SWISH

screenplay by

Micah Cox
“Don’t measure yourself by what you have accomplished, but by what you should accomplish with your ability.”

- JOHN WOODEN
INT. BEDFORD COMMUNITY GYM - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT

THROUGH A VIDEO CAMERA FEED

SUBTITLED/BOTTOM OF SCREEN: SPORTS UPDATE. BEDFORD COMMUNITY GYM. NY1 NEWS. CRAIG’S LITTLE HEROES.

MICHAEL SWISH, 11, black, undersized for his age yet strikingly handsome, gives a cool-aide smile to the camera.

He’s holding a basketball. We hear the voice of a REPORTER.

REPORTER (V.O.)
Michael Swish. Sixth grader.
Basketball player. Looks like your average kid right...wrong.


He dribbles two balls while running. Two balls around his body. Two balls between his legs while moving.

REPORTER
Michael swish is anything but average. From five to nine every night Michael works out with his father...

RON SWISH, 30’s, tall, feeble, tosses Swish tennis balls while he dribbles a basketball with one hand.

TV CUTS TO: Ron talking into the camera.

RON
He amazes me every single day. I mean I push him, but he does allot of it on his own.

BACK TO: Swish in a wife beater flexing his ripped muscles.

REPORTER
Did we forget to mention how cut this kid is. Maybe the two hundred pushups, sit-ups, and squats he does every night before bed has something to do with it. Oh yeah, and his first words...

CLOSE UP OF RON:

RON
Basketball.
INT. WILLIAMSBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL - NIGHT

SCOREBOARD: JAYHAWKS 79 HORNETS 78. CLOCK READS: 6.0.

SUPERIMPOSE: BROOKLYN, 1999


SIDELINES -- Hornets coach VICTOR COLLAZO, a slubby, earnest, beer-bellied Cuban in his 40’s addresses his team.

VICTOR
...Okay high screen and roll. Mike if Jason’s open you hit him on the wing. Let’s go gentlemen, six seconds. Bring it in.

The players slap their hands on top of each other. Swish locks eyes with JASON CRISP, a stocky chiselled guard with a King Kong sized ego.

TEAM
WIN!

BLEACHERS -- Ron stands amongst the hornets parents clapping. TOM ROGA, 30’s, leans over and hands Ron his business card.

ROGA
Tom Roga. I’m a recruiter with the AAU basketball league.

They shake.

ROGA
Your kids talented.

RON
Thanks.

ON COURT -- A WHISTLE. A Hornets PLAYER inbounds the ball to Swish. He dribbles past defenders with lightning quickness.

AL DAVIS, a brawny hot headed power forward sets the pick and rolls to the basket calling for the ball.

Jason flanks the three point line. WIDE OPEN.

Two DEFENDERS collapse on Swish as he shoots an impossible fade away jump shot. The ball sinks through net. BUZZER.

BLEACHERS -- Parents cheer. Ron scowls, shaking his head.
INT. WILLIAMSBURG MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

Swish stands in front of his classmates nervously reading from a piece of paper.

SWISH
Kobe B-b-bean Bryant was born
August twenty third in Ph-ph-
Philadelphia. His p-parents...

Classmates SNICKER. Swish looks over at the TEACHER nodding her head with encouragement. He takes a breath, continues.

SWISH
His parents named him after the famous beef of K-k-kobe Japan...

EXT. HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Kids leak into the hallway.

INT. BATHROOM - STALL - MINUTES LATER

Al has his arm wrapped around Swish’s neck as he squirms. Jason stands in the stall’s entrance, snarling.

JASON
Pass the rock next time bitch!

Jason slams the stall door on Swish’s hand. Swish releases an ear-splitting SCREAM.

INT. RON’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ron and Swish sit at a table eating dinner in silence. Swish has a CAST on his right hand. Ron gives him a salty look.

SWISH
What?

Ron wipes his mouth with a napkin. Stands.

RON
Do your homework.

INT. SWISH’S ROOM - LATER

Posters of the comic book character WOLVERINE decorate Swish’s wall. Swish cranks out push-ups staring up at the KNICKS GAME on a small TV monitor.

His school books sit off to the side.
EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NEXT DAY

Ron watches as Swish struggles with a series of basketball drills using his left hand. The CAST on his right.

RON
We been out here four hours and you’re still dribbling like Laimbeer.

SWISH
I got one hand.

RON
Well use it.

Ron grabs the ball.

RON
Guard me.

Swish crouches into a defensive stance. Ron runs through him on his way to basket. Swish falls on his back, disheartened.

RON
No wonder those kids call you pussy. You got no heart. Anytime someone knocks you down son, you stand right back up. Now Get up!

EXT. SKYLINE - SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY - DAY

A bright clear blue sky high above the carrier dome.

SUPER GRAPHIC: 8 YEARS LATER

INT. CARRIER DOME - DAY

A teeming mass of 45,000 rowdy fighting “Orangemen” students BOO loudly. A banner reads: SWISH’S SECTION.

JIMMY BOEHEIM the legendary Syracuse coach paces, exhorting.

ON COURT -- Swish, 19, handsome, lies on his back.

Jason Crisp, 20’s, the kid that slammed his hand, wearing a Villanova uniform towers over him.

JASON
Get your pussy ass up.

Swish quickly rises to his feet. The two alpha males stand chest to chest. The REF steps between them. Signaling.
REF
I gotta a technical foul on blue number five!

JASON
That’s bullshit!

The ref thrusts his fist into the air, motioning for an ejection. Jason lunges at the ref as his teammates push him off court. He curses wildly, taunting Syracuse fans.

MONTAGE/LATER -- Swish darts past Villanova players. Scoring at will. Trash talking opponents, he’s cocky. Selfish.

The Syracuse forward, Al Davis, 20’s, powerfully built, throws his hands up in frustration barking out complaints.

Swish ignores him playing to the crowd. Every basket Swish makes, the crowd surges. CHEERING loudly.

CROWD
SWISH! SWISH! SWISH!

EXT. SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY - DAY

An impeccably well groomed campus basks under radiant sunlight. Pristine buildings. Well manicured lawns.

STUDENTS toss frisbee’s back and forth. A bell TOLLS.

Emblazoned on a marble symbol attached to the Women’s building we see: SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY--FOUNDED A.D. 1870.

GROUND

Swish walks with his back pack slung over his shoulder, flocked by a group of adoring female fans.

He looks back, smiles, waves. Then runs head on into a sexy, mouthy Newyorican, JANET SANTIAGO, 20’s. She drops her books.

JANET
Watch it asshole.

SWISH
Sorry.

Swish helps her pick up the books. He stares a beat, she’s gorgeous. He gives her his trademark lady killer smile.

SWISH
You alright?
She rolls her eyes and moves on, unfazed.

INT. WOMEN’S BUILDING – HALL – DAY

Swish stops in front of a dorm room. He knocks. A ravishing caramel skinned BEAUTY opens dressed only in a T-shirt.

    GIRL
    You’re late.

    SWISH
    Study hall.

She grabs his shirt, pulls him in the room.

INT. CARRIER DOME – LATER

Swish stands on court in a dapper two piece suit behind a podium addressing the media. He’s composed. Confident.

CAMERA FLASHES.

    SWISH
    After discussing it with my family,
    I’ve decided to take my talent to
    the NBA. I’d like to thank the
    University of Syracuse...

INT. MICKEY’S PUB – SOMEWHERE IN BROOKLYN – NIGHT

A seedy bar. Victor downs a beer at the bar staring up at the television. ON TV -- A NEWS REPORTER speaks with a small cropped photo of Swish in the corner of the screen.

    NEWS REPORTER
    In other news earlier today the top
    college player in the country,
    Michael Swish announced that he
    will be declaring for the
    NBA draft...

EXT. STREET – CURB SIDE – ESTABLISHING

A souped up CUTLASS CIERA idles curb side.

CUTLASS

A vicious rap beat emanates from speakers. Two MASKED MEN bob their heads as they load bullets into their shotguns, .45’s.

The smaller of the two pumps the for-end along the gun barrel of his sawed off shotgun. He shakes his head, grinning.
MASKED MAN 1
Old school nigga...

He turns up the radio. Over the radio we hear the lyrics of a RAP SONG. The voice of a RAPPER belts out...

RAPPER
“When I cock my nine, it’s time to shine. I press rewind, with blood on my mind. Eight slugs to yo chest, you fuckin’ wit da best…”

He looks out the window towards the basketball court.

EXT. RUCKER PARK - NIGHT

A large crowd full of urbanites BOO loudly. Swish lies on his back. Queens native NATE JACKSON, a looker, stands over him.

NATE
I run Brooklyn.

Swish rises to his feet. The REF steps between them.

The balls inbounded. Swish moves down court, puts a killer crossover on Nate, fade away jump shot. SWISH.

He smirks confidently. The vibrant voice of the ANNOUNCER blares over the PA system.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Brooklyn’s in the house! Watch your ankles baby, courtesy of my main man Mike Swish!

SIDELINES -- Money exchanges hands.

ANTHONY “BIG GIP” JACKSON, a hefty street hustler with an intimidating presence, stands with his thuggish crew members.

Gip looks pissed. One his crew members whispers in his ear.

THUG
I told you not to bet against him.

ON COURT -- Swish weaves through players, clowning opponents with flashy moves. He scores, looks up into the bleachers.

BLEACHERS -- Ron sits next to Victor shaking his head with disapproval. Victor puffs on his cigarette, nodding.
VICTOR
Should’ve let me have him for a year.

RON
I’ll leave the coaching to Boeheim.

Suddenly two masked men hustle toward the court, guns drawn. The gunmen UNLOAD on Gip’s crew. People scramble.

Gip’s crew pulls out .9mm’s returning fire. As Swish runs bullets rip into his back. He falls to his knees -- Ron darts across court.

One of the gunmen collapses, dead. The other continues the assault. Ron jumps in front of Swish taking several shots to the chest. Gip’s crew backs off court, FIRING. POP! POP! POP!

Ron slumps over the concrete, lifeless. The lone gunman, shot in the arm, begins to take off. He notices Swish dragging himself off court.

The gunmen limps over. Lifts his .45. Swish looks up at him, shaken. A quick flash of light--BAM!

Swish’s body jerks. The gunmen limps off into darkness...

SFX: POLICE SIRENS.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL CENTER - NEXT DAY

Swish lies in bed, his face heavily bandaged. Victor enters carrying a small paper bag full of comic books.

VICTOR
Hey champ.

Swish turns his head away, ashamed.

VICTOR
Brought you some comic books. Hulk’s my personal favorite but--

SWISH
I’m nineteen.

Victor waits a beat before responding.

VICTOR
You got a favorite?

Swish sighs, bothered.
VICTOR
Mike if there’s anything I can do-

SWISH
Get out.

Uncomfortable silence.

VICTOR
I’ll just leave these on the bed.
Take it easy buddy.

Victor rests the comics on the bed, heads for the door.

SWISH
Wolvawine.

Swish’s speech is slurred, voiced nasalized. Victor hesitates, turns around.

VICTOR
Wolverine’s cool. Retracting bone claws. Animal Keen senses.

SWISH
A healing factow dat allows him to recova fom virtually any wound.

VICTOR
Right...well your like wolverine.
Remember that when your rehabbing.

INT. HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Swish sits in the wheel chair staring out the window at a basketball game. The bandages have been removed.

The skin on the right side of his face is badly scarred. His nose twisted and pushed in. There is a severe cleft in his upper lip. He looks dejected, broken.

INT. SKILLED NURSING UNIT - SERIES OF IMAGES - DAYS LATER

A THERAPIST helps Swish take steps on parallel bars. He lifts weights. Runs up training stairs. Pulls a rickshaw.

INT. BROOKLYN BOYS CLUB - DAY

SUPER: 3 YEARS LATER

Swish paces in front of a small group of inner city kids sitting on the gym floor. His face still hard on the eyes.
SWISH

Wha we say to gangs?

KIDS

NO!

SWISH

Wha we say to drugs?

KIDS

NO!

SWISH

Wha we say to guns?

KIDS

NO!

Swish looks up and notices Victor watching through the gym’s entrance doors. He ignores him, continues...

INT. HALLWAY - AFTER CLASS

A TROPHIE CASE. Victor stares at a picture of Swish standing next to playground legend RAFER “Skip To My Lou” Alston.

SWISH (O.S.)

I don’t ball no more.

Victor spins, strolls over to him.

VICTOR

If I wanted to recruit a ball player I’d go down to the Rucker.

SWISH

So what do you want?

VICTOR

Heard you were working at a meat market up in Marcy?

SWISH

Yeah, and?

VICTOR

You like it?

SWISH

Pays da bills.

VICTOR

But do you like it?
SWISH
Why you sweat me?

VICTOR
I’m not sweating you. I just-

Swish looks at his watch.

SWISH
Look I gotta anova class to teach.

He begins to walk off.

VICTOR
Shame.

SWISH
What?

VICTOR
All that talent gone to waste.

SWISH
You got a probem?

Victor pulls out his wallet, hands Swish his business card. Swish stares at it.

VICTOR
I’m coaching a BAA team. I want you to come play for me.

SWISH
I told you, I don’t ball no more.

Swish turns, storms down the hall.

VICTOR
Is that what your father would have wanted?

SWISH
Puck you!

VICTOR
Get in the game Swish.

SWISH (O.S.)
I don’t ball no more!
INT. SMITHY’S MEAT MARKET - FREEZER - NIGHT

Rows of wooden pallets full of grocery items. Swish and his co-worker LARRY BROWN stack milk cartons onto shelves.

LARRY
...Shorty looks just like Kim Kardashian, and she went out with Duby in receiving.

SWISH
Duby? He looks like Cwaig Mack wit a Strahan gap.

LARRY
I’m tellin’ you these Persian girls got a thing for for brotha’s. Think about it? Kobe, Reggie, Lamar.

SWISH
Kobe’s girl isn’t Pusian, she’s Mexican Twish. And Kim Kadsahian’s Amenian.

LARRY
Whateva, point is shorty’s a freak and she got paper.

SWISH
She know about my face?

LARRY
She ain’t gonna care. What you a think a girl from the Hamptons is doin’ messin’ with brotha’s from Brooklyn?

Swish stops, glares at him.

SWISH
Set it up.

The NIGHT CREW MANAGER sticks his head into the freezer.

NIGHT CREW MANAGER
Hey Mike, need you in my office.

Swish and Larry exchange a concerned look.

LARRY
Good luck.
INT. MANAGERS OFFICE - NIGHT
Swish sits in front of the managers desk.

    NIGHT CREW MANAGER
    Cuts are kickin’ my ass. Sorry Mike.

Swish stands. They shake.

INT. EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE - NEXT DAY
Swish is hyperventilating in front of a packed auditorium full of chattering college kids. He bolts for the exit doors.

INT. RIVER CAFE - NIGHT
Swish sits at a corner table, restless. An exotic, opulent “Kim Kardashian” look alike saunters in his direction.

Swish stands to greet her. As she grows closer the smile on her face disappears.

    SWISH
    Lacy?

She turns, walks away.

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT
Swish sits on his bed turning the pages of a worn photo album. Swish with family. Friends. Team high school pictures.

Newspaper clippings read:

    Brooklyn’s next prodigy. Mike Swish, why he’s better than Lebron. Born to play. Basketball star gunned down at Rucker Park. NBA Dreams SHATTERED.

He stares up at a framed photo on the wall of him and his father slapping hands on a basketball court...

EXT./INT. BASKETBALL COURTS - GROCERY STORES - DAY/NIGHT
Swish dribbles, loses the ball. He shoots a free throw, air ball. Swish picks up the ball, hurls it.

GROCERY STORE -- Swish bags groceries, depressed.

ON COURT -- Swish practices. ALL DAY. ALL NIGHT. For months. Slowly, his shot improves. His crossover. His footwork.
Swish competes in basketball competitions around the city. The Rucker. Blacktop. And One. He’s winning, collecting cash.

Gip and Swish make eye contact as Swish counts money, but Swish breaks it quickly.

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Swish sits at the kitchen table flipping through the newspaper, he stops on a small photo of a basketball game. In the picture, Jason shoots a jump shot.

Cap reads: NEW YORK KNIGHTS HOLD THREE DAY TRYOUTS.

INT. J TRAIN - DAY

A cuddly 6 year old GIRL stares hard at Swish. He smiles at her, slides on his sunglasses, looks out the window.

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gip and several crew members are standing in Swish’s ransacked living room. A CREW MEMBER walks out of Swish’s bedroom holding up a small stack of wrapped dollar bills.

    GIP
    How much?

    CREW MEMBER
    Eleven hundred.

Gip takes the money.

    GIP
    Light it.

A crew MEMBER holds a lighter to a cloth stuffed into a bottle. He throws the lit bottle on the couch.

    BIG GIP
    Teach this nigga a lesson.

INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - HALL - DAY

Players fill out paper work at the registration desk. Swish walks in, receives a couple nods.

Standing off to the side Isiah “SPEEDY” Williams, a pudgy, slick talking womanizer, all hood, is being worked over by his X-GIRLFRIEND. She’s got a crying baby in her arms.
X-GIRLDFRIEND
...No you need to take of your responsibilities, that’s what you need to do.

SPEEDY
Why you bugin’ ma?

X-GIRLDFRIEND
Nigga fuck you and your tired ass excuses.

Swish bumps into her.

SWISH
Sowy

SPEEDY
Oh snap. The stickiest crossover in Brooklyn. What it do fam.

Speedy sticks out his hand, they give each other dap.

SPEEDY
Hey yo Oscar. Mike Swish.

Speedy waives over his boy OSCAR MORENO, a stringy Rican with a nasty tic dressed in tube socks and “Kurt Rambis” goggles.

SPEEDY
Names Isiah but everybody calls me Speedy. This is my boy Oscar.

Oscar approaches. His head jerks back violently, ticking. He sticks out his fist, Swish gives him a reluctant pound.

SWISH
Damn son. You stuck in 88?

SPEEDY
Don’t sweat the style though. My man’s got crazy hops.

OSCAR
(Ticking)
Weren’t you averaging like--f-f-f forty a game.

SWISH
Something like dat.

Swish stares at him.
OSCAR
Something wrong?

SWISH
No.

OSCAR
Then what you s-s-starin’ at?

SWISH
Noting.

Speedy sucks deeply from his asthma inhaler. He rests his hand on Oscar’s shoulder.

SPEEDY
My man’s a little sensitive that’s all. But we gone see you inside though.

SWISH
Ai’ght.

SPEEDY
Bet.

Swish walks toward the registration desk. Speedy’s X-
GIRLFRIEND lays into him, waiving her finger in his face.

X-GIRLFRIEND
Anyways like I was saying, I need that child support money-

SPEEDY
Why you all up in my ear drums right now...

INT. KNIGHTS GYMNASIUM - TRY OUTS - DAY

A scrimmage game. Al Davis dribbles at the free throw line. He touches the TATOO on his arm. Shoots. Air ball.

SIDELINES...Victor stands off the side with his loathsome assistant coach NICK FEMA, 40’s. Nick rubs his eyes, pained.

NICK
Christ. He’s worse than Chuck Hayes.

Al shoots his second, the ball CLANKS off the backboard.

BLAKE EDWARDS, an ungainly, seven foot, pale skinned center, fumbles the rebound.
DEMARCUS ROBINSON, a brawny, clean cut ivy league brotha with authority issues, rips the ball from Blake’s hands. Blake falls to his back as Robinson throws it down.

ROBINSON
Get your sorry ass off the court.

MARVIN THORTON, a slim, black, short fused “Georgia Boy” with a stylish DR. J fro grabs the ball. He slams it between his hands angrily, glaring down at Blake.

MARVIN
Damn dawg. Stand your ground.

Blake peels himself off the floor, runs up court. Marvin inbounds the ball to -- TYLER BASKINS A.K.A “Vanilla”, a scrawny, blond haired, vigorous point guard from Oklahoma.

Tyler streaks down court, hits a silky smooth jumper over Blake with ease, shaking his head with satisfaction.

SIDELINES...Nick notices Swish enter the gym.

NICK
What the hell is he doin’ here?

VICTOR
Don’t get your tits in a knot.

Victor walks over to meet him. They shake.

VICTOR
Mike.

SWISH
You still a lousy recooter.

Swish nods toward the court.

SWISH
So who’s ankews I gotta bwake?

VICTOR
Crisp is our starting point. You’ll be competing with Baskins for the backup job.

SWISH
I don’t pay backup.

VICTOR
You don’t play defense either.
Swish cuts his eyes at him.

**SWISH**
Let’s do **dis**.

**SERIES OF SHOTS – LATER**

Swish is all razzle dazzle, scoring with flashy street ball moves--On the opposite end Jason takes Swish to the basket with ease while dishing out assists.

Swish continues to score without passing.

**SIDELINES -- Victor stands with Nick.**

**NICK**
Kid’s a selfish prick.

**ON COURT --** Swish dribbles up the court, Al flashes Jason a look. Swish spins on Jason, Al sets a pick and rolls to the basket, WIDE OPEN. Swish ignores him, heads for the paint.

As he’s about to score Al’s diesel arm cracks Swish across the throat. Swish’s ankle buckles awkwardly as he lands.

He falls to the floor in pain. Speedy shoves Al from behind, teammates break up the ruckus. Victor runs on court, livid.

**VICTOR**
Mike you alright!

Swish gasps for air. Victor gets in Al’s face.

**VICTOR**
You got a problem Davis?

**AL**
He’s playin’ Starberry ball coach.

**VICTOR**
Pull a stunt like that again and you can forget about a contract. You play by my rules. We clear?

Victor stares up at him, not the least bit intimidated.

**AL**
Yeah coach.

Victor turns to Swish.

**VICTOR**
Take him to the trainers room.
INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Blake supports Swish as he limps up the hall.

BLAKE
Maybe you should consider passin’.

SWISH
Passin’ is for peple that can’t shut.

Blake stops.

BLAKE
You really believe that don’t you.

SWISH
Look man, in Brookyn it’s dog eat dog. If you can’t handle it take your Bill Walton ass back to Utah or whateva whitebwead town you came fom.

Swish limps down the hall on his own. All of sudden he falls to the ground, clutching his ankle in pain.

SWISH
Puck!

Blake strides up to him.

BLAKE
Walton’s a hall of famer and I’m from Chicago.

SWISH
Whateva.

BLAKE
Good luck making down the hall.

Blake turns to walk off.

SWISH
Hole up...My bad.

Swish sticks out his hand.

SWISH
Mike Swish.

Blake helps him to his feet.
BLAKE
Blake Edwards.

They move down the hall together.

BLAKE
You really think I look like Bill Walton?

SWISH
Nah, you ugier. More like a white Manute Bol.

BLAKE
Thanks.

INT. TRAINERS ROOM - DAY

Swish lies on a metal table. Athletic trainer JANET SANTIAGO, early 20’s, attractive, wraps his ankle with an ace bandage.

JANET
I’m going to recommend that you get an MRI.

SWISH
For what?

JANET
Your ligaments may be torn.

SWISH
Yeah well...just tell cuch is a light stwayne okay.

JANET
You want fries with your order?

SWISH
What?

JANET
You ever consider that fact that I have a job to do?

SWISH
For you it’s just a job. For me, it’s a caweew.

Janet tightens the bandage, extra tight. Swish squirms.

SWISH
Waps a little tight.
JANET
You don’t remember me do you?

SWISH
No.

JANET
You ran into me at Syracuse. You were too busy staring at your fan club.

Swish stares at her.

SWISH
You called me an asshole.

JANET
I see nothing’s changed.

She heads for the exit.

SWISH
You just gone leave me here?

SWISH
Yup.

SWISH
Can I keep the cutches?

JANET (O.S.)
No.

She’s gone.

SWISH
Lesbian.

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Swish, stunned, stands in the doorway watching policemen remove burnt articles from his charred apartment.

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT - DAY

Swish bends down, picks up the soot covered framed photo of him and his father on the basketball court.

IN THE PICTURE -- Half of Mike’s face is burnt away. He flips it over, removes the backing. Slides out the photo.
INT. MANAGER’S OFFICE - DAY

Swish is arguing with his Iranian LANDLORD.

    SWISH
    You have to povide me-

    LANDLORD
    You don’t have renters insurance.
    There is nothing I can do. You go now, please, or I call police...

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

An all out brawl. STREET BALLERS and THUGS swap punches.

BLEACHERS -- Gip smiles as he counts a fat wad of money. Swish limps toward him.

    SWISH
    Sup Gip.

    BIG GIP
    You got allot of balls comin’ here.

    SWISH
    Somebody bunt down my apatment.

    BIG GIP
    Fuck that gotta do with me?

Gip stares up at him. Swish looks at the ground.

    SWISH
    I could use a fava.

    BIG GIP
    A what?

    SWISH
    A-a fava.

    BIG GIP
    Must of forgot about the three g’s you owe me.

    SWISH
    I make it up to you.

    BIG GIP
    And how you gone do that?
SWISH
I pay for you in da Rucka. I just need a loan for my surgery.

BIG GIP
For what?

SWISH
My surgery on my ankew.

Swish sticks out his foot.

SWISH
Don’t have medical benefits.

Gip lights a cigar. Reaches into his waist, pulls out a titanium gold plated DESERT EAGLE.

BIG GIP
Nigga I look like Obama to you.

He cocks the desert eagle, stands.

BIG GIP
Come up with my cash by the end of the week. Or I’m gonna put a bullet in the other side of your face.

Gip heads toward the court, yelling.

BIG GIP
Hey y’all chill out...

Swish notices a half open T-shirt on the bench. Inside, a flashy gold bullet chain with a large diamond YANKEES medallion on the end of it. He scans, picks it up.

INT. BRONSON’S PAWN SHOP – DAY

A rotund PAWN SHOP CLERK examines the chain through a magnifying glass. He looks up at Swish.

CLERK
I’ll give you a grand.

SWISH
Das woth thwee.

CLERK
You slow or somethin’. Grand’s what I’m offering. Take it or leave it.
EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - ESTABLISHING

The RUSH of a bullet train as it streaks over tracks.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

A packed station. Swish stands amongst the large crowd. He looks around, frenzied, breathing heavily.

A PICK POCKET makes his way through the crowd bumping into unsuspecting passengers, stealing jewelry, wallets. He darts by Swish causing him to lose his crutches. Swish freaks.

    SWISH
    Watch out man!

    PICK POCKET
    Sorry.

INT. J TRAIN - MOVING

Swish sits stiffly in his seat. A mischievous group of coked up STREET KIDS heckle him from across the aisle.

    STREET KID 1
    Damn son, your face is fucked up.

They chuckle, wiping their noses, snorting. One of the kids squints, recognizing him.

    STREET KID 2
    Yo chill. I think that’s Mike Swish.

    STREET KID 3
    That ain’t him. That nigga look retarded.

EXT. STREETS OF BROOKLYN - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

Stuffy traffic. Old MEN sit in lawn chairs outside the local Bodega playing backgammon. A PROSTITUTE works her corner.

INT. MOTEL 6 - NIGHT

The PROPRIETOR stands at the front desk watching Swish dig his pockets frantically.

    SWISH
    I have it...I know I got it. I was the twain--

Swish realizes.
SWISH

Shit!

EXT. STOOP - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Swish stands in front of metal CALL BOX. He pushes a button.

INT. LARRY’S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Deafening RAP MUSIC fills the room. A portable PHONE rings on a small coffee table.

Swish’s co-worker, Larry, naked, stands behind Lacy the Kim Kardashian look alike. He pumps away rapidly as Lacy releases emphatic pleasure filled screams. The phone rings. And RINGS.

EXT. STOOP - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Swish presses the button repeatedly. After several tries he gives up and takes off down the sidewalk.

EXT. SIDEWALK/PAY PHONE - NIGHT

Swish on his cell phone, dialing. The cell phone BATTERY light blinks, ONE BAR. He stands at a pay phone, banging the receiver against the phone’s housing. He’s losing it.

INT. PROVIDENCE HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

Swish stands amongst a never ending line of homeless people. The SHIFT LEADER steps outside.

SHIFT LEADER

All full folks.

GROANS.

EXT. GREEN HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

Swish stands on top of a rickety old school desk pounding his crutch against a small window. Glass SHATTERS.

INT. GREEN HIGH SCHOOL GYM - LATER

An open FUSE BOX. Swish flips a switch, one by one the overhead lights flicker to life, illuminating the court.

STORAGE ROOM - LATER

Swish pushes out a basketball rack.

BASKETBALL COURT - QUICK IMAGES
Swish at the free throw line. Shot after shot, the ball slithers through net. He stands at half court.

    SWISH
    ...And now, parting at guard. A 5"9 point guard out a Gween City high cool, number 11, Michael Swish.
    (Crowd noises)

SHOWERS

Swish soaks under the shower head. He holds the soap bar like a microphone, pretending to interview himself.

    SWISH
    ...So Swish how does it feel to be MBP? Feels gwate. I just wanted to dis for my tim you know, it’s not about me, it about da tim.

LOCKER ROOM

Swish curls up on a bench. He pulls out the picture of his father on the court, stares at it for a beat. He cries.

INT. J TRAIN - NIGHT

Swish stares at a TEENAGER in a KNICKS jersey dribbling a basketball rapidly under his legs.

EXT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - NEXT DAY

The players stand side by side. Victor paces, doing his best “Bobby Knight” impersonation. Speedy leans into Oscar.

    SPEEDY
    Here goes another PSA.

    VICTOR
    For the last hour I’ve watched you guys run up and down this court like a bunch of bickering old ladies.

His steely eyes bore into each of them.

    VICTOR
    Robinson in case you haven’t noticed, I got the whistle around my neck not you. Williams lay off the god damn cheese burgers. Edwards you’ve got to hit the weight room asap.
    (MORE)
Davis this is basketball not WWF.
Moreno your wandering around the perimeter like a god damn space cadet...I run a tight ship gentlemen.

OSCAR
(Saluting)
Aye aye c-c-coach.

Some of the players fight back laughs.

VICTOR
You think that’s funny. Anybody that wants to clown around can hit the streets.

Swish enters the gym, yelling.

SWISH
I want you to pay for my surgy!

The players turn and stare. He limps toward Jason, pointing.

SWISH
You puckin pay for my surgy!

JASON
What? Yo somebody get this cripple off the court.

Swish snatches the ball out of Jason’s hand.

NICK
Get the fuck out a here.

SWISH
I wanna pay!

Victor steps to him.

VICTOR
I’m tryin’ to run a practice Mike. You come back next year, and try again alright?

Swish and Nick share a fiery stare. Blake and some of the other players watch him trail off, shamefaced.

JASON
Yeah, go home Rudy.

SWISH
I be back like Arnold!
INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Nick follows Swish, trying to keep up.

NICK
Hold on a second.

SWISH
What you want?

NICK
Listen Swish I think it’s best you stay away from the team.

SWISH
What?

NICK
We’ve got some good players this year. We don’t need selfish rejects like you screwin’ up chemistry.

SWISH
I ain’t no reject.

NICK
Just do us all a favor and go away. I see your ugly face around here again I’m calling the cops.

Nick heads down the hall. Swish elevates his voice.

SWISH
You can’t stup me!

EXT. GREEN WOOD CEMETARY - DAY

Swish stands in front of his fathers grave site with his head bowed in payer. Engraved on MARBLE we see the words:

RON SWISH “1966-2007” R.I.P.

He looks up, wipes a tear from his face.

SWISH
I’m gonna do it dad. I’m gonna pay in da NBA. I won’t let you down.

VARIOUS LOCATIONS -- Swish asking for job applications. Department stores. Fast food restaurant's. Gas stations. Same results every time. EMPLOYERS shake their heads “No”.
EXT. PROSPECT PARK - DAY

Swish sits on a park bench looking hopeless. He pulls out his cell phone. Stares at it.

EXT. BRONSON’S PAWN SHOP - DAY

Swish stands in front of the pawn shop owner. His cell phone on the glass counter.

    PAWN SHOP OWNER
    What the hell am I supposed to do with this?

    SWISH
    Das an eighty dola cell phone.

    PAWN SHOP OWNER
    Used. I’ll give you twenty bucks.

EXT. STREET CORNER - HOT DOG STAND - DAY

The PROPRIETOR hands Swish a hot dog. He moves off to the side, wolfs it down quickly.

Swish looks up to notice a black Escalade pulling to the curb. Gip and two of his crew members hop out approaching the stand. Swish slides on his hoodie, hastily shuffles away.

EXT. STOOP - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Swish stands on the sidewalk looking up into an apartment window. He’s yelling.

    SWISH
    Hey yo Larry! Larry!

Larry opens the window.

    LARRY
    You can stay here Mike. I’m getin’ evicted.

Larry shuts the window. Swish limps away.

EXT. SIDEWALK/GREEN HIGH SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

THROUGH A METAL GATE -- Swish watches a SECURITY GUARD guard patrol the gym’s entrance. He hobbles away.
EXT. UNDERPASS - NIGHT

Brooklyn’s homeless congregate next to fire filled oil drums. Swish catches shut eye under a makeshift tent made of plywood and bed rolls. A limping HOMELESS MAN passes by, muttering.

The man stops, staring at Swish’s crutches. He picks them up, scoots off.

DAYS GO BY -- We see Swish sleeping in parks, alleys, street corners, shelters.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

A cardboard sign reads: “HOMELESS PLEASE HELP”

Coins drop into a rusty tin can. Swish sits slumped against the wall, half asleep. He’s a mess.

A couple ON LOOKERS recognize him, snapping photos.

INT. CAESARS SHOPPING MALL - DAY

The mall’s crawling with BLACK FRIDAY shoppers moving about busily on cell phones.

Swish dirty and disheveled is standing in front of a mirror in a pair of dark stylish sunglasses.

The SALES WOMAN involved with another CUSTOMER, glances over suspiciously. Swish removes the glasses from his face, places them back on the rack.

BLAKE (O.S.)
Those look good on you.

Swish spins. Blake stands behind him with a shopping bag decked out in a sporty jump suit.

SWISH
Yeah, well evybody can’t ball like you.

Swish hobbles past him.

BLAKE
I’m headin’ to this party tonight. It’s kind of like a meet and greet for the players.

SWISH
Good for you.
BLAKE
What is it with you?

Swish stops, turns to him.

SWISH
What you mean?

BLAKE
You don’t like party’s. Clubs. You like girls?

SWISH
Punny.

BLAKE
You should come.

SWISH
Lata.

Swish limps away.

INT. MALL RESTROOMS - LATER

Swish stands at the sink splashing water on his face. Blake walks in, takes the sink next to him.

SWISH
What are you sawking me?

They wash their hands in silence.

BLAKE
All that talent gone to waste. Must suck.

SWISH
What?

BLAKE
Your father gets gun downed trying to protect you and this is how you repay him.

SWISH
Puck you!

Swish rushes him, pushing Blake into the wall. He delivers a swift knee to Blake’s grind. Blake hunches over in pain. They tussle, falling to the floor.
Blake gains the upper hand, with his arm firmly wrapped around Swish’s neck from behind. Swish gives in.

BLAKE
You tried to od on oxycontin after your father died.

SWISH
You don’t know shit!

BLAKE
I know you were the best college player in the country.

SWISH
What do you want?

BLAKE
Let me help you.

SWISH
I don’t need your hep!

BLAKE
Well I need yours.

SWISH
Get off me!

BLAKE
You got something to say. I knew it the moment I met you.

SWISH
You don’t know how it feels. Girls want to vomit evy time dey see me. Peple tink I’m retaded. Dey laugh and point like I’m some sort of fweak. I can’t even get a job. I was a great ball paya. I was I was da best!

He shakes his fist in the air as he begins to sob uncontrollably. Tears streak down his disfigured face.

SWISH
I was da best! I was da best...

Blake stares up at the ceiling teary eyed. Full of remorse.

BLAKE
I know Mike. I know...
Blake slowly releases his grip. They sit in silence, both emotionally spent. Sniffling. Panting.

BLAKE
You deserve to be on this team more than I do...My father’s a plastic surgeon, he never got drafted...so now he’s living through me. Only reason I made the cut is cause he sent coach Fema a fat check.

SWISH
Yeah well...You’re lucky.

BLAKE
Why’s that?

SWISH
Despite yo shitty post moves you can make it on size alone.

BLAKE
Doubt it.

SWISH
Payers over six six have a fifty percent chance to make it to NBA. You a seven footer and dis da BAA. So stop crying.

Blake smirks as wipes a tear from his face.

BLAKE
You hungry?

INT. FOOD COURT - TABLE - LATER

Blake watches Swish stuff his face with french fries, sickened. Swish glances up.

SWISH
What about your mova?

BLAKE
She’s a lawyer. According to her I’m throwing my life away playing a stupid game.

Swish looks him over.

SWISH
Maybe you are.
BLAKE
What do you mean?

SWISH
Fuget it. So was da deal?

Blake thinks, sipping his soda.

BLAKE
We get coach to put you on as a water boy. In return you help me with my game.

SWISH
Wata boy?

BLAKE
For now. Or at least until I can squeeze some money out of my dad for your surgery.

Swish shoots him a distrustful stare.

SWISH
I don’t need any hanouts.

BLAKE
Yeah well, looks like you lost some weight. You smell like sour milk and pigeon shit. And you damn sure need a haircut.

SWISH
You seduce all da boys like dis?

Blake smirks.

BLAKE
You can crash at my place till you get things figured out.

INT. BLAKE’S APARTMENT - KNIGHTS TEAM HOUSING UNIT - EVENING

Swish sits on a bar stool as Speedy runs clippers through his hair. Oscar, ticking, sits on the couch next to Blake watching TV.

SPEEDY
...Soon as I make it to the league, I know Buffie’s gone be sweatin’ a playa.
SWISH
Buffie?

Speedy pauses as he reaches into his back pocket. He pulls out a magazine cut out of a voluptuous African American pin up model “BUFFIE THE BODY”, and hands it to Swish.

SWISH
You cawy her picta in yur back pocket?

SPEEDY
Met her on my man’s video shoot the other day. That’s gonna be wifey watch.

OSCAR
He’s d-d-delusional.

SWISH
So what are my chances?

SPEEDY
Zero. Roids got Jason ballin’ like a maniac right now.

SWISH
Roids?

SPEED
Him and Al both juiced up on that shit.

SWISH
How you know?

SPEEDY
I overheard them talkin’ in the locker room.

ON TV...Blake flips the channel.

HARLIN DASH, a dapper “PAT RILEY” look alike with neatly slicked hair is sitting in a studio talking to a news ANCHOR.

DASH
...Well my loyalty is to my clients, and my job is to get them fair market value...
BACK IN THE ROOM

SWISH
Isn’t dat da cat dat gets B payers phat contracts in Europe?

BLAKE
Yup. Now he’s reppin’ Jason.

SPEEDY
He got a deal with greasy ass coach Fema too. The more Jason’s stats go up, the more perks coach gets on the side.

SWISH
Cuch Collazo know?

SPEEDY
Doubt it. Wouldn’t matter anyways cause three division one schools are eyeing him for head coaching jobs next year. As long we win, coach is deaf and dumb.

Speedy turns Swish to a mirror on the wall. The letters SWISH have been etched into his hair with expert craftsmanship.

SPEEDY
Damn I’m nice.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - CHELSEA PIERS - EVENING

The restaurant’s pleasingly old fashioned. Hard wood floors. Period piece lanterns. A jazz band plays on a small stage.

Knights players intermingle with some of basketball’s elite. Blake stands next to Swish dressed to the nines.

SWISH
Dis ain’t my kin of potty.

BLAKE
Relax. See that guy sitting next to Al. He’s a scout with the Miami heat. The one talking to Marvin’s with the Atlanta Hawks. And the guy next to Jason’s Harlin Dash.

Swish watches Jason speak to Harlin. He also notices Janet sitting between Victor and Tyler.
SWISH
What about the girl next to cuch?

BLAKE
What about her?

SWISH
Who is she?

BLAKE
His niece.

Nick approaches. He shoots Swish a cold stare.

BLAKE
Hey coach.

NICK
What’s he doing here?

BLAKE
I was thinking he could work the sidelines as a water boy.

NICK
This events for BAA players only.

BLAKE
Well Swish-

NICK
He’s not part of the team.

Blake’s tongue tied. Nick locks eyes with Swish.

NICK
Maybe next year buddy. Blake there’s somebody I want you to meet.

Nick leads Blake away. Swish just stands there looking lost.

BLAKE
What about Swish?

NICK
He’s a big boy, he’ll get over it.

BLAKE
But-
NICK
Remember your not here cause of your skills. Now shutup and smile.

They walk up to several middle aged men dressed in black tie talking amongst themselves.

NICK
Charles, somebody I’d like you to meet...

AT THE TABLE -- Janet excuses herself and walks up to Swish.

JANET
How’s the ankle?

Swish gives her a sour look.

SWISH
What do you care.

He limps away.

INT. BLAKE’S APARTMENT - LATER

Swish stands in front of the flat screen with a remote.

ON TV--LEBRON JAMES drives to the hole. The action backtracks.

BACK IN THE APARTMENT -- Swish mimics Lebron’s moves shaking his head. He stops, putting his hand on his hips.

SWISH
Hell wit her...

INT. BLAKE’S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Swish is covered in soap suds singing loudly in the shower.

SWISH
...You cut me open and I, keep beedin, keep keep beedin,and I, keep beedin, keep-

He shuts off the water as if he hears something. There’s a loud KNOCKING sound coming from the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Swish opens the door shirtless, dressed in jeans, blotting himself with a towel. Janet stands in the doorway in a tight fitting outfit looking ravishing. She’s peeved.
JANET
What’s your problem?

Swish stares at the floor.

SWISH
I don’t have a probem.

JANET
You want to blame me for ruining your dream then fine. You wouldn’t have made it anyway.

SWISH
Oh yeah. Why’s dat?

JANET
Your selfish, your defense sucks, and your crossovers weak.

SWISH
Anyting else?

JANET
You got no heart.

Janet storms down the hall. Swish sticks his head out the doorway, offended.

SWISH
I got penty of heart!

JANET
Whateva.

SWISH
Where you going?

JANET
To get trashed.

SWISH
Want some company?

JANET
No!

BLAKE’S APARTMENT

Swish bounds into his bedroom. He reappears seconds later wiggling into his shirt, shoes half on his feet. He scrambles through the front door.
EXT. SIDEWALK - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - NIGHT

Janet stands on the sidewalk trying to flag down a cab as Swish approaches. She looks at him rolling her eyes.

JANET
Are you deaf?

SWISH
No I’m retaded.

She gives him a fake smile continuing to flag down the cabs.

JANET
I thought I ruined your dreams.

SWISH
You did. But I like da way you walk.

JANET
My walk?

SWISH
Your ass swings back and futh like a-

JANET
Classy. Real classy.

A cab pulls up to the curb. Janet opens the door. Swish quickly scoots around the other side.

JANET
What are you doing?

SWISH
Being pusistant.

JANET
I didn’t ask you to be.

SWISH
I know.

Swish climbs in the cab. Janet shakes her head, irritated.

INT. THE PEANUCKLE - NIGHT

A drunken MAN performs a bad karaoke rendition of a 70’s classic on stage. Swish and Janet sit at a small corner table munching on peanuts. Swish looks around, he’s sketchy.
JANET
Something wrong?

SWISH
I hate kaweoki.

JANET
Then you should have stayed home.

SWISH
You don’t date much do you?

JANET
This isn’t a date.

Swish nervously fiddles with his beer.

SWISH
So, your cuch’s niece huh?

JANET
Are you implying something?

Swish raises a brow.

SWISH
No. Why you gettin’ all defesive?

JANET
I’m not.

A WAITRESS sets down a plate full of chicken wings and a pitcher of beer.

JANET
Thank you. My father married his sister.

SWISH
What made you want to become a twaina?

JANET
I love the healing process. Makes me feel good if I can help an athlete get back on his feet.

SWISH
Any bova’s and sista’s?

JANET
Two brothers. One’s an engineer. The others a police officer. You?
SWISH
No.

JANET
What about your parents?

Swish looks off.

SWISH
Their dead.

She stares at him intensely, feeling a sense of sorrow.

JANET
I’m sorry. What happened?

SWISH
My moxa was killed by a dwunk driva. And my fava died in a shoot out.

JANET
Shoot out?

Janet thinks, realizes.

JANET
Oh my god...Rucker Park. That was you?

SWISH
Yeah.

JANET
I read an article in the paper. It’s just—it’s been so long I forgot-

SWISH
Is okay.

JANET
Must be hard for you.

SWISH
I do alwight.

They sit in silence for a while watching the drunk on stage. Swish catches her peeking at his face out of the corner of her eye. He looks at her, agitated.

SWISH
What?
JANET
Can I ask you something?

SWISH
Go head.

JANET
Why are you so ashamed of the way you look?

SWISH
I’m not.

JANET
Then why do you look at the ground when people talk to you?

SWISH
You always dis bunt?

JANET
Bunt?

Swish stares at the floor, embarrassed. She’s pushing it.

SWISH
Fuget it.

JANET
Just kidding. Yes I’ve always been this bunt. Does it bother you?

SWISH
No.

She can tell he’s uncomfortable. Janet pours the beer into her mug, holds it up.

JANET
Friends?

Swish slowly lifts his beer mug.

SWISH
Fwends.

They toast, drink.

ON STAGE - LATER

Janet finishes her set, walks off stage. The MODERATOR takes over the mike.
MODERATOR

Give it up for Janet y’all.

APPLAUSE

TABLE...Swish laughs it up, tipsy. Janet trudges over and slumps into her chair. Trashed. He smiles at her.

SWISH

Good job.

JANET

Panks.

SWISH

You got jokes.

MODERATOR (O.S.)

Alright folks we need one last volunteer for tonight. This is the last call. Who’s gonna come up and give it a shot?

ON STAGE...The moderator scans. No one volunteers. All of a sudden Janet points over to Swish.

JANET

Right here!

SWISH

What you doin’!

MODERATOR

Okay, we got a volunteer. Come on up here buddy.

All eyes on Swish. He’s frozen stiff. AT THE TABLE -- Swish turns to her, scared out of his mind.

SWISH

You cwazy!

JANET

You scared?

Swish glances around the club, people stare. He reaches for his beer, slurps it down quickly.

MODERATOR (O.S.)

Don’t make me come down there and get you.
Swish looks at Janet full of disdain. He stands, slowly treks toward the stage. He’s breathing heavily, petrified.

The moderator greets him as he steps on stage.

MODERATOR
All your lyrics are right there on that screen. Knock em’ dead buddy.

The moderator hops off stage. Swish stares at small flat screen. Music starts to play.

The lyrics scroll up the screen. Swish lifts the mike to his mouth as he peers out into the crowd.

Everything becomes blurry, peoples faces distorted. He struggles to find the words.

SWISH
I-I should have...no go...just tun awound...

Swish stops, glances around the club. Deer in headlights. He runs off stage towards the exit.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT
Swish limps up the sidewalk, he’s on fire. Janet catches up.

JANET
Hold on a second.

SWISH
Leave me alone!

JANET
Is that how you deal with all of your problems? You just run away from everything?

SWISH
You don’t know anyfing.

JANET
So why don’t you tell me?

SWISH
Look at you, you’re bewtiful. All you have to do is shake yo ass and you can get anyfing you want. It don’t work like dat for me.

Janet grabs his arm, turns him towards her.
JANET
You think I’m some type of two
dollar ho?

SWISH
I didn’t say dat.

JANET
Let me tell you something Swish. In
high school when other girls were
shaking their ass in front of the
boys. You know what I was doing?

Swish stares at the ground.

JANET
I was taking care of my two
brothas. You know why?

Janet lifts his face to her. He pulls away.

JANET
Look at--Look at me. Cause my
mother was too busy trickin’ and my
father was too strung out to
notice. So who are you to judge me?

SWISH
I ain’t judgin’. All I’m sayin’ is
we’re diffwent.

JANET
Everybody’s different. So what?

SWISH
(Screaming)
Yo not diffwent like me! Look at my
face! Look at it!

JANET
I’m lookin’! And it ain’t that bad.

Swish looks her dead in the eyes.

SWISH
How come you didn’t do dat wit’ my
ankew?

JANET
Do what?

SWISH
Lie.
Janet thinks about it.

    JANET
    Fuck you Swish.

Janet storms away, now she’s on fire.

    SWISH
    Whateva.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NEXT DAY

    SUPER: NEW YORK KNIGHTS VS. RALEIGH ROCKETS

Knights fans lightly speckle the bleachers. Swish is sitting in the stands behind the knights bench.

He glances up at the scoreboard: ROCKETS 45, KNIGHTS 26.

ON THE COURT...The knights are taking a royal beating. Speedy bodies up his DEFENDER. Something catches his attention.

IN THE STANDS--“BUFFIE THE BODY” moves through the crowd. Her ass is the reason men study adult magazines.

Tyler passes to him but the ball hits Speedy in the face, falling out of bounds.

SIDELINES...Victor sits with his head in his hands on the bench. Exasperated.

ON COURT...The Rockets massive center “SKYWALKER” jams the ball over Blake sending Blake crashing to the ground.

    SKYWALKER
    Sorry ass white boy.

KNIGHTS fans **BOO**. Blake stands, embarrassed.

SIDELINES -- Robinson turns to Victor on the bench.

    ROBINSON
    Coach we should be runnin’ our flex against their man to man.

    VICTOR
    Can it Robinson.

    ROBINSON
    Blake’s gettin’ rocked. I can handle-

Victor stands, walks away.
BLEACHERS...Swish watches as Jason reaches behind his chair, picks up a black WATER BOTTLE. Jason notices him staring.

JASON
Problem bitch?

Halftime BUZZER.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - HALFTIME - LATER

Victor stands in the middle of the room addressing his team. He’s more mechanical than inspirational.

VICTOR
What the hell are you guys doin’ out there. Edwards, catch the freakin’ ball with two hands. Moreno you gotta learn the plays. Thorton, you building a house? Your one for nine. Speedy you might want to concentrate on the ball rather than vagina’s.

The locker rooms quiet. All of a sudden Swish storms in, enthusiastically clapping it up.

SWISH
Is okay guys. Is okay. Pick up your engy. We still have a nover half to go.

AL
Man shut your retarded ass up.

BLAKE
Don’t tell him to shut up.

Al looks at Blake with intimidating self-assurance.

AL
What?

Blake looks away, not wanting a piece.

MARVIN
He said don’t tell him to shut up.

Al steps to Marvin. But Marvin’s not so quick to back down.

AL
Got a problem bama?
MARVIN
I ain’t wit all that talkin’
homeboy.

VICTOR
Both of you sit your asses down or
I’ll bench you the second half.

Victor steps between them. The two hot heads separate.

VICTOR
Swish you got a go buddy. This is a
team meeting.

Swish turns, slowly limps outside. Nick follows.

HALLWAY -- Nick steps into the hallway.

NICK
Hey Mike.

Swish turns.

NICK
I thought I told you to stay away
from the team.

SWISH
Cuch said is okay for me to watch
da games.

NICK
Really because he didn’t tell me
that.

SWISH
Well maybe you should go bover him.

NICK
Swish let me break it down for you.
You, are not a part of this team.
Now you wanna be a little fagoty
cheerleader on the sidelines fine.
But don’t ever step foot in our
locker room again. Understand?

SWISH
What are you da Godfaver.

Nick shoots him a condescending smile.
NICK
I know all the scouts, agents, and GM’s that you need to get to back to the top. Fuck with me and I’ll bury you.

Swish glances at Nick’s thousand dollar wrist watch.

SWISH
Nice watch.

NICK
What?

Swish hobbles off. Nick stares down at his gold plated stainless steel “Roberto Cavalli”.

NICK
Try me Swish.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - NIGHT

Jason is curling dumb bells in front of a mirror like a mad man. Swish walks in, eyes him, heads to the weight bench.

He leans back, pumps the bar up and down. In an instant, Jason’s over him. He holds the bar down on Swish’s chest.

JASON
What up son.

Swish coughs, struggling for air.

SWISH
What--you--doin?

JASON
That little stunt you pulled don’t fly wit’ me.

SWISH
I--don’t know--

JASON
Shutup. Now pay attention. Me and Al makin’ moves. Last thing we need is a bitch nigga like yourself screwin’ things up. So what you gone do is play your position. If I tell you to sniff my ass, you gone sniff my ass. Got me?
SWISH
Got you.

Jason releases the bar. Swish sits up, gasping for air.

JASON
Why’s your sorry ass even here?

SWISH
Same weason--you are.

JASON
Nigga the NBA don’t want you.

SWISH
I got more game den you.

JASON
It ain’t about game. You ain’t marketable. Not with a face like that.

Jason smirks as he heads out of the room.

JASON
Just remember what I said pussy.

INT./EXT. SERIES OF IMAGES - VARIOUS ARENAS - DAY/NIGHT

ON COURT -- Jason and Al are hooping way beyond their capabilities. They play a two man game, ignoring teammates.

Oscar wanders around the perimeter looking disoriented. Marvin misses shots. Speedy sucks air, struggling to keep up. Blake’s bullied in the post. Al commits dirty fouls.

SCOREBOARDS -- KNIGHTS LOSING GAME AFTER GAME.

ON THE BENCH -- Teammates sit on the bench with bleak facial expressions. Frustrated.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - HALLWAY - POST GAME

Swish slaps hands with several knights players as they head off court, defeated. Jason throws a towel in his face.

JASON
Come clean up the locker room retard.

SWISH
Puck you.
INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Swish pushes a cart full of dirty uniforms through the locker room singing to the music on an ipod.

SWISH
...In New York, concrete jungle
where dreams are made of. Dere’s noting you can’t do...

He notices Oscar sitting on the bench studying the knights playbook, head jerking uncontrollably. He limps over to him.

SWISH
What you up to?

OSCAR
Trying to m-m-memorize the plays.

Swish sits.

SWISH
Is it had for you?

Oscar shuts the playbook.

OSCAR
Why would you think it’s hard for me?

SWISH
No offense. It’s just...you seem a little lost out dere.

OSCAR
I’m not lost alright!

SWISH
Alwight. Calm down.

Oscar stares at him, contemplating.

OSCAR
I got H-h-huntington’s disease. Doc said--I may be experiencing early signs of d-d-dementia.

Swish shake his head, shocked.

SWISH
Sowy man.
OSCAR
Don’t be. I hate when people say that.

SWISH
You mind if I ask you sometin’?

OSCAR
I started s-s-stuttering when I was fifteen. Me and my older b-brotha was comin’ from a party in flatbush. He h-had too much to drink and crashed into a light pole. I m-m-made it. He didn’t. So fuck off.

They sit silence for a good while.

SWISH
You know you talk funny.

OSCAR
S-so do you.

SWISH
Guess we both got screwed huh?

OSCAR
Guess so.

Swish sticks out his fist.

SWISH
I used to studa too. I know how it feels.

Oscar looks at him. They pound.

SWISH
Let me see dat.

Oscar hands him the playbook. Swish studies it for a beat. He leans over, pointing at the book with his finger.

SWISH
Alwight. So Iso 2...

INT. BAY RIDGE SPORTS BAR - NIGHT

Swish and his teammates sit around a table downing shots, talking smack, buzzed.
ROBINSON
He’s runnin’ three two motion plays like we’re a JV team.

MARVIN
Why you always haten’ playa?

ROBINSON
I’m not haten’. All I’m saying is that Jason and Al get all the glory while we play Hoosier ball.

BLAKE
I like playing Hoosier ball.

ROBINSON
Figures. Look we ain’t gonna make the playoffs like that.

SPEEDY
Ain’t nobody care ‘bout the playoffs. They taken away our shine.

OSCAR
True. We ain’t never gone get c-c-called up playin’ with them.

Speedy notices a group of fashionable females standing at the bar talking amongst themselves.

SPEEDY
I say we get some ass.

MARVIN
Hell yeah.

SPEEDY
See them dime’s at bar.

The players turn their heads.

SPEEDY
Watch a professional go to work. Y’all take notes.

They watch Speedy strut up to the bar.

ROBINSON
Here comes a diss.

Speedy runs his game. They girls smile, laugh. He’s charming.
ROBINSON
You gotta be kiddin’ me. He looks like Randy Jackson with down syndrome.

MARVIN
Didn’t stop Biggie.

The ladies look over and wave at the players. Speedy notices Swish staring at the floor. He walks back over to the table.

SPEEDY
We bout to hit up this club. You down?

SWISH
Nah I’m coo. I’ma call it a night.

SPEEDY
A’ight check it. See the red head.

Swish glances at the cute RED HEAD. She oozes sex dressed in a hot red mini skirt, with six inch “DO ME” me pumps.

SPEEDY
Shorty is ripe. And she loves ball players.

SWISH
Not my type.

SPEEDY
What is your type?

SWISH
Don’t wurry bout a’ight.

SPEEDY
My bad nigga damn.

Swish stares at the floor. Speedy puts his arm around him.

SPEEDY
Look man, as for me I don’t really care what you do. But some of the cats are startin’ to think you like gettin’ poked in the ass, na’ mean?

Swish looks over at the girls, back to the fellas.

SWISH
Let’s roll.
INT. CLUB EXIT - NIGHT

The clubs live. Iced out play boys spit game to dolled up women in scanty mini skirts. People dancing, drinking.

A couple B-Boys battle it out in the center of the dance floor to a mean old school RAP BEAT.

DJ (O.S.)
Milky. Tear it up baby.

Swish stands next to Speedy and the rest of the crew. He notices Jason and Al enter the club with a group of rough looking street cats.

They’re slapping hands with people, obviously well known. Speedy nudges him, taking note.

SPEEDY
Forget them. Let’s hit up vip.

ACROSS THE CLUB -- Jason approaches a RAUNCHY FEMALE with the body of a pin-up super model.

JASON
What up Stacy. You lookin’ real healthy.

She looks him over, somewhat interested.

RAUNCHY FEMALE
You in the league yet?

JASON
I’m workin’ on it.

She rolls her eyes and walks away. A couple THUGS cackle at the bar.

JASON
Fuck y’all lookin’ at?

INT. VIP SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

The players sit around red velvet couches with the girls. Blake and Oscar are making out.

Marvin and Robinson watch Speedy sandwiched on the floor between two shapely women in tight fitting “booty” shorts.

Robinson shakes his head, bewildered.
ROBINSON
What’s he got that I don’t?

MARVIN
Game dumb ass. It’s called game.

ON THE COUCH -- The cute RED HEAD sits next to Swish. He’s uncomfortable. She talks loudly over the music.

RED HEAD
So Speedy said your really good.

SWISH
I’m awight.

RED HEAD
What position do you play?

SWISH
Point god.

RED HEAD
What?

SWISH
Neva mind.

The Red head gives him a seductive once over sipping from her tropical daiquiri. She leans in close, whispers in his ear.

RED HEAD
I’ll bet your better than alright.

She places her hand in Swish’s crotch area.

RED HEAD
Wanna go somewhere?

He brushes her hand away.

SWISH
How much he pay you?

RED HEAD
What?

Swish gets up and limps away. The red head’s confused.

STAIRS - Swish hobbles down the stairs. He looks up to notice Janet on the dance floor with Jason. They’re grinding hard.
BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Swish, enraged, splashes water on his face. He slams his fist against the wall.

Jason walks in, the two share a hostile look. Jason moves to the urinal, shaking his head.

JASON
Feel sorry for you.

SWISH
Why’s dat?

JASON
I’ll be pushin’ a lam in a couple years while your retarded ass is flipin’ burgers.

SWISH
I ain’t retaded.

JASON
Fact is I’m movin’ up, you movin’ down son. Everybody know I’m the best point in Brooklyn. Streets don’t lie.

SWISH
You got nufin’ on me.

Jason zips up, turns to him.

JASON
Don’t you get it dumb ass. It ain’t ’bout how you start the race. It’s how paid you are at the finish. You Zab Judah, I’m Mayweather.

SWISH
I don’t pay for da money. I pay to win.

JASON
Fuck outta here with all that Herm Edwards crap. Real niggas do real things. Cause in the end, we all tryin’ to get dough.

Jason moves to the sink, washes his hands. He stares at himself in the mirror.
JASON
What you think of coach’s niece?

SWISH
What about her?

JASON
Shorty got a fat ass. Tell you what. You play your position like I told you, I’ll let you sniff my fingers when I’m done.

Jason walks out, smirking. Swish balls his fist.

DANCE FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

Swish stands off to the side watching Jason dance with Janet.

ON THE FLOOR -- Jason’s fingers caress Janet’s curvaceous thighs. She looks sweaty, sexy, turned on.

Swish heaves. Everything moves in slow motion. The sound of a rapid HEARTBEAT. The music in the club becomes drowned out by Swish’s heavy breathing. He limps over to them.

SWISH
What are you doin’?

JANET
Swish?

SWISH
Why you dacen wit dis lootha.

JASON
Take your retarded ass home.

Swish punches Jason in the face hard, WHACK! Jason falls back. He responds with a swift blow to Swish’s head.

PEOPLE move out of the way as Al and his thuggish FRIENDS run over to assist.

Blake, Marvin, Speedy, Tyler and Oscar join the fracas. The two groups swing wildly exchanging punches. It’s pandemonium.

INT. ST. MARY’S HOSPITAL - WAITING AREA - NEXT DAY

Blake and Speedy, faces bruised, sit in chairs reading the Brooklyn paper.

Speedy tosses his newspaper on a small coffee table. One of the articles reads: KNIGHT FIGHT AT CLUB EXIT.
There's a picture of Knights players in handcuffs being escorted out of the club by POLICEMEN.

SPEEDY
Coach is gonna have our ass for this.

BLAKE
My lungs are already burnin’.

SURGERY ROOM
Swish lies on an operating table knocked out under anesthesia. A SURGEON works on his ankle.

INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY
Knights players sprint up and down the court. Speedy lags behind, laboring, pained.

Victor and Nick stand off to the side watching, unimpressed.

VICTOR
You guys want to act hard. You gone run hard.

NICK
Five more. You can thank Speedy for that.

EXT. JANET’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - NIGHT
Swish knocks on Janet’s door. She opens looking sexy in short shorts and a wife beater.

JANET
Now’s not a good time.

SWISH
(Staring at the ground)
I just um...I just wanted to apologize for da over night. I know how I acted, and das not me--

All of a sudden Jason opens the door, shirtless.

He locks eyes with Swish for a brief moment. Slides on his shirt, scoots past him. Swish shoots daggers at Janet.

JANET
Wait-

He storms away.
INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

Al, frustrated, stands at the free throw line taking instructions from Victor.

VICTOR
Bend your knees more. Snap your wrist.

Al shoots, the ball CLUNKS off the rim. Swish runs into the gym with a basketball. Streaks down court, shoots a lay up.

SWISH
I wanna pay cuch.

VICTOR
Rosters full.

SWISH
I can hep you get to de payoffs.

VICTOR
I don’t doubt your abilities or your heart Mike. But on my team I need Steve Nash runnin’ the point. Not Michael Jordan. Next year.

Victor turns to Al.

VICTOR
You’re still not bending your-

SWISH
Ain’t no nex year. I wanna make da tim dis year. Memba you came to me.

AL
Take your corny ass outside man.

Swish glares at Victor, nostrils flaring.

VICTOR
We’re already thirty games into the season.

SWISH
Den I’ll be your wata boy. Team macot. Cheeleada. I don’t care cuch. Just me give a shot!

Victor shakes his head, annoyed, intrigued. He looks at Al.
VICTOR
Damnit. Alright I want five freethrows in a row. You miss one, you wait till next year.

Swish moves to the free throw line.

AL
Left handed.

Swish looks at Victor, he nods. Swish steadies himself.

Shoots left handed. The ball swish’s through the net with each shot. Al shakes his head, pissed. Victor turns to Swish.

VICTOR
We could use a water boy.

SWISH
Panks cuch.

VICTOR
Now tell your buddy Blake to get off my back. Kids been breakin’ my balls for weeks.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - DAY
Swish moves Oscar and Blake into position on a designed play.

SWISH
So Blake sets da pick, you slash to da baseline, and I hit him.

Swish passes to Blake, he shoots a hook shot. SWISH.

SWISH
Das it. Again...

INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY
Jason’s pulling basketballs from a rack shooting jumpers. Nick enters, strolls over.

NICK
Pacers pulled their offer.

JASON
What?
NICK
Your little knight club fiasco
didn’t go over well with the front
one.

Jason launches a ball against the wall.

JASON
Fuck!

NICK
Relax. I got everything set up at
the showcase.

Jason gets in Nick’s face.

JASON
Why you always talkin’ out your ass
man. This right here ain’t gone cut
it! I need that league money.

NICK
Just do your job and you’ll be
fine. Alright?

Jason backs off. Paces.

JASON
You got somethin’ for me?

Nick scans, reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small bottle
of pills. Jason snatches it out of his hand, storms off.

NICK
Take it easy with those things.

THROUGH THE OFFICE WINDOW -- Victor stares down at them.

EXT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - LATER

Knights players file onto the team bus. Janet approaches
Swish standing in line.

JANET
Can I talk to you for a second?

SWISH
Say away fom me slut.

She stands there, mouth gaping, hurt. He steps onto the bus.
INT. TEAM BUS - ROLLING - DAY

Tyler sits next to Swish listening to music on his ipod. Swish removes one of Tyler’s ear pieces.

SWISH
Can I ask you sometin’?

TYLER
What’s up?

SWISH
My boy like’s dis girl wight. But she played him had. And he wants to cut her off, but dere’s just someting about her. What you tink he should do?

Tyler shoots him a curious look.

TYLER
She worth it?

SWISH
Yeah...I mean he tinks so.

TYLER
Then I’d say he should go with his gut.

Tyler shakes his head as he places the ear plugs in his ears. Swish looks at him, snatches the ear piece again.

SWISH
I tink he’s in love wit her man.

TYLER
Really?

SWISH
Yeah. Which is cony, cause love is for suckas. You eva been in love?

TYLER
Once. Can I have my ear piece back.

Swish hands him the ear piece, stares out the window in deep thought. He turns back to Tyler snatching his ipod.

TYLER
What are you doin’?
SWISH
What happened?

TYLER
We had a joint account. She cleaned me out and moved back to Oklahoma with my best bud. Ipod.

Swish stares at him, then breaks into laughter, doing his best “Forrest Gump” impersonation. Tyler’s not amused.

SWISH
“I’m not a smat man...but I know what love is”.

TYLER
Funny.

SWISH
“Why dun’t you luv me, Jenny?”

TYLER
No really hilarious.

SWISH
Told you luv is fo suckas.

TYLER
Thanks for the advice Dr. Ruth.

INT. GAMPEL PAVILION ARENA - BAA SHOWCASE - CONNECTICUT - DAY

SUPER: New York Knights vs. Boston Broilers

A lively crowd packs the stadium.

ON THE FLOOR...NBA GM’s, scouts, and coach’s speak amongst themselves. CHEERLEADERS bust dance moves. Team MASCOTS pump up the crowd.

NBA TV announcers RICK KAMLA and MICHAEL COOPER stand in front of cameras for the pre-game show.

KAMLA
This is Rick Kamla along with my cohost former Laker great Michael Cooper comin’ to you live from Gampel Pavilion arena where today 150 NBA hopefuls will have a chance to show what they can do in front of this spirited crowd...
ON THE FLOOR - LATER

SERIES OF IMAGES -- It’s tight game. The knights play physical basketball, while the Broilers work their finesse game. Scoreboard: BROILERS 56 vs. KNIGHTS 51.

Blake streaks across the lane, shoots a flying hook. BUCKET.

BENCH -- Swish leaps out his chair, clapping excitedly. Players shoot him puzzled looks.

LATER: A WHISTLE. Jason’s being tossed out of the game by the REFEREE. He curses wildly, sneering.

Al pushes him toward the bench as the crowd jeers.

Tyler runs on court, he gives the Broilers POINT GUARD a nudge. The point guard looks him up and down, scoffs.

POINT GUARD
You can’t guard me Vanilla.

TYLER
Barks worst than your bite.

Over the next six minutes Tyler plays spectacular basketball. He’s hitting shots from everywhere on the court. Playing lock down defense, igniting his team. The crowd eggs him on.

ON COURT -- Tyler drives to the basket, leaps in the air, suddenly he’s bumped in mid-air by a Broilers DEFENDER.

He does a full flip, lands violently. Tyler’s laying face down, motionless. The arena goes silent.

Janet and the opposing team’s trainer run onto the court followed by Victor and Nick.

KAMLA (O.S.)
...And Tyler Baskins the scrappy backup point guard for the knights just took a nasty spill.

COOP (O.S.)
That’s unfortunate, because he was really playing well...

INT. ARENA - HALLWAY - LATER

Two EMT’s roll Tyler out of trainer’s room into the hall on a gurney. He’s wearing a brace around his neck.
As they pass Swish, Tyler gives him a thumbs up.

TYLER
It’s your show now boss.

Victor exits the trainer’s room with Nick. They’re having a heated debate. Victor notices Swish and calls him over.

VICTOR
Hey Mike.

Swish approaches them.

VICTOR
Get dressed.

SWISH
What?

VICTOR
Did I studder? Your playing the second half. Don’t dissapoint me.


INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Swish is standing by a locker putting on his uniform. Al strolls up to him.

AL
You see angles when you were lyin’ in that bed?

SWISH
What?

AL
Some see angels. Others see Satan. I ain’t see shit.

SWISH
I’m out.

Al grabs Swish’s shoulder.

AL
You can play Starberry ball and keep wonderin’ where that next slugs comin’ from. Or you can get me thirty a game. If I were you I’d pick door number two.
Al walks out rapping to himself. Swish watches him, shook.

AL
“Eight slugs to your chest, you fuckin’ wit da best.”

INT. ARENA - LATER

SECOND HALF -- Jason drives to the basket, scores a layup. He runs down court, hunches over, out of breath.

SIDELINES -- Victor looks to the bench.

VICTOR
Swish your in.

Swish doesn’t budge. He looks down the bench at Al. Speedy elbows him.

SPEEDY
That’s you baby boy.

Swish hesitates, stands, slowly trots over to the scorer’s table. He glances back at the bench. Al forms his hand in the shape of a gun, slyly points at him.

EXT. RUCKER PARK - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Swish lies on the ground trembling. His face a bloody mess. He looks up out of the corner of his eye.

Al hovers over, .45 in his hands. He grins. BAM!

BACK TO THE GAME -- Swish snaps back into reality, steps onto the court. He’s greeted by fans with a warm APPLAUSE.

KAMLA (O.S.)
And it looks like Michael Swish is going to check into the game Coop.

COOP (O.S.)
Well I’m curious to see if he’s still got the skills he had back at Syracuse, cause I’m tellin’ ya this kid could hoop.

ON THE COURT...Jason heads for the bench. He passes Swish.

JASON
Behave yourself.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- Blake’s open on numerous plays, Swish ignores him, electing to go to Al instead.
Al dominates the post on both ends of the court.

KAMALA (O.S.)
...And the one two punch of Mike Swish and Al Davis is really giving the Broilers some problems.

INT. SAUNA - LATER

A steam filled room. Swish sits on a bench covered with towels in deep thought. Al walks in, sits across from him.

The two share a long quiet stare.

Swish rushes him but Al’s too much muscle. He cracks Swish across the face with his fist SMACK! Swish drops, grimacing.

AL
You see this tat on my arm. Gip killed my brother over a guap. I did what I had to do. Your father just got caught up.

SWISH
You wuined my life!

AL
Fuck your life bitch nigga. I would have got drafted if it wasn’t for your selfish ass. So fuck you, and your sorry ass life.

Al walks out.

INT. TEAM BUS - NIGHT

Swish heads for the back of the bus, holding an ice pack to his jaw. Al sticks out his fist, smirking.

AL
Good game.

Swish looks at him fiercely, not returning the dap. He moves on, plops down in his seat.

ACROSS THE AISLE -- Blake bobs his to the music on his ipod, biting his nails. He glances over at Swish, rolls his eyes.

SWISH
What?
INT. REGENCY HOTEL - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Speedy, Oscar, Blake, and Marvin sit around a table littered with beer, chicken wings. They’re watching a boxing match on television. Speedy dips his fork into his salad.

BLAKE
How’s that working out for you?

SPEEDY
Shutup.

Swish approaches.

SWISH
Sup fellas.

The guys glance at each other in silence.

SWISH
Oh it’s like dat?

BLAKE
Glad to see you and Al are getting along.

SWISH
Man you twippin’.

SPEEDY
Spade is a spade son. And from what I seen, Blake was wide open.

MARVIN
You didn’t even look in my direction.

SWISH
Das cuz you been playin’ like gawbage.

MARVIN
You talk to much bra’.

SWISH
Whateva man, kiss my ass.

Marvin gets in Swish’s face.

SWISH
Back up off me.

Speedy separates the two.
SPEEDY
Y’all chill out. Look either you
with us, or you with them?

SWISH
I’m wit’ myself. Bump y’all.

Swish walks off.

OSCAR
(Ticking)
Told you. He’s a s-s-selfish
asshole.

INT. ELEVATOR - MINUTES LATER

Swish stands in the elevator alone. The doors open to reveal
Janet, she hesitates before stepping inside. She presses a
button, elevator moves upwards.

There’s a quiet intensity.

JANET
Just so you know we didn’t do
anything.

SWISH
Whateva.

JANET
We were fighting about his back.

Swish shakes his head, not believing a word.

SWISH
His back. You know he’s getting a
contract and you wanted a piece.
Girls like you always go for the
fava of da month.

JANET
His back had acne all over it. Side
effects of the roids asshole.

The elevator DINGS, doors open. Janet storms out as Victor
walks in. He whistles, presses the elevator button.

VICTOR
Lovers quarrel?
INT. GAMPEL PAVILION ARENA - DAY

SUPER: NEW YORK KNIGHTS VS. SAN JOSE SHARKS

ON COURT...Swish takes a bad jump shot with a DEFENDER in his face. The ball clanks off the rim.

BLEACHERS...SCOUTS text, shaking their heads.

    KAMLAS (O.S.)
    ...Another missed field goal by Mike Swish, he’s really struggling Coop.

SCORERS TABLE: Coop sits next to Kamla.

    COOP
    Well his jumpers been off all game,
    but he’s done a great job getting
    the ball inside to Davis.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - HALF TIME

Swish sulks in a chair with headphones over his ears. Al walks by, gives him a friendly tap on the shoulder.

Some of the players notice. They mutter amongst each other.

INT. ARENA - LATER

SECOND HALF -- Swish continues to play half assed. He misses jump shots, allows defenders to blow by him.

Jason checks into the game as Swish heads to the bench, slapping Swish on the ass.

    JASON
    Good game baby.

ON COURT -- Marvin misses every shot he takes, arguing with refs, opponents, teammates.

Al makes a move to the basket, the opposing forward steps on his foot. Al grimaces as he falls to the ground, clutching his ankle. Crowd BOO’s.

    KAMLAS (O.S.)
    And now Davis is down. The injuries just seem to keep piling up for the Knights.
Janet runs on court with the coaches. Teammates help Al to
his feet. He tries to put pressure on the ankle, bends over
in pain. Two Knights players walk him off court.

Crowd APPLAUSE. Swish watches with a smirk on his face.

BENCH -- Victor eyes his bench.

VICTOR
Alright we’re gonna have to play
small ball. Swish your back in for
Jason. Every time we get the
rebound, run the break. Help each
other guys, let’s go.

As Swish stands, Victor stops him.

VICTOR
Either your a winner or a loser.
Make a decision.

COURT...The two teams take the court. Swish looks out into
the crowd. His breaths become heavy, heart THUMPS rapidly.

He closes his eyes for a moment. He opens them with a look of
determination across his face, shaking his head. BUZZER.

FOURTH QUARTER -- Swish looks like a different player.

He’s lighting up the Sharks on offense, hitting jumpers.
Three pointers. Layups. Every shot sinks. FINAL BUZZER.

SCOREBOARD: KNIGHTS 87. SHARKS 65.

COOP (O.S.)
The scouts may have to think twice,
because it looks like the Brooklyn
phenom is back.

AFTER THE GAME -- Swish signs autographs for a few adoring
FANS. Hot shot agent HARLIN DASH strolls up to him.

DASH
July 21st 2005. You drop fifty six
on St. Joseph’s despite having the
flu. Breaking the school record for
the most points scored by a single
player in a game. Not only that,
you did it with style. Very, very,
impressive. Harlin Dash. I’m with
Elite.

Harlin sticks out his hand. Swish shakes it apprehensively.
SWISH
I know who you are.

DASH
You want Childress money, I’m your guy.

SWISH
Yeah, well, I’ve hurd it all before.

Swish turns to walk away.

DASH
I can get you a six figure contract with an NBA team of your choice by the end of the month. Guaranteed.

Swish whips around.

DASH
Let’s take a walk.

Dash strides over to him, drapes his arm over Swish’s shoulder. They head off court together.

DASH
My plan for you...

ARENA’S AROUND THE COUNTRY -- The knights are winning games. Swish plays selfishly. He scores but teammates don’t clap. He’s approached by GIRLS after games. REPORTERS. SCOUTS.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - POST GAME

Players dress in silence. Swish places a diamond studded chain around his neck. Slaps on a colorful wrist watch. Speedy slams him up against the lockers from behind.

SWISH
What the hell--

SPEEDY
Pass the fuckin’ ball!

Oscar pulls Speedy off him.

SPEEDY
You ain’t nothin’ bitch!

SWISH
You jus jealous.
Swish grabs his gym bag, storms out.

    SWISH
        All of you are jealous. Mark ass niggas.

INT. BLAKE’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - DAY

Swish is on the couch watching an NBA basketball game on TV.

ON TV...Jason steps onto the court.

    NBA ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
        And Jason Crisp is gonna check into the game. He got a reputation in the BAA as a bit of a hot head...

Blake walks out of his room with a suit case and book bag strapped over his shoulder.

    SWISH
        Where you going?

    BLAKE
        I’m movin’ out.

Blake opens the door, steps out. Swish shrugs his shoulders.

    SWISH
        Peace.

INT. TEAM HOUSING UNIT - LAUNDARY ROOM - LATER

Janet’s washing clothes as Swish walks in toting his laundry bag. They make eye contact. She slams the lid of a washing machine, grabs her laundry basket, storms out.

INT. RIVER CAFE - NIGHT

Swish sits at a table having dinner with Harlin, and New York Knicks executive TOM ROGA.

Harlin slaps down a copy of SLAM magazine with Lebron James on the cover.

    DASH
        That’s the type of exposure we’re looking for. Swish has got the same amount of talent Lebron does. He can be a franchise player, and everyone knows the knicks are on life support.
ROGA
Let’s not forget the economic climate we live in.

DASH
Don’t play that card with me Tom.

ROGA
Players salaries are being affected across the board Harlin, you know that.

DASH
You’ve got the cap room to make this happen.

ROGA
No disrespect, but Mike’s still got to prove himself at the next level.

DASH
We got every scout and GM in the league wanting a piece of this kid.

Roga looks at Swish.

ROGA
Mike you remember when I recruited you for the AAU team?

SWISH
I remember.

ROGA
You always used to tell me, one day I’m gonna play in the NBA. Well here’s your opportunity.

DASH
Alright enough with the bullshit. Tell your boss we want a fair multi year deal, or we walk. Let’s go Swish.

Dash and Swish stand. Roga looks up at Swish.

ROGA
You gonna listen to this prick?

SWISH
Buness is buness.

They walk off.
INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - DAY

Players run offensive drills. Victor blows his WHISTLE. He steps onto the court, irate.

VICTOR
Moreno we’re fifty games into the season and you still don’t know the plays! It’s a simple one three one set. Get it together guys. Quick.

Oscar nudges Speedy. They argue over who should talk.

VICTOR
You two got somethin’ to say?

SPEEDY
You want us play team ball coach. But the fact is, one of these things is not like the other.

Speedy looks at Swish.

SWISH
Who you lookin’ at?

SPEEDY
I’ll whip your little ass dude.

Speedy charges Swish, teammates step between the two.

VICTOR
Hey! Hey!

Silence.

VICTOR
I’m getin’ sick and tired of your selfish, pre-madonna attitudes. So here’s what we’re gonna do. Our next game, every possession the ball moves at least five times before every shot. I don’t care if we win or lose. You don’t pass, you don’t play. And trust me ladies, I won’t hesitate to bench you for the rest of the season. Now get out of my sight.

The players head off court.

VICTOR
Swish.
Swish turns to him, annoyed.

VICTOR
You see Any Given Sunday?

SWISH
Yeah.

VICTOR
Remember that scene with Pacino and Fox?

SWISH
Yeah I know. You gonna tell me how I’m ruinen da tim. How selfish punks like me are bad for da game. Look Jason got his, so I’m a do me bottom line. Save your cuch K speech for somebody dat cares.

Swish walks away.

INT. ARENA’S/GAMES - DAY/NIGHT

The Knights play Hoosier ball, passing, scoring, with good chemistry. Even Blake’s playing well, hitting hooks.

Swish and Robinson ride the bench in warm ups. They look on with sullen expressions.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

SUPER: NEW YORK KNIGHTS VS. TITUSVILLE TITANS

ON COURT -- The knights out hustle their opponents playing good defense.

BENCH -- Swish nudges Robinson.

SWISH
Dis is bull.

ROBINSON
I talked to coach last night. He agreed to trade me to Raleigh.

SWISH
I don’t bame you. I’m getting sick of his stupid politics.

SIDELINES -- Victor paces, yelling. He stops, rubs his chest.
ROBINSON
You should request a transfer.

SWISH
Nah I’m coo. My agents workin’ on gettin’ me a phat contract wit Toronto. Den I’ma tell cuch to kiss my ass.

Robinson shakes his head, they give each other dap.

SIDELINES -- Victor suddenly collapses in front of the scorers table. Convulsing. The crowd GASPS.

Nick and some of the other players run over to him.

EXT. TEAM HOUSING UNIT - BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Swish dodges imaginary opponents, trash talking to himself. He shoots, Blake swats his shot from behind.

SWISH
What you doin’?

BLAKE
I should be asking you that.

SWISH
Look I ain’t in da mood alwight.

BLAKE
Why didn’t you go to the hospital?

Swish walks over and picks up the ball.

SWISH
I’m sick of husbitals.

Swish dribbles, shoots. Blake runs over and swats him again.

SWISH
What’s your probem?

BLAKE
Your my problem! Your everyone’s problem. Coach nearly died today, and all you can think about is yourself.

Blake picks up the ball, hurls it over the fence.
BLAKE
Now I see why everybody calls you sas.

SWISH
Sas?

BLAKE
Selfish ass Swish.

Blake storms off the court. Swish watches him go, riddled with guilt. Swish paces, yells.

SWISH
Puck!

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Swish is running. He runs past drug dealers on the block. Homeless people on the streets. Over the Brooklyn Bridge. Past Prospect Park. He can hear voices in his head.

JASON (V.O.)
Pass the ball bitch.

JANET (V.O.)
Get over yourself.

SPEEDY (V.O.)
You ruining this team!

BLAKE (V.O.)
Selfish ass Swish.

EXT. SIDEWALK/BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Swish watches a FATHER drill his 8 year old SON. The kid dribbles toward the basket.

FATHER
Left hand, left hand.

The kid crosses over, dribbles with his left, misses a lay up. The father grabs the ball, tosses it back to his son.

FATHER
What the hell was that. Do it again.

Swish trails off...
INT. BETH ISRAEL MEDICAL - NEXT DAY

Victor lies in bed eating sunflower seeds reading a newspaper. Swish walks in carrying a bouquet of roses.

SWISH
Hey cuch.

VICTOR
What are you tryin’ to seduce me?
Put ‘em over there.

Swish rests the bouquet next to a small coffee table full of flowers and gift boxes.

VICTOR
Nice watch.

Swish glances at his showy wrist watch.

SWISH
It was a gif. So how you feelin’?

VICTOR
Like I just had a heart attack.

SWISH
Maybe is time to give up da canca sticks.

VICTOR
Least I wasn’t on top of my wife. You read this?

Victor hands him the newspaper. Swish stares down at a picture of Jason. Cap reads: NBA Player tested positive for anabolic steroids.

SWISH
Guess he got what he deserve.

VICTOR
We all do.

SWISH
What do you mean?

Victor removes his reading glasses.

VICTOR
I’m sayin’ for every action there is a reaction. I chose to smoke for seventeen years.

(MORE)
VICTOR (cont'd)
My heart finally had enough. You let money dictate who you are, that’s a lonely road son.

Swish hands back the newspaper, thinks deeply.

SWISH
Cuch can I ask you someting?

VICTOR
Shoot.

SWISH
You really believe all dat tim ball stuff you peach?

VICTOR
Most of it’s bullshit I got from Disney movies.

Swish smirks.

VICTOR
But my job is to make you guys into better ball players. My duty is to make you into better men. It’s the same thing I plan on doing at the collegiate level. And if you can’t understand that, than I feel sorry for you.

Victor picks up the newspaper.

VICTOR
How was that?

SWISH
You’re getting beta.

VICTOR
I know. Now pass me that yogurt cup.

INT. CAB - ROLLING - DAY

A grubby CAB DRIVER takes a long drag from his cigarette. He exhales, filling the cab with smoke. His eyes flash into the rearview. Swish stares out the window in deep thought.

CAB DRIVER
Aren’t you that ball player that got shot in the face?
SWISH
You mind putin' out dat cigawet.

CAB DRIVER
What are you mother Teresa.

He ashes out his cigarette.

CAB DRIVER
You hear about that agent?

SWISH
What you talking 'bout?

CAB DRIVER
That sleaze ball, what’s his name ahh...Harlin Dash.

SWISH
What about him?

CAB DRIVER
FBI raided his house couple hours ago. It was all over ESPN. Guy ran the biggest gambling ring on the east coast. He was stealin’ money from boosters, bookies, even his own clients. Turns out he owed a ton in back taxes. They found him in his living room with a hooker and a pound of coke.

Swish pretends to be disinterested.

CAB DRIVER
Prick was the Madoff of the sports world. Least he didn’t rep you right?

SWISH
Yeah.

CAB DRIVER
Hey you think I think I can get autograph for my kid?

INT. SWISH’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - DAY

Swish and Robinson stand in front of the TV.

ON TV -- Several FBI AGENTS escort Harlen from his front door to a squad car.
REPORTER (V.O.)
Authorities believe Mr. Dash embezzled thousands through an illegal sports gambling ring...

BACK TO SCENE

Robinson looks at Swish.

ROBINSON
There goes your contract.

INT. KNIGHTS PRACTICE FACILITY - COACH’S OFFICE - DAY

Swish stands in front of Nick’s desk, shirt drenched with sweat. He’s vex.

NICK
You can declare for the draft next year.

SWISH
Hell no. I’m sure there are plenty of over agents dat would be willing to take me on.

NICK
Doubt that.

Nick reaches into the desk drawer, pulls out a file.

NICK
Got the results of your last physical. Looks like you tested positive for DHEA.

SWISH
What?

Swish snatches the file, skims through.

SWISH
How did you-

NICK
An old friend owed me a favor. He’s got my liver. I got his signature.

SWISH
Dis is a lie. I’ll sue your ass for backmail.
NICK
Judge won’t know the difference.
Once that comes out no GM in the league’s gonna touch you.

SWISH
Maybe I go to da press about you getting perks from Dash.

NICK
You mean the same perks you got?
The same perks that were paid for in cash? A gift isn’t a crime Swish.

Swish throws the file on the floor. He stands, breathing heavily, about to explode.

SWISH
You went thew all dis twuble just to ruin me!

NICK
You know why I don’t like you Mike.
Your the kid that all the other kids have to live up to. That one special player that makes all the dads yell at their sons cause they them to be more like Swish. I was the puny kid with the bad overbite. The last one picked in PE. I hated cocky little punks like you.

SWISH
Sowy you sucked.

Nick rises from his chair. Leans over the desk.

NICK
Listen you little shit it’s simple. You finish out the season. Keep your numbers low, and play your role. Help us win a title and everyone’s happy.

SWISH
You mean hep you get a head cuching job somewhere else for mo money.

Swish turns to leave.

NICK
By the way your the backup.
Swish spins, staring in silence.

NICK
Jason’s back. I can’t put you both in the starting line up.

Swish walks out, SLAMS the door.

NICK
Retard.

EXT. MARVIN’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - DAY
Swish knocks on Marvin’s front door, it’s cracked open.

SWISH
Marvin.

He steps inside.

INT. MARVIN’S APARTMENT - DAY
Marvin’s trashy apartment is littered with clothes, pizza boxes, soda cans.

A pulsating rap song pumps through a state of the art entertainment system. Swish stands in the doorway.

SWISH
Hey yo Marvin!

Swish moves toward the bedroom, the doors half open.

He notices Marvin on the bed bobbing his head, injecting himself with a needle. Swish rushes in.

SWISH
What you doin’ man!

Marvin peers up, startled. He stands.

MARVIN
Swish?

Swish slaps the needle out of his hand. He grabs Marvin by the shirt, pushes him up against the wall.

SWISH
You know how many brovas would kill for dis oppatunity!

MARVIN
What you care for bra. Get off me!
Marvin pushes back.

MARVIN

SWISH
You wanna risk yo caweer over dis!

Swish picks up the needle.

SWISH
Over dis! What is it?

Marvin looks away.

SWISH
What is it!

MARVIN
It’s HGH man alright! You don’t know the pressure I’m under.

SWISH
Das an excuse.

MARVIN
My dad played in the league. My brothers in the NFL. This all I got.

SWISH
And you tink doin’ roids is the ansa!

MARVIN
I’m doin’ what I gotta do!

SWISH
You diswespect yo pawents, cuches. Evyone who eva believed in you.

MARVIN
Fuck that. It’s about money Mike. This whole game’s about money.

Swish snaps the needle, throws it at him.

SWIH
Your a disgwace.

Swish walks out. Marvin punches the wall.
INT. REC ROOM - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - LATER

Janet walks in, she notices Swish shooting pool by himself. She begins to turn around, stops herself and walks over to the pool table.

JANET
How much longer you gonna be?

SWISH
Why?

JANET
I want the table.

Swish sharpens his pool stick with chalk.

SWISH
You pay pool?

JANET
Forget it.

She turns, heads for the door.

SWISH
Why don’t you pay me for it?

She spins.

JANET
How much?

SWISH
Punny. You know what I meant.

JANET
You didn’t answer my question. How much?

Swish digs into his pocket, pull out a fifty dollar bill. He lays it on the table.

SWISH
Fify.

JANET
Your on.
Janet walks over to the wall, grabs a pool stick. She strides over to the table with a confident swagger.

Swish sets the balls in the pool rack. He begins to shoot, then stands.

    SWISH
    What if I win?

    JANET
    You won’t.

QUICK SHOTS: Pool balls sink into corner pockets. Both run the table. Janet’s good. But Swish is a shark.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND FAIR GROUNDS – NIGHT

SFX: SCREAMS. A roller coaster dips down a steep drop as passengers flinging their hands in the air.

GROUND – Swish and Janet walk through a large crowd of people. She’s eating cotton candy.

    JANET
    I still can’t believe you won.

    SWISH
    Evybody meets dey match.

They walk in silence for a while.

    JANET
    So why’d you bring me here?

    SWISH
    I loved comin’ here as a kid. My pops used to say is da birf pace of da hot dog.

    JANET
    I hate hot dogs.

    SWISH
    I tink you hate men too.

    JANET
    Not really. Just the ones with speech impediments and bloated egos.

Swish cracks a smile. He stops, grabs her arm. She looks down at his hand, he pulls it away quickly.
SWISH
Look Janet...I’m sowy for da way
I’ve been acting. I shouldn’t have
acews you like I did. And I should
neva have called you a slut.

She can see the sincerity in his face. He stares at the
ground. She munches on the candy, waiting for him to grovel.

SWISH
I was wong, and I’m really sowy.

JANET
Admit that you were jealous at the
club.

SWISH
Nah I wasn’t...okay I was jealous.

Janet lifts his face to her.

JANET
And your defense sucks ass.

SWISH
And my defese sucks ass.

JANET
And you go right ninety percent of
the time.

SWISH
I don’t--

She narrows her eyes.

SWISH
And I go wight niney pucent of da
time.

She turns and walks away.

JANET
Keep going...

EXT. PIER - LATER
Swish and Janet sit on a bench laughing together eating
cotton candy.

JANET
...There’s something I’ve been
meaning to ask you.
SWISH
Yes I will mawy you.

She laughs.

JANET
No seriously. What happened at the Karaoke bar?

Swish stares at her. His smile disappears as he looks away.

SWISH
You wouldn’t undersand.

JANET
Try me.

SWISH
I have SAD.

JANET
Sad? What is that?

SWISH
Social anxiety disorder. Guess I got it when I was a kid. Got wus after I got shot.

JANET
You get it when your playing ball?

SWISH
No. When I’m on da court I fuget about everyting. It’s like I’m mad, but mad in a good way. When I’m off da court is anova story.

Janet thinks. She stands, sticks out her hand.

JANET
Come on.

SWISH
Where we going?

JANET
You’ll see.

Swish takes her hand as she leads him away.
INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

A small crowd packs the theatre. A bald tatted up freak show artist PIN HEAD, stands on stage holding a square peg board with nine inch razor sharp nails jutting from it’s base.

PIN HEAD
What’s my motto?

CROWD
If it ain’t dangerous, it ain’t fun!

PIN HEAD
That’s right ladies and gentlemen.
Pain is pleasure, pleasure is pain...

IN THE CROWD -- Swish stands next to Janet, his eyes dart around nervously.

SWISH
Dis is a bad idea.

JANET
Your never going to get over your fears if you don’t face them.

ON STAGE -- Pin Head holds up the peg board.

PIN HEAD
...Alright folks, at this time I need two volunteers to come on stage and assist me as I drive this nail board into my chest. Two volunteers.

He scans the crowd. Janet has her hand raised, HOLLERING. Pin Head points to her.

PIN HEAD
Right here.

She grabs Swish’s hand, they walk on stage.

PIN HEAD
Thank you very much for doing this guys. What’s your name?

JANET
Janet.
PIN HEAD
And you sir?

Swish clears his throat nervously.

SWISH
Mike.

PIN HEAD
Everyone let’s give a round of applause to Janet and Mike.

Crowd APPLAUSE. Swish looks around, breathing heavily. He swallows hard. Janet whispers to him.

JANET
Get mad.

PIN HEAD
Okay here’s the deal. I’m going to have my lovely assistant lay this bed of nails over my chest as I lay on the ground awaiting my certain death. And when I say go, each of you will step on top of the peg board, and stand there for exactly one minute. Got it?

JANET
Got it.

Pin Head notices Swish heaving.

PIN HEAD
Mike. You with me?

SWISH
(Yelling)
PUCK IT!

Pin Head’s a bit startled.

PIN HEAD
Wow. I like that. I like your energy Mike. You know what, everybody say puck it on three. One. Two. Three.

CROWD
PUCK IT!
PIN HEAD
Awesome. Let’s do this. Drum roll please.

A DRUM ROLL plays through speakers as Pin Head lays on the stage floor. His ASSISTANT places the peg board over his chest. He glances at them.

PIN HEAD
Go.

Janet steps onto the board, balances herself. Swish is next, he wobbles for a minute, then catches himself.

The assistant glances at her watch as Pin Head makes an excruciating pain filled face.

Swish’s heart THUMPS in his chest. Faces in the crowd contort, sinister looking.

Swish closes his eyes, mumbling under his breath.

SWISH
Get mad. Get mad...mad.

ASSISTANT
Holding...holding...holding.

Swish opens his eyes. As he looks out into the crowd, distorted faces morph back into normal faces.

The THUMP of the heartbeat disappears. He relaxes, taking slow, deep breaths.

ASSISTANT
Good.

Swish and Janet hop off. CROWD APPLAUSE. Pin Head stands, takes a bow. He turns to Swish and Janet.

PIN HEAD
How ‘bout a hand for these two volunteers.

The crowd claps. A couple SCREAMS.

Janet looks at Swish, she smiles. Grabs his hand.

JANET
Not so bad is it.
EXT. STREET - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

Swish and Janet walk down the sidewalk.

    SWISH
    What we did tonight helped, but is not a cure. It’ll come back.

    JANET
    So when it does, you get mad.

He looks at her.

    SWISH
    Seriously though, how come you don’t have a boyfwend?

    JANET
    He got shipped off to Afghanistan.

    SWISH
    And?

    JANET
    I came home from school one day and he had my roommate bent over the couch.

    SWISH
    Damn.

    JANET
    Yeah. On second thought, you were right. Love sucks.

    SWISH
    All I know is dat in college I didn’t have a probem getting a girl. Now, dey always got a fat fwend dey want to introduce me too.

They stop in front of a basketball court. A couple tuff looking players are involved in an intense pick up game.

    SWISH
    You weally tink my defense sucks?

    JANET
    Yup.

Swish eyes the court.
SWISH
We’ll see.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - PARK - NIGHT - LATER

Swish shuffles his feet, cutting off the lane. The opposing PLAYER spins, rises up for a shot. Swish strips him, streaks down court, scores a layup.

BLEACHERS...Janet shouts encouragements.

JANET
Good job Swish.

STREET CORNER

Anthony “Big GIP” Jackson and four of his crew members step out of black Escalade. They head towards the court.

THUG
Let’s get this money.

COURT -- Swish brings the ball up court, throws a no look alley-oop to a TEAMMATE. A couple spectators hoot and holler.

Big Gip and his crew move towards the bleachers. One of the crew members recognizes Swish. He taps Gip on his arm.

CREW MEMBER 1
Hey yo, that’s the nigga that stole my chain.

Big Gip stares at Swish puffing on his cuban.

BIG GIP
That’s him. Handle it.

The four crew members reach into their wastes, pull out guns.

BIG GIP
Fuck y’all doin’.

CREW MEMBER 2
You said handle it.

BIG GIP
This ain’t Grand Torino. Rodney King his ass.

They stuff the guns into their wastes. Two of them head back to the Escalade.
Bleachers -- Janet glances over at Gip and his crew. She notices the two men through the gate pulling bats out of the escalade. She looks at her watch.

COURT -- Swish is trash talking his DEFENDER.

    SWISH
    How you want it?

    DEFENDER
    Give me that three pussy.

Swish clowns him with an exceptionally quick crossover. He bounces the ball off the defender's forehead, catches it, shoots a three. SWISH. Spectators go wild.

    SWISH
    Das game baby!

Swish's teammates give dap. The MONEYMAN strides over holding up a fat wad of cash.

    MONEY MAN
    Three g's. Come and get it.

BLEACHERS -- Janet watches as suddenly, Gip and his crew members run on to the court.

    JANET
    Swish...SWISH!

She makes a b line for him.

COURT -- Swish turns, Janet's running towards him in slow-mo. She's pointing off to the side. Swish looks in the direction she's pointing.

In an instant, Gip and his crew members are on top of him.

A BAT smacks Swish across the face. He falls to the ground.

    CREW MEMBER
    Steal from me from me bitch nigga!

They proceed to beat and kick Swish to a bloody pulp. One of the thugs BOOTS smashes down on SWISH'S hand. He SCREAMS.

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL CENTER - HOURS LATER

Swish lies in bed, he's heavily bandaged. His face unrecognizable. Victor walks in munching on sunflower seeds.
VICTOR
We gotta stop meeting like this.

SWISH
Who you tellin’.

Swish manages to crack a smile.

SWISH
Why always eatin’ dose tings?

VICTOR
Their good for the heart.

SWISH
You back on the floor?

VICTOR
Not till next year. Gotta take it easy for a while. You?

SWISH
Punny.

VICTOR
You know there’s this quote by Paul Meyer.

SWISH
Another Disney speech.

VICTOR
Can I finish...Enter every activity without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat. Concentrate on your strengths instead of your weaknesses, on your powers instead of your problems.

Swish gives a sarcastic clap.

SWISH
Dat was bewtiful.

VICTOR
Yeah thanks.

They lock eyes, sharing a quiet understanding.
VICTOR
Take care of yourself Mike.

Victor heads for the door.

SWISH
Hey cuch.

Victor turns to him.

SWISH
I’m gone win.

VICTOR
I know you will Mike...I know.

Victor walks out.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

BAA PLAYOFFS ROUND 1
SUPER: NEW YORK KNIGHTS VS. FAYETTEVILLE FLASH

COURTSIDE...Rick Kamla and Michael Cooper stand in front of the NBA-tv cameras.

KAMLA
Rick Kamla along with my cohost Michael Cooper coming to you live from Madison Square Garden. Where today the first round of the BAA playoffs will begin...

INT. BROOKLYN HOSPITAL CENTER - NIGHT

Swish is lying in bed reading a book.

IMAGES/KNIGHTS GAMES -- Oscar, Speedy, Marvin, and Blake playing their hearts out. Scoreboards. BUZZERS.

INT. BLAKE’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - DAY

Swish watches the Knights play on TV. He’s still bruised, with a large band-aid over his right eye. Ace bandage on his wrist. He looks out the window, thinking...

EXT. TEAM HOUSING UNIT - JASON’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Swish knocks on Jason’s door dressed in basketball gear. Jason opens, shooting Swish a perplexed look.
EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - LATER

Swish dribbles with his left hand in front of Jason.

    JASON
    Yo this is stupid.

    SWISH
    BALL UP!

Swish backs Jason into the post, Jason rips him, scores a layup. He gloats as he checks the ball.

    JASON
    You can’t beat me son. It’s already over.

Swish bends over, pained. He rises, checks the ball back.

    SWISH
    BALL UP!

    JASON
    Ai’ght fuck it.

EXT. MARVIN’S APARTMENT - TEAM HOUSING UNIT - MINUTES LATER

Oscar knocks on Marvin’s door. Marvin opens, sleepy eyed.

    OSCAR
    You gotta see this!

QUICK SHOTS: Knights players knock on doors. Word spreads.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT - LATER

The court is surrounded by Knights players ranting, clapping loudly. Jason takes Swish the hole, scores.

Swish falls on his back, clutching his wounded chest. Jason stands over him.

    JASON
    That’s right nigga game point!

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - FLASHBACK - DAY

Ron standing over Swish lying on his back.

    RON
    Get up!

BACK TO SCENE
Swish slowly rises to his feet. Gets in Jason’s face.

    SWISH
    Check ball.

    JASON
    Ain’t you had enough.

    SWISH
    Check ball!

Jason heads to the top of the key. Swish follows, limping, sucking air. He’s trying not to show his pain.

He looks to the sidelines. Nick and Janet join the crowd which has now swelled. Jason glances around, he’s not going to be out done.

    JASON
    Acknowledge me as the king of Brooklyn.

    SWISH
    Check ball.

Swish checks the ball. Jason dribbles, toying with him, playing to the crowd.

Jason lowers his shoulder into Swish’s chest, sneering.

Swish stumbles backwards, clearly hurting. Jason looks at the rim. Shoots. Swish leaps into the air, snatches the ball.

Some of the players CHEER. Now it’s Swish’s turn. Swish gives Jason a quick stutter step. Jason flinches.

Swish drives to the basket, Jason cuts him off. Swish stops on a dime, shoots a jumper with his left hand. SWISH. CHEERS.

Jason can’t believe he’s lost. Swish limps over to Nick, he can barely breath.

    SWISH
    I want to pay against da Rockets.

Nick scoffs.

    NICK
    With your injuries. Forget it. Your a liability.

Nick walks away.
A couple players congratulate Swish as they head off court. He notices Speedy, Oscar, Marvin and Blake walking away.

SWISH
Hey fellas.

They turn to him.

SWISH
I pucked up. It ain’t about sas, is about da tim. I hope you guys win a title.

He scoots past them. They look at each other, shrug their shoulders. They run over to him, pick him up.

SWISH
Good game baby boy!

SWISH
Oouch! Take it easy!

They set him on the ground.

MARVIN
Give us a minute.

The other players move off to the side.

MARVIN
I thought about what you said...and I don’t need that crap to help my game. Appreciate you dawg.

SWISH
My brova.

They rap hands. Janet walks over.

SPEEDY
Handle your business playboy.

OSCAR
Told you he wasn’t g-g-gay.

The guys laugh.

JANET
What was that?

SWISH
I wanted to pove I was beta.
JANET
What else you good at?

SWISH
I don’t know. I take it game by game.

JANET
Uh huh. Let’s go.

She grabs his hand. They walk off together.

SWISH
Where we going?

JANET
Knicks are playing in my bedroom.

Speedy nudges Oscar.

SPEEDY
Uh oh. Take it easy on him.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NEXT DAY

CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

SUPER: NEW YORK KNIGHTS vs. RALEIGH ROCKETS

ON THE COURT -- The Knights take the floor. Crowd CHEERS. Nick whispers in Jason’s ear.

NICK
Do your thing.

STANDS...Some of the die hard FANS proudly flaunt custom made Knights Jersey’s, holding up foam fingers for the cameras.

ON THE FLOOR...The defending champion Raleigh ROCKETS storm the court. Supporters belt out rallying cries.

The Rockets are an impressively well sized team, with Robinson among them. He runs past Swish standing courtside in street clothes.

ROBINSON
Y’all bout to get an ass whoopin’.

The Rockets star guard, NATE JACKSON, the same kid from the Rucker, takes a minute to pose for a photo op with adoring female fans. Speedy watches with Oscar.
SPEEDY
Nigga swear he pretty like me.

OSCAR
He ain’t n-n-othin’.

Oscar notices “Buffie the body” sighing an autograph in the stands. He nudges Speedy, pointing.

OSCAR
Yo it’s Buffie.

Speedy sees her. His eyes widen.

SPEEDY
Recognize that ass anywhere.

SCORERS TABLE -- Michael Cooper speaks into his head set.

COOP
...Yeah Rick, I think this is a mismatch when you talk about the big front court of the Rockets matching up with the smaller Knights. But I’m looking forward to the point guard battle between Brooklyn’s Jason Crisp and Queens native Nate Jackson...

FRONT ROW -- Janet sits behind the knights bench next to Victor and Tyler.

ON COURT -- Blake notices his PARENTS taking their seats in the crowd. He looks shell shocked as he nudges Marvin.

BLAKE
My parents are here.

Blake points. Marvin looks into the crowd, spots his father sitting next to Blake’s parents.

MARVIN
Their sitting next to my pops.

Players strip off warm-ups. BUZZER sounds. Teams take the floor. Opposing players give each other pounds.

ON THE COURT -- Jason and Nate size each other up.

JASON
I run New York.
NATE
We’ll see.

FIRST HALF -- Tip off goes to the Rockets. Nate brings the ball down court, whirs past Jason, dishes to the Rockets monolith center “Skywalker”.

The seven footer slams it down, posterizing Blake.

SKYWALKER
Too easy.

SCORER’S TABLE

KAMLAA
And it’s just as you suspected
Coop, the Rockets go right into the
big fella Darwin Jones, the
nineteen year old prospect outta
Fairhope high school.

COOP
Could be a long night for the
Knights center Blake Edwards...

STANDS...Mixed reaction from the crowd. SCOUTS shake their heads, punch buttons on PDA’s.

ON THE COURT...Momentum switches back and forth. Nate runs the Rockets offense with militant precision, feeding the ball to his wing men, athletic bigs.

The knights play determined basketball, but the Rockets size begin to wear on the Knights smaller front court.


INT. KNIGHTS LOCKER ROOM - HALFTIME

Nick paces in front of his team.

NICK
Their picking us apart! Edwards grow a pair god damnit.

Blake puts his head down. Speedy sucks from his inhaler.

NICK
You guys want to be champions you better get it together. Now we got one half to go. Lets move the-
Some of the players clap. Yell. Nick turns his head. Swish stands in the doorway in his knights uniform.

NICK
What the hell are you doing?

SWISH
Let me pay cuch.

Nick marches over to him, steamed.

NICK
You tryin’ to show me up? This is my team, and my call. So you can take your wounded super hero bullshit somewhere else.

SWISH
Let me pay.

NICK
Get out!

SWISH
No.

Nick’s face goes bright red. Spit drooling from his lips.

NICK
Get out! Get the fuck out of here now you retarded little shit!

The room goes dead silent. Swish walks out slowly. Nick looks around, takes a minute to collect himself.

NICK
What are you lookin’ at!

THIRD QUARTER...Rockets swarm the knights on defense.

They’ve made key second half adjustments, trapping Jason, cutting off the lane.

Their just as deadly on offense, with Nate catching fire behind the three point line.

Jason’s thrown off his game, shooting off balance three pointers, bickering with the ref’s. Marvin’s no better.

STANDS...Knights fans grow frustrated. BUZZER sounds.

COURTSIDE...Knights players head to the bench. Nick glances up at the scoreboard.
Scoreboard: Rockets 84  Knights 73

NICK
Let’s go guys, let’s go. Fourth quarter’s ours.

He looks at his bench. The players have lost hope. Jason turns to Blake.

JASON
You plan on playing some D?

BLAKE
Why don’t you guard him.

NICK
Hey. Cut it out. Now listen, we gotta get the ball inside...

Jason notices Swish standing in the player entrance to the court. He rises out of his chair.

NICK
Where you goin’?

JASON
Stop bitchin’.

COURTSIDE -- Jason walks over to Swish. They stand face to face like two boxers before a fight.

JASON
Personally I think you got nothin’ on Marbury. In fact I would take Telfair over you. But one thing you do have is heart. I gotta respect that. Besides, you beat me with one hand. So get your punk ass on that court, and lets get this win.

Jason sticks out his fist. Swish bumps him.

SWISH
Let’s do dis.

They walk over to the bench together. The players notice and give Swish high fives, patting him on the head.

NICK
No way. Your not playing.

JASON
He don’t play. I don’t play.
What?

Jason nods to Al. He thinks it over. Looks Swish dead in his eyes. Swish holds his gaze, steady. Confident.

Me too coach. Kids got heart.

Count me in.

Me too.

Me too.

Teammates chime in one by one.

This is my team! I run this ship!

BUZZER sounds. Rockets players take the court. They notice the Knights players standing on the sidelines, arms folded.

...Coop it looks like the knights players...the players aren’t coming out for the fourth quarter. This is strange.

SIDELINES -- Jason begins to clap.

Swish. Swish. Swish...

Then Al, Blake, Speedy, Oscar. The whole knights team.

STANDS -- Tyler, Janet, and Victor stand, clapping.

Swish. Swish. Swish...

It catches fire. The whole stadium’s chanting.

Swish! Swish! Swish!!!

COOPER (O.S.)

Sounds like their saying...Swish.
SIDELINES...Nick rakes his hand over his head. He looks at Swish long and hard. He can’t win this battle and he knows it. Finally, he gives up.

   NICK
   Hell. Check in.

Swish walks over to the scorer’s table. The crowd erupts. The REFEREE stops him peering over at Nick.

   REFEREE
   He can’t play he’s not eligible.

Nick strolls up to the ref and hands his clipboard, glaring over at Swish.

   NICK
   Yes he is. I changed the roster sheet before tip off.

The ref checks it, shaking his head.

   REFEREE
   Your good.

FOURTH QUARTER -- The knights take the floor, pounding each other, ready for battle. Nate and Swish rub shoulders.

   NATE
   How many of y’all I got school in one night.

The balls inbounded. As the game goes on the Knights begin to gain momentum, rejuvenated by Swish’s presence.

Swish and Nate go head to head. Swish plays left handed, grimacing every time he’s hit. Al and Robinson trade baskets.

UNDER THE BASKET...Blake muscles up to Skywalker, he fakes one way, cuts in the opposite direction. Skywalker falters.

Blake heads to the rim, launches into the air, slams over Skywalker. His crotch in Skywalker’s face. Crowd goes wild.

   BLAKE
   How’s that taste.

AS THE GAME GOES ON...Marvin hits threes. Oscar slashes to the hole, skying over defenders. Speedy sucks it up, stealing balls, running the break.

The rockets players put Swish on his back on several plays. Each time he rises to his feet, continuing to show his heart.
Swish controls his offense passing, scoring, he’s the ultimate leader. Nick can’t keep up, Swish is too determined.

COURT...Al is fouled by Skywalker under the basket.

    KAMLAL (O.S.)
    And that’s five on Skywalker. That’ll send Davis to the line with ten seconds left in the game.

SCOREBOARD: ROCKETS 101. KNIGHTS 100. CLOCK READS: 10.

COURT: Al steps to the free throw line. The REF tosses him the ball.

    REF
    Two shots.

Al takes a deep breath. Touches the TATOO on his arm. Shoots. The ball clanks off the front of the rim. Crowd GASPS. Al steps back. Swish walks up to him, whispers in his ear.

    SWISH
    Take your time.

    COOPER (O.S.)
    He’s gotta hit this or it might be over.

Al steps up to the line. Deep breath. He shoots. The ball flies through the air towards the rim...SWISH.

Crowd CHEERS. The Rockets COACH calls time out. Players head to the sidelines.

ROCKETS HUDDLE: The coach screams at his players.

    ROCKETS COACH
    Get it together! Shit! Alright listen up...

KNIGHTS HUDDLE: Nick claps.

    NICK
    Good job men. Good job. Now we got a get a stop. One stop, we run a triangle defense...

SCORERS TABLE: Kamla and Coop.

    KAMLAL
    What a great game.
COURT: The teams take the floor. Ball’s inbounded. Nate dribbles up court, crosses over, Swish steals it, streaks down court. Calls TIMEOUT. The crowds jacked.

SIDELINES...Knights players huddle around Nick as he diagrams a play on his clipboard.

NICK
Okay fellas. We’re gonna run Iso 2. Oscar you v-cut to the basket. Instead of popping back up play your defender back-door. Swish if he’s open hit him, if not take it yourself. This is it guys, six seconds. Bring it in.

The players put their hands in a pile, one on top the other.

NICK
Knights on three. One, two, three.

PLAYERS
Knights!

As Swish heads onto the court Victor yells out.

VICTOR
Hey Mike!

Swish turns, looks at him.

VICTOR
Win!

COURT -- The Knights take the floor. Swish takes in the moment. He glances at the Rockets players. Blake. The crowd. The fans are on their feet.

SWISH
You know the pay?

OSCAR
Yeah.

Oscar inbounds the ball. Swish dribbles, scans. Everything begins to move in slow motion.

Blake steps out and sets a pick on Nate. Oscar moves into position. Swish dribbles around the pick, Robinson cuts off his path.
The CLOCK TICKS as Swish dribbles.... Two DEFENDERS collapse on him. Jason and Al flank the three point line wide open. Swish rises into the air.

As he does this Oscar cuts back door behind Skywalker. Three...two...Suspended in mid-air Swish passes down low to Oscar. He slams it through. BUZZER sounds. Knights win.

KAMLA (O.S.)
Knights win! Knights win! It’s over!

Oscar streaks down court yelling, hand in the air.

OSCAR
I’m the best mother bitches!

STANDS -- The crowd goes into a frenzy. Janet hugs Victor.

COOP(O.S.)
Another unbelievable performance by Michael Swish.

Court: Rockets players shake their heads in defeat.

Knights players swarm Swish and Oscar, hoisting both players on their shoulders. Swish looks out into the crowd, elated. Blake runs over to his parents.

BLAKE’S FATHER
Great game son!

They hug. Blake turns to his mother.

BLAKE
Mom...

She cracks a smile, hugs him tightly.

BLAKE’S MOTHER
I was wrong. It’s not a stupid game.

Standing behind them. Marvin’s father hugs his son.

MARVIN’S FATHER
I’m so proud of you son.

Speedy notices “Buffie the body” in the crowd. She’s consoling Skywalker.

She tries to hug him, Skywalker pushes her away, storms off. Speedy moves in for the kill.
SPEEDY
Excuse me.

She turns to him, smacking her gum, full of attitude.

BUFFIE
What?

SPEEDY
I just wanted to say that a brotha should treat a sista as fine as you like a queen. And from what I seen, that brotha can’t handle you.

BUFFIE
Oh and you can right?

SPEEDY
I may not have the six pack he got. But I got somethin’ he don’t.

BUFFIE
What’s that?

SPEEDY
Respect. Like Mef said to Mary, “It’s me in your world, believe me.”

She looks him up and down. Big man’s got skills.

SIDELINES -- Victor rests his hand on Nick’s shoulder.

VICTOR
I reported your tactics to the league office.

NICK
What are you talking about?

VICTOR
Black mailing players. Steroid distribution. Good luck with your career.

Victor walks away. Nick looks like he’s going to cry.

COURT...Janet moves through the crowd. She makes it to Swish.

SWISH
Was I pwedictable?
JANET
Your defense still needs work. And your crossovers weak. But you know what?

SWISH
What?

JANET
Your sexy as hell.

She kisses him deeply. Marvin nudges Oscar and Speedy.

MARVIN
Get it dog.

KNIGHTS TEAM
Swish! Swish! Swish!

INT. PRESS ROOM - MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER

Swish stands at a podium. His face filled with emotion. The rooms jam packed with REPORTERS. Camera flashes.

SWISH
...I’m twilled to be in New York as a memba of da Knicks. And I’d like tank da Knicks organization, cuches and fans. I’m confident...

Swish’s voices cracks. He gets himself under control, glancing at Janet in the back of the room.

SWISH
I’m confident dat we can win. Pank you.

EXT. ARENA HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Swish walks with his arm draped over Janet’s shoulder.

SWISH
How’d I do?

JANET
Looked like you were mad as hell.

SWISH
Weally?
JANET
Just kidding.

Swish notices an ten year old boy with down syndrome standing next to his FATHER. He stops to sign an autograph.

FATHER
Thanks Mike. My boy loves you.

SWISH
What’s your name big guy?

BOY
Zack. I play basketball too. I’m going to be just like you when I grow up.

Swish stares at him.

SWISH
No, your going to be beta den me. You know why?

BOY
Why?

SWISH
Cause your going to go to cool and get your education fust. Den you can step on da court wit me.

Swish hands the boy the autographed picture. The boy’s face lights up.

BOY
Wow!

SWISH
See you in a couple yuz kid.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

SUPER: TWO WEEKS LATER

The stadiums packed. The lights are dim. Crowd BUZZES. Images of Knicks players flash across the JUMBOTRON.

BENCH...Swish sits on the bench in warm ups.
ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
...And now. Starting at guard, a
5’9” point guard out of Green City
high school, number 11. Michael
Swish.

He lifts his head. MUSIC plays. Crowd cheers.

FADE OUT.