

CHANG CAN DUNK

Written by

Jingyi Shao

Based on countless true stories

NO FRILLS OLD SCHOOL EDUCATIONAL VIDEO

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

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

BASKETBALL COACH

(to camera)

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

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

BASKETBALL COACH (CONT'D)

Well done. How did that feel?

PLAYER

Pretty good coach.

BASKETBALL COACH

(to camera)

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

MUSIC UP: a very hype track

SMASH CUT TO:

MONTAGE - HISTORY OF THE SLAM DUNK

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

- cellphone footage of randoms dunking in pickup games
 - TikToks, IG stories of kids dunking in their backyard.
 Dunks happening EVERYWHERE. Everybody. Wants. To. DUNK.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

CHANG (O.S.)
 Chang with the rock. Between two
 defenders!

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

CHANG (CONT'D)
 Uh oh, double team. What's that?
 Bam. Behind the back. Eurostep!
 ARGHH!

BOOMSHAKALAKA. Chang slams it. This kid loves basketball.

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

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

BO
 Wowww.

CHANG
 I did it.

BO
 I barely recognize you.

CHANG
 I know! It's awesome!

Chang checks the mirror again, beaming.

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

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

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

Chang gestures again. *At the top.*

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

BO
 (skeptical)
 You really think so?

CHANG
 I know so.

BO
 But what if you end up trying too
 hard?

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

Chang points behind him at the Kobe poster.

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

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

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

Bo squints, searching for the correct answer.

BO
 Uh, Be himself?

CHANG

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

BO

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

Chang groans. Bo grins, cheeky.

CHEN (O.S.)

Lan Lan!

CHANG

I gotta go. See you at practice?

BO

Yeah. Hey, it looks good man.

CHANG

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

Kobe!

BRICK.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

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

Waiting impatiently by the door in hospital scrubs is Chang's Mom, CHEN (45), serious, her forehead wrinkled by years of frowning. Chang hustles down the stairs, a bit wary. Her eyes lock on his head like a targeting laser.

CHEN

(a slight accent)

What that?

CHANG

What?

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

CHEN

Why you do this?

CHANG

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

Chen considers it...

CHEN

No, it look weird on you.

Chang's loses some wind in his sail.

CHANG

Whatever, let's just go.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

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

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

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH FRONT - A BIT LATER

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

CHEN

Are you coming to the hospital on Saturday?

CHANG

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

CHEN

You will have lots of money after you go to a good college.

CHANG

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

CHEN

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

CHANG

I will. When I find the right thing.

Chen gives Chang a disappointed look. Chang relents.

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

CHEN

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

CHANG

Okay Mom. Have a good day.

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

INT. GYM CLASS - LATER

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

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

BENNEVIDO

...foul shot, then through the cones, lay-up, sprint back, score however you want. First team through gets a pat on the back. Okay?

Bennevido eyes Chang's hair.

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)

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

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

OWEN

Why you gotta swaggerjack Matt though!

Laughter. Matt gives a cackling Owen a shove.

BENNEVIDO

Okay okay. Ready?

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

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

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

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

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

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

BENNEVIDO (CONT'D)

Whooooa! Team 1 wins!

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

INT. BOY'S LOCKERROOM - LATER

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

MATT

Almost dude. Next time dunk it.

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

INT. GYM CLASS - A BIT LATER

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

He drops the ball and leaves.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - AFTER SCHOOL

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

MR. RYAN

Stop. STOP!

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

BO

So, what happened with the hair?

CHANG

(shrugs)

Eh. I wasn't really feeling it.

BO

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

CHANG

I will. When I find the right cut.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)
Who is that?

BO
 I don't know but I need her insta
 right now.

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

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

Mr. Ryan raises his hands. *And...*

EXT. BLEACHERS - LATER

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

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

Melissa looks up, surprised. She nods.

MR. RYAN
 Chang!

Ryan waves Chang over, KRISTY next to him.

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

KRISTY
 Sup.

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

RYAN
 Chang, hello!

CHANG
 (snapping out of it)
 Sorry.

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

CHANG

Okay.

INT. BAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

KRISTY

Wow. You guys take this pretty seriously.

CHANG

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

KRISTY

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

Chang ponders it, agreeing. He unlocks a storage locker, revealing spare instruments.

CHANG

So you're like new in town?

KRISTY

Yeah. Just moved here with my Mom.

CHANG

You like it?

KRISTY

Good so far. Kinda white though.

CHANG

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

KRISTY

Ohh. So they can stay.

CHANG

Yeah, for diversity.

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

KRISTY

This it right here?

CHANG

Yeah. Let me help you--

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

CHANG (CONT'D)
You play a lot?

KRISTY
I do.

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

EXT. STREET - EVENING

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

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

KRISTY
How'd you get into drums then.

CHANG
Bass drum. It ain't exactly rocket science.

KRISTY
So you like doing things that are easy.

CHANG
Uhh...

Kristy smirks. She enjoys tilting Chang.

KRISTY
I'm just giving you shit.

They stop in front of a condo complex.

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

CHANG

Bet.

KRISTY

(mockingly)

Bet.

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

CHANG

What would Kobe do. What would Kobe do. What would -

(to Kristy)

Hey. You wanna...*chillax* this weekend?

Uggggh. Kristy turns back, amused.

KRISTY

Uh, okay. What day?

CHANG

Saturday?

KRISTY

Maybe. I was gonna check out this basketball game.

CHANG

Basketball game? Is it like a traveling team?

KRISTY

(shrugs)

I dunno. This guy Matt invited me.

Chang's heart falls to his feet.

CHANG

Oh. Yeah I know Matt...

KRISTY

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

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

CHANG

Yeah, sure. Meet there?

KRISTY

Cool. Nice meeting you Chang.

CHANG

Same.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

Where...am I?

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

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

BO

Dude. She's suuuper hot man.

CHANG

Sooo hot.

BO

But like in a sad, tragic way.

CHANG

Like a painter with not enough colors.

BO

Save her man. Save her from her eternal melancholy.

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

CHANG

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

BO

I'm not following.

CHANG

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

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

BO

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

CHANG

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

BO

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

CHANG

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

(concerned)

Right?

BO

I don't know dude, I'm a virgin.

But you know who isn't. Matt.

(gets killed in Fortnite)

WHAT THE! You Motherfu--

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

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - MATT'S TIK TOK/IG

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

MATT

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

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

MATT (CONT'D)

Yo Thompson. You like facials?

THOMPSON

What do you mean?

Thompson smiles, sheepish. From behind, Syd creeps up, a miniature basketball hoop in his hand. He holds it above Thompson's head as Owen suddenly appears, smashing a rubber ball viciously through the hoop, right off Thompson's head.

MATT
CUZ YOU JUST GOT FACIALED!

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

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

ROBERT
No!

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

MATT
CUZ YOU JUST GOT FACIALED!

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

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

TIFFANY
Depends. Is it from you?

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

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHEN
(quietly)
Lan Lan?

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

CUT TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

Matt climbs to his feet and argues with the ref.

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

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

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

ON BLEACHERS

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

KRISTY
What happened?

CHANG

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

(shakes his head)

Unsportsmanlike. Just play dude.

KRISTY

You seem pretty into basketball.

CHANG

Oh yeah, I'm a huge basketball head. I used to play 5 hours a day.

KRISTY

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

CHANG

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

Kristy smiles. Chang perks up. *Prepared.*

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

KRISTY

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

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

CHANG

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

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

MATT

Yo Kristy! You made it!

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

MATT (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

CHRIS

Uh, we were actually about to leave.

MATT

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

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

MATT (CONT'D)

Stay. You don't want to miss this.

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

ON COURT

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

BLEACHERS

The visitors inbound the ball.

CHANG

C'mon. Score.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

Damnit!

KRISTY

Who are you rooting for?

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

ON COURT

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

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

KRISTY (CONT'D)

Ohhhhhh!!!

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

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

MATT

I told you!

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

CHANG

(to himself)

You have got to be kidding me.

INT. MATT'S HOUSE - LATER

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

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

MRS. O'NEIL

Honey!

MATT

(annoyed)

Yes, Karen?

MRS. O'NEIL

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

MATT

Just some condoms!

Matt's yes-men giggle like fools.

MRS. O'NEIL

(amused)

Oh, you.

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

LIVING ROOM

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

KRISTY

You know people here?

CHANG

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

KRISTY

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

CHANG

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

Kristy breaks away. Chang pours the remnants of his drink into a plant.

OWEN (O.S.)

Chang with the Thang!

Owen and Syd approach, half-drunk. They put their arms around Chang, sandwiching him with their muscular frames.

SYD

Who invited you?

CHANG

(flustered)
Uhh. I--

SYD

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

They drag him into the...

KITCHEN

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

OWEN

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

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

OWEN (CONT'D)

I only throw rock.

CHANG

What?

OWEN

Rock is my only move.

SYD

It's true.

Chang squints at Owen, who is dead serious. They line up their hands.

OWEN AND CHANG

Rock, Paper, Scissors!

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

OWEN

Double or nothing.

CHANG

Uhh.

OWEN

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

SYD

You already know what he's going to throw!

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

OWEN AND CHANG

Rock, Paper, Scissors!

Chang, paper. Owen, rock. Owen covers his face as the onlookers break into laughter and mockery. Owen downs the double shot, recoiling at the taste. Syd cheers and gives Chang a high five. A momentary smile breaks on Chang's face, before he spots out the corner of his eye, Matt and Kristy outside by the pool. Alone. Before he can move, Owen grabs his arm.

OWEN
C'mon. Last round.

CHANG
No, no, no. I gotta go.

Owen pours again. It's a long pour.

OWEN
Quadruple or nothing!

A crowd gathers. Hungry for a show.

SYD
Don't be a quitter Chang.

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

Chang squints, suddenly unsure. He searches in Owen's half-drunk eyes for a clue. There's nothing, just emptiness. The crowd jeers impatiently, eager for blood. Chang looks outside. Kristy and Matt and standing closer now.

CHANG
Fine. Let's go.

OWEN
ROCK! PAPER! SCISSORS!

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

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

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

CROWD
Ohhhh shit!

Chang pushes through the crowd.

OUTSIDE

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

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

CHANG
Hey guys.

MATT
Yo.

KRISTY
(concerned)
You okay?

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

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

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

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

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

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

MATT

Not you.

CHANG

Not me? Says who?

Matt laughs.

MATT

Dunk then.

Chang's smile disappears.

CHANG

I could if I tried.

MATT

What? Listen man --

CHANG

I could if I tried.

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

MATT

No. You could not.

CHANG

Why not?

(angry)

Why not?!

KRISTY

Okay, okay, let's go.

CHANG

I bet you I can.

MATT

I'll take that bet all day.

CHANG

Yeah? What are the stakes?

MATT

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

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

KRISTY

C'mon.

Jaw clenched, Chang utters one last parting remark.

CHANG

We'll see. We'll se--

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

PARTY CROWD

Ohhhh! Chang overboard!

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

MATT

Yo Chang, you like facials?

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

CUT TO:

INT. O'NEIL SUV - LATER

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

MRS. O'NEIL

Good night Kristy. It was nice meeting you.

KRISTY

Nice meeting you too Karen. Thanks for the ride.

(to Chang)

See ya.

CHANG

(weakly)

Bye.

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

MRS. O'NEIL

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

CHANG

Just been a bit busy. With school and stuff.

MRS. O'NEIL

Oh. I bet. Smart kid like you.

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

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER.

They pull up to Chang's house. The kitchen light is still on. Chang gulps.

The front door swings open as Chang gets out of the car. It's Chen in her pajamas.

CHEN

Lan Lan?

CHANG

Yeah.

CHEN

Where have you been!

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

MRS. O'NEIL

Hi Chen!

CHEN

Hi. Karen?

MRS. O'NEIL

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

As Chang passes, Chen notices water dripping from Chang's clothes.

CHEN

You're all wet!

MRS. O'NEIL

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

CHEN

Oh I'm so sorry. Thank you for drive him back.

(to Chang in Chinese)

Get inside.

MRS. O'NEIL

Not at all. Good seeing you! Good night.

CHEN

Okay, good night.

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

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They enter.

CHEN

Don't move you're making a mess.

CHANG

Mom, I can clean up myself.

Chen ignores him. She starts drying him with towels.

CHEN

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

CHANG

Well I couldn't because...

CHEN

Because why?

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

CHANG

It was an accident.

CHEN

Lan Lan. Phone is a lot of money.

CHANG
I'll pay for a new one.

CHEN
Somebody push you?

CHANG
No, why would you even say that?

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

CHANG
You're making me upset!

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

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - LATER

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

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

MATT
Cause you just got FACCIALLLED!

Below, hundreds of likes and thousands of views. Chang slams his laptop closed, head spinning with vengeful thoughts. Something pulls his eyes up to the just above the foot of the bed. A poster. Kobe. Flying through the air. Fire in his eyes. The BLACK MAMBA.

The proverbial clouds part. A golden light shines down on Chang. A gift of inspiration. Courage. Chang's mouth curls into a defiant snarl.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Bo catches up to Chang in the hallway.

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

CHANG
 No, I was humiliated. But that's okay. The Mamba spoke to me.

BO
 Oh, uh, okay. Did you talk to Kristy yet?

CHANG
 Not yet.

Chang stops abruptly.

CHANG (CONT'D)
 I know finally know what I need to do.

BO
 What?

CHANG
 I need to dunk a basketball.

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

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

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

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

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

INT. GYM CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Chang heads for his target Matt like a guided missile.

CHANG
 Matt!

The class goes silent. Matt looks up, amused.

MATT
What is it Chang?

CHANG
Stand up when I'm talking you.

OWEN
Yo, you trippin'.

CHANG
Shut up. Sidekick.

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

MATT
You coming in with some strong energy today.

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

MATT
Are you joking? You're still on this?

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

Chang points to the center hoop.

MATT
That's the dumbest thing I have ever heard.

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

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

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

Chang looks up at Matt's luscious locks.

CHANG
Loser has to shave their head.

ONLOOKER

That's it?

MATT

Nobody gives a shit if you shave your head Chang.

CHANG

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

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

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - VARIOUS STUDENTS' IG/TIKTOK

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

CUT TO:

EXT. BLEACHERS - LATER

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

BO

(hyped)

Bro, I'm getting chills just watching this!

CHANG

My legs were shaking like crazy! Could you tell?

BO

Hell no. You held it down!

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

CHANG

Hey.

KRISTY

Hey.

CHANG

I, uh, just wanted to --

KRISTY

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

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

BO

Oh, he will.

Kristy smiles.

FADE OUT:

OVER BLACK - 12 WEEKS UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

EXT. STREET - DAY

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

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

Across the street, shaking his head is Bo.

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

Chang and Bo watch a video on youtube.

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

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

MIKEYG (O.S.)

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

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

BO
5'5"!

CHANG
I've got 4 inches on this dude. If he can throw a reverse two-hander...

BO
You could probably do a windmill!

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

CHANG
A tomahawk!

BO
Between the legs!

CHANG
On Matt's stupid head!

Chang slams it.

CHANG AND BO
Let's goooooooooo.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - POUNDING PLATES

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

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - MORNING

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

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - EVENING

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

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

A BIT LATER

The band wraps up. Bo comes over to Chang who is chewing on some kind of jerky.

BO
How you feeling now?

CHANG
I think I'll walk again soon.

BO
What is that?

CHANG
Deer jerky. You want some?

BO
Psh. Duh.

Chang hands Bo some deer jerky.

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

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

KRISTY
Bo says your butt hurts.

CHANG
It's better now.

KRISTY
C'mon, walk me home then.

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

EXT. STREET - LATER

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

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

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

KRISTY
(sings)
Raaaape meeeeeee. Raaaaape meeeee.

CHANG
Wow. Catchy.

Kristy laughs.

KRISTY
So how's the dunking going?

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

KRISTY
Mmm.
(beat)
So why'd you come over that night then? When Matt and I were talking.

CHANG
I...Don't know.

KRISTY
Were you afraid he was gonna seduce me?

CHANG
No...

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

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

CHANG
Thanks.

They stop in front of her condo.

KRISTY
Wanna see my drum set?

INT. KRISTY'S CONDO - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. KRISTY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

CHANG
Wow.

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

CHANG
He doesn't play anymore?

KRISTY
He's dead. Cancer.

CHANG
Oh, I'm sorry.

KRISTY
Don't be, it happens. I used to fight a lot with my Mom and my sister but now we're all kinda close. Funny how that stuff works.

CHANG
Yeah.

KRISTY
How about you? What's your family like.

CHANG
Um, my parents divorced when I was just a kid. I live with my Mom now. We're cool I guess.

KRISTY
You ever wonder if she's lonely?

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

CHANG
Let's hear something.

KRISTY
Okay.

Kristy gets up and gets behind her drum kit. She starts to play. Chang can only watch.

OVER BLACK - 10 WEEKS UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

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

CHANG
I can almost touch rim.

BO
That's less than last week.

CHANG
I know.

BO
Maybe you're tired.

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

BO
You know what might work?

CHANG
Steroids?

BO
Not jerking off.

CHANG
What?

BO

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

CHANG

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

BO

He does jump really high.

Chang scoffs. They turn towards opposite directions.

BO (CONT'D)

You wanna hang later?

CHANG

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

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

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

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

CHANG

Ta-da.

TOM

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

(to Klaus)

Look Klaus. Look upon this feast.

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

KLAUS

It's look cold.

TOM

Like your heart.

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

TOM (CONT'D)

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

CHANG

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

TOM

That's nonsense. Klaus, you should take Chang and his mother up in that little plane of yours.

CHANG

(impressed)
You have a plane?

KLAUS

(modest)
It's small. 4 people max.

CHANG

I would be super down!

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

CHEN

Hi Tom. How are you feeling today?
(to Chang)
Ready to go?

Chang nods.

TOM

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

CHEN

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

Chang diddles his thumbs. *Nice.*

TOM

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

CHEN

Oh no no.

TOM

You'll be fine. Klaus will take good care of you.

CHEN

I don't want to trouble Klaus.

TOM

Your son already expressed his enthusiasm. C'mon live a little.

Chen gives Chang a look. Klaus notes the interaction.

CHEN

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

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

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

CHEN

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

CHANG

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

CHEN

You don't understand what is manners. Let's go. I don't have long.

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

INT. AT&T STORE - CONTINUOUS

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

DEVIN

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

CHANG

Hi. I need a new phone.

DEVIN

Well we got the newest models right
over --

CHEN

He don't need too new.

DEVIN

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

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

CHEN

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

CHANG

Yeah.

Chen excuses herself. Chang looks at Devin.

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

DEVIN

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

CHANG

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

A BIT LATER

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

That's you?

DEVIN

Yessir. Check this out.

Devin takes out his phone. He plays a video on youtube labelled DEVIN ADAMS HIGHLIGHT REEL. Clips play of Devin breaking ankles, splashing jumpers and lastly, dunking on heads, over a cheesy hip-hop track. Neither the production value of the video or the competition he's playing against are particularly high quality but Devin's passion and love for the game are obvious. The video ends with Devin lifting an MVP trophy.

CHANG

Sick. What league was this?

DEVIN

Romania. Back to back champs baby.

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

You hoop? You look like you hoop.

CHANG

Really?

DEVIN

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

CHANG

I just play for fun.

DEVIN

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

CHANG

That's cool

(beat)

Do you teach how to dunk?

DEVIN
Why? You trying to dunk?

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

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

EXT. MOUNT DAVIS HIGH - LATER

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

DEVIN
Sup.

CHANG
Hey, this is Bo.

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

JANITOR
My man Doc Devin!

INT. GYM - A BIT LATER

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

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

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

Devin points to Chang's hips and core.

DEVIN (CONT'D)
You're also only bringing the ball halfway up. Try this.

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

BO

Holy crap!

CHANG

That was like a 6 inch difference!

DEVIN

Yup.

CHANG

So what do you think, could I dunk?

DEVIN

(shrugs)

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

CHANG

I need to do it in 10 weeks.

DEVIN

Say what?

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Damn.

CHANG

I need help man. I'll do anything.

Devin looks at Chang sympathetically. He scratches his chin.

DEVIN

You know what. I'm in.

CHANG

Really?!

DEVIN

How much you gonna pay me though

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

You thought I was gonna coach you for free?

CHANG

Yeah for your youtube channel.

DEVIN

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

CHANG

I don't have any money.

DEVIN

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

CHANG

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

Devin is in disbelief.

DEVIN

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

BO

It's an Asian thing.

DEVIN

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

Chang weighs his options. He sticks out his hand.

CHANG

I'm committed.

They shake.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE FROM BO'S CAMERA

1) EXT. STREET - PRE-DAWN

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

BO

Okay. I'm rolling. Start walking.

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

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

Devin rubs his hands together.

BO (CONT'D)
Perfect.

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

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

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

Devin shakes his head.

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

DEVIN

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

CHANG

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

DEVIN

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

Chang looks wary.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

The haters are always gonna hate but you, you gotta recognize your own growth.

CHANG

You're right.

DEVIN

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

CHANG

Yeah.

DEVIN

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

CUT TO:

POV FROM BO'S CAMERA

Bo frames up Chang who is obviously camera shy.

CHANG

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

DEVIN (O.S.)
Cut. Cut. Where's your swag man?

Chang cracks a smile.

CHANG
Long gone.

Bo pans to Devin who looks into camera.

DEVIN
We gonna work on that.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF DEVIN'S WORKOUT PLAN

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

- Chang and Devin doing a morning run. They do a playground workout. Sit-ups, push-ups, dips etc.

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

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

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

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

BO
WHAT. WOULD. KOBE. DO??

Chang finds the strength to get up. To keep going.

- Bo uploads more videos. They're getting more views. More positive comments.

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

- Through Bo's videos we see Chang is more consistent now. He's preparing his own meals. Following his training plan. And the videos are getting more views. More positive comments.

- Chang wakes up, crack of dawn. He gets himself out of bed and goes on a run on his own. Chen catches him leaving. She's surprised.

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

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

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND COURTS - DAY

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

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

PICK-UP PLAYER

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

Chang shrinks. Devin gets up and pulls Chang.

DEVIN

C'mon bruh. I got your back.

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

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Nice bucket!

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

I know a baller when I see one.

Chang is beginning to understand.

CUT TO:

OVER BLACK - 1 WEEK UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

A CLIP FROM DEVIN'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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

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

CHANG
I feel good.

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

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)
Almost there.

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

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

Chang and Devin watch old highlights of Devin.

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

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

CHANG
Ooooooooooh!

DEVIN

In yo face!

CHANG

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

DEVIN

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

Chang nods, trying to imagine.

CHANG

Did you ever try to make the league?

DEVIN

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

CHANG

Why not?

DEVIN

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

Chang nods, contemplatively. Devin notices.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

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

(beat)

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

CHANG

Yeah.

DEVIN

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

Chang ponders it for a long time.

CHANG

(honest)

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

DEVIN

Word.

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

MAE

Why are you still in my house?

DEVIN

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

MAE

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

Boom, roasted.

MAE (CONT'D)

Hey Chang. You hungry?

CHANG

I'm okay Ms. Adams. Thank you.

DEVIN

I'm starving.

MAE

Nobody was talking to you.

Mae leans down and Devin gives her a kiss on the cheek. Chang watches enviously.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

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

CHANG
Hey Mom. You hungry?

Chen comes over and takes a look.

CHEN
When you'd learn how to do this?

CHANG
Been practicing.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)
You like it?

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

Chen smiles. Chang takes what he can get.

CHEN (CONT'D)
How's school?

CHANG
Good.

CHEN
You seem very busy these days.

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

CHEN
Like what?

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

CHEN
You have a job?

Chang hesitates. *Shit.*

CHANG

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

CHEN

For what?

CHANG

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

CHEN

I'm just asking questions.

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

CHANG

(getting agitated)

Yeah but what are you getting at?

CHEN

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

CHANG

(triggered)

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

CHEN

I didn't say that.

CHANG

But that's what you meant!

Chen looks up at her son who is suddenly heated.

CHEN

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

CHANG

Because everything you say feels like a judgment.

CHEN

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

CHANG

Oh really? Tell me then, who am I?

CHEN

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

CHANG

-- What does that have to do with
anything!

CHEN

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

CHANG

What are you even talking about?

CHEN

I'm just look out for you, okay?

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

CHANG

Whatever.

Chang storms upstairs.

CUT TO:

OVER BLACK - 1 DAYS UNTIL DUNK DEADLINE

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

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

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

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

DEVIN

We got you something.

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

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

Chang nods and hugs his friends.

BO

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

Chang locks eyes with Kristy. She nods.

CUT TO:

CHANG'S VLOG - LATER

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

CHANG

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

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

Chang clenches his jaw, turmoil in his eyes.

EXT. SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

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

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

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

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

EXT. BLEACHERS - NIGHT

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

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

MELISSA

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

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

INT. SCHOOL GYM - A BIT LATER

Devin is already waiting.

DEVIN

(smiles)

You ready big man?

Chang nods. He takes off his band uniform. Underneath, his friends' gift, his custom purple and gold jersey.

As he changes, curious people start to filter in. Finally, Matt, Syd and Owen enter, relaxed as can be. As Chang starts to do his warmup stretches, Owen comes over with his phone to start recording.

OWEN

Yo Chang. It's not too late to back out man. Matt says he'll let you go scott free. Otherwise we filming everything.

DEVIN

Man get the hell --

CHANG

-- I got this.

(to Owen)

Nah, film all you want man. Your boy is getting his head shaved.

The gym is half full now. There's an impatient murmur in the crowd. People have their phones out.

SYD

Yo, lets go already.

Devin nods at Chang. Chang takes a deep breath and approaches the hoop, looking up at it one last time. Matt meets him at the center.

MATT

I'll give you three tries.

CHANG

I'm only gonna need one.

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

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

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

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

KRISTY

...Chang. Chang. Chang.

The crowd begins to join in.

CROWD

Chang. Chang. CHANG. CHANG!

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

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

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

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

MATT

Props.

Chang nods in appreciation.

ONLOOKER

Shave his head. Shave his head!

CROWD

Shave his head! Shave his head!

SHAVE HIS HEAD!

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

Finally in one fell swoop. He buzzes the entirety of Matt's head, right down the middle of the scalp, Full Metal Jacket style. The crowd erupts as Chang buzzes haphazardly across Matt's head. Matt gestures to the crowd to bring it on. Even he looks like he's enjoying himself.

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

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

DEVIN

My man.

CHANG

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

DEVIN

(nods)

Let's do it.

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

CHANG
You wanna get out of here.

Kristy nods. He grabs her hands pulls her away from the crowd.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They run through the dark hallway, laughing.

INT. BAND ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

CHANG
My heart can't stop pounding.

KRISTY
I can tell.

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

CHANG
I'm really into you.

KRISTY
Yeah? Prove it.

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

CUT TO:

SOCIAL MEDIA MONTAGE - CHANG'S DUNK

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

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

Finally, we see the views and comments rise on Devin's account at a rapid fire pace.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM

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

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

Chang raises his hands in the air.

CHANG

YES!

Chang can't stop smiling.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

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

Bo catches up to him.

BO

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

CHANG

Yes! I think it's gonna go viral.

BO

Bigger than viral bro. Look at this.

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

BO (CONT'D)

You're gonna be a MEME!

CHANG

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

BO

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

Chang grins, playfully.

CHANG
Especially Kristy.

BO
Yoo! Give me the deets.

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

BO
Ya'll kissed?! What?!

The bell rings.

CHANG
I'll tell you later?

BO
Bet!

The two friends dap. Chang continues on.

INT. GYM CLASS - CONTINUOUS

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

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

Bennevido pokes Chang on the shoulders and arms, playfully.

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

CHANG
Thinking about it.

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

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

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

MATT

Damn I'm off today.

OWEN

Must be the hair.

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

BENNEVIDO

Are you okay?!

MATT

Yeah. I think so.

Matt gets to his feet.

SYD

Yo Chang, you dunked too hard yesterday man!

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

PRINCIPAL

Chang! Can you step outside for a second?

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

CUT TO:

LOCAL NEWS REPORT

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

REPORTER

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

We cut to the REPORTER interviewing Chang.

CHANG

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

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM

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

TOM

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

Klaus nods.

CHANG

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

TOM

ESPN! That's amazing!

Klaus nods.

CHANG

In New York!

TOM

New York! Klaus!

Klaus nods.

TOM (CONT'D)

KLAUS! NEW YORK!

Klaus cracks a smile. Tom and Chang laugh.

TOM (CONT'D)

(shakes head)

Forgive him, he needs an oil change.

(beat)

Your mother must be ecstatic.

CHANG
Actually I haven't told her yet.

TOM
Why not? She'll be so proud.

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

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

CHANG
(surprised)
Really?

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

CHEN
Hello, everybody!

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

Chen raises her eyebrow. Chang shrinks.

TOM (CONT'D)
Tell h--

Klaus jumps up and squeezes Tom's hand.

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

They turn and look at Chang.

CHEN
Tell me what?

CHANG
I'll tell you later.

She gives Chang a look, a bit suspicious.

CHEN
Okay.

TOM
You'll be very, very impressed.

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

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

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

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CHANG
Thanks for that.

KLAUS
Of course.

Chang smiles and turns to leave.

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

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

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chang on Facetime with Kristy.

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

KRISTY
Your Mom going to take you?

CHANG
Nah, Devin.

Chang grins, extra cheeky.

KRISTY
What? What are you geeking out
about.

CHANG
...You wanna come?

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

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

KRISTY
(touched)
Oh is that so?

CHANG
Yeah, you and Bo.

Chang is an oblivious lad. Kristy smiles to herself.

KRISTY
I'll ask my Mom.

CHANG
Tell her Chang requested your
presence.

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

CHANG
President. Kings summon.

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

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

KRISTY
Yeah. Bye.

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

CHEN
You're very smiley today.

CHANG
It was a good day.

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

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

CHANG
 Yeah. Actually. I, uh, I got asked
 to...

(beat)
 ...to represent the school at a
 conference in New York. For Math
 and Science.

CHEN
 Oh. Really?

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

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

CHANG
 Nah, one of the teachers will
 chaperone me.

CHEN
 I see. Well have fun then.

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

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

Chang smiles, appreciative

NEW YORK DRIVING MONTAGE

- Devin, Bo, Kristy and Chang drive in Devin's old sedan through the Holland Tunnel.
- They pass by MSG and then Times Square
- They get Pretzels off the street. They take pictures.
- They walk up to a large tower. Plastered on the side, the logo of ESPN.

INT. ESPN STUDIOS - LATER

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

PA

You guys can wait in here.

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

PA (CONT'D)

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

CHANG

Thanks. Oh! Actually.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

Could my friends get a set

The PA smiles.

PA

Shouldn't be a problem.

Chang nods as she leaves.

BO

"Shouldn't be a problem."

KRISTY

"Whatever you need Mr. Chang."

Chang smirks and pops a fizzy water.

CHANG

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

DEVIN, KRISTY, BO

Oooohhhhhh.

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

JAY

Mr. Chang!

CHANG
Hey, Mr. Williams.

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

CHANG
Thank you.

Chang beams.

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

CHANG
That's funny, I like that.

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

CHANG
Whatever you need. I gotchu!

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

CHANG
Like I said. Whatever you need.

JAY
My man.

Jay and Chang dap.

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

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

Jay searches his memory. He shrugs.

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

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

CHANG
(mouthing)
JAY WILLIAMS. OH MIY GOD!

ESPN SHOW: "THE GET UP"

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

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

INT. "THE GET UP" STAGE - SAME TIME

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

WILLIAMS
...Chang!

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

CHANG
Hey guys.

GREENBERG
So tell us a little about yourself.

WILLIAMS
Who is Chang?

CHANG
Uh, well...

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

(confident)

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

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

WILLIAMS

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

JEFFERSON

(sarcastic)

Nice one Jay.

WILLIAMS

Man, be quiet.

CHANG

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

WILLIAMS

Wow. I like it.

CHANG

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

Devin puts his arms around Kristy and Bo.

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

Chang's friends are a bit stung by this.

GREENBERG

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

(beat)

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

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

WILLIAMS

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

CHANG

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

WILLIAMS

Hey, if that's what you want.

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

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

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

GET UP ANALYSTS

Ooooooh!

WILLIAMS

Is the shoes?

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

CHANG

I didn't get to stretch!

More laughter.

GREENBERG

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

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

INT. ELEVATOR - LATER

Kristy, Bo and Devin try to comfort Chang.

DEVIN

Don't trip man! It was funny!

BO

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

CHANG

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

KRISTY

Yeah but you can.

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

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - CONTINUOUS

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

BO

Whoa.

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

WAITER

Drink?

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

DEVIN

I ain't yo momma.

They help themselves. Bo lifts his glass to Chang.

BO

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

Gestures low with his hand.

BO (CONT'D)

To here.

Gestures to everything around them. Chang is moved.

DEVIN

Man of his word. Cheers!

They raise glasses. Chang downs it in one go.

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Whoa easy!

WILLIAMS (O.S.)

My man Chang!

Williams. Chang is a bit embarrassed.

CHANG

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

WILLIAMS

What? You were amazing!

CHANG

Really?

WILLIAMS

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

CHANG

Oh. Thanks.

WILLIAMS

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

DEVIN

Like you did against Indiana?

Jay gives Devin a look. Devin shrugs.

WILLIAMS

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

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

ESPN PARTY MONTAGE - CONTINUOUS

- a beautiful, stylish crowd, mix and mingle.
- Jay introduces Chang to some friends who recognize him. He's shy. He grabs another drink.
- Kristy and Bo comparing the different hor d'oeuvres they've amassed.
- Chang tells a funny joke. His confidence and drunkenness grow.

- Devin handing out AT&T business cards and pitching anyone who will listen.

- Chang gets challenged to a dance battle. He's reluctant but then he gets in there. The crowd goes nuts!

- Kristy and Bo sit in the corner, bored. Bo yawns while Kristy looks at the time.

ON CHANG

Chang kicks it with GILBERT ARENAS and his entourage.

ARENAS

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

CHANG

Cuz I can!

ARENAS

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

CHANG

So down.

Arenas and Co love it.

ARENAS

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

CHANG

Wait, wait. Can my homies come?

ARENAS

Yeah, whatever.

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

CHANG

What's going on here.

KRISTY

Hey. Somebody's sauced.

CHANG

Just enjoying myself. How about you guys.

BO
We're kind tired to be honest.

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

Kristy crosses her arms.

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

KRISTY
I think I'm okay.

CHANG
Bo?

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

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

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

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

Chang looks at the two and nods.

CHANG
Okay. See ya.

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

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

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

DEVIN
Chang!

Too late.

MUSIC UP: Kid Cudi "Pursuit of Happiness"

PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS MONTAGE

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

CUT TO:

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY

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

DEVIN
Well look who it is.

CHANG
(holds head)
Ah. What is this?

DEVIN
It's a hangover. Here drink this.

Devin hands Chang a gatorade. Suddenly Chang jolts up.

CHANG
My mom!

DEVIN
Bo called her. It's cool.

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

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

Chang suddenly feels guilty.

CHANG
Where was I?

DEVIN

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

CHANG

Damn, really. Sorry.

DEVIN

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

CHANG

(concerned)

How.

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

CUT TO:

CHANG'S IG: CHANG'S STRIP CLUB ADVENTURE

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

ARENAS

Ay yo Chang what you doing bro?

CHANG

Dunkin' on these hoes.

CUT TO:

INT. DEVIN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chang watches in disbelief. Devin laughing.

DEVIN

You were wilin' bro.

(shakes head)

I gotta get some coffee and your ass got school.

He searches desperately for his phone. Somehow, he still has it. His lockscreen is littered with IG DMs. *You crazy bro! AGENT ZERO!!! You can dunk on me anytime ;).*

He goes to his post. There's thousands of views. He looks at who has viewed. At the top. Kristy.

CHANG

Shit!

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

DEVIN

You just gonna -- You owe me 50 dollars!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

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

STUDENT

Chang you crazy bro!

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

CHANG

Kristy!

Kristy turns, a cold look on her face.

CHANG (CONT'D)

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

KRISTY

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

Kristy pushes past Chang.

CHANG

Kristy! I'm sorry!

Kristy ignores him. Chang throws up his hands.

CHANG (CONT'D)

It was GILBERT freaking ARENAS!

An exasperated Chang turns to face Bo.

CHANG (CONT'D)

Gilbert Arenas man.

BO

I know.

CHANG

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

BO

Well. You kinda ditched us.

CHANG

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

BO

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

CHANG

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

Bo is taken a back. Offended.

CHANG (CONT'D)

What?

BO

(scoffs)

Whatever man.

Bo walks away. Chang waves him off.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

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

CHANG

(cocky)

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

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

What?

Matt seethes. Owen and Syd egg him on.

OWEN & SYD

Go off Matt.

MATT

I knew you couldn't dunk.

Chang stands. He gets in Matt's face.

CHANG

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

MATT

Yeah, but you cheated.

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

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

DUNK EXPOSER (O.S.)

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

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

CHANG

Who even is this?!

(incredulous)

You're gonna get in my face because some rando on the internet made a video? Do you also think the Earth is Flat??!!

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

MATT
Do it again then.

The class looks up at Chang, suspicious.

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

MATT
Yeah but you cheated!

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

MATT
Because you can't!

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

Matt scoffs and shakes his head.

MATT
Man, that's weak!

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

This one hits Matt different.

MATT
(laughs)
You wish you were me. You're so desperate to be me you had to trick everyone into even liking you.
(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

You'll never dunk you lying ass
poser.

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

CHANG

I CAN DUNK!

MATT

NO YOU CAN'T!

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

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

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Chang. Hi.

CHEN

Hello. I'm sorry I am late.

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

CHEN (CONT'D)

(in Chinese)

What did you do?!

CHANG

(in Chinese)

What did I do?!

PRINCIPAL

Mrs. Chang. Please have a seat.

Chen sits and glares at Chang.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

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

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

MR. O'NEIL
 There's even video.

MRS. O'NEIL
 FROM EVERY ANGLE.

MR. O'NEIL
 This could affect his college
 recruitment.

MRS. O'NEIL
 He could have PTSD!

MATT
 Mom, that's a bit --

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

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

CHEN
 Is this true?

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

MATT
 You did lose!

CHANG
 Says you!

Chen leers at Chang with vengeful eyes.

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

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

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

CHEN

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

CHANG

Oh my god!

PRINCIPAL

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

CHEN

(confused)
Vlog?

PRINCIPAL

Yes, about the dunking.

CHEN

Dunking?

Chen is utterly baffled. She has no idea.

INT. CHANG'S MINIVAN - LATER

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

CHANG

Please, don't do this! Mom!

Chen ignores him and jumps out the car.

INT. AT&T STORE - CONTINUOUS

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

CHEN

Are you Devin?

DEVIN
Yes Ma'am, can I --?

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

CHANG
Mom! That's not what he did!

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

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

Chang is on the verge of tears.

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

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

CHANG
Mom! That's --

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

CHEN
You make him a liar and a cheater!

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

DEVIN
I'm so sorry.

CHEN
You stay away from my son!

DEVIN

I will.

Chen drags a broken Chang out of the store.

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

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

CHEN

(in Chinese)

What did I do wrong for you to be like this?

CHANG

Nothing Mom. I'm just a screw up.

CHEN

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

CHANG

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

CHEN

Why? What happen?

CHANG

You wouldn't understand.

Chen's brow furrows into a familiar expression.

CHEN

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

Chang shakes his head quietly.

CHEN (CONT'D)

I want to understand. Help me.

Chang takes a long beat. Finally...

CHANG

You're always upset about something.

(MORE)

CHANG (CONT'D)

I can't tell you anything because I don't know if you'll snap at me or tell me it's stupid. I want to tell you stuff, ask you things, but I can't.

CHEN

Why?

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

CHANG

Because I'm scared of you!

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

CHEN

You're scared of me? You don't know scared! My mother beat me! When I do something bad, she say I can't eat!

(furious)

You scared of me? I give everything to you! I spoil YOU!

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

CHEN (CONT'D)

Maybe you want another mother, but you can't! I am your mother!

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

CHANG

I wish you weren't! You're never happy. You're always miserable! That's probably why Dad left. That's why you're always alone!

Chang grabs the car keys and storms out.

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

CHEN
 (in Chinese)
Lan Lan! Get back here now!

Chang ignores her, tears running down his face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

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

He takes a deep breath and gets out.

INT. LI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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

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

MARY
 Who are you?

Chang looks down her quizzically, surprised by her existence.

CHANG
 I...

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

LI
 (in Chinese)
Lan Lan? What are you doing here?

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

LI (CONT'D)
 Come in. Come in. We are just about to have dinner.

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

MARY
Who is that Daddy?

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

MARY
(in Chinese)
Uncle Lan Lan, hello! I'm Mary.

Chang smiles as best he can.

CHANG
Hi. Mary.

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

LI
Johnny, say hello to your cousin.

JOHNNY
Hi.

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

LI
(in Chinese)
Coco, we have a guest.
(to Chang)
This is my wife Coco.

CHANG
Hi.

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

Coco smiles warmly. Chang smiles back, awkward.

INT. LI'S DINING ROOM - LATER

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

LI
(in Chinese)
...I could if I wanted to!
(MORE)

LI (CONT'D)

*My boss is stupid. If I was him,
the company would do much better.
He knows this, that's why he never
promotes me.*

COCO

*Mmm. How can this idiot be the
boss.*

LI

Exactly.

Li turns his attention to Chang.

LI (CONT'D)

*So, how's school? You have a good
GPA?*

CHANG

Yeah.

LI

That's good!

(to Coco)

*He was smart ever since he was a
little kid. He could read when he
was 2. He loved to read.*

COCO

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

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

LI

*Of course he does. Mary and Johnny
are very smart too. They even know
some Chinese poems.*

(to Mary, Johnny)

*Mary, Johnny recite for Uncle the
poem you learned.*

Johnny and Mary stop eating, eager to perform.

MARY AND JOHNNY

(in Chinese, loudly)

*Moonlight reflects off the front of
my bed; Could it actually be the
frost on the ground? I look up to
view the bright moon; And look down
to reminisce about my hometown!*

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

INT. LI'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

LI

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

CHANG

No. Why?

LI

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

CHANG

I don't.

Li goes back to his game.

CHANG (CONT'D)

I should go.

LI

Huh?

CHANG

Thanks for dinner.

Chang gets up and walks out.

INT. CHANG'S MINIVAN - LATER

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

EXT. CHANG'S ROOM - LATER

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

EXT. PARK COURTS - LATER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - LATER

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

CHANG

I'm sorry. I should have been honest with you.

CHEN

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

She caresses her son's hair.

CHANG

You were right. I should have listened to you from the beginning. Then I wouldn't be in this situation. From now on, I'm going to do what you tell me, okay?

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

CHEN

I love you okay?

CHANG
I love you too.

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

CUT TO:

CHANG'S VLOG: THE APOLOGY

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

CHANG
This is going to be my last vlog.
As a lot of you know, someone
accused me of cheating on my dunk.
I'm here to say...that's it's true.
I trained really, really hard but I
was still short so I lowered the
rim by an inch or so.
(long shameful beat)
I should have just admitted to
losing the bet and taken the L. But
for some reason, I just couldn't.
Maybe I never really cared about
dunking. Maybe what I really wanted
was for people to think that I
could. That's not cool.
(beat)
I'm sorry I let down everyone who
has been following me. I'm sorry to
Matt for cheating the bet.
(soul-crushing beat)
And I am especially sorry to all my
friends who really believed in me.
Chang out.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: 1 WEEK LATER

EXT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

CHEN (O.S.)

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

CHANG

Thanks Mom. Have a good day.

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

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - A BIT LATER

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

Look outside.

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

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Chang walks over, looking disheveled.

CHANG

Hey.

KRISTY

You look terrible.

CHANG

It's called depression.

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

CHANG (CONT'D)

What do you guys want?

KRISTY

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

CHANG

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

KRISTY

Oh my god. So extra.

BO

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

CHANG

He did win. He always wins.

KRISTY

We miss you dude. Just come back.

Chang is touched by his friends.

CHANG

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

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

KRISTY

See ya.

CHANG

See you.

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

BO

See ya.

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

INT. TOM'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

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

Chen observes solemnly from the foot of the bed.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Klaus and Chen sit and have a quiet coffee together.

KLAUS

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

CHEN

(chuckling)

No.

KLAUS

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

CHEN

How about you?

Klaus shakes his head.

KLAUS

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

CHEN

And then he don't leave.

KLAUS

(smiles)

And then he didn't leave.

CHEN

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

KLAUS

He did always get what he wanted.

CHEN

That's why he so happy. No regrets.

Klaus smiles in agreement.

CHEN (CONT'D)

I envy him.

Chen's thoughts drift. Klaus reads it.

KLAUS

You know Tom used to say something to me all the time. "Klaus, you're so grumpy.

(MORE)

KLAUS (CONT'D)

You should smile more." And I would say back, "what's there to smile about?" And then he would say, "well you won't know unless you're smiling."

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

INT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

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

CHANG

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

CHEN

I took the rest of the day off.

Chen looks around.

CHANG

Sorry, I know it's a mess.

CHEN

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

Chang is a bit hesitant.

CHEN (CONT'D)

C'mon hurry up!

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

EXT. PRIVATE AIRFIELD - LATER

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

EXT. RUNWAY - A BIT LATER

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

KLAUS

Ah! My passengers have finally arrived.

CHANG

This is yours!?

KLAUS

Yeah. Name's Ellie, after my mother.

CHANG

She's beautiful.

(beat)

I'm sorry about Tom.

Klaus smiles warmly.

KLAUS

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

Chris grins. Klaus looks up at Chen.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

Ready?

CHEN

(not ready)

No. Too small! How can fly?

CUT TO:

FLYING WITH KLAUS MONTAGE

- Chang and Klaus sit up front, Chen in the back. The plane roars alive.

- It taxis to the runway, where Klaus tells Chang to clear them for takeoff

- The plane takes off, bouncing off the runway. Chen holds on for dear life. Chang is loving it.

- They reach cruising altitude. Klaus points out points of interest as Chang and Chen look out, enjoying the waves of green forest, rolling over the round Appalachian mountains.

- The sun begins to set in the horizon, casting an amber glow on all that they can see. It's beautiful beyond words.

Chang looks over his shoulder and gives Chen a thumbs up. She grabs his hand and gives it a squeeze.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - LATER

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

KLAUS

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

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

CHANG

This was really fun Mom.

CHEN

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

CHANG

I know.
(beat)
I appreciate it.

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

CHEN

I'm trying.

Chang nods.

INT. CHANG'S ROOM - LATER

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

CUT TO:

CHANG'S HIGHLIGHT REEL

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

CHANG

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

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. AT&T STORE - DAY

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

DEVIN

You saw how I hit that at the buzzer.

SALES TRAINEE

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

DEVIN

You right. You right.

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

DEVIN (CONT'D)

Aw snap.

CHANG

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

DEVIN

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

CHANG

Still...My bad.

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

CHANG
Yeah.

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

Chang stands tall, with a new assuredness.

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

DEVIN
Oh word?

The two grin.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANG'S BEDROOM - DAY

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

CHANG
I miss you man.

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

CHANG TRAINS MONTAGE

- Chang shaves his head in his bathroom.
- Devin and Chang at playground courts. Devin puts Chang
through some dribbling drills. Between the legs, behind the
back, one ball, two balls. Faster. Faster! FASTER!
- Chang returns to school. People still leer at him, but he
ignores them. Bo and Kristy are happy he's back. He sees Matt
and his friends in the hallway, but he doesn't avoid them. He
walks past, chin up.
- Chang and Devin work on his shooting form. Bo shoots a Tik
Tok of them while they work.

- Chang shoots by himself. The court lights turn off, but he keeps going.
- The Marching Band celebrates on a bus, having just won a competition. Bo, Kristy and Chang play drums in the back as another member dances with a trophy. Chang and Kristy lock eyes. The chemistry still intact.
- Chang hitting weights. He screams as he hits a new personal best on deadlift.
- Chang watches HGTV with his Mom. Both of them exhausted, downing snacks.
- A bulletin is tacked up outside the gym. It's a try-out sheet for the Boy's Basketball Team. It's already overfilled with names. Chang reaches up and writes his name down. *Chang.*

INT. SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

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

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

COACH

Alright let's do Matt and uh, you.

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

CHANG

Bet you I hit more shots than you.

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

MATT

I'll take that bet.

COACH

Okay here we go.

WHISTLE. Chang and Matt zoom off.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK: **TWO MONTHS LATER**

EXT. CHANG'S HOUSE - DAY

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

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

CHEN
Going already?

CHANG
It doesn't hurt to be early right?
(beat)
Okay maybe it's too early.

Chen laughs and shakes her head at her goofy son.

CHEN
Come help me.

Chang puts down his bag and hops over.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - LATER

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

ON BLEACHERS

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

KRISTY
PUT IN CHANG!

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

BO
We want Chang!

DEVIN
We want Chang!

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

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

ON BENCH

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

COACH

Alright. Jimmy, Steve you're in.

Jimmy and Steve rip off their warmups and run on court.

COACH (CONT'D)

...and uh, Bernard you too.

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

MATT

Yo Chang, coach says you're in.

COACH

Bernard! You wanna play or what?!

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

ON BLEACHERS

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

CHANG GANG

Chang. Chang! CHANG! CHANG!

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

CHANG GANG (CONT'D)

Ohhhhhhh.

Chang shakes his head, angry at himself.

DEVIN

Hey! Keep ya head up!

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

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

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

CUT TO:

TITLE UP: CHANG CAN DUNK