now
 approaching Tokyo. Please fasten
 your seatbelts.*

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO HOSPITAL - PAPA-SAN'S ROOM - DAY

Rocky hobbles on crutches into his dad's hospital room,
 gritting his teeth in pain. Sees lying in bed:

Papa-san. Suffering from liver cancer. His belly swollen.
 Spirit broken.

The two make eye contact. No words. Just a slight nod.

As the NURSE preps Papa-san for surgery...

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR - DAY

Rocky and Papa-san get into a tiny elevator. The doors close.

In the privacy of the elevator, Papa-san begins to cry.

Rocky looks like Papa-san's shitting on the floor. Rocky tries his best to hide that he's uncomfortable as fuck.

Papa-san cries in silence for the duration of the ride.

BEEP-BOOP. Doors open. Papa-san is wheeled out by a NURSE.

Rocky stands there frozen. *What. The. Fuck.*

INT. U. OF TOKYO HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Rocky hobbles into the waiting room, still stunned.

ROCKY

Any booze in this place?

A loud THROAT CLEAR makes him realize he's not alone.

Rocky finds his three younger brothers there, solemn. They shoot cold glances at him.

Shiro finally walks over to Rocky. Eyes red from crying.

SHIRO

This is a hospital, not a bar.

(beat)

How about some tea?

INT. U.OF TOKYO HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Rocky and Shiro sit alone at a table. Shiro pours tea.

SHIRO

Tea here is weak. Here.

Shiro slides over a flask. Rocky raises a brow. Looks at his younger brother. He takes it. Pours generously into his cup. He holds up his cup in cheers. Gulps. That hits the spot.

ROCKY

I saw him cry for the first time.

SHIRO

Papa-san... cry? Really?

ROCKY

It was painful. Maybe he thought it was the end. Or I don't know, maybe he saw how fucked up I look.

SHIRO

Maybe there were times he needed to feel like a father. And you wouldn't let him.

ROCKY

Fuck you, shrimp ball. At least I didn't katana my own brother in the back. Asshole.

SHIRO

You still hung up over that? Man, I can't compete with you. Anytime Gasho's written up, I'm mentioned as "the brother of Rocky Aoki."

ROCKY

(caught off-guard)
You're making that up.

SHIRO

No, people think Benihana owns Gasho. To be honest, doesn't bother me anymore. I mean, you made the Benihana name. The Aoki name.

ROCKY

(cautiously)
That's right. And no one fucks with an Aoki.

Shiro lets slip a grin. The two brothers at a detente, when --
Mom rushes in, finds them. Her face is a wreck.
Off Rocky, shit --

INT. U. OF TOKYO HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rocky, his mom and brothers listen to the DOCTOR's report.

DOCTOR

The operation didn't go well. There were unexpected complications. He may go at any moment.

Mom holds in her grief, exploding inside. She bows.

INT. U. OF TOKYO HOSPITAL - PAPA-SAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mom stands beside Papa-san at the head of the bed. Papa-san calls to each of his four sons, one at a time.

PAPA-SAN
Hiroaki, come here, Hiroaki.

Rocky goes up and holds his father's hand. Papa-san says a very formal good-bye.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
Osaki ni shitsureshimasu.
Sayounara. [Excuse me for leaving
before you. Farewell forever.]

Then does the same with the next.

PAPA-SAN (CONT'D)
Yasuhiro, come here, Yasuhiro.

As Papa-san says his goodbye to Son #2 --

INT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

NURSES hook Papa-san to an oxygen tank. Rocky nudges Shiro.

ROCKY
Give his leg a little massage.

As Shiro does, Rocky holds Papa-san's hand. Papa-san looks over at Rocky with glassy eyes. Like he has something to say.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Papa-san? Yes, what is it?

Rocky leans in close. Papa-san is about to speak -- but BLOOD comes out of his mouth. Mom screams and looks away, tears in her eyes. Doctor cleans up the blood.

DOCTOR
Yunosuke-san, can you hear me?

PAPA-SAN
Doc-tor... thank... you.

Papa-san goes still.

MOTHER
Doctor, he's so cold. So cold...

Rocky lets go of his father's lifeless hand, stunned.

INT. CREMATORIUM (TOKYO) - DAY

Papa-san's PINEBOX COFFIN is placed on a long tray.

Rocky and family witness it slide into the CREMATION CHAMBER.

The flames roar. The heat singes the air.

Rocky turns away, face sweaty. He pulls from the flask.

MOMENTS LATER:

Rocky wears sunglasses. He and his Mother use large chopsticks to pick the BONES out of Papa-san's ashes. Transferring them to a ceramic URN.

They both grab the same bone. The two exchange a look, then gravely work together to place the bone into the urn.

EXT. GRAVEYARD (TOKYO) - DAY

A stone monument engraved with the family name [AOKI]. Japanese names of all the family members are carved underneath. Some are colored red (those still living).

Rocky uses a ceremonial BRUSH to paint white over the red on Papa-san's name.

The three younger brothers place sprigs of star anise, incense, and flowers in vase containers.

Mom places the urn in a chamber underneath the monument.

INT. PRIVATE DINING ROOM (TOKYO) - NIGHT

Rocky, his mother and brothers sit on the floor around a table of food. It's a somber and quiet banquet dinner.

Rocky and Mom both happen to pick the same pork rib with their chopsticks. She softly gasps. Breaks down into tears.

Rocky comforts his Mother. Shiro pours her a cup of tea.

She sips the tea. Calms a bit. Stares into her cup.

MOTHER

*Hiroaki, do you remember when the
Americans bombed Tokyo? You were so
young. They destroyed everything.*

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. STREET (TOKYO) - 1945

Back to the moment when Papa-san walks through the wreckage with Young Rocky, who is grasping his bamboo arrow.

MOTHER (V.O.)

*After the attack, your father took
you and walked through the wreckage
to try to find food for us.*

*Papa-san stops. Sees something growing through the rubble --
It's a beautiful RED FLOWER.*

RETURN TO:

INT. RESTAURANT (TOKYO) - NIGHT

Back with Rocky, his mother and brothers.

MOTHER

*He found a tiny red flower growing
in the ashes. It was a Benihana.*

Rocky nods. He's heard this story a hundred times.

But that's when we notice on the wall is *BENIHANA*. They're in Papa-san's original restaurant.

INT. JAPAN AIRLINES PLANE - DAY

Rocky stares out at the clouds, lost in thought.

ROCKY (V.O.)

*Hey, it's me. Rocky. You didn't
think I forgot about you, right? I
was getting tired talking so much.
But I really need to make sure one
thing's clear. This shit about my
father dying hasn't changed me.
Okay? I'm still Rocky. Living life
balls to the wall.*

The STEWARDESS takes Rocky's empty scotch tumbler and asks if he wants another. He declines. Gets up. Walks down the aisle.

ROCKY (V.O.)

*And this is just the intermission.
So get up and make that call, get
that third martini, do whatever you
have to do... No, I'm kidding.*

(MORE)

ROCKY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is the end of the movie! I ran out of money to film anymore stuff.

Rocky gets to the airplane bathroom stall. He enters.

ROCKY (V.O.)

But just imagine crazy wild Rocky shit. I'm gonna marry three times and my kids will sue me. And I'll sue them back. I'll tell reporters that my proudest achievement is that I had three kids from three different women at exactly the same time. Crazy, right?

Rocky locks the door behind him. Then takes out a cocaine baggie. Does a huge bump. And lets out a relaxing sigh.

ROCKY (V.O.)

My son Steve is going to be famous. Oh shit, you don't know Steve? We didn't have enough space to fit him in the movie. I have too many kids.

EXT. STADIUM - NIGHT

LIVE FOOTAGE of DJ STEVE AOKI on stage. Music and lights blaring. He takes out a giant SHEET CAKE and chucks it into the sold-out crowd of thousands. They love it.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Steve will become a DJ... I don't know what the fuck that means. But he'll be rich and famous and everyone will love him.

INT. MILAN FASHION SHOW - DAY

LIVE FOOTAGE of DEVON AOKI modeling Gucci down the catwalk.

ROCKY (V.O.)

And my daughter Devon--also not enough room in this movie--will be a hot model. She'll be my favorite.

EXT. NEWPORT BEACH, CA - DAY

Palm trees. California sun.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 And I gotta make sure you know that
 this last scene, my agents made me
 put in. You know this is a comedy.
 Gotta have a happy fucking ending.

EXT. CHIZURU'S HOME - DAY

Rocky pulls up in his Benihana red Ferrari F40 to a quaint
 slice of Americana.

ROCKY (V.O.)
 This may not be exactly how it went
 down. But then again, half the shit
 you saw wasn't, but so what. As
 long as you're a satisfied
 customer, I want you entertained.
 Okay. I'll shut up. Here we go.

INT. CHIZURU'S HOME - KEVIN'S ROOM - DAY

Chizuru helps her son Kevin (15) with last-minute packing.

CHIZURU
 You bring extra underwear?

KEVIN
 God, mom. Quit worrying.

DING-DONG. The doorbell rings. Kevin runs out --

KEVIN (CONT'D)
 It's Dad! Dad's here!

INT. CHIZURU'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Chizuru walks up with the packed suitcase to find Rocky and
 Kevin roughhousing.

ROCKY
 So strong! But can you go to the
 Olympics? Come on, strong guy!

CHIZURU
 (re suitcase)
 Kevin...

ROCKY
 Come on, help your mother. That's
 your heavy-ass suitcase.

Kevin takes the suitcase and lugs it outside.

Rocky looks at Chizuru. She smiles sadly. They've made peace.

CHIZURU
Don't let him get into trouble.

ROCKY
He'll be with me.

CHIZURU
That's why I'm worried.

Rocky grins his devilish grin.

INT. ROCKY'S FERRARI F40 - DAY

Rocky gets behind the wheel. Kevin in the passenger seat.

ROCKY
So where you wanna go in New York?

KEVIN
Benihana.

ROCKY
There's one here in Newport Beach.

KEVIN
I know. But I want to see how you
run the business.

ROCKY
Really? You've got a trust fund.
Killer genetics. You're set for
life. And you want to run Benihana?

KEVIN
I'm an Officer of the company.

ROCKY
That's true. Okay. It's your life.

Rocky sniffs. Ignition roars. They drive into the sunset...

FADE OUT.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Wait. One more thing --

TIRES SCREECH --

FADE IN:

INT./EXT. ROCKY'S FERRARI F40/STREET - DAY

Back with Rocky and his son.

ROCKY

What? I thought we were done.

KEVIN

If I do this, I don't want you to
just be my business partner. I
still want you as my Dad. Okay?

Rocky's eyes widen in realization.

ROCKY (V.O.)

Holy shit. That's what I wanted to
tell Papa-san my whole life.

(then)

Fuck. I've become my own Papa-san.

KEVIN

Hello? Dad?

Rocky looks at his son. A beat.

ROCKY

Hey I got a great idea! Why don't
you drive?

KEVIN

Really?... But I don't have my
license yet.

ROCKY

Who cares! Go ahead. I won't tell
your Mom.

Rocky gets out to switch places. Exhales. Dodged a bullet.
Almost had to be vulnerable there. Kevin gets out and Rocky
snaps back to being Mr. Benihana.

ROCKY (CONT'D)

Hey, have I ever told you about the
time I won the Milan-Moscow Road
Rally? I almost drove off a cliff!
It was fucking amazing...

FADE TO BLACK.