1 EXT. SUMMERDALE RECREATION CENTER PLAYGROUND NORTHEAST PHILADELPHIA - DAY 1

Open to parents playing at the playground with their children. Nothing but smiles and laughter fill the air.

A few shots of parents pushing their kids on swing sets and catching toddlers at the end of the slide.

SAL (V.O.)
I'd wake up every morning like this, wondering what my life would have been like if I had a normal childhood...

2 EXT.6570 OXFORD AVE OPEN ROAD-NIGHT FEB 2000 2

SAL (17yr old,African-American male) lays in the bed back of an old raggedy pick up truck parked on the street. Residence 6570 Oxford Ave (think 70s, American).

He clutches his knees in a fetal position. A black hooded sweat shirt lays draped over his knees as he shifts uncomfortably trying to stay warm.

SAL (V.O.)
Where a mother and father would love you and want nothing but the best....

Sal leans up in the back of the truck bed as he hears a car slowly coasting down the street playing loud rap music (Beanie Sigel "The Truth").

As the bass from the car gets closer Sal peaks up over the back of the truck bed only partially so not to be seen.

The car (old model Chevy impala) passes by. Sal notices the car suspiciously turn its head lights out. It parks a few spots away with the engine still running.

While grabbing his trash bag trash bag full of clothes, Sal cautiously gets out the truck bed.

He starts heading down the street, stepping on cracked pavement covered with broken crack bottles and discarded syringe needles.

Night becomes morning.

SAL (V.O.)
I envied this warmth...

(CONTINUED)

As he walks Sal is fixed on watching his steps on the ground, avoiding any needles.

He stops in his tracks as he comes across a pair of shoes.

As Sal slowly looks up he is confronted by another TEEN (18YR OLD African American, heavyset) holding a hand gun.

CAMERAS ON SAL'S FACE AS WE HEAR

SAL (V.0.)
.....and affection.

GUNSHOT EXPLODES

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN:

3 INT.SALS BEDROOM-DAY SEPT 1998 3

15 yr old Sal lays on the floor of his bedroom sweating staring blankly at a broken ceiling fan only moving half speed.

It provides a slight breeze, just barely warding off the heat permeating through the house from a space heater in the middle of the hallway near his room.

KYW morning news station is playing low on a television sitting on the floor next to him.

Laying across the room on a race car bed mattress we see Jamal (11 yr. old African American male), Sal's younger brother), sleeping in a deep slumber. He's wrapped in a sheet, partially sweating from the heat.

Sal watches the fan go round and round. He reluctantly turns off his alarm clock as it starts to go off at 7:00 am. BARBARA (African American Female 30s), Sal'S mother, yells from her bedroom.

BARBARA (O.S.)
Get up boy! I heard your alarm go off. I know you don't think that you're staying your ass at home today!

Sal takes a moment to collect himself before getting up.

BARBARA (O.S.)
Did you not fucking hear me!?

Sal hears the floor creak as his mother get out of her bed.

SAL
I don't know about that fam, college? I don't even know the first--

KILE
Slow down fam I'm just putting it out there.

Kile laughs and shares a brotherly handshake with Sal.

KILE
(laughing)
I mean I don't even know if you can hoop yet.

SAL
(jokingly)
Oh I can handle mine brah.

KILE
We will see about that, you know we have basketball today in Mr. Smith's gym period!?

SAL
All good, on another note you know we have a pop quiz in Ms. Peterson's class today, right?

KILE
You gonna let me cheat off your paper fam?

A beat. Sal looks at him with an awkward but light stare as he cocks his head back.

KILE (CONTINUED)
I'm just playing fam, lets hurry up though before were too late.

Sal and Kile enter their classroom and get an awkward stare from MS. PETERSON while trying to take their seats.

The other students in class snicker and chuckles as if the two are in trouble.

SAL (V.O.)
School to me was a sanctuary from the darkness at home. All of the worry I had would disappear as soon as I'd enter the front doors. But that safety net would be short
(MORE)

SAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
lived as soon as school was out...I had to find a passion, I had to find something to take the pain away.

CUT TO BLACK.

5 INT.SAMUEL S FELS HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM-DAY-LATER 5

Sal and Kile warm up for their one-on-one pick up game.

We see girls and boys of all ethnicity running around in the gym engaged in various activities: jump rope, double dutch, basketball, tag, and running laps.

MR. SMITH sits at his desk in the far right corner of the gymnasium keeping an eye on everyone, grading papers and filling out evaluation reports.

Sal and Kile finish their warm up. Sal goes to the free throw line.

Kile gets a basketball and bounces it to Sal.

KILE
Aiight come on fam show me what you got! Game to 21.

SAL
Ok say no more.

Sal holds the ball in a triple threat position as Kile guards him tightly.

Sal fakes left and goes right, dribbling the ball two times and pulling up for the jumper.

Kile attempts to block the shot. It goes swish in the basket effortlessly. Kile looks on as the basketball bounces down after going through the hoop.

KILE
Beginners luck anyone can make a pull-up last see what you really got nigga.

SAL
Yeah aiight , I got you.

Nore "Super Thug" plays as Sal and Kile start to play again.

Back and forth they go. Sal scores and dunks. Kile then crosses Sal over but Sal blocks his shot.

The two battle it out like two prison yard inmates with no fouls being called.

After 30 minutes the game is tied 20 to 20. Class ends but all of the other students notice that Sal and Kile are still playing.

Mr. Smith blows the class whistle, trying to get everyone to sit in their assigned spots on the gym floor.

But the boys aren't done. Sal and Kile have one more point to go. Mr. Smith waves at the two as if he were saying to just finish the game.

Everyone in the room looks at them, rooting the two teens on.

Sal starts to dribble. He dives left. As Kyle jumps to block him Sal fakes back and spins, losing Kile in the midst as he drives to the basket and goes up for a tomahawk slam dunk.

The class goes crazy, jumping up and yelling. "You got schooled! You got schooled!"

Sal has a smile on his face as Kile shakes hands with him in a brotherly fashion. The two sit down next to each other.

Sal starts to sit down, wiping his face on his soaked white t-shirt. Suddenly, RED BLOOD begins seeping through the back - his wounds from the beating this morning have been opened.

Kile looks at Sal with concern but Sal shakes his head at him. The two then listen up to Mr. Smith as he addresses the class about the coming events.

6 EXT.BUS STOP IN FRONT OF SCHOOL-LATE AFTERNOON 6

Sal waits with Kile and a few other students at the bus stop in front of the high school.

He tries to avoid suspicion of not having a bus token, fearing he would be made fun of for not having a bus token.

KILE
Hey man earlier today I have to hand it to you, you have game man.

SAL
(as Sal brushes off his shoulders)
I don't mean to brag but ....you know what can I say? Do what I do!

They laugh.

KILE
Yeah aiight, just make sure you bring it at the try-outs tomorrow. It's going down at Temple University off Broad street at the old gym though.

SAL
Ok cool, yeah I know where that's at. My Aunt Peanut used to stay over there.

The two do their signature handshake as Kile prepares to leave.

KILE
Aiight fam I'm out, moms is cooking some fried chicken tonight my nigga and you know it's going down!

SAL
I'm already knowing brah, I remember the last time I came through for dinner moms made this pasta that was the best I ever had.

KILE
I feel you kid
(smiles)
so I'm about to take off. Ill catch you tomorrow G I'm so glad today is Friday!

Kile turns to walk off northbound up the street towards his mom's house.

SAL
(giving a slight wave)
Aiight Kile.

Sal waits at the bus stop looking down the street as Kile walks away. As soon as Kile turns out of sight Sal starts to walk the other way. It's a long 5 mile walk back home without a second bus token.

Time passes. Sal starts rubbing his hands together to stay warm as the afternoon starts to become night.

He decides to take a short cut through the north east suburbs.

While walking through these nice neighborhoods he notices: kids playing tag, walking their dogs, nice cars in the drive ways, fathers and mothers pulling up in cars looking happy as can be with their children.

He checks his watch. 5:00 PM.

The street lights are starting to come on. The scenery begins to change - the smell of piss and feces fill the air. Police cruisers with sirens blazing floor it down the street past Sal walking. He clutches his back pack straps a little tighter.

Sal walks faster as he sees the corner boys and stick up kids taking their post on the avenue. Prostitutes and pimps fall in, making loud and obscene remarks as they stand near by an on going dice game. Their silhouettes are highlighted by the orange street lights.

A sign reads OXFORD AVE and WYOMING ST.

Sal makes his way towards the dice game.

As he makes a right at the corner a participant PIMP (Puerto Rican, male, 30yrs old) in the dice game stands up after crapping out and mistakenly BUMPS into SAL.

PIMP
Yo, what the fuck nigga!

Caught off guard, Sal hesitates to respond.

PIMP (CONT'D)
Watch where the hell you walking yo!

SAL
(shocked)
My bad yo I didn't see you.

Tension builds as the PIMP takes a second to stare at SAL with a devilish grin on his face.

The prostitutes and gangsters in the dice game look on waiting for what's about to happen next.

The PIMP slowly lifts up his black T-shirt as he reveals a SEMI-AUTOMATIC BLACK HANDGUN.

SAL freezes with his heart beating faster and faster. *Should he run or stay?*

The two continue their stare down when all of a sudden the PIMP starts LAUGHING loudly.

PIMP
I'm just fucking with you man! But real talk though watch where you going... niggas get killed out here in these streets.

SAL
(breathing a sigh of relief)
I got you ole head my bad again man trust me I would never--

PIMP
Fallback youngin...

The Pimp takes the gun out from the front of his waist band turns the safety on. He places it in the back of his waist band and drapes the back of his shirt over it.

PIMP (CONT'D)
Get the fuck outta here before I change my mind yo.

Sal runs off fast as he can up the block towards his house. The PIMP and the rest of the dice game participants laugh as Sal runs off.

One of the gangsters stands up next to the PIMP as he passes him a PHIILY BLUNT with WEED in it.

The PIMP takes a big hit as the rest of his crew continue to laugh. As they resume their game of craps, the PIMP yells out at Sal running in the distance.

PIMP
Run Forrest! Run!

He turns and the group begins a new game.

7 INT. SALS MOTHERS HOME-NIGHT 7

Sal bursts into his mother's house, frantically shutting the door behind him.

He peaks through the living room blinds, ensuring that the coast is clear.

SAL (V.O.)
This was life growing up in the hood, not knowing if you would be lucky enough to make it to another day.

Judging that the coast is clear, Sal takes off his backpack and drops it by the front door near an umbrella holder.

He exhales and walks through the living room to the kitchen near the back of the house.

SAL (V.0.)(CONT'D)
Leaving turmoil for sanctuary only to return back to the same thing...

Sweating profusely, Sal enters the kitchen wiping his face.

He grabs a plastic cup from the cupboard and goes to the sink.

Sal leans over the sink and lets the water run for a moment. Small cockroaches run out from the drain.

After the water seems clean enough to drink, he fills it up half way with water, takes a big gulp, and exhales.

He turns around and sits back on the sink.

BARBARA (O.S.)
(yelling from her upstairs bedroom)
Boy! Are you down there?!

Sal takes a moment to gather himself, tosses his cup in the sink and heads upstairs.

FADE TO BLACK

8 INT.BARBARA'S BEDROOM-NIGHT 8

Sal hurries up the stairs towards the bathroom. He quickly washes his hands and face.

BARBARA (O.S.)
Hurry up and get in here boy and eat dinner.

SAL
Yes, I'll be there in a second mom.

He rushes to his room. Dirty laundry is strewn everywhere.

Sal takes off his blood-stained sweat shirt and throws it into the hamper.

He grabs a black T-shirt out of his dresser and puts it on as he heads to his mother's room.

Barbara sits on her bed, leg's crossed under her with a green tray in her lap. On it sits a loaf of wonder bread and a packet of sliced turkey meat. A pot of mixed vegetables simmers on a hot plate to the right of her, next to a jar of apple sauce.

Jamal sits in a chair to the right of Barbara's bed. He fidgets with his food, but his cerebral palsy makes it hard for him to eat.

Sal looks around for a place to sit down on the floor as Barbara prepares the turkey sandwiches and vegetables for them to eat.

Moving a few pieces of paper and clothes out of the way he takes a seat, leaning back on his elbows so he can see the television.

The FAMILY FEUD is on. Sal and Jamal watch with excitement as they call off answers on the show.

JAMAL
I knew that one mommy , It was trains not cars.

BARBARA
I know baby you're smart and don't you forget it.

SAL (V.O.)
I loved this time of day where there were no worries, just family time...Just the three of us. My brother Jamal had complications at birth which left him with a mild case of cerebral palsy.

Jamal plays with his G.I. JOE action figures as they wait to eat.

SAL (V.O.)(CONT'D)
This little guy was a fighter and the kindest individual you would ever meet. Not like his father.

Barbara places food for Jamal and Sal on two disposable plates. She gestures to them that dinner is ready.

Sal gets up from the floor to get his and Jamal's plates. He hands Jamal his plate first. They share a smile.

Sal grabs his own plate and sits back down on the floor to watch TV.

After eating for a bit Jamal starts to become restless.

He tries to get off his chair.

JAMAL
I have to pee mommy.

Jamal places his empty plate on the floor and starts to stand up.

He struggles - the cerebral palsy makes it difficult for him to control his motor skills.

BARBARA
Sal..help your brother boy do you not see him trying to get up?

Sal is too wrapped up in the show and doesn't hear her.

BARBARA(CONT'D)
Salahudin Vance!!

This gets his attention. Sal jumps up fast as he rushes to help guide his brother to the bathroom

SAL
Aww snap I'm sorry mom, come here bro I got you.

He places his arm around Jamal and help him to the bathroom.

He comes back and sits down.

Infomercials play on the TV now. The classic "CHI CHI CHI CHIA!" CHIA PET commercial comes on.

Sal giggles at the commercial.

O.S. The bathroom toilet flushes and Jamal opens the bathroom door. He starts to walk back methodically into his mothers room, not paying attention to what is on the floor.

As he crosses the room, Jamal steps onto Sal's plate of food with his bare feet, smashing the mixed vegetables and apple sauce left there.

JAMAL
I'm sorry, I'm sorry , I'm sorry!

Sal runs to the bathroom to grab some toilet paper.

He wipes off his younger brother's foot.

SAL
It’s all good lil bro, we all make mistakes.

Sal smiles and tosses the toilet paper into the trash.

Barbara looks on with concern for Jamal as Sal guides him back to his seat.

SAL
(concerned)
You good?

JAMAL
Yes , yes , thank you. I didn’t mean to--

SAL
(while rubbing Jamal’s head)
Don’t even worry about it...Things happen its all good. I just want to let you know that I always got your back no matter what.

The two brothers share a moment that shows that their bond will never be broken.

Sal turns to his mother.

SAL
Mom.

Barbara continues to eat, not paying attention as she watches TV.

BARBARA
What?

SAL
(polite)
May I have another plate of food please?

With a look of disdain on her face Barbara reluctantly answers.

BARBARA
No...

SAL
Huh? Mom, Mal just stepped in my food I didn’t get to finish my place!

BARBARA
Well you should've thought about that before you were sitting over here hooting and hollering.

SAL
That's not fair. I only ate the sandwich..I haven't had anything to eat all day!

Sal stands up and starts to head to his room.

Barbara gets up off of her bed and charges at Sal, cutting in front of him so he can't leave.

Jamal looks on with concern, helpless.

BARBARA
Not fair! Who in the hell do you think you are?! You walk around here with those clothes on your back. Who got them for you? Me! That food in your stomach?! Me! A roof over your motherfucking head?! Me!

She pokes him hard in his chest.

BARBARA(CONT'D)
Whats not fair is me being left here to raise two kids by my got damn self on a government stipend and a piece of shit welfare check!

SAL
(muttering)
Mom I didn't mean--

BARBARA(CONT'D)
Oh yeah you did you think you're smart. Just like your daddy! Mr. Know it all! Are you going to end up in prison just like him!? End up a murderer just like him?! I'm disabled and can barely walk up and down the stairs! Oh lord have mercy before I end up killing this boy.

SAL
(crying)
I'm sorry Mom I didn't mean it like that.

Sal attempts to hug his mom and she pushes him away.

BARBARA
Yes you did....
(a beat)
I'm giving you one option.

SAL
Yes?

BARBARA
You can eat what's left on that plate or...don't eat at all.

Barbara points to the plate on the floor - A footprint-shaped hole bordered by apple sauce and mixed vegetables right in the center of it.

BARBARA(CONT'D)
You don't see all this good food untouched right there?

Sal pauses for a second, sickened.

SAL
Seriously?

Barbara gives him a serious look.

SAL (CONT'D)
Ok...I'll eat it.

He sits and reluctantly finishes his dinner.

Barbara gets back into her bed and quickly gets absorbed back into the TV.

Jamal slides off his chair to sit next to Sal.

FADE TO BLACK

9 INT.SAL'S MOTHERS KITCHEN-NIGHT 9

Sal stands over the kitchen sink, scrubbing dishes.

Suddenly, he throws the dishes down and bangs his hands on the edge of the sink, letting out a frustrated yell.

Water splashes everywhere.

SAL (V.O.)
Why is it that I have to burden the faults of a man whom I've barely met? My external problems have now become internal, going through
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
obstacles in life on a daily basis dealing with the sins of my father...

CUT TO:

10 INT/EXT. MOMS MERCURY STATION WAGON-FLASHBACK JUNE 1993-EARLY MORNING 10

Barbara drives her 1989 blue mercury station wagon. Hanging from the rear view mirror is a pair of purple dice. The radio plays Power 99 FM, "Breathe again" by Toni Braxton.

Barbara looks in her rear view mirror, keeping her eyes on a 10yr old Sal and 6yr old Jamal as they sit strapped in their seat belts playing with HE-MAN action figures.

Jamal sits in a booster seat wearing a green teenage mutant ninja turtles helmet.

A sign reading GRATERFORD PRISON comes into view. Barbara hits her blinker and starts to merge right, getting ready to exit the freeway.

Sal takes Jamal's Skelator action figure, making him cry.

BARBARA
Salahudin! You better leave your little brother alone.

SAL
Mommy it's my turn to play with Skelator. He had him the whole time!

BARBARA
Boy don't make me pull this car over! Give him his toy back it's too early for this.

SAL
Yes maam...

Sal sadly gives the toy back to Jamal, who stops crying.

Barbara turns down a dirt road. Her car radio starts to lose its signal the further she drives down.

She pulls up the the prison entrance and takes out her identification.

She waits for the prison guard to check her in.

After the gate opens Barbara drives in and parks her car in one of the only spots left in a packed parking lot.

It's Friday - the busiest day at the prison for visits.

She reaches in the back seat and unbuckles Sal.

BARBARA
Help your brother.

Sal reaches over and unbuckles Jamal from his seat belt while Barbara gets a stroller out from the trunk.

Barbara places Jamal inside and they head toward the prison entrance.

11 INT. PRISON ENTRANCE-DAY 11

Sal walks beside his Mom, pushing the stroller as they talk the wheel chair ramp. The big, gray, tall-walled concrete prison seems like a castle.

The family enters the front door and is approached by a FEMALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER (Caucasian Female 20s).

FEMALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER
Excuse me ma'am, I'm going to need you to come this way with your children through the security check point.

In the PRISON lobby they see a desk sergeant behind a tall desk stacked with papers.

Orange chairs are lined up to the left and right of the room filled with families waiting to get cleared for visitation.

Barbara takes Jamal out of the stroller and removes his helmet, prepping to walk through a metal detector.

She sends Sal through the metal detector. Jamal walks cautiously after him, trying not to fall with the braces on his legs.

Barbara walks through after placing her keys, jewelry and purse on the conveyor belt.

The detector doesn't sound off. The FEMALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER waves them through to her partner, MALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER #1.

MALE CORRECTIONAL OFFICER #1(African Amer Male 20's) files the family onto the elevator, taking them down 3 levels to the inmate visiting area.

Barbara fumbles with her jewelry and keys, trying to put everything back in place as she freshens up to see her husband. The elevator comes to a stop.

As the doors open Barbara puts Jamal's helmet back on, licks her thumb, and wipes a dirt smudge off his face.

BARBARA
Help me with this stroller boy.

Sal complies.

They and two other families get off the elevator and stand in line to get a name tag.

12 INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM-DAY 12

Sal sees dozens of families sitting around in the visiting area.

One woman sits close to a man. Sal sees him stick his fingers between her legs.

The man pulls his hand back slowly, trying not to be seen by the guards. He smells his fingers and swallows what apppears to be a blue balloon filled with drugs.

Barbara and the kids sit down patiently waiting for their father to come out.

CUT TO:

13 INT. PRISON VISITING ROOM-DAY CONT'D 13

BEN (African American male 40's) sits in a different cell block. Guards make him open his mouth and show them his tongue. He then turns around, squats down and coughs.

He pulls his pants up as the CORRECTIONAL OFFICER #2 buzzes the door to the visiting room.

Ben walks through slowly. Sal locks eyes with him.

Ben walks stands 6ft5 with a gangster swagger.

SAL (V.O.)
This man I've never known...My father. I would hear stories about him. How he used to rule the streets of Philadelphia with an Iron fist. About how people would freeze up at the sound of his voice. Who was this man I am a part
(MORE)

SAL (V.O.) (cont'd)
of, this man my mother was in love with?

Ben walks up as Barbara stands the two share a hug and a kiss briefly.

BEN
How was the drive baby?

Ben picks up Sal, swings him around once, and sits him down. He then grabs Jamal and sits him in his lap.

BEN
You been doing your push ups lil man like I've told you in my letter?

SAL
Yeah but 100? It's too hard Dad.

BEN
OK lil man lets start you off with 25 a day and go from there, deal?

Ben puts up his hand to give Sal a high-five.

SAL
Deal!

Ben hands Sal an handfull of chang. Barbara sits next to Ben in awe of seeing her family together.

BEN
Take your brother with you and go get some candy from he vending machine.

Ben points towards a few vending machines along the wall of the visiting room.

Sal helps put Jamal in his stroller and pushes him towards vending machines.

Ben turns to Barbara. She keeps her eyes on Sal.

BEN
Barb...have you been getting everything Ive been sending you?

BARBARA
(turning her attention back slowly)
(MORE)

BARBARA (cont'd)
Like the letters and gifts?
I've been getting them.

Ben pulls his chair closer to her and takes her hands gently.

BEN
I'm trying my best, you know. I would love to be out here with you and my children but this situation is holding me back from doing a lot.

Barbara pulls her hands away from him.

BARBARA
I know, but it's hard on me too! Ben, you have to understand you left me here to raise 2 kids! Ben, 2!

She raises two fingers, putting them in Ben's face.

BARBARA(CONT'D)
It's not easy.

Ben looks at Barbra with rage.

BEN
Two kids, huh!?

He leans in and whispers in Barbara's ear.

BEN(CONT'D)
Do you think I'm an idiot? Huh? I know for a fact that Jamal isn't mine.

Barbara looks away.

BEN(CONT'D)
I knew all along...but did I say anything? No. I love that kid as my own.

Ben slams himself in the chest with passion.

BEN(CONT'D)
I love all of you. Ive been locked up for 8 years now and my parole board hearing is coming up. I may be getting out soon.

BARBARA
You always say this.

BEN
I mean it this time.

Ben gets up and pulls Barbara toward him. It's uncomfortable.

BARBARA
Ben, your hurting me!

A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER #1 RUSHES over to see what's going on.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER #1
Excuse me sir you're going to have to let her go.

BEN
Fallback man, this is my wife!

CORRECTIONAL OFFICER#1
Let the woman go, inmate!

Other OFFICERS RUSH over to assist in a take down.

Barbara waves for Sal and Jamal to come to her and one of the SECURITY OFFICERS escorts them onto the elevator out.

As the elevator doors close Sal takes one final look at his father belly down on the ground with CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS ALL OVER HIM.

The elevator doors close.

FADE OUT:

14 INT.TEMPLE GYMNASIUM AAU TRYOUT DAY 14

SAL (V.O.)
In the words of BIGGIE SMALLS the only way to make it out of the hood was to "sling crack rock or have a wicked jump shot." I know there's no choosing where you come from and in my hood the apple never fell too far from the tree. But I wasn't feeling the status quo...

Sal is sitting in the TEMPLE UNIVERSITY basketball gymnasium, stretching out on the floor on the sideline.

The gym is full of other teenage boys, all different races ranging from age 15-17.

Balls bounce all around the court as everyone warms up, getting ready to run basketball drills and scrimmage.

Sal stands up and kneels right back down to tie his NIKE Air Force Ones.

He takes a glance at his wristwatch before taking it off. 7:45am.

Kile rushes into the gym - he's late

Sal is already dressed and ready to go.

Kile approaches Sal after changing into his basketball clothes. They shake hands.

KILE
What's good man you ready to show 'em what you got?

SAL
Yeah, but I've never really played organized basketball before fam, do you think that will be a problem with the coaches?

KILE
I've only been playing for a few years and what I've noticed is that as long as you leave it on the floor, no one will have a problem with anything.

SAL
I feel you, Imma do my thing, you got some gum or something? I didn't get a chance to grab something on the way.

KILE
Yeah I got you, here.

Kile hands Sal a piece of JUICY FRUIT GUM.

Sal quickly unwraps it and throws it in his mouth.

SAL
Thanks, this gum is mad good yo.

COACH COLLINS (Caucasian male 40's, heavyset) blows a whistle.

He calls all of the players to the huddle, instructing them to link up in a circle. He stands in the center and addresses them.

COACH COLLINS
I want welcome you all to the 23rd annual AAU tryouts for the Sonny Hill League All Stars traveling team. This is a unique opportunity that will expose you to great possibilities. I want you to now look to your left and look to your right. Making this team is not promised. There are 32 of you and only 15 spots on this team.

Sal looks to his left and right, noticing the teens that look determined and the ones shaking with nervousness.

COACH COLLINS
Alright now, everybody bring it in and lets have a great tryout.

They all place their hands in together.

COACH COLLINS
On three!

EVERYONE
1, 2, 3, team!

The players break away and start warming up at their stations.

Standing at 6’5 each Sal and Kile are both FORWARDS. They walk to the same station.

SAL
I don’t know about you, but I’m not about to get cut.

KILE
Shoot...me neither. These cats don’t know what they just got themselves into.

Kile picks up a basketball and does a dribbling trick while they walk.

MONTAGE of Sal warming up through basketball position drills. He’s ready to go.

Coach Collins picks teams and starts to hand out blue and white jerseys, separating the players.

Sal and Kile both get put on the blue team.

Sal take a moment and looks up in the rafters - all of the conference championships along with national tournament appearances.

SAL (V.O.)
This was my chance to prove that I was more than a statistic, more than a mistake...

Sal walks to center court and gets ready to jump ball against another teen.

Kile gives a thumps up to Sal with a smile on his face.

The buzzer sounds as the REFEREE (Caucasian male 40's) comes to center court with the basketball.

REFEREE
Alright you ready!?

He blows his whistle and tosses the ball in the air.

Sal jumps quickly and tips the ball behind his head to the point guard who dribbles down, calling a play.

After a pick and roll Sal goes up for the alley-oop dunk.

He slams the ball in the hoop and everyone in the gym goes crazy! Kile jumps up in the air with excitement as Sal gets down from the rim runs back on defense.

KILE
Let's go!

They play a few scrimmage games back and fort. During each game it looks as if Sal is getting stronger and better.

The Sonny Hill league coaches look on with excitement.

At the end of the last game Coach Collins calls everyone into another huddle.

COACH COLLINS
Now first off, I want everyone to congratulate themselves for some fine work out there today.

Everyone claps.

COACH COLLINS(CONT'D)
There were some good things me and my staff saw out there today and there were some bad.

SAL
(whispering to Kile)
Man what is he talking about? Some bad? I don't know man...

KILE
Chill out Sal, you're all worried for nothing.

COACH COLLINS
Now give us a few minutes to post the cut sheet. For those who don't make the team we'll see you next year and for those who do, welcome aboard.

Coach Collins and his staff walk away to the sideline table where they congregate over the cut sheet.

They periodically raise their head up looking at Sal and the rest of the players who sit with ice bags and water as the re-hydrate and wait for the verdict.

Moments later Coach Collins posts a white piece of paper on a bulletin boar.

All the teens rush the board searching for their names.

Some walking away with regret, kicking basketballs and crying and others jump for joy after seeing they made the cut.

Sal makes his way through the hoard of teens. He scrolls his finger up and down. No name.

As his finger reaches the bottom of the page, he realizes that they posted his full name, Salahudin Vance, instead of Sal.

He jumps for joy and hits the running man dance.

Moments later, Kile sees that he's made the cut as well.

The two start dancing awkwardly as the other teens look on, laughing with them.

FADE OUT:

15 INT.TEMPLE GYMNASIUM AAU PRACTICE-DAY 15

Sal and Kile sit on the ground with their shoes off, sharing a few laughs with teammates after their first practice.

Sal tosses his sweaty shirt into his backpack and throws on a sweat shirt.

SAL
Hey man, that was an intense practice today B. By the way please thank your Moms for letting me ride with you this evening.

KILE
Come on man you're like family, it's all good.

Kile finishes getting dressed and stands up.

KILE (CONT'D)
This is when the fun begins bro, just think about it.

Kile helps Sal get to his feet.

SAL
(curious)
Think about what?

KILE
College coaches are going to be at all of these next games.

SAL
College?

KILE
Yeah man, don't you want to go?

SAL
I mean yeah but I never really thought about it, a brother too busy out here not trying to get hit by a stray bullet and just make it to the next day. You feel me?

KILE
I hear you man but it's a way to get up outta here man. I'm not trying to be working at no gas station, counting the days til I die.

SAL
You got a moms and a dad B. Good jobs living in a good neighborhood. Colleges would love a nigga like you with that background.

Kile gets in Sal's face

KILE
(intense)
A nigga like me? Come on man think, just because your current circumstances are the way they are doesn't mean you have to accept that.

Sal takes it in.

SAL
My bad man I know you just looking out for your loved one.

KILE
No doubt.

The two share their signature handshake and Kile walks off.

Coach Collins closes up the gym. Only Sal and a few teens who are waiting for rides are left.

With no money for the bus, Sal walks over to Coach Collins.

SAL
Hey, Coach C!

COACH COLLINS
What's up son.

SAL
I think I just missed the last bus for about an hour, I wanted to know if i could bum a ride from you? You stay in North Philly right?

COACH COLLINS
Yeah son no worries, I got you. I just need for you to help clean up a bit before we head out.

SAL
I'm on it coach!

Sal starts to pick up loose trash and throws it in the bins.

16 INT.COACH COLLINS CAR-NIGHT 16

Sal sits in the passenger seat a Jeep Wrangler as he and Coach drive northbound.

While they are driving, Sal's stomach starts to rumble.

Sal notices the clock radio in Coach's car. 10:40pm

COACH COLLINS
Good work today, you have a lot of potential following through those veins of yours. Heart is something you can't teach...

SAL
Thanks Coach, I know I'm new to the sport but I'm willing to learn.

COACH COLLINS
That's all you can do...And make sure you keep them grades up.

SAL
Definitely.

Sal nervously glances at the time again.

Coach pulls up on a MC Donald's drive thru.

COACH COLLINS
You hungry?

SAL
(Smiling)
I could definitely eat.

DRIVER THRU ATTENDANT FEMALE
Welcome to McDonald's, would you like to try our new 20 piece all white meat Mcnuggets?

COACH COLLINS
No thank you Ma'am, I want a number one regular with a sprite.

He turns to Sal.

COACH COLLINS(CONT'D)
Order whatever you want son I got it.

SAL
Thanks, Coach.
(To the teller)
I'd like a Number 1 as well with a coke!

DRIVER THRU ATTENDANT FEMALE
OK your total is 15.75 please pull forward.

Coach pulls up, pays, and takes food bags.

They head towards Sal's place.

COACH COLLINS
Hey Sal...

SAL
What's up, Coach?

COACH COLLINS
Is everything good?

SAL
Yeah of course, why would you ask?

COACH COLLINS
I'm just asking because you keep looking at your watch every 30 seconds.

SAL
Oh no, no! everything is good Coach.
(smiling awkwardly)
Its just that my curfew is at 11:00 and its 11:05 but it should be a problem. My Mom is cool with it if I'm a few minutes late.

COACH COLLINS
OK cool , you had me worried there for a second.

Sal gestures to Coach.

SAL
The one right here with the white screen door Coach.

Coach pulls over and Sal gets out.

Coach sees that the coast is clear and pulls off.

Sal waves goodbye.

17 EXT.FRONT OF MOTHERS HOUSE-NIGHT 17

Sal walks up to the front door and tries to unlock the door. The lock doesn't move.

He tries another key it. It doesn't work.

SAL
(to himself)
Did I pick up the wrong keys?

He tries both keys on his key chain once more. No luck.

SAL
This must be a mistake...

He bangs on the door.

After a few minutes his mothers bedroom window opens up and Barbara sticks her head out.

BARBARA
(yelling down)
You think you a grown man huh?
Think you can come into this house
whenever you damn well please?

SAL
No, Mom, I was just a few minutes
late! We had a long practice and my
Coach just dropped me off--

BARBARA
You hear me talking?

Next door neighbors start to turn on their lights at the sounds of their yelling.

BARBARA(CONT'D)
I'm tired of dealing with this
bullshit. You wanna be grown? Be
grown out of my house!

She disappears for a moment and reappears, throwing bags of Sal's clothes out the window.

Sal stands helplessly in the grass.

A final trash bag of belongings smashes down onto the ground.

FADE TO BLACK:

SAL (V.O.)
It was a mystery to me why my mother hated the site of me so much, I guess maybe because I looked so much like my father. With him not around she took the hate out on me...I still remember when I was younger how sweet and kind she was. I guess the day she shot him I lost a piece of my mom.

18 FLASHBACK AUGUST 1990-NIGHT 18

Barbara wrestles through her bedroom drawers looking for her hand gun.

Sal, 7 yrs old, sits on her bed holding a 3 yr old Jamal in his arms.

MANS VOICE (O.S)
(slurring)
Barbara come out here now I want my son!

BARBARA
(frantically)
Sal come here baby give me your brother...I need you and Jamal to get in this closet. Sit down and be as quiet as you can, OK baby?

She kisses the both of them and finds her gun and stuffs it in the back of her underwear.

Sal tries to be brave for his mom as he holds his little brother tight. He puts a finger to his mouth, letting his mom know he will be quiet.

She does the same thing back and closes the children in the closet.

The sound of vases and plates being thrown around can be heard from downstairs.

Barbara looks at herself in the mirror, trying to collect herself.

She heads down the stairs looking to confront JOE (African American male late 20's).

SAL (V.O.)
Joe, my mother's abusive ex-boyfriend and the father of my younger brother Jamal, was on a binge.

Barbra walks into living room and Joe is standing in the middle of broken plates and furniture.

Joe holds a 40-ounce bottle of "OLD ENGLISH" in is hand, almost empty.

He takes a final swig of the bottle. Then, he locks eyes with Barbara.

With a devilish grin on his face...

JOE
Get out of where bitch!? This is my motherfucking house. I pay the bills in this motherfucker.

BARBARA
Get out Joe! You're drunk!

Barbara pulls her handgun out and points it at Joe.

He starts walking towards her.

JOE
What the hell you gonna do with this little pea shooter?

He walks closer.

JOE
Give me my son bitch or I swear to--

Barbara fires her gun, shooting Joe in the hip.

He is tossed backward, but then stands up and tries to attack.

BAM! Barbra shoots Joe once more in the leg. He turns for the front door and hobbles out, leaving a trail of blood behind.

Barbara drops the gun and falls to her knees crying.

FADE TO BLACK OFF HER LOOK:

19 EXT.FRONT OF MOTHERS HOUSE-NIGHT 19

Sal stands on the front lawn, gathering his things into the black trash bag.

He takes one more look up toward his mothers window, throws his bag over his shoulder, and starts to walk down the street.

CUT TO TWO YEARS LATER:

20 EXT.OPEN ROAD FEB 2000-NIGHT 20

Sal stares down the barrel of the stick-up kid's gun.

SAL (V.O.)
I envied this warmth and affection..

Sal hits the gun as a shot is fired, wrestles with the heavyset teen for a few seconds, and punches the kid a few times in the face and gut.

He tries frantically to knock the gun further away on the ground.

A neighbor pokes his head out of the window of a near by house.

NEIGHBOR
Hey, what the heck is going on down there?

Sal and the stick up kid continue to tussle as the neighbor says he's calling the police.

Sal punches the kid one last time, knocking him over on his backside.

He grabs his trash bag and runs off as the police sirens start to sound in the distance.

Sal makes his way into a back alley way.

Out of breathe and filthy, he takes a seat next to a dumpster.

He closes his eyes and tries to bring his heart rate down.

He falls asleep.

21 EXT.TEMPLE GYMNASIUM OUTSIDE 21

Sal waits outside Temple Gymnasium in hopes that he will see his old basketball coach, Coach Collins.

Hours go by and the last practice of the day appears to be over.

Sal hides behind bushes on the side of the gym looking out to catch Coach as he leaves the building.

He tries to ignore his filthy appearance.

As soon as he grabs his bag and begins to walk away, he hears Coach Collins calling out his name.

COACH COLLINS
Sal? Is that you?

Sal turns around, embarrassed.

SAL
Hey coach...how's practice going?

COACH COLLINS
Practice is fine.

He locks up the gym as the last teen leaves.

COACH COLLINS(CONT'D)
The question is, are you good?

SAL
I'm..I'm....

Sal drops his bag and starts crying. Coach Collins hugs him.

COACH COLLINS
Let it out, son. I haven't seen you in two years.

Sal wipes his tears.

SAL
Ive been trying to just survive out here Coach...Everyday

COACH COLLINS
(concerned)
Where are you staying at?

SAL
I'm over at the Men's shelter off Broad and Fifth.

COACH COLLINS
(shocked)
Today is the last day your over there. I have a couch over at my apartment that folds out, you can stay with me until we figure something out.

SAL
Thank you so much Coach! I really appreciate what your doing for me.

COACH COLLINS
OK I know your hungry.

SAL
I definitely could eat.

They laugh. Coach Collins and Sal walk over to Coach's car.

22 INT. COACH COLLINS HOME-NIGHT 22

Coach gives Sal a fresh wash cloth and towel so Sal can clean up.

Sal goes to the bathroom and turns the shower on. He removes his clothes, falling victim to his own stench as he peels his shirts off.

Layers of dirt fall off of Sal's arms and legs as he prepares to get in the shower for the first time in 6 months.

As Sal takes off his pants and begins to remove his socks, a full layer of transparent skin come off of both his feet.

Sal flushes it down the toilet.

He slowly gets into the shower. While the water beats off Sal's back and the top of his head, He looks down at the white floor of the shower focused on his feet.

Brown water swirls around the drain.

After Sal gets clean, Coach knocks on the bathroom door and hands him some fresh clothes.

23 INT. COACH COLLINS HOME-NIGHT 23

Coach places a turkey sandwich and can of sprite in front of Sal.

He goes to sit across the table with his own sprite..

They cheers.

SAL
Coach, thanks for letting me stay here. These situations just seem to keep happening to me. I've been homeless for the past two years. Eating out of the garbage, my mother disowning me for someone else's mistake. I just keep getting the bad end of every deal.

He puts down his sandwich and clenches a basketball next to him.

SAL (CONT'D)
My life is crap! I guess I need to start facing the facts... that I ain't shit! and I'm never gonna be shit!

Frustrated, Sal puts his head down in his lap.

COACH COLLINS
Hold up man, look at me.

Sal lifts his head.

COACH COLLINS(CONT'D)
Don't ever say that again. You've come this far bro and trust me, you still got a long way to go but you'll get there.
(with passion)
You just have to have FAITH.

Sal sits up straight.

COACH COLLINS(CONT'D)
Pick ya head up G, lets look at ya options. I mean you're a great ball player but room and board for a growing kid like you that about to turn 18 is something that I just cant afford right now. But there's a bright side to this.

(CONTINUED)

Sal nods.

SAL
What's up Coach? What did you have in mind?

COACH COLLINS
I have a friend that lives over in Oakland who helps kids just like you. He's old school and a tough dude but you're from Philly.

They smile.

SAL
Coach on the real Ive never even heard of Oakland. But I trust you and if you feel that its a good look

Sal stands up and they shake on it

SAL (CONT'D)
I'm there.

COACH COLLINS
His name is D. Smith , I met him back in College at UC BERKELEY. Ever since we played for the Golden Bears we've been tight. He's really book smart top of our class. A real good look in helping get you into college.

SAL
You really think that I have what it takes to get into college?

COACH COLLINS
Yeah...but you have to believe. I can talk to you until my face is blue. But you're the one that has to put in the work. Or you can go back to --

SAL
I ain't going back to Philly! I mean, I'm not going back there.

COACH COLLINS
OK well it's settled , Ill be right back let me put the calls in.

Coach gets up to make a call in the other room.

Sal yells down the hallway toward Coach, tossing the basketball back and forth.

SAL
Coach man thanks! Trust me you won't regret this...
(beat, whispers to himself)
I'm about to go ham...

Instrumental for "HAM" By Kanye West and Jay-Z.

FADE OUT:

24 MONTAGE SEQUENCE OF SAL TRAVELING TO OAKLAND 24

COACH COLLINS DROPS SAL OFF AT GREYHOUND BUS STATION, HANDING HIM 20 DOLLARS.

SAL ON THE BUS, TAKING THE LONG 3 DAY JOURNEY FROM EAST COAST TO THE WEST.

SAL RUNS OUT OF MONEY AND RESORTS TO EATING KETCHUP, MUSTARD AND RELISH PACKETS.

SAL LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW AS THEY PASS SIGNS READING: "WELCOME TO OAKLAND".

25 EXT.GREYHOUND BUS DEPOT OAKLAND-NIGHT 25

Sal's bus pulls into the station. He takes in the city of Oakland.

After a few moments Sal gets up, checks his seat for anything missing and gets off of the bus.

As he walks down the stairs of the bus Sal sees families embracing each other, lovers giving each other hugs and friends catching up. To him they all seem like a dream.

The bus drivers reaches underneath the bus and tosses out Sals BLACK TRASH BAG full of clothes.

Sal grabs the bag in mid swing.

He goes to sit on a bench outside the bus depot. He has no idea what D. Smith looks like.

Everyone at the bus station has left. A few more minutes go by and Sal hears a car pull up.

The grey car has one person inside, and the engine is rumbling as if the car hasn't been tuned up in years.

As the car pulls to a stop at in front of Sal the breaks squeak loudly. The engine and headlights turn off.

The driver's side door opens. Getting out of the car is D.SMITH (African American male, slim, late 40's) He shuts the door behind himself.

D. Smith walks over and extends his hand.

D. SMITH
Sal, right?

Sal shakes his hand realizing that this is D. Smith.

SAL
Yes, hey Sir how are you doing? Should I call you Mr. Smith?

D. Smith laughs.

D.SMITH
Nah, not even D or D. Smith is fine. Let me help you with your bag.

D. Smith reaches down and tries to take Sal's trash bag but embarrassed, Sal insists to carry it himself.

SAL
No worries sir I got it.

Sal throws his bag in the trunk of D. Smith's car.

D gets back in the car and reaches over and pulls up the lock to let Sal get in the other side.

Sal gets in and adjusts the seat to fit his 6'5 frame.

D starts the car up and they drive off.

26 INT. D.SMITHS CAR-NIGHT 26

On the radio plays "Bill Withers Ain't no sunshine."

With one hand on the steering wheel and his other hand constantly tapping the dashboard, D. Smith navigates through the streets of Oakland.

Looking out of the car window Sal sees that the Bay-Area bares little resemblance to the streets of Philadelphia.

D.SMITH
So...I'm going to let you know right now. Coach Collins told me about your situation. And trust me when I say I can empathize with that but point blank you're here to work and work hard because I don't vouch for no quitters, you got me?

SAL
Yes sir I want to let you know that I am ready for whatever, I'm here to work hard and do my best.

D.SMITH
I'm gonna tell you right now that your best might not be good enough. I need more than that. I need your blood, sweat, and tears.

SAL
I got you, say no more.

D. Smith nods his head as if he is enjoying what he hears. He then turns into an apartment complex.

Graffiti lines the walls at the entrance of a large resident access gate. D hits a remote control attached to the visor in his car to open the gate.

D drives in and parks.

D.SMITH
Alright, this is home.

D pulls the lever underneath the steering wheel and pops the trunk.

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
Grab your stuff out of the trunk!

Sal gets out of the car swiftly and does as he's told.

He follows D to an apartment.

27 EXT.OUTSIDE D.SMITHS APARTMENT 27

While walking to the apartment, Sal notices some teens playing a late night game of pick up basketball on the complex property.

The teens stop playing for a minute as they notice Sal walking with D. They wave.

D waves back and the teens continue there game.

As they approach D's apartment, Sal sees a few other men standing around smoking blunts. They all sport big leather coats and dreadlocks.

As D passes them they exchange fist pounds.

As they walk up a flight of stairs...

SAL
Hey D. Smith, who were those guys we just passed? They were some scary looking dudes but they showed you mad respect.

D fiddles with his keys for a second as they make it to where his apartment unit is. He looks out at the men he's just passed.

D. SMITH
You see those 3 men out there, they were once 3 of the best ball players in the city...But now the streets got 'em.

Sal and D look at the 3 men as they laugh and joke while smoking weed.

D. SMITH(CONT'D)
Remember this Sal ..the saddest thing in life is wasted talent. You can have all the talent in the world but if you don't do right by it then nothing happens.

SAL
Damn...

D unlocks the door and walks in.

D.SMITH
Come on man...

Sal follows.

28 INT.D.SMITHS APARTMENT-NIGHT 28

Not sure where to sit, Sal stands in the door way.

D straightens up his living room couch and gestures Sal to sit down there.

SAL
D, do you mind if I use your bathroom?

D.SMITH
Nah, go ahead it’s right over there.

He points down the hallway.

29 INT. D. SMITHS APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT 29

Sal goes to the bathroom door and tries to open it but the door is locked.

He hears music playing and a male voice singing "If I Ruled the World" by NAS.

Sal knocks on the door.

The music stops playing, EBRO (African male 20’s) answers.

EBRO
What’s good!? Ill be out in a second

SAL
Oh my bad bro its cool.

Sal goes back in the living room and starts to take his things out of his trash bag, separating and organizing them.

D hands some sheets to Sal.

Sal crumples his trash bad and throws it in a garbage can. Two years living on the streets homeless is over.

Ebro comes out of the bathroom, dancing.

He walks up to Sal, extending his hand.

EBRO
What’s good brah, my bad I took longer than usual in the bathroom today.

SAL
It’s cool fam, its my first day here so I’m just trying to get used to the rules and regulations of the house.

Ebro grabs a glass out of the cabinet in the kitchen and fills it with water.

EBRO
It’s not like that here man, real talk. D. Smith saved me from the streets man he got me into junior college over at San Francisco City College where I’m playing on their Men’s basketball team. He’s like my big bro.

He takes a drink of water and puts his cup in the sink.

EBRO(CONT’D)
This is not a group home, if you need anything I mean anything just let me know. I know how hard it can be when adapting to a new city with new surroundings.Ebro walks off.

D.Smith comes back out of his room wearing a du-rag and a CAL BERKELEY ALUMNI t-shirt on.

Sal lays his sheets down and sits back on the couch.

D. SMITH
Ok, so I’m gonna to tell you the rules of the house while you get situated. As I said before, your here to work so we have bed times up in here.

D points toward the ground.

SAL
Bed times? I’m 18 years old, come on D.

D. SMITH
Come on D nothing I’m sorry my man but like I told you before play time is over. 10:30 lights out, no cartoons, no booze or drugs you live under my roof you have to obey my rules...or there’s the door.

D points at the door with a stern look on his face.

SAL
I respect that, trust me messing up is the last thing on my mind you wont have to worry about it.

D.SMITH
Alright now, I hope so.

D goes to head back to his room.

SAL
Hey D! I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity.

A beat.

D.SMITH
Get some sleep now we have an early morning ahead of us.

Sal nods, gets under the blankets, and closes his eyes.

D turns off the lights.

CUT TO:

30 INT. D.SMITHS LIVING ROOM - 5:30 AM 30

It's still dark out. Sal is fast asleep on the couch, snoring.

D.Smith saunters into the kitchen, flipping on its bright lights. The lights don't wake Sal.

D looks through the fridge, pulling out ingredients to make a protein shake.

He pours all of the ingredients in a blender.

He reaches over and turns on a small clock radio in the kitchen.

D places the lid on the blender and turns it on high.

The buzzing sound finally wakes Sal. He sits up on the couch groggy. D has a smile on his face.

D hands a glass of shake to Sal.

D.SMITH
Rise and shine, young buck! Time to go to work!

Sal picks his watch up off the floor and looks at it. 5:35 AM.

D starts opening up the blinds.

Sal takes a drink from the protein shake. His face says it all - *gross.*

D looks on, lightly offended

D.SMITH
What was that face for?
(laughing)
That was some of my best stuff I put in there.

Sal wipes the shake off his mouth.

SAL
I'd hate to see your worst.

Looking to wash up and get ready to start his day Sal walks to the hallway bathroom and tries to open it but the door is locked. He knocks.

EBRO
My bad youngin', I'm coming out right now.

Ebro opens the door dressed up in athletic gear.

Sal goes in the bathroom and prepares to take a shower. He wipes the fog off of the mirror in the bathroom and sees himself - this is a better look than the last time he saw himself in the mirror.

He washes up and changes into some new athletic clothes

D. Smith and Ebro sit in the living room waiting for him.

Sal finishes up and walks over to them.

SAL
So...whats the plan?

Sal grabs his shoes by the front door and kneels down to tie them.

Ebro and D look at each other, D points at Sal with a "who does this guy think he is?" look.

D.SMITH
Hold up partna, the plan is we're about to go put in some work.

Ebro rubs both of his palms together.

EBRO
Yeeeeeaaaaahhh......

D.SMITH
(energetic)
Were going to hit up the track across the street over at Kennedy High school and get some wind sprints in.

SAL
(To Ebro)
What's a wind sprint yo?

Ebro gestures for Sal to follow him outside.

EBRO
Pretty much we about to run like hell from end to end on this long ass track.

SAL
Aw snap....

CUT TO:

31 EXT. TRACK AT KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL 31

Ebro and Sal start light jogging around a dirt track at the end of a small football field, getting loose and warmed up.

As the finish, D points at the starting line for the 100 yard dash on the track.

Ebro and Sal line up.

D pulls a whistle out of his pocket and places it in his mouth.

As Sal lines up he and Ebro share a familiar competitive look.

D raises his hand.

D.SMITH
On my call you're running a 100 yard sprint! On your mark...get set....go!

D blows the whistle and the two take off.

Sal and Ebro run like two bats outta hell, but Ebro is smokes past Sal set after set.

D looks unsure if this was a good decision.

The boys finish their dash.

EBRO
(To Sal, encouraging)
Come on,you got this. Get your hands over your head, it's easier to breathe that way.

Sal places his hands over his head.

SAL
(To Ebro)
Yo...I...I...feel like my lungs are about to burst open.

He moves around, trying to deal with the pain.

D walks over to Sal and Ebro and gets in their faces while clapping.

D.SMITH
Yeeeeeeeaaahh, let's go people! This is what I'm talking about, Its 6 am! and who's up right now out here putting the work in? How bad do you really want it?

Sal and Ebro line up again.

D raises his hand up and blows the whistle.

D.SMITH
Go!

Sal starts to pick up momentum, gaining his second wind.

He comes up fast on Ebro and wins the first sprint.

A look of joy fills D's face.

D.SMITH
(To himself)
Ok we may have something here.

After winning a few more sprints, Sal and Ebro shake hands and bring it in with D.

EBRO
(Tired)
Yo...you did ya thing brah.

SAL
(Tired and Excited)
Thanks man you put up one hell of a fight though. I never have been pushed that hard in my life man.

EBRO
(Laughing)
I had you a few times but you are hella fast!

SAL
(Smiling with a humble cockiness)
I mean I'm aiight.

D settles them down.

D.SMITH
Alright, alright lets settle down now. Good work today though, let's hurry up and get out of here. Ebro you have class later on.

They all walk off back to the apartment.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. BARBERSHOP -NEXT DAY 32

D and Sal are driving in downtown Oakland.

Sal leans back in the passenger seat of his car as D pulls over to a barbershop and parks.

D.SMITH
So yea man, I know you were homeless but you're not anymore. So were going to have to do something with that hair of yours.

Sal plays with his hair for a second. He has a small nappy Afro, a chunk missing from the stresses of the previous months.

SAL
What's wrong with my hair D?

D.SMITH
Come on son it looks like a bunch of spiders are having a meeting on the top of your head.

They laugh.

D. SMITH(CONT'D)
I mean look at this piece what is it?

SAL
(laughing still)
It gives me character D.

D stares at Sal with a straight face. Sal realizes that the hair has to go.

SAL
Dang aiight, I loved my hair man. My hair was my strength!

D.SMITH
Nah brother trust me your hair is your weakness.

D and Sal get out of the car and walk into the barbershop.

33 INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY 33

As D opens the door the bell rings. There are a few people waiting for haircuts in line, but D and Sal have an appointment.

D shakes hands with everyone while Sal sits down in the first open chair he can find.

D walks to the back of the shop where CRAIG (African American male, 40's) Is finishing up with a client.

Craig sees D and throws both hands up in excitement.

CRAIG
What's up D I haven't seen you in a long time brother. How you been?

D.SMITH
You know me man just helping the kids out when I can. I'm taking a leave of absence from group home and starting to take the time out to help the youth.

CRAIG
I feel you man we need more people like you with all of our teens getting lost in these streets. Something has to be done.

D.SMITH
One kid at a time Craig, one kid at a time.

D places his arm on Sal's shoulder.

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
This is the kid I was telling you about. His bus just arrived here a few days ago. I'm trying to get him in school sooner than later so he can start hooping.

SAL
How you doing, Sir?

Sal extends his hand and they shake.

CRAIG
Hold on son enough with the formalities,
(Laughing)
I know I'm old but I'm not that old.

Craig does a fake play fighting motion with Sal.

SAL
OK I got you Sir..oops, I mean Craig.

CRAIG
All good, sit down.

Craig brushes off the barber chair and Sal sits down.

Craig starts to cut Sal's hair.

CRAIG
So how you liking Oak-town so far?

SAL
I've only been here a few days but so far so good. It reminds me of home, but on the west coast.

CRAIG
Where are you from ?

SAL
Philly, born and bred.

CRAIG
Oh we got a Philly Cat up in here. Man I tell you one thing about Philly. Ive been meaning to try one of them cheese steaks.

SAL
Yeah man, that one of the things I miss most about home.

CRAIG
(To D)
Hey D, what school are you thinking about enrolling this kid in?

D.SMITH
You know what Craig, I'm not even sure about that yet.

He leans forward in his chair.

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
I mean think about it you have Mack which is a powerhouse school on the rise, but then I live right across the street from Kennedy High school so do I send him there?

CRAIG
Well what about Tech, they almost made it to the state championship game last season.

D.SMITH
That is true...

He ponders the idea.

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
I'm heading over to this cookout MJ invited me to over at the North Oakland rec center.

Craig finishes up Sal's hair cut.

D goes to pay for the cut but Craig refuses to take the money.

CRAIG
Not this time D, it's on me.
(To Sal)
Welcome to the town.

Sal gets out of the chair checks himself out in the mirror. He lies what he sees.

CUT TO:

34 NORTH OAKLAND REC CENTER - DAY 34

Sal and D walk up to a park filled with kids and adults of all ages throwing an annual "Stop the Violence" cookout in the city of North Oakland. Music bumping on the radio - Tupac's "California love".

Sal follows D to a picnic table in the center of the park where MJ (Mexican American male 30's) sits at the table with a few other men playing spades. Others around him cook on the grill.

D.Smith approaches MJ.

MJ
What up kin folk get over here.

They share an embrace and pull apart.

SAL (V.O.)
MJ Was an O.G. original gangster, he had turned his life around and cleaned up his act by helping inner city kids make it out of the hood for something positive and not in a body bag.

MJ
(Looking at Sal)
Who's this fam?

D.SMITH
Oh yeah, this is Sal the kid from Philly I told you about that was coming out here for me to mentor.

SAL
What's up man, much respect I heard a lot about you.

MJ
No doubt you fella.

He sizes Sal up and down.

MJ(CONT'D)
Damn yo how tall are you?

SAL
I'm 6'5.

MJ
Shit D, you need to have this youngster playing with Leon over at Tech.

D.SMITH
Speaking of Leon, where is he?

MJ points toward a basketball court at the park. A teen about the same height as Sal dominates, dunking on everyone he's playing against.

MJ calls him over.

MJ
Hey, Lee!

LEON (African American male 17 yrs old) runs over.

SAL (V.O.)
Leon was Oakland High School basketball, standing at 6ft6 inches tall and weighing 240 pounds he was a beast ranked number 2 in the country behind the number one high school player in the country at the time, Le'bron James.

The two shake hands.

LEON
Whats up blood, how you liking the town so far?

SAL
Man its cool so far it feels like being at home...

Sal see a beautiful girl, CHANEL (Puerto Rican female 17yrs old), walking behind Leon as they talk. He can't take his eyes off of her.

Leon stops talking mid-sentence, noticing Sal looking mesmerized at something. He realizes that Sal is checking out Chanel.

Leon snaps his fingers while laughing, trying to get Sal's attention.

LEON
What's up brah, you good?

SAL
(refocusing)
Yeah I'm good... hey Lee who is that?

Sal points across the park at Chanel, standing at the cookout laughing with some of her friends.

LEON
Oh, her? Thats Chanel. (smiling)
You like her?

SAL
I mean she aiight...

Leon looks at him with the side eye. Sal laughs - he cant fool him.

SAL (CONT'D)
I'm lying man she is FINE.

LEON
Yeah she is super cool, plays on the girl's basketball team at Tech.

SAL
Oh word so ya'll go to school together?

LEON
Yeah she's cool let me introduce you...

Leon turns to call Chanel over and Sal freezes.

LEON(CONT'D)
Hey Chanel!

Leon waves to her. She talks to her girlfriends for a second more and then makes her way over to them.

LEON
Hey Chanel, this is my boy Sal he just moved here from Philly. I'm trying to get him to come enroll at the Tech house.

Leon nudges Sal.

CHANEL
Ok, ok so you're a Hooper?

SAL
Yeah, I mean I do what I do.

Sal dusts imaginary dirt off of his shoulder. They all share laugh

FEMALE VOICES O.S.
Chanel!

Her friends are calling for her.

CHANEL
Well Sal it was nice meeting you and welcome to Oakland.

They shakes his hands but they hold a second too long while their eyes lock. Chanel slowly lets go and returns to her friends.

The girls giggle and walk off

SAL
Hey Leon thanks for that man, that was a good look.

LEON
Not a problem at all my friend any friend of D. Smith's is a friend of mine.
(and then)
I'm hella hungry brah lets go grab some of this grub.

SAL
I'm with that G.

Sal and Leon walk off toward the food at the cookout and join the rest of the party.

CUT TO:

35 INT.D.SMITHS APARTMENT-NEXT DAY 7:00 AM 35

Sal is laid out in the living room on the couch, fast asleep wrapped up in a blanket.

D. Smith walks to the kitchen and starts to cook breakfast.

D. SMITH
Sal, wake up brah! We have a long day ahead of us.

Sal gets up, yawning.

SAL
Aiight...I'm up...

He smells what's cooking in the kitchen as D stands over a sizzling pan.

SAL (CONT'D)
MMMMM...what's that you cooking over there D, that smells good! What you making in there?

D.SMITH
Some eggs, bacon and toast smell hella good huh?

SAL
Yup! Aye I'll be right back I have to run to the rest room really quick.

Sal heads down the hallway to the bathroom.

He returns looking for his food.

SAL (CONT'D)
Hey D, wheres mine at?

D.SMITH
Your what?

SAL
Breakfast?

D.SMITH
We got Cheerios on top of the fridge handle that.

He points at the Cheerios box.

Sal is confused.

D starts laughing as he finishes up his breakfast. Ebro walks out of his room and starts to laugh as well.

EBRO
Don't trip Sal he got me like that before as well.

Ebro laughs again and leaves. Sal cracks a slight smile and the screen fades out.

36 INT D.SMITHS CAR-DAY 36

Sal sits back in the car with D as they drive through West Oakland.

D.SMITH
So I'm gonna take you past a few schools out here in Oakland, trying to see what the best fit for you would be. You're 18 and that leaves you with one year of high school basketball to play so there's no room for error.

He turns to Sal

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
You feel me?

SAL
Yeah I got you D. I'm all in for whatever situation, is the best. I just want to play ball and have an opportunity to graduate.

D. SMITH
Alright I hear you, right now we are going to one of the best schools in Oakland and my Alma-Mater Mack!

Sal is hesitant.

SAL
What about that Tech school that Leon goes to?

D.SMITH
I don't know man, ya'll both play kind of the same position.

Sal looks down. He no longer feels like he's in control of his destiny.

D pulls up to Mack High School parks his car.

He gets out and looks at Sal. Something's up.

D. SMITH
Hey Sal, lets go.

Sal looks up with concern

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
You said you wanted to go to Tech High school lets take you to Tech High school!

Sal smiles with excitement as him and D.Smith get back into the car and high tail it away from the school.

CUT TO:

37 INT. DARK STAIRWELL OAKLAND TECH HIGHSCHOOL 37

There is an echo of bouncing basketballs in the background.

Sal walks up a set of stairs with the sound of balls bouncing and sneakers screeching across the floor, he finally reaches the top of the stairs.

He witnesses Leon and a few of Oakland Tech High School basketball players finishing up their first game of open gym playing pick up basketball.

Sal walks into the gym as the game finishes up and greets Leon.

LEON
What up brah, so you finally decided to come to the tech house I see.

SAL
Yeah, I did a lot of thinking and when it came down to it I figured this is the place where I want to play

LEON
Well you're just in time, were playing some pick up and about to select new squads, I'll pick 4 more and you can run with Rondo and Trey's team

SAL
Aiight

Sal guards Leon as they go up and down the court a few times as they get ready to hoop.

Leon grabs an offensive rebound from Sal and goes up to dunk it.

LEON
Ahhh!! Y'all niggas can't hold me

Leon gets back on defense. Rondo comes down the court slicing through, Sal gets the ball and faces up on Leon for a step back jumper that goes swish in the basket.

SAL
Come on brah, Philly ain't never raise no soft cats man.

Sal jogs down on defense. The two go at it back and forth possession after possession talking smack and crazy to each other, neither one of them backing down.

Leon grabs the ball on the defensive end and dribbles coast to coast with a wide lane to the basket.

He takes off for the dunk within the foul line but is unsuspecting that Sal is trailing him for the block.

Leon goes up for the dunk and Sal blocks the ball out of bounds, all of the on lookers with D.Smith in the Oakland Tech gym share their ooohhs and aahhs.

Leon turns to look at Sal with frustration on his face.

LEON
That was a foul! My ball

SAL
What! Are you serious man I got all ball

Leon walks up to Sal in an intimidating manner,trying to spook Sal but he doesn't budge.

SAL
What's up brah!

Sal spits on the floor

SAL (CONT'D)
I don't care who court this is! I'm right here move me nigga!

All the other ballers and bystanders separate Sal and Leon before the situation gets escalated.

Later as everyone prepares to leave,Leon walks up on Sal

LEON
Sup man, yo real talk you you got heart man. I've played with some guys that go hard but you have a different gear to you and don't back down. I dig that. So on the real I'm glad to have you be a part of this team.

SAL
Man, who you telling. Dude you are a beast.I'm glad to be a part of this team as well

They shake hands and walk over to the other guys on the team while Leon introduces everyone to Sal.

CUT TO:

38 INT. OAKLAND TECH HIGH SCHOOL-FIRST DAY 38

SAL (V.O.)
The tech house, this school was built like a castle from the purple and yellow bricks to the massive courtyard where everyday kids would post up, play some bay area music and dance. From the beautiful girls with long braids in their hair looking like Alicia Keyes and Jenny from the block this school needed no introduction.

SAL (V.O.)(CONT'D)
On this the first day of school for Sal power 106 radio station showed up and I got my first real glimpse on what the bay life was about.

Sal and Leon walk up the steps into the front doors of the school building.

Sal notices a fight break out in the hallway between other students boys and girls, a girls breast pops out while shes fighting another girl.

Kids going into bathrooms setting fires to create more of a distraction so that others can sneak into the school and avoid detention.

Crowds huddling around egging it on, students that didn't go to this school that looked much older selling drugs sneakily in the hallway of the school while Sal goes through the metal detector.

LEON
Welcome to the tech house fam, I know its a lot going on but you should be used to this

Leon and Sal Laugh

SAL
Yeah man, feels just like home

As they walk into the school they see fellow teammates FRED(Caucasian late teens male)and RONDO (African American late teens male).

LEON
What up yo, you remember Sal from open gym right?

FRED
What up yo, so you coming to hoop over here with us this year ?

SAL
Yeah, I see y'all been putting it down and this is the year to make some noise

FRED
Yeah we bout to take state this year, ain't that right Lee

LEON
You already know it!

FRED
(Laughing)
We got Mr. All American slash all-world slash all everything slash--

LEON
Come on brah you be wilding

The bell to go to class rings

SAL
Aye I gotta run to class brah

LEON
Yo who you got first period?

SAL
Mrs. Pitts? I think

LEON
Aww snap yeah brah you better hurry up she be tripping on fools

Sal runs off finally he finds the classroom,class is already in session. He opens the door.

39 INT . MRS. PITTS CLASSROOM -DAY 39

MRS.PITTS(African American 40's female)

MRS. PITTS
Uh emm excuse me?Who do you think you are waltzing into this classroom unannounced?

SAL
Oh um my bad

MRS. PITTS
My bad? Did your mother raise you to talk like that?

SAL
Um no ma'am, I apologize.

MRS. PITTS
Please take a seat and please try not to create another distraction

A few kids in the class laugh while Sal looks for a chair and takes a seat.

While he sits down in a chair he notices Chanel whom he ran into at the cookout when he first got to Oakland.

They lock eyes for a second

While he sits down he mistakenly knocks one of her books off of her desk.

Mrs. Putts gives him a stare

Sal proceeds to help the girl pick up the books.

SAL
(Whispering)

I'm sorry about that, aren't you the girl I ran into at the park last week with Leon?

CHANEL
Yes that was me I see you chose to come to Oakland Tech after all. Was it for me?

Laughing

CHANEL(CONT'D)
I'm just joking with you

SAL
I know
(smiles)
Its good to see you again

CHANEL
likewise, but you better keep it down before you get both of us in trouble

They both smile as they start to pay attention in class as the lesson goes on.

40 EXT. STOOP AT SCHOOL- LATE AFTERNOON 40

Sal and Leon are waiting for their rides home

SAL
So I heard some of the teammates mention that you used to be homeless? Is that true?

LEON
Yeah, I have 5 brothers and sisters, we were all homeless with my mom after we lost our home in a fire.

SAL
Man trust me I feel you...before I came out here to stay with D.Smith, I had no where to go man. I really thought to myself that is this it? But I know now that the bigger plan is at work.

LEON
Yup... I'm gonna make it outta here and not in a body bag.And this

Holding a basketball

LEON(CONT'D)
is our ticket out. We've had unfortunate circumstances yeah but we cant dwell on that.I dont know about the next man but I'm gonna make it out. Anyway... how was your first day at the tech house man!

SAL
Aww you know, it was popping brah, Ive never been to a school like this before ever in my life.

LEON
I see what else is popping brah, you and Chanel

SAL
Aww man...umm.. yeah shes a friend

LEON
Uh huh a friend

SAL
So... is she seeing anybody?

LEON
I knew you liked her you liar

Laughing

Leon's ride pulls up,MJ is driving and he beeps the horn

LEON
Alright man that's me, you good?

SAL
Yeah D is on his way

Leon rides off with MJ and Sal takes his school books out of his backpack and starts to study while he waits on D.Smith.

CUT TO:

41 MONTAGE SEQUENCE OF THE NEXT FEW DAYS 41

LEON AND SAL PRACTICING AND WORKING OUT

SAL HANGING WITH CHANEL

LEON HANGING WITH SAL LEON AND SAL STUDYING

42 INT OAKLAND TECH BASKETBALL GYM END OF PRACTICE 42

COACH GREG(African American 50's male) Has just addressed the team and he calls Sal into his office.

COACH GREG
Sit down son, first off I want to tell you that your doing a hell of a job out there everyday.OK well I'm going to get straight to the point, the school board has ruled you ineligible to play for us this year.

SAL
Not let me play? what are you talking about Coach? man this is my life. What am I supposed to do if I cant hoop I'm done!

COACH GREG
We gotta have faith

Sal gets up kicks his chair and walks off to the locker room.

FADE OUT:

43 EXT FRONT STEPS OF SCHOOL 43

Sal is sitting on the front steps of the school after practice with his head in his hands. Leon comes up as if he were looking for Sal.

LEON
Hey whats wrong brah, man I have been looking for you why did you bolt out of the locker room so fast?

SAL
Im not really trying to talk about it right now

Sal gets up with his backpack and starts to walk away from the school.

LEON

Leon runs up on Sal and grabs his arm.

SAL
Dont touch me man,I got a lot on my mind

Sal proceeds to walk away after shrugging Leon off. Len calls out Sal to why he is walking away with anger in his face.

LEON
Bro! is this about them trying to not let you play?

Sal stops in his tracks and turns around

LEON(CONT'D)
Coach told me, dont get mad at him I basically made him do it,listen were here for you bro , they didn't say a complete no yet right your still have to appeal?

SAL
Yeah your right its not a complete no yet

LEON
So this still means that there's a chance, you didn't come all this way to fall short trust me

SAL
Aiight I hear you my bad man

Leon and Sal shake on it and walk back up to the school

CUT TO:

44 INT D.SMITHS APARTMENT- NIGHT 44

Sal and Chanel are studying in the living room while D is on the phone with one of the superintendents of the school board. D paces back and forth on the phone and hangs up.

D. SMITH
Ill be back

D.Smith leaves the apartment. Sal sits with Chanel trying to study

CHANEL
What did you get for the answer on number 4?

Sal doesn't answer he is in a daze with a lot on his mind at the moment

CHANEL(CONT'D)
Sal...earth to Sal...did you just see the big rat walk across the table?

SAL
Huh?Oh I'm sorry , Its just that this whole eligibility ruling is weighing on me heavy right now I don't know whats going to happen at the meeting scheduled for next week.

CHANEL
You can only hope for the best we don't have control over everything in our lives we just gotta give it our all and hope for something good to come of it.

SAL
Your right, thanks for being there in my time of need it really means a lot to me

CHANEL
Its not a big deal, I mean I like spending time with you, your not like any of these other guys out here...

Sal and Chanel gaze into each others eyes

SAL
Oh....really

He gets closer pushing their text books out of the way . Sal and Chanel sit there face to face about to kiss.

All of a sudden the front door of the apartment opens and they both jump back away from each other and pretend to be studying.

Ebro walks in with headphones on rapping to music

The two star at each other as if they just dodged a bullet but then they both smile

CUT TO:

45 INT. OAKLAND HIGHSCHOOL DISTRICT HEAD OFFICE 45

Its hearing day with the school board to see if he is going to be able to play.

Sal and D.Smith sit in an empty hallway waiting patiently to be called in.

SAL
D....

D. SMITH
whats up man?

SAL
Im freaking out over here man

D. SMITH
just take a deep breathe and hope for the best.

SAL
Lets hope so

The board room door opens and one of the Athletic directors for Oakland school board pokes his head out looking for Sal and D,They get up and walk into the room.

Sitting at the desk in the board room is the superintendent of the school board(Caucasian 40'smale)

SUPER INT.
Thanks for coming in Mr Vance and Smith with such short notice

Sal and D sit down at the desk, Sal is nervous

SUPER INT.(CONT'D)
Well I'm not going to hold you up all day son the answer is no.

SAL (V.O.)
My world has ended the one good thing I had going for me in years taken away at the drop of a dime.

D. SMITH
What? what the hell you mean the answer is no!?

SUPER INT.
Excuse me Mr.Smith you are going to have to restrain yourself before I call security.

D. SMITH
This is a young boys life here and your going to sit there with no emotion and just say no? What ever happened to saving our young lives huh!

SUPER INT.
Call security

D. SMITH
Call security Im right here! Your a dream killer you know that!? And your going to have to live with it!

D.Smith and Sal head out before the security comes

CUT TO:

46 INT OAKLAND TECH HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY 46

Sal and Leon stand there talking after recieving the bad news

LEON
I'm sorry about hearing your decision brah but I have good news.

Aiight so after the season every

year all of the other high school

basketball players we get together

and play in the Bushrod Classic

SAL
What you talking about yo?

Leon pulls a flier out of his pocket with the tournament on it.

LEON
This is the Bushrod Classic, you

ever heard of Rucker Park?

SAL
Yeah where they be playing all that street ball whats up?

LEON
We’re putting together a team to compete in it, and the catch is there will be college recruiters from all over coming to watch us play. And I want you to run on my team

SAL
Oh that’s whats up, hell yea I’m running with your team.

LEON
Aiight man lets hit the gym and go to work

CUT TO:

47 102. INT. MJ’S HOUSE 47

Sal is sitting in the living room watching ESPN tossing a basketball in the air. D.Smith sits in the kitchen

D. SMITH
You good?

SAL
Yeah I should be alright man gonna take a minute though. I’m looking forward to going to my senior prom though

D. SMITH
This is that time of year where all you guys are getting over excited for the senior prom?

SAL
Yeah all the other guys at the school are going but I chose to sit this one out, I mean what is the senior prom anyway? A right of passage. I’ll pass. I mean I don’t even have the money to afford a tuxedo for the prom let alone the tickets.

D. SMITH
Come on now you can't be so down on yourself. I mean I know prom may seem like a silly thing to you but I went to my prom and it was one of the most memorable night I have ever had

SAL
I mean I do want to go, who am I fooling? I just don't have the money.

D. SMITH
Well Sal I was hoping you would say that

The front door opens and its MJ holding a tuxedo over

his shoulder

D.SMITH(CONT'D)
That's why B and I wanted to pitchin and rent your tuxedo for prom.

SAL
(excited)

Oh my god! Oh my god! Thank you,

thank you!

Sal grabs the tuxedo and goes to try it on

SAL (CONT'D)
It fits perfect!

MJ
(laughing)

You're about a 44 long right?

SAL
You guys don't know how much this

means to me, I will definitely pay

you back

MJ
Sal, don't worry about it, you're

(MORE)

MJ (cont'd)
part of this family too

Sal, MJ and D.Smith all share a hug.

CUT TO:

48 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - PROM NIGHT 48

Sal is on the dance floor with Chanel, dancing to some hip hop, having a ball with all of their friends, then the dj slows down the vibe of the prom and starts to play a slow song. Sal and Chanel slow dance as they stare into each others eyes. Sal smiles.

SAL
What?

CHANEL
SAL Nothing

CHANEL
What, is my makeup running? Oh my god

SAL
No, no...its just..you make me happy

CHANEL
Well I'm glad you asked me to prom, I thought you were going to ask one of your groupies

SAL
Come on now, since day one I've

been feeling you and you know that

CHANEL
Really?

SAL
Yes really

CHANEL
I'm glad I met you...

She pulls him closer

CHANEL (CONT'D)
and you're going to win the Bushrod

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHANEL (CONT'D) (cont'd)
tournament and show everyone what

you can do...

Sal pulls her closer and they slowly kiss as the music

plays.

FADE TO BLACK:

49 MONTAGE OF SAL GETTING READY FOR TOURNAMENTSAL 49

FULL WORKOUT GEAR, ITS EARLY MORNING

HE WALKS OUT THE FRONT DOOR AND TAKES A DEEP BREATH AS HE LOOKS UP AT THE SKY

HE PREPARES TO STRETCH (MUSIC KICKS IN)

LEON COMES OUT OF THE FRONT DOOR AND PASSES HIM A BASKETBALL

SAL STARTS TO JOG WHILE DRIBBLING THE BASKETBALL

SAL (V.O.)
Everything I've been through, every
mile I've ran every weight I've
lifted all of the negative people
saying I can't do it

SAL CUTS THROUGH A TRAIL LEADING UP A HILL WITH LEON RUNNING WITH HIM ON HIS TRACKS

SAL (V.O.)
They don't define me! They don't

validate me! You get out what you

put in!

SAL RUNS FASTER UP THE HILL AND LETS OUT A PASSIONATE YELL AS HE REACHES THE TOP OF THE HILL AND THEN LOOKS OUT TO THE VIEW AND TAKES IT ALL IN

CUT TO:

50 INT. BASKETBALL COURT - BUSHROD CLASSIC 50

Sal walks into a packed gym from wall to wall with a game

already going on in progress, while holding his gym bag. Sal and Leon with a few of their teammates stand there waiting for the game to be over.

Sal looks at Leon with a grin on his face as if he has arrived.

SAL
Yo lee, you ready?

ANNOUNCER
Walker has the ball, crosses left

oh my god did he just do that!

As a guy falls to the ground JOHN WALKER (6’6, athletic build, African-American early 20s late teens) goes up for the monster slam.

LEON
I was born ready are you ready is

the question? You see all these

scouts

Sal looks around the packed gym.

LEON (CONT’D)
You do your thing here man ain’t no telling what could happen

SAL
Say no more, are there any teams we should be worried about?

LEON
I mean we should about everyone,

but we got squad, the only team I’m worried about is John Walker’s

team, they are the only ones that

seem to be able to give us

competition

Sal and Leon first dab it up and go to the locker room to get ready for their game.

CUT TO:

51 INT. BASKETBALL COURT - BUSHROD CLASSIC 51

Leon is jumping ball center and Sal is playing forward and the rest of their team is on the court.

REFEREE
Alright you guys ready?

They nod yes and the Referee throws the ball up.

Leon tips the ball to Sal, Sal dribbles down the court and tell Leon to post up

SAL
Yo Lee post up that's easy work on you

Leon gets the ball spins off the guy and dunks

LEON
(while running down the court)

Easy work

SAL
Dee up

Sal plays harder defense on the opposing teams 2 guard.

SAL (CONT'D)
There we go...got em

Sal steals the ball, goes coast to coast for the one handed throw down dunk. The other team calls a timeout

D. SMITH
Alright fellas we got em, lets blow this team out the water! Bring it in 1,2,3 sharks!

Sal and Leon team take and early 20 point lead and coast to a victory.

52 INT. GYM HALLWAY 52

After the game Sal and some teammates are walking through the gym hallway and Sal and John Walker collide by accident without looking at each other.

SAL
Oh my bad, brah

JOHN WALKER
Yeah it’s your bad you better watch where you walking blood

SAL
Wha, what the fuck you say brah

JOHN WALKER
Nigga you heard me, yeah you might have had some good game today but y’all were playing some scrubs we’ll see if y’all make it to the championship game with us

SAL
Man you hella weak, only reason y’all won was because I wasn’t guarding you, ain’t none of that garbage you were throwing up today falling when we play y’all fool

JOHN WALKER
You better watch who you talking to

Leon walks up and stares John Walker in the face.

LEON
Yo we got a problem here brah?

JOHN WALKER
Nah we good

He and Sal give each other a death stare and John walks away.

LEON
Yo Sal you good

SAL
Yeah he was just trying to flex, but come on you know where I’m from

TEAMMATES
We know, we know, Philly you always

saying it

They all laugh, Sal and his teammates walk off.

CUT TO:

53 . INT. CHANEL'S HOUSE 53

Sal is sitting in Chanel's living room with an ice bag on his knee, trying to rest up.

CHANEL
Babe you did crazy good today, how

much you had like 20 points and 15

rebounds?!

SAL
Yeah something like that, ahh

He's in pain.

CHANEL
What's wrong? Are you alright?

SAL
Yeah I'm good my knee just hurts a

bit, I think when I went up to grab
a rebound it happened when the
other teams point guard undercut
me. I think I'm good though.

Chanel's mother, MRS.GARCIA (Latin woman, late 40s) walks in the kitchen from her room, while Chanel and Sal sit on the couch icing his ankle.

MRS. GARCIA
You kids want something to eat

SAL
Thanks that would be great
Mrs.Garcia

CHANEL
Thanks mom, you going to make that

pasta dish you always love

MRS. GARCIA
(laughing)

You know it!

SAL
(to Chanel)

Babe tomorrow is the championship

game, I-

CHANEL
Look at me, you'll do great babe.

They share a kiss.

54 INT. BASKETBALL COURT - BUSHROD CLASSIC 54

The crowd is bumping, wall to wall people in the gym, scouts everywhere, it's the north Oakland sharks taking on the Bushrod rebels, John Walkers team.

SAL
You ready to do this

JOHN WALKER
Like I told you before y'all ain't

coming up in my gym and winning

Sal walks on the court staring directly at John, John stares back with a look of fury on his face. They jump ball, Sal gets the tip and the game starts.

D. SMITH
Dee up! Sal you got John Walker

stay with him

Walker comes down, tries to crossover Sal but he's not moving. He pulls up for a jumper and swish it goes in while Sal puts a hand in his face.

JOHN WALKER
I told you this is my court!

Sal takes the ball out of bounds to their point guard, bumping and trying to get in position with John Walker guarding him. MJ is sitting in the crowd and yells out.

MJ
Yo ref! What the hell you doing he's fouling him!

Leon gets the ball at the top of the key and drives to the basket for the dunk, the crowd goes wild.

LEON
Yo Sal, stay with him!

SAL
I got em

While Sal denies John from getting the ball, a blind screen isn't called and in slow motion John Walker cuts back door for the alley oop dunk. The rebels take a 5 to 2 lead against the sharks.

FADE TO BLACK:

ANNOUNCER
We got a close one here!

LEON
Sal, what you doing man?! Get ya head in the game

Sal takes the ball out and gets it to the guard, Sal runs a pick and roll screen and goes for the alley oop toward the hoop but John Walker bumps Sal while he is in mid air, Sal falls down on the court with a thunderous thump and Leon and teammates run over to John Walker pushing him. The referees try to restore order while Sal is helped up. The game resumes, both teams go on a flurry scoring points back and forth running the score of the game up.

ANNOUNCER
It's 55 rebels 52 sharks with 2 minutes left in the first half.

The rebels point guard crosses over the sharks point guard and heads for the basket. Sal starts to chase him down for

the steal or block. When out of nowhere Sal gets blind side screened by John Walker knocking him down to the ground with a thud, the wind is knocked out of Sal and his nose starts to bleed while a minor shoving match starts between the two teams.

MJ
(in the stands)

Yo what the hell ref!! Eject him

they been doing that all game

MJ gets up and runs on the court trying to confront the

referee while others in the stands hold him back. Leon helps Sal up.

LEON
Sal man you don’t have to do this,

its only a game

SAL
Nah man, not to me, not to me, come on!

Sal gets control of the ball and starts to orchestrate the

show facilitating the game flow, coming down crossing people

over, throwing alley oops to his teammates, Sal pulls up for

3 points as the half time buzzer goes off. The score is

rebels 61 sharks 60.

CUT TO:

55 INT. LOCKER ROOM - BUSHROD CLASSIC 55

All the guys sit there with their heads down.

SAL
Ain’t no reason for us to have our

heads down! Pick em up. They aren’t

better than us, we know that, and

we aren’t playing like it! Lets

play with the hunger we started

this tournament with! Bring it in

1,2,3 sharks!

CUT TO:

56 INT. BASKETBALL COURT - BUSHROD CLASSIC 56

Sal is playing point guard now, he comes down calling plays getting his men to score, feeding the ball to Leon and getting buckets himself, the college scouts look on with smiles on their faces as they see this kid out of nowhere do his thing.

It’s 30 seconds left and a tie game 85 to 85. The

sharks point guard has the ball and he crosses left and

crosses right. The other guard on the rebels steals the

ball, while the clock counts down Leon chases down the ball and grabs the rebound.

Its 5 seconds left in the game Leon throws a full court pass to Sal. Sal drives to the basket for the dunk but is fouled, the crowd is tense as the clock ran out. Sal misses the first free throw but makes the second! He is overtaken with joy and tackled by his teammates as they win the Bushrod Classic

Chanel comes to give Sal a kiss in the crowd.

John Walker finds Sal in the crowd.

JOHN WALKER
Yo Sal, real talk you can hoop bro,good game

SAL
Thanks man you too, its all good

They shake hands.

FADE OUT:

57 INT.MJ’S HOUSE 57

Sal sitting on the couch

SAL
Leon its been a long year...

He’s looking through his new year book.

SAL (CONT'D)
I wouldn't take anything back.
Ican't believe I graduate tomorrow.

LEON
Yeah me too, everything went so

fast, you graduating and finally

seeing your mom after 3 years...

SAL
Yeah...wait what you say?

LEON
Umm yeah, don't be mad at me it was supposed to be a surprise. D.Smith is picking your mom up at the airport right now.

Sal sits there on the couch in shock, the front door opens

and Sal turns around still in shock. It's just MJ that

walks in.

SAL
Yo Lee I'll be right back

Sal walks to the bathroom

58 .INT. BATHROOM 58

Sal splashes water on his face.

SAL
(to himself)

Mom? What am I supposed to say its

been so long...

The door bell rings, it's D.Smith with Sal's mom.

59 INT. MJ'S HOUSE 59

D. SMITH
Hey Sal come out where you at?!

Sal walks out of the bathroom, he turns the corner and walks into the living room and sees his mom.

SAL
Mom?

Sal walks up and gives her a hug while crying they embrace each other.

MOM
I'm so proud of you, I love you and I'm sorry for everything

SAL
It's alright mom, I'm just glad that you're here to see me graduate, I love you too, I never stopped.

CUT TO:

60 INT. AUDITORIUM GRADUATION DAY 60

Sal walks across the stage for his high school graduation,his mother is in the crowd smiling.

SAL (V.O.)
My mother flew across the country

having never been to California to

watch me graduate. People can hold

on to regret, or people can build

and move on. Because the measure of a man is not what you are its whom you are

CUT TO:

61 INT. BATHROOM-DAY 61

Sal is in the mirror fixing up his tie and collared shirt getting ready for a job interview. He walks out of the bathroom into the kitchen and starts to pour orange juice while he talks to Leon. Leon is watching ESPN.

LEON
So where you interviewing today

brah?

SAL
Man, I have an interview over at

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAL (cont'd)
the gas station off El Cerrito, I

hope I get this one. I have to

start preparing for my future, I

might enroll in junior college down

the street if everything goes well

and I get this job.

LEON
Man don't give up hope just yet, I

mean you had a great year and

someone was bound to have seen you

SAL
Maybe but who? I haven't received a letter or an offer and the Bushrod tournament has been over for 4 months, I just have to face the facts

LEON
Don't say that

SAL
Don't say what? Dude your good you have scholarship offers from everyone I gave it my all

Sal gets his jacket and opens the front door to leave for the job interview. As Sal walks out the door Leon gets up to close the door behind him when an old lady, MISS. LOUIS(late 60s, Caucasian woman) who lives next door walks up as

Sal passes her. She is carrying mail.

MISS. LOUIS

LEON!

LEON
Hey Miss Louis how you doing?

MISS. LOUIS
The mail man put some of MJ'S mail in my box again.

LEON
Thanks, Miss Louis...hey Sal! Sal!!

Sal turns around.

SAL
Whats good?

He turns around and Leon is holding up a letter from Oregon State University for him. Sal is stunned he hurries back to the house and Leon hands him the letter. Sal holds the letter in his hand and looks away savoring every moment before he opens it.

Leon calls MJ and D.Smith in the living room where Sal sits down at a table to open his letter. D.Smith with his hands on Sal's shoulders shaking him as he looks at the letter before opening it.

Everyone surrounds him

AS SAL OPENS THE LETTER INSERT FLASHBACK CLIPS OF THE WHOLE MOVIE

AS THE CLIPS PLAY:

SAL (V.O.)
I went through my whole life

without stability. I was looking

for a foundation, for a family, a

place to call home when it was

right in front of me the whole

time, put there by faith. I had

friends who were like my brothers,

no matter what my living situation

was not having a bed to sleep in at least I had a couch, no matter how rough the road was I had to stay resilient all roads led to me

becoming a man of faith, a man of

responsibility, a man who is

grateful for the opportunities he

has received.

FADE TO BLACK:

62 INT. OREGON STATE BASKETBALL COURT 62

Sal walks onto the basketball court at Oregon State

University in the empty gym. As he is dressed in his jersey and gear from head to toe, Sal stands at center court with a smile on his face and watery eyed with a basketball in his hands.

SAL (V.O.)
Dreams do come true, say no more...

BLACKOUT

THE END.