

VERVE

# ***GET LITE***

Written by

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VERVE/LIT

We hear the sounds of a train coming to a stop.

And read:

If we're not supposed to dance,  
Why all this music?

Greg Orr

**OVER BLACK.**

A stampede. The rush of commuters as they board a train.

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)  
(intercom)  
Stand clear of the closing doors.

As we hear the doors close, we open to --

**INT. TRAIN - EARLY MORNING.**

Summer. New York City. The morning commute.

149th St. station left in the dust as the 2/3 heads downtown.

The train is crowded, airless, miserable.

**CREDITS ROLL AS WE SEE --**

A banker playing Candy Crush, a pregnant woman rubbing her belly, a Sikh with a Chihuahua in his kaftan, a construction worker reading the Wall Street Journal, triplets with a Trinidadian caretaker, a homeless man combing his beard.

The MTA subway. The great democratizer.

We end on a lanky black teen wearing khaki pants, Penny Loafers, and a button down which blooms sweat patterns.

This is SAUNDERS BELL (17).

His head is tilted at 45 degrees, ear buds are in, IG feed scrolls across his tired eyes. Bored as can be.

But after checking his Casio watch, he smiles. And like clockwork, here they come.

Right through the inter train doors. In SLOW MOTION.

All wearing the same uniform: black track pants, wife beaters, flat brimmed Mets hats.

And on their feet? Air Force 1's with leather wings protruding from the heel, the Greek Gods of the subway.

The leader of the crew is an enthusiastic though chubby black man with three days of stubble sprinkled on his tired face.

This is PRESTON SAMPSON (33).

## PRESTON

Rise and shine, ladies and gentlemen. Rise and shine. Welcome to the greatest show on earth...or at the very least today's commute. Remember. One ride can change your life. Here. We. Go.

A Puerto Rican beat maker fiercer than young Rosie Perez taps on her iPhone. This is OLALLA "OOMPH" CORRAL (19).

A catchy beat spews out of a scuffed purple bluetooth amp.

Oomph's pint sized cousin launches into a crab walk. Though neither big nor a man, this is RAFE "BIG MAN" CORRAL (9).

After a few hat tricks, he throws to --

LEE "YOUTUBE" JEONG (23), the videographer of the crew, who taps record on an iPhone holstered to his winged sneaker.

He jumps on the center pole and starts pirouetting.

We see the faces of commuters roulette from his shoe POV.

He lands on the ground and takes a theatrical bow, eliciting claps from the battle-weary passengers - a small miracle!

And now Preston is up.

Though past his prime, the man can still hit.

He begins with a Tone-Wop Foot Shuffle then weaves into a spastic Harlem Shake.

*(NOTE: Some moves will be described in detail. Some won't. But all are real. And all are nasty as hell.)*

And now the others join in for the finale.

Slides and turns and flips and spins. They're a combination of acrobats and strippers and dancers and vaudevillians.

And they have a playful acrobatic subway-based style all their own: Litefeet.

And as the beat breaks, all four members hit a Bad One in unison - a fierce exclamation mark that ends the routine.

The look on Saunders's face is pure amazement.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Thank you very much! We are the  
Rise & Shine crew! Dancing in the  
greatest nation on the world!

Big Man comes around with a vintage metal lunch box that has  
Porky Pig on it. This is the Piggy Bank.

BIG MAN  
Donation! Dollar dollar bill y'all.

A few singles here and there. Not great but that's the gig.  
Saunders makes sure to throw a bill in the metal box.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
Appreciate you.

PRESTON  
On to the next.

Rise & Shine push through the inter train doors.

Commuters return to whatever distraction is available.  
Anything to forget you're in a packed metal coffin.

As Saunders watches them go, a longing spreads over his face.  
Because he's ridden these trains his whole life.

But he's never floated in them.

**END CREDITS.**

**EXT. BROADWAY/72ND STREET - MORNING.**

Saunders deftly wades through a gauntlet of strollers,  
bankers, hot dog vendors, and young professionals.

He ends up at 81st and West End, in front of --

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - SAME.**

A progressive private school on West End Avenue. The hallways  
are mostly empty - it's summer.

We follow Saunders from behind as he moves towards --

**THE ENGINEERING LAB.**

Open space under fluorescents. Industrial cabinets line the  
perimeter. Pairs of TEENAGERS clik clak at computer stations  
that connect by large cables to rudimentary automatons.

They tweak lines of code and watch as their robots move or - in most cases - do absolutely nothing.

MR. VEASLEY (45), a bearded teacher with a sweater vest, inspects the progress and offers ideas.

Saunders joins an overweight preppy girl who types away at a work station. This is NORA HURWITZ (17).

They fist bump then get down to business.

SAUNDERS  
How's Herman doing?

NORA  
Sleepy. Doesn't want to move today.

She types some code into the console. HERMAN - the robot they are programming - stays still.

SAUNDERS  
I know the feeling.

Saunders takes over typing.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
Summer school's an oxymoron. You got summer. You got school. Those two don't mix.

Saunders hits return on the console. Robot Herman is unimpressed. Nora takes back over, tweaking his code.

NORA  
You'll be singing a different tune when MIT comes a-knocking.

Nora presses enter and voila - one of Herman's arms moves. Is it Johnny5 or the Iron Giant? Not even close. But it's something. Nora smiles proudly.

NORA (CONT'D)  
Don't worry. You've been riding my coattails since middle school. I'm cool with it at this point.

Saunders looks out the window. But his head isn't in the clouds above. It's in the tunnels below.

**INT. SUBWAY - LATER.**

Saunders heads uptown, once again armored up: Head at 45 degrees, earbuds in, IG dancing across his eyes.

PHONE INSERT: *Youtube's feed of Rise hitting on the trains.*

Saunders finishes the clip. Then plays it again.  
And again and again and again.

**EXT. BRONX - DUSK.**

Saunders weaves through an emcee hawking his mixtape, a churro lady, a hustler selling loosies, two Nigerians selling discount t-shirts - everything the Bronx can throw at him.

**EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SUNSET.**

He ducks under chain link into an empty construction site.

What's he doing here? Gonna swing a hammer? Demo dry wall?  
Nope. But he is about to get to work.

After making sure the coast is clear, he ditches his book bag and grabs his phone.

He thumbs his way to *Soundcloud*.

Selects a track from a specific user: OOMPH.

And as he slides the volume up, we hear the beat that slaps in his earbuds.

He climbs up the scaffolding, starts swinging monkey bar style. Getting the limbs loose.

And then it happens.

He vaults to a vertical pole and, using his hands, lifts his entire body horizontal, every muscle straining. He spins himself around and around.

Then wraps his legs around the pole, sends his torso and head on a wild arc. Just using his feet, he rail slides down the scaffolding.

And it becomes clear: He's doing pieces of the Rise routine from the train earlier. He knows their moves inside and out.

And not just *doing* it. *Crushing* it. He's getting lite. And as he does, we break from reality:

The bolts start to shake, the metal bars tense and bend, and the scaffolding slowly dislodges from the ground. And for the first time we realize: Newton got it wrong.

Gravity has nothing on Saunders.



**INT. BRONX CONDO - NIGHT.**

A modest but well-appointed two bedroom condo.

Coltrane's "A Love Supreme" on the Technics 1200.

A large framed photo on the wall - "A Great Day in Harlem" - shows the jazz greats who lived just 6 stops south of here.

In the kitchen, a man stirs a pot of penne. He carefully spoons it onto two plates, the exact amount on each.

This is a man who likes things just so. And no other way. This is KHALIL BELL (45).

Saunders comes in, sweaty from his scaffolding routine.

KHALIL  
Dinner's ready.

Saunders washes his hands, splashes some water on his neck. He takes a seat as his Dad puts a plate in front of him.

Saunders dives in with a fury. Khalil eats slowly.

KHALIL (CONT'D)  
How's school? That robot making moves or what?

SAUNDERS  
I guess.

KHALIL  
You guess?

SAUNDERS  
We're making progress.

KHALIL  
Good. That's real good. Glad to hear you're enjoying it.

SAUNDERS  
(half under his breath)  
Didn't say that.

Khalil sets down his fork and knife, each the exact distance from the plate, perfectly straight. Narrows his gaze.

KHALIL  
I grew up six blocks from here.  
Know what it was like back then?  
The Boogie Down?  
(MORE)

KHALIL (CONT'D)  
I'll put it this way. No one had  
the chance to take AP engineering  
in Manhattan.

SAUNDERS  
(not this again)  
I know where you grew up.

KHALIL  
You know *where*. But not *how*.

Saunders stares at his Dad, not interested in a lecture.

KHALIL (CONT'D)  
You think that class is cheap? You  
think I got nothing else to spend  
my money on?  
(settling down)  
I just...you got a real shot, man.  
MIT, Stanford, Carnegie Mellon,  
wherever you want.  
(beat)  
I couldn't take that shot. But I  
can throw up an alley-oop.

Khalil pantomimes lobbing an imaginary basketball. He leaves  
his shooting hand up, waiting for Saunders.

Saunders rolls his eyes but nevertheless "dunks" it.

A familiar routine.

The two of them resume eating. In silence.

**LATER.**

Khalil works a crossword puzzle on the couch. Saunders  
finishes up the dishes, heads into the living room.

He passes a small framed photo on the mantel of Khalil and  
Saunders. Between them is a smiling beautiful woman.

Noticeably absent from their lives now.

**INT. SAUNDERS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.**

Small but tidy.

On the wall is a poster showcasing the Alvin Ailey dance  
theatre - a lithe dancer caught mid-leap.

And on closer inspection we notice this dancer is the same as  
the smiling woman from the family photograph.

Saunders sprawls on the bed, an engineering book open nearby. But that's not what he's studying. He's studying his phone.

YOUTUBE'S FEED: *Rise & Shine hitting on the trains.*

We push close on Saunders's face till we can see the phone light flicker in his eyes.

**EXT. BRONX - MORNING - ESTABLISHING.**

Aerial shot as the daybreak rouses the borough from sleep. We fly past nine brick towers -- The Bronx River Houses.

PRELAP: *A simple short riff plays on a Midi Keyboard.*

**INT. OOMPH'S APARTMENT - DAY.**

Popcorn ceiling, plastic on the couch, Jesus on the wall. Dialysis machine in the corner. An old person lives here.

Or maybe *used to* live here.

Oomph works a small Midi keyboard on stacked milk crates. She tickles the plastic ivories, bobs to the melody.

BIG MAN (O.S.)  
Huuuungry.

Big Man crawls into the room, a wife beater tied over his head like a shipwrecked mariner.

OOMPH  
So get some food.

BIG MAN  
Tastes better when you make it.

Oomph loops the beat, adds drums.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
I feel faint.

He mock collapses. Unable to resist her nephew's charms, Oomph goes to the kitchen and pours him a bowl of Fruity Pebbles. His eyes light up --

DRIP. DRIP.

-- but dim when the milk gallon offers only a single splash.

Oomph fills the remainder of the bowl with water. Big Man slumps in disappointment.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
When's the record deal coming  
through? We need those "Mo Money Mo  
Problems" problems.

OOMPH  
Just wait. After these slaps hit at  
Kingdome, it'll pop off.

Big Man smiles brightly, dreaming of that good life. But  
after he shovels a spoonful of "breakfast," the smile fades.

BIG MAN  
Water Pebbles.

**INT. STOCK ROOM - MORNING.**

Goya products and various sundries stacked against a wall.  
And shoe boxes incongruously stacked against another.

Youtube sits at a desk made up of cinder blocks and a long  
sheet of plexi. On top are a few monitors.

YOUTUBE  
C'mon SneakerBoi69er. I know you  
want em.

Like a high frequency day trader, he's got multiple windows  
open: Ebay, FiteClub, Sneaker Don, Complex.

Youtube is sneaker reseller. And he's tracking a potential  
sale of gold Jordan 4's.

On a shelf, a bodega cat meows from a throne of Doritos bags.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)  
Marked em down once already, Bo.

Bo meows quizzically. Youtube clicks on the computer.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)  
His buyer status is rated gold.  
Less than 10% returned.

Bo purrs. The auction goes on as planned. While he waits,  
Youtube throws his phone into his shoe holster, practices  
quick releasing it like an Old West gunslinger.

We hear a chime on the computer. Youtube checks and -- yes!  
The sale has gone through. He pumps his fist triumphantly.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)  
That's what I'm talking about, Bo!

**INT. BODEGA - MOMENTS LATER.**

Youtube wraps up the Jordan's using saran wrap from a sandwich station. Bo naps on a Ramen 12-pack.

Nearby, an older Korean woman guns price tags onto bottles of Windex. This is Youtube's mother, MRS. TUBE. (late 50's).

MRS. TUBE  
Need your help with inventory.

YOUTUBE  
I'm doing business.

MRS. TUBE  
Selling sneakers and videotaping  
your friends on the train?

YOUTUBE  
(shaking his phone)  
This is my money maker. I get that  
blue check won't be long till them  
green checks follow.

MRS. TUBE  
When you're done playing, please  
price tag the back three aisles.

Youtube and Bo share a commiserating look.

YOUTUBE  
(Big Willie Style)  
Parents just don't understand.

Bo agrees, licks his paws.

**INT. BRONX RIVER PROJECTS - MORNING.**

Elevator doors open revealing Preston, wearing the familiar brown UPS uniform. We track with him to his one bedroom.

**INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - SAME.**

Preston sets his keys down. A large boisterous woman in an MTA uniform enters the living room. She's buttoning her shirt, unwrapping an Egg McMuffin, and applying makeup.

This is KEISHA (38).

KEISHA  
How was it?

Preston shrugs, stoic. He clocks the gooey sammy, perks up.

PRESTON  
Can I get a McMuffin?

KEISHA  
You get a McNuffin. You're training  
for that Kingdome competition.

PRESTON  
Almost in fighting shape.

Keisha gives him a skeptical once over.

KEISHA  
Keep eating your Wheaties.  
(gooey bite)  
See you at the office?

Preston nods, gives her a kiss. She whirlwinds out the door.

**BEDROOM.**

Preston sheds the stank uniform. And replaces it with track pants, a wife beater, and his winged AFl's.

He looks in the mirror: Ain't pretty, but it'll have to do.

**EXT. 174TH STREET - MORNING.**

Rise & Shine meet up outside the busy station.

PRESTON  
How's the count, Big Man?

Big Man, munching on a churro like it's a cigar, opens his lunch box. In FAST MOTION, he counts the bills like a Vegas croupier.

BIG MAN  
Two thirty eight.

PRESTON  
For yesterday?

BIG MAN  
For the week.

PRESTON  
No bueno. And our socials?

Youtube quick draws his phone from his holster, dials up their analytics.

YOUTUBE

View count steady. Low. But steady.  
Engagement - slightly down.  
Followers. Let's see here.  
(surprised)  
Uptick in followers last week.

PRESTON

Hell yeah.

YOUTUBE

(upon further inspection)  
From Uzbekistan.

PRESTON

Bots count.

YOUTUBE

Showtime has ten times our --

PRESTON

I don't care what Showtime has. We  
ain't Showtime. And they ain't us.  
They work the parks, we work the  
trains. Totally different hustle.

Clearly this is a sore spot for Preston.

**INT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER.**

The crew makes their way through the station.

OOMPH

Kingdome is the baddest tournament  
all year. You wanna be somebody you  
gotta come correct. How we gonna  
enter with those kinda numbers?

Youtube quick releases his piece, dials up the Kingdome IG.

YOUTUBE

Cardi's a judge this year. And  
Complex is sponsoring!

PRESTON

Forget Cardi. Forget Complex.  
How we hit is what matters. Period.

YOUTUBE

My guy. If we're gonna play in the  
finals, we need an MJ to build the  
team around. Then we can play ball.

PRESTON  
You're looking at him.

Youtube pops his retro flip up sunglass to get a closer inspection at the older man. Preston waves him off.

They approach the station booth, where Keisha is at work. She's an MTA station agent.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Hello young lady. How's the  
downtown train looking today?

KEISHA  
Looks good. No delays.

She winks at him - a signal.

PRESTON  
Good to know. Have a lovely day.

She smiles at him as Rise swipes through the turnstile.

#### **INT. TRAIN - MORNING.**

Once again, the daily summer commute for Saunders:  
Earbuds in. Head at 45. Scrolling IG.

And that's when he hears it. One of Oomph's monster tracks?  
Not exactly.

Two MARIACHI SINGERS strum guitars, singing dolorous  
canciones about unrequited love. A Litefeet banger this most  
certainly is not.

He checks his watch, concerned.

And right on time, Rise pushes through the train doors. The  
mariachi music hits them like a ton of bricks.

YOUTUBE  
Oh hell no.

BIG MAN  
What's this rah-rah bullshit?

PRESTON  
Lemme handle it.

Preston approaches the two Mariachi singers.



PRESTON (CONT'D)  
These our cars. You get the  
lettered ones. We get numbered.  
Wider aisles. Higher ceilings.

MARIACHI #1  
Los pasajeros don't seem to care  
about tus reglas.

He head nods to some commuters shelling out singles. Preston  
heads back to his crew in a huff. He nods to Oomph.

PRESTON  
Drop a beat.

OOMPH  
Let's just hop the next one.

PRESTON  
It's the express. Fewer stops.  
That'll halve our rush hour take.  
Drop a beat.

Oomph sets down the scuffed amp, taps play on her phone.  
Preston revs up, launches into his preamble.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Rise and shine, ladies and  
gentlemen. Rise and shine. Welcome  
to the greatest show on earth...or  
at the very least today's commute.  
One ride can change your life.  
Here. We. Go.

He transitions a Cheddar Bob Thread into a Tornado Spin.

Not to be upstaged, the Mariachis play louder.

Preston is pissed, ups the ante. He motions to Big Man.

They jump into a choreographed routine where Big Man attaches  
to Preston's torso, making it appear like the kid has chubby  
adult legs. The crowd eats it up.

In response, one of the Mariachi singers launches into a  
Jarabe Tapatio - the traditional Mexican hat dance.

It's a Mexican/Bronx standoff!

Youtube unholsters his phone to record. Most commuters pay no  
mind. But Saunders is on the edge of his seat.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Time to dead these chollos.

Preston jumps onto a pole, starts to Peter Pan, spinning round and round. Then he punctuates with a Kiss of Death.

But he doesn't plant his hands properly. He falls down, assed out on the subway floor. Directly in front of Saunders.

Saunders can't help it. He giggles at the sight.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Fuck you laughin' at? Think you can  
do better prep school?

We push into Saunders's face.

The sound fades away till all we can hear is the bump bump bump of train over tracks. It gets louder, syncing up with Saunders's pounding heart.

He looks down at trembling legs, sweaty palms. And then, before he even knows it, he's standing up.

SAUNDERS  
(frog in throat)  
I can try.

All eyes on Saunders. Commuters, Rise & Shine, even the Mariachi singers. All staring like W to the T to the F.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
(to Oomph)  
Play "Brick Destroyer."

OOMPH  
You know my songs?  
(to Big Man)  
He knows my songs?

Big Man shrugs. She sizes up the lanky nerd in front of her.

OOMPH (CONT'D)  
I got you. One piping hot beat,  
fresh out the oven.

Oomph serves up the beat. Saunders head nods, shuffling back and forth. He's never danced in front of an audience.

But as the beat drops, he's hit with a shot of adrenaline. This is what Oomph's music does to him.

Saunders jumps up onto the ceiling railing. Pulls his legs between his arms like a gymnast and flips onto the floor.

A hush falls over the crowd.

Saunders then launches into a Litefeet dance routine that is powerful, energetic, and somehow *emotional*.

Using dance, Saunders depicts his Jekyll and Hyde split personality: a studious nerd and a powerful dancer.

He tries to "tamp down" his limbs. But it's no use. Each have a mind of their own and cannot be contained.

He then launches into a Butterfly Twist into a Tic Tac Toe.

These are not easy moves to execute. And they're definitely a little rough around the edges. But the entire train now knows what we already knew: this kid is undeniable.

As the song hits it's final break, he nails a Stunna Dive.

The train erupts in applause as Saunders catches his breath.

YOUTUBE  
(inspecting his phone)  
Please tell me I got that.

Oomph comes over to Saunders.

OOMPH  
That was fire.

And just as he was beginning to catch his breath, she dabs him up, rocketing his heartbeat once again.

SAUNDERS  
You're fire...I mean...your beats  
are...fire.

Don Juan's not so slick line is further compromised by his blushing. And his feet shaking in his Penny Loafers.

Big Man goes around collecting ones, fives, and tens.

Even one of the Mariachi guys takes a single out of his guitar case: Credit where credit's due.

CONDUCTOR (P.A.)  
This is....74th street.

BING BONG. The train doors open. Passengers rush out.

Saunders grabs his book bag and heads to the doors.

CONDUCTOR (P.A.) (CONT'D)  
Stand clear of the closing doors.

Saunders makes it to the platform just as the doors close. He turns back to find Preston, still on the train, staring hard. The veteran and the rookie. One on the train, one off.

The train whooshes away.

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - ENGINEERING LAB - DAY.**

Saunders works with Nora on their robotic project.

NORA

To initiate our intended sequence we need to effect six degrees of freedom. Three for position - left/right, forward/backward, up/down - and three for orientation. That's the yaw, the pitch, and the roll.

She checks some of their code against a textbook.

NORA (CONT'D)

But we are lacking in lateral, axial, and rotational compliance. Remember, we need Herman to exhibit complex dynamic behavior that is both accurate and repeatable.

Saunders is daydreaming about what happened on the train.

NORA (CONT'D)

You follow me?

SAUNDERS

(snapping out of it)  
Motion but with purpose.

NORA

That's one way to put it.

SAUNDERS

Each tiny movement executed in the right sequence with total control.  
(realizing)  
It's a dance.

NORA

A dance? Bit of a reach, metaphor-wise. It's closer to synchronized swimming if the swimmers had a task to achieve or maybe like the inside of a clock, each part needing to work in service of the whole.

(MORE)

NORA (CONT'D)  
But really a neural network is its  
own self contained metaphor if you  
think about...

The sound of Nora's explanation fades out. All Saunders can think about is floating on those trains.

**INT. SAUNDERS BEDROOM - NIGHT.**

Saunders lays in bed, staring at his phone with wide eyes.

Youtube's latest post shows him hitting on the train. Him! Saunders. The one and only. In the flesh. Well...in pixels.

But that's not what he's looking at.

He's zoomed into Oomph, watching her as she watches him.

Replaying the clip, studying her every reaction for a clue. What does *she* think about *him*?

Headlights flash blue white shapes on the wall as we --

MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. TRAIN - DAY.**

The shapes of light coming through the train windows.

Saunders, armored up and in battle position. He checks his watch, we see the smile. He looks to the inter train doors.

But they don't come. Off his disappointed face --

**INT. 74TH STREET STATION - DAY.**

Saunders exits the train. Takes the escalator up.

PRESTON (O.S.)  
Prep school.

Waiting at the top is Preston. He holds a brown shopping bag.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Lemme get at you for a second.

Saunders keeps walking, not trying to catch heat for his upstaging of the elder statesman on his home turf.

SAUNDERS  
I got class.

PRESTON  
It's summer.

SAUNDERS  
Extra credit.  
(beat)  
Sorry about what happened  
yesterday. That was an accident.

PRESTON  
Hold up, man. Hold up. That was no  
accident. You got the goods.

Saunders stops.

SAUNDERS  
(pride)  
For real? You think so?

PRESTON  
I mean it needs work. Way too  
tight. You need to relax. Plus your  
transitions are sloppy. And your  
sequences are out of order. Still.  
Diamond starts out a lump of coal.

SAUNDERS  
(hurt)  
I'm not a dancer.

Saunders keeps walking. Easier to just bury this side of him.  
Preston walks alongside him.

PRESTON  
No, you aren't. But with my  
training, you damn well could be.  
(beat)  
So what's your deal, man?

SAUNDERS  
What do you mean?

PRESTON  
What's your grind? Your hustle?

Saunders looks at his shoes, hoping they'll provide an  
answer. But they keep quiet. Penny loafers don't snitch.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Okay. How about what's your name?

Now Saunders looks him in his eye.

SAUNDERS

Saunders.

PRESTON

There we go. Nice to meet you,  
Saunders. I'm Preston.

They shake hands. But Preston doesn't let go.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Listen Saunders. Got a proposition  
for you. How would you feel about  
training with me? With my crew?

SAUNDERS

Me? I can't -- I'm not --

PRESTON

I'll teach you. Everything you need  
to know. The moves, the tricks, the  
traps, the hustle. You got the  
talent. Just needs to be shaped.  
(in for the kill)  
Let me shape it.

Saunders, a deer in headlights. Turns out when offered that  
one thing you've been chasing, it's hard to just accept it.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Something I want you to have.

Out of the brown paper bag, Preston pulls a pair of winged  
Air Force 1's. They glow. Saunders's eyes go wide as saucers.

SAUNDERS

I don't have cash for that right  
now. I appreciate --

PRESTON

I'm not *selling* them to you. I'm  
*giving* em to you.

Saunders shakes his head. Can't come up with any words.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Try em on. You don't like the fit?  
Give em back this afternoon.

Preston walks away, leaving Saunders with the winged kicks.  
He basks in their glow. Then snaps out of it.

SAUNDERS

(yelling after him)  
This afternoon?

PRESTON  
Unionport Yard. East 180th street.

Preston descends back into the station. Saunders stays dead still. He looks at the winged shoes. They shoot currents of electricity through his body.

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - LAB - DAY.**

Nora is at the console, typing in code.

NORA  
We've had success before sending  
individual actions to each node.

SAUNDERS  
Kinda creates a weird Frankenstein  
effect. As if each limb and joint  
has a mind of its own.

Nora presses return. We see Herman spastically come to life like a marionette controlled by an amateur puppeteer.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
(echoing Preston)  
We need smooth transitions from one  
action to the next. Sequences  
executed to perfection, all  
occurring in the exact right order.

Saunders, inspired, whiteboards a new approach.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
Check this out. Each "body part" is  
comprised of dozens of nodes which  
in turn control other nodes. That's  
the branch theory. But we need an  
executive command function. A  
purpose. So it's not just separate  
commands to control the arms which  
control the hands which control the  
fingers which control the  
fetch/grab mechanism. We need an  
engine. A heart.

NORA  
What a romantic.

He playfully throws the marker at her.



**EXT. UNIONPORT YARD - AFTERNOON.**

An empty rail yard in the South Bronx. A dozen trains sit motionless at bumper blocks.

Saunders walks between the trains with trepidation. What's he doing here? Why's he wearing sneakers with wings on them?

He decides to bounce before he gets jumped or arrested.

OOMPH (O.S.)  
They look good on you.

Saunders turns, startled. Oomph materializes out of thin air.

SAUNDERS  
How long you been creeping?

OOMPH  
Long enough to check you out.

SAUNDERS  
(feeling himself)  
Oh yeah? So whatcha think?

Oomph walks around him. Close. Very close. The hair on his neck stands at attention.

OOMPH  
Jury's still out.

SAUNDERS  
So what are we doing here?

Their almost moment is interrupted as Big Man and Youtube emerge from nearby train.

Big shakes Skittles into his mouth. (He's got a sugar habit). Youtube sports icy Jordan 6's. (He's got a sneaker habit).

YOUTUBE  
No wash or maintenance facilities.

OOMPH  
Security guard's only here in the morning and at night.

BIG MAN  
This is where trains go to sleep.

YOUTUBE  
Know what they dream about?

Saunders shakes his head.

PRESTON (O.S.)  
They dream about us.

Saunders looks up to find Preston sitting on top of a train.  
His legs dangle off the edge. And of course the winged AF1's.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
See. Normally? A train's just a  
sardine can on rails. Shuttling  
bored folks from A to B.

BIG MAN  
But not when we in the mix.

YOUTUBE  
We breathe life into them.

OOMPH  
Turn em into Broadway theaters.

PRESTON  
And every time the doors close,  
it's our opening night.

Preston jumps off the train, lands in front of Saunders.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
That's what getting lite is all  
about. That freedom. That flow.  
Letting go of the outside world,  
letting go of *everything* -- till  
it's just you and the music,  
hurling through space.  
(beat)  
One ride can change your life.

Saunders looks at the trains, the afternoon light kissing  
them just right. And they do look different. Special.

Oomph drags out her scuffed amp and powers it up.

OOMPH  
Got a track that's perfect for you.

SAUNDERS  
For me?

Oomph taps her phone. We hear the keyboard and bass intro to  
a playful Litefeet track. It builds in intensity.

We'll call this *Saunders's Theme*.

OOMPH  
Whatcha think? You wanna get lite?

Saunders smiles, wipes his sweaty palms on his AF1's.  
And just as the beat hits we --

**BEGIN INITIATION MONTAGE.**

Preston heatedly choreographs inside the empty trains.

Saunders, Youtube, and Oomph follow suit.

They go through the routine, each one after the next.

Saunders is up. He executes well, but he's stiff.

**PAUSE MONTAGE.**

PRESTON

Too tight. Do it again.

He tries another Pin Drop.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Relax, man. You're in your head.  
Getting lite ain't about the head.  
Can't think your way into this.

SAUNDERS

Okay. I get it.

Saunders goes again. Trying his hardest. Oomph smiles at him.  
This kid's got heart.

After some tries, he nails the routine. Perfection.

He looks to Preston for approval. Nope.

PRESTON

I need you to *feel* it.

SAUNDERS

C'mon! That was perfect.

PRESTON

You got the sequence right. But if  
you ain't feeling it, it's nothing.

**RESUME MONTAGE.**

Now Preston gets Big Man in the mix, showing Saunders how to  
throw the kid into an aerial spin.

Saunders tries a throw. Big Man goes flying, narrowly missing  
the pole.

Big Man brushes himself off and shoulder checks Saunders.

Oomph smiles. She jumps onto the poles, does a few spins.

Saunders joins her, the two of them hanging from the rails.

Their dancing syncs up, a clear chemistry between them.

Youtube shoots the routine, his head bobbing the whole time. And Preston nods his approval, a thought clearly forming in his head: they may have just found their MJ.

**END MONTAGE.**

**EXT. BRONX RIVER - SUNSET.**

As the sun sets, Rise & Shine along with their new addition walk along the only fresh water river in the city.

YOUTUBE

You're a natural, man.

SAUNDERS

Moms was a dancer. Must be in my blood.

YOUTUBE

Can't wait till the trains get a load of you.

BIG MAN

Trains just the beginning. We're going all the way to the top. Kingdome, baby baby.

SAUNDERS

Kingdome?

YOUTUBE

The Super Bowl of B-Boy culture. Every emcee, graff writer, and dance squad shows at Kingdome.

OOMPH

Legends are made at Kingdome.

BIG MAN

Fortunes too.

(doing his best Kanye)

Wait till I get my money right.

Saunders stands there, the wheels turning.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
Hold up, hold up. You've never been  
to Kingdome?

OOMPH  
You've never been to Kingdome.

BIG MAN  
Not yet.  
(smiling at Preston)  
But we going this year.

PRESTON  
Enough about Kingdome. That's end  
of the month. What about tomorrow?

They reach a crossroads. Everyone lingers for a beat.

YOUTUBE  
We hittin' or what?

PRESTON  
Good question.

He turns to Saunders. Saunders thinks it over and nods.

SAUNDERS  
I'm down.

Youtube dabs up the crew, heads towards his train.

BIG MAN  
Let's dip. I need two CC's of  
Starburts and a Twix. Stat.

OOMPH  
Nerd.

BIG MAN  
Nerds! That'll work. Something.

Big Man heads down the road, kicking an empty soda can. Oomph  
approaches Saunders.

OOMPH  
I like your moves. Need some  
practice. But I like em.

SAUNDERS  
Your moves are also -- likable.  
(Don Juan takes his shot)  
We should practice sometime.

He takes out his phone, ready for them digits. She ignores the overture and hugs him before he has a chance to put his AF1 any further in his mouth.

OOMPH

See you tomorrow.

She runs after her pint-sized cousin. Now it's just Preston and Saunders. OG sizes up his protege.

PRESTON

They fit okay?

Saunders looks down at his shoes.

SAUNDERS

They fit perfect.

PRESTON

Good. Get some rest. One thing to hit on an empty train. Totally different with passengers.

SAUNDERS

Where do we meet?

PRESTON

8 in the morning. 174th street.

SAUNDERS

Everybody?

PRESTON

We rise and shine as a family. Or not at all.

Preston heads to the housing projects. And Saunders heads home. And the sun disappears behind the Hudson River.

**INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

Khalil is on the couch doing the crossword. Saunders enters.

KHALIL

9 letter word. Starts with "D."  
Magician's tricky act.

SAUNDERS

I dunno.

Saunders looks down, sees he's still wearing his winged AF1s. He quickly removes them, shoves them in his book bag.

KHALIL  
You hungry?

SAUNDERS  
Grabbed a slice after class.

KHALIL  
Deception.

Saunders stops in his tracks, caught red footed.

KHALIL (CONT'D)  
Magician's tricky act. 9 letters.  
Deception.

SAUNDERS  
(relief)  
Oh. Nice solve. I should do some  
problem sets.

He enters his room, shuts the door. Finally safe.

**BEDROOM.**

Saunders's heart pounds from the thrill of his afternoon. He shoves his engineering text books aside, dials up Youtube's social feed.

Once again, phone light flickers across his face.

FADE OUT.

**OVER BLACK** - we hear the sounds of the subway.

FADE IN:

**EXT. 174TH STREET - EARLY MORNING.**

Saunders meets the Rise camp outside the train station. The crew huddles up. Preston lays out the run of play, mostly so Saunders knows the deal.

PRESTON  
The morning commute. This is our  
bread and butter. We'll work each  
car, one by one. Front to back.  
Then hit the express downtown for  
Wall Street commuters. MTA workers,  
we bail. Service dogs, we bail.  
Angry commuters, we bail. And keep  
an eye out for Vandal Squad.

SAUNDERS

Vandal squad?

PRESTON

NYPD Task force dedicated to  
"quality of life" crimes. Basically  
they harass black and brown folks.  
But I got a source on the inside.  
Stay one step ahead of them.

BIG MAN

("teaching" Saunders)  
That's right. If Johnny Law comes  
around, just go straight incognito.

He lowers his Mets cap, crosses his arms.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)

(deep serious voice)  
They went thatta way.

SAUNDERS

Convincing.

PRESTON

Stick to what we practiced. Tone  
Wops. Bad Ones. Chicken Noodle  
Soups. A few pole tricks. Keep it  
simple. And keep it loose.

BIG MAN

(snickering)  
No Evil Knevel?

A hush falls over the crew. Saunders doesn't follow.

SAUNDERS

What's an Evil Knevel?

YOUTUBE

Litefeet urban legend. Everyone's  
heard of it, no one can do it. Like  
Tony Hawk's 900 or Jordan's foul  
line dunk.

OOMPH

Single leg Peter Pan into a  
rotating double flip that resolves  
in a Kiss of Death.

SAUNDERS

Is that even possible?



BIG MAN  
(somber)  
All my years hitting on these  
trains and I ain't never seen one.

PRESTON  
C'mon. Train's almost here.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - SAME.**

Big Man and Youtube slide down the center of the escalator.  
Preston goes up to the MTA booth where Keisha helps a  
customer with his demagnetized card.

PRESTON  
Downtown trains running on time?  
  
She smiles at him, winks.

KEISHA  
Sure are.

PRESTON  
Thanks very much.  
(one more thing)  
By the way, that blouse looks  
lovely on you, young lady.

Keisha looks down at her MTA blues and blushes. When she  
looks up, her man's in the wind.

**INT. TRAIN - LATER.**

We catch Preston finishing up his spiel.

PRESTON  
...A ride can change your life.  
Here. We. Go.

Rise & Shine hit on the train. We see the routine they  
practiced at the train yard.

With Saunders in the mix, it's a whole different ballgame.

And commuters take notice. Waving bills in the air. Big Man  
collects the proceeds. Piggy Bank gets well fed with green.

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - LAB - SAME TIME.**

Nora works at the console. She presses enter. Herman waves to  
her. She waves back.

She looks around. Every other team has at least two members. But she's all alone. She pulls out her phone.

TEXT MESSAGE TO SAUNDERS: "WYA?"

**INT. TRAIN - SAME.**

Saunders watches as Youtube and Preston mime being in *super slow motion*, moving as if they're underwater.

BUZZ BUZZ.

Saunders pulls his phone out, sees Nora's text.

SAUNDERS

Damn.

He starts typing out a response. But before he finishes, Oomph taps him on the shoulder.

OOMPH

Check this. It's a duet. You down?

SAUNDERS

You know I'm down.

She presses play on her phone. Then jumps on the rails. Oomph's music wafts into Saunders's ears. Intoxicating.

He quickly pockets his phone, text message unsent, and jumps on the rails. And they spin around each other, getting closer and closer, looking into each other's eyes the whole time.

It's summer. The train is hot.

But as Oomph and Saunders lock in, it gets even hotter.

**EXT. SCAFFOLDING - LATE MORNING.**

With the morning commute over, our crew eats breakfast. Bacon, egg, and cheese. High up on scaffolding. It evokes that classic New York photograph "Lunch Atop A Skyscraper."

PRESTON

How'd we do?

Big Man opens up Piggy Bank, FAST MOTION hand counts.

BIG MAN

One sixty eight.

YOUTUBE

Hell yeah.

BIG MAN

And that's after breakfast and re-upping our swipes. And my %3 accounting fee.

Oomph lightly messes up his hair.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)

(a la Travolta)

Mah hair. Watch mah hair.

Youtube quick releases his phone, thumbs through it.

YOUTUBE

Caught wind of a basement battle this weekend. Could be a good look?

PRESTON

Could be. Could be.

BIG MAN

That's small potatoes. We gonna fuck up the Dome this year!

PRESTON

Watch your mouth, small potatoes.

BIG MAN

My b. My b. We gonna *kick ass* at the Dome this year!

Everyone smiles at Big's outsized confidence.

PRESTON

Kingdome's not to be taken lightly.

BIG MAN

Come. On. After all these years? I can't believe you don't wanna stick it to Showtime. Make those fools regret turning they back on you.

Preston shoots him a look that shuts him right up.

PRESTON

Finish up. We got work to do.

Preston walks along the scaffolding towards a freight elevator, the mood clearly deflated.

YOUTUBE

Dumb ass.

BIG MAN

I'm just saying what we all  
thinking. Just cuz I happen to have  
the which-nuts to speak up...

SAUNDERS

Which nuts?

BIG MAN

(pointing crotchward)  
Deez nuts!

He cracks up. Youtube and Big Man finish their breakfast,  
take off after Preston.

SAUNDERS

What was that about?

OOMPH

Preston used to hit with Showtime.

SAUNDERS

Showtime?

OOMPH

You know. "Ladies and gentlemen,  
it's Showtime." Original Litefeet  
crew. But since the vandal squad's  
launched their assault, Showtime  
went above ground. Now they just  
work parks. So we take trains.

SAUNDERS

Bum deal.

OOMPH

No. Litefeet was born on the  
trains. And we keeping it there.  
Among the people, the commuters,  
the real New Yorkers. Showtime  
plays for tourists. They're a boy  
band. We're punk rock.

SAUNDERS

So what happened with Preston?

OOMPH

Never got the full story. All I  
know he parted ways with Showtime a  
few years back. Right after  
Kingdome. His first and last.

(MORE)

OOMPH (CONT'D)  
Been steady building this clique  
ever since.

SAUNDERS  
I had no idea.

She sees his concern. His compassion. His innocence.

OOMPH  
Lemme see your phone.

SAUNDERS  
(excited)  
New beat?

Saunders hands her his phone. She works her magic on it.  
Hands it back to him.

OOMPH  
Bonus track.

She heads over to the elevators. Saunders looks at his phone.  
Right there in the contacts is Oomph's number.

Prep School got the digits!

Saunders hangs back, basking in the afterglow of being a  
teenager with a crush in the thick of an NYC summer.

He looks out over the city: So many people, so many stories.  
But in this rare private moment, it's his and his alone.

**EXT. HARLEM - NIGHT.**

A cloudless muggy night.

We see the Apollo Theatre. Haring's "Crack is Wack" mural.  
And 2 Bros Pizza, home to the \$1 slice. But we're far from  
there. We're in East Harlem. Still dicey.

In front of a shuttered Metro PCS store, Youtube stunts a  
pair of iced out baby blue Jordan 6's to the crew. Saunders  
rolls up, wearing his customary tight khakis.

BIG MAN  
You dress like that even at night?

Saunders shrugs. Guilty as charged.

**DARK STREET - LATER.**

Rise & Shine move with purpose though the night.

SAUNDERS  
Thought we only hit on trains?

OOMPH  
Only *earn* on trains. We'll battle  
wherever there's a floor.

SAUNDERS  
Where exactly is this floor?

YOUTUBE  
Don't worry. We're close.

Two possums crawl out of a sewer. They look at the humans  
like: the fuck you gonna do?

SAUNDERS  
Close to what?

They round a corner and approach --

**EXT. RESTAURANT SUPPLY COMPANY - SAME.**

Security grille on the front. Youtube consults at his phone.

YOUTUBE  
C'mon.

Saunders looks to Preston. He nods. They head around back --

**EXT. LOADING DOCK - SAME.**

A great place to bury a body. Stealthily, they make their way  
to a freight elevator.

BIG MAN  
Bruh. You for real right now?

Youtube taps a combination on a security keypad. The elevator  
doors open.

YOUTUBE  
Abracadabra, fukkers.

**INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - SAME.**

Shards of light stab through the rickety elevator. They play  
across our crew's nervous faces.

**INT. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT - SAME.**

Brimming with ominous industrial restaurant equipment. We hear a faint murmur at the far end of the room. And, incongruously, a bass-heavy beat.

OOMPH

Not trying to jump in some Fight Club, man.

BIG MAN

I am.

Big Man windmills his arms. Oomph slaps him upside the head.

PRESTON

(sternly)

Will you two stop playing?

They move towards the bass, approaching a set of double doors.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Listen. If we ain't up for this --

He's got a point. Maybe it's smarter - *and safer* - to call it a night. Oomph looks to Saunders. And that's all he needs.

Saunders pushes through the double doors to --

**INT. STORAGE ROOM - SAME.**

Boxes pushed against the walls. A portable utility light shoots off the wall. A big ass amp producing bass so thick, you feel it in your gut.

Oh. And also. Forty of New York's FIERCEST DANCERS.

YOUTUBE

Hail Cesar. Those about to die salute you.

The dancers are in a circle.

In the middle, an impossibly cut young man is floor rocking: rotating his legs while he carrying the weight on his hands.

This is DEON (26).

He smoothly transitions to a head spin, picking up speed. The crowd shows their love, *oohs* and *ahhs* raining down.

After a freeze, he catapults upright.

A RIPPED B-GIRL hands him a Yankees cap. He dabs up 8 other DANCERS, all wearing Yankees caps.

This is the SHOWTIME CREW. Act like you know.

Deon clocks Preston, approaches with menacing swagger.

DEON

Look what we got here.

PRESTON

What's good, Deon?

DEON

Leaving floors in rubble. Making breakers wish they never laced up they boots.

Preston chuckles at the chest puffery.

PRESTON

Never one for modesty, huh?

DEON

Not with these moves.

(giving him a once over)

Damn sure look like you been eating your share of humble pie though.

Some Showtime dancers crack up. Big Man takes off his jacket, about to throw down. Oomph holds him back with one hand.

PRESTON

Talk is cheap. The dance is what counts.

Deon mimes slapping his ear to get water out of it.

DEON

Did y'all hear that? Thought I heard this ashy diabetic talking bout 'the dance.'

PRESTON

You heard me.

The crowd gets real quiet. All eyes on Deon. He smiles wide.

DEON

You ready for this, *patna*?

PRESTON

Bet.



Preston gathers his troops.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
I'll open it up. Then you three  
enter with a weave. Then Saunders  
you'll shut it down. And remember:  
loose not tight.

The team says nothing. Just wide-eyed with fear.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
What's the problem?

OOMPH  
Are we ready for this?

Youtube, Big Man, and Oomph stay mum. Saunders nods.

SAUNDERS  
We're ready.

Preston shoots him a look: thanks for stepping up. He then  
nods to Oomph. She heads to the amp. A BIG DUDE WITH FACE INK  
holds the cord, grittin' on her.

OOMPH  
Lemme get that.

FACE INK  
What do you say?

OOMPH  
Lemme get that...now.

She snatches it out of his hands, plugs in her phone, and  
dials up a banger.

We hear Oomph's Litefeet remix of Frank Ocean's "Pyramid."

She cranks the volume dial. (Her name is Oomph for a reason.)

Preston starts his rev up.

Showtime watch with folded arms, scowled faces.

Preston launches into a Needle and Thread - the classic move  
of linking an arm to a raised leg and pulling the standing  
leg through.

Then Oomph, Big Man, and Youtube enter, crisscrossing each  
other on the beat; this is the Weave.

Big Man does a running flip on to Youtube's shoulders.

Oomph works her way through an impressive routine - a Buck One into a series of Knee Drops.

Preston and Saunders look on with awe and reverence. The OG turns to the up and comer.

PRESTON

You're up.

Nothing. Just sweaty palms and knocking knees.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

You got this.

Preston and Saunders share a moment. Saunders nuts up. Walks to the middle of the dance floor.

DEON

Here comes the ace in the hole!

Snickers from the crowd as the lanky kid walks around in a circle, getting warm. He launches into a top rock - a precursor move - swaying side to side.

And then -- he just stays there. Caught in a loop. Right foot out. Left foot out. Right foot out. Left foot out.

SAUNDERS'S POV: *His legs doing the same thing, over and over.*

DEON (CONT'D)

(to face ink)

Man, kill this noise. Next!

Face Ink goes to switch out the track. Oomph boxes him out.

OOMPH

Touch my phone, I'll slap the ink off your face.

She deftly scrolls to Saunders's theme - now with an added bass line and some synth. The track pulses with new energy. Saunders looks to Oomph. She nods to him.

OOMPH (CONT'D)

I got you.

And indeed she does. The music moves from the amp to his ears down to his heart - a surge of electricity.

Saunders again looks to his feet and then...snaps out of it.

He launches into a few Floor Taps. And into an Aunt Jackie. And then lands a Tic Tac Toe.

And then he brings the mutherfucking ruckus.

Letting himself go buck wild on a Kiss of Death. The crowd eats it up. Preston nods sagely. He knew he had it in him.

Some of the Showtime dudes are applauding. Some are "holding each other back" in mock anger. And a few are picking their jaws off the ground. One Showtime dancer whispers to Deon.

SHOWTIME DUDE  
The fuck *is* this kid?

Deon smiles ruefully.

DEON  
Competition.

As Saunders gets lite, the world breaks from reality.

The boxes against the wall start jumping to the beat's waveform. All the Showtime guys shrink impossibly small.

It's just him out there, in a flow state.

And then he goes in for the kill: The Evil Knevel.

A collective inhale as the crowd sees what's happening.

Spins around on one leg - that's the Peter Pan.

Then, using his working leg, he takes the lateral momentum and straight launches into space.

The periphery goes blurry. Sound distorts. We're on a different plane now. Airborne.

He makes it around once.

We catch a few faces melting in the crowd.

But midway through the second flip, he hesitates. Not quite sure he can land it. Doesn't quite orbit all the way around.

And Saunders ends up eating a slice of warehouse floor.

A collective exhale. The routine's over. A new dancer takes "center stage." Rise dust off their man.

YOUTUBE  
(reviewing the footage)  
That was epic!

SAUNDERS  
Delete that shit.

YOUTUBE

You crazy? A move ain't a move  
unless I capture it on video.

Preston puts his arm around Saunders.

PRESTON

It'll come, man. Just gotta learn  
to let go. That's the paradox. Only  
way to land it is being willing to  
fall on your ass. And then boom.  
Let your body do the rest.

(beat)

But you got nothing to be ashamed  
about. We did what we came to do.

SAUNDERS

Which is what?

Preston looks across the dance floor to find the Showtime  
dancers. Deon stares right back with that menacing grin.

PRESTON

Make em recognize.

And on that, Rise & Shine head back into the summer night.

**INT. KHALIL'S CONDO - DAY.**

Early Sunday morning.

Saunders peeks out of his room. No sign of Khalil. Sleeping  
in. He tiptoes to the --

**BATHROOM.**

He looks himself over from every conceivable angle. Then  
opens up the mirror and grabs his Dad's cologne. He sprays  
some into the air, and bunny hops into it.

In, then out. In, then out. A pretty fly routine.

He opens the door and -- Khalil. Standing right there.

KHALIL

Why you messin' with my Brute?

Saunders pushes past him, beyond embarrassed.

SAUNDERS

Meeting a friend.

KHALIL  
(wide smile)  
Be back for dinner, playboy.

Saunders, mortified, rushes out the door.

**EXT. UNIONPORT YARD - DAY.**

Saunders walks through the empty train yard.

He puts his hand on the metal giant like a horse trainer in a stable. The train whisperer.

OOMPH (O.S.)  
Preparing for the flood?

Saunders turns to find Oomph in an empty train behind him. She gestures to his high water khakis. His face goes hot.

SAUNDERS  
My school has a --

She untucks his shirt. Pops his collar.

OOMPH  
Better.  
(beat)  
Is that cologne?

SAUNDERS  
(changing subjects quick)  
What moves you want to practice?

Oomph sets her amp down. Scrolls on her phone.

OOMPH  
You had me worried for a minute the other night in Harlem.

SAUNDERS  
I get too inside my head sometimes.

OOMPH  
We can't have that now can we?

She taps play. Instead of a customary Litefeet banger, we get..a *slow track*.

SAUNDERS  
Not quite the BPM I was expecting.

She locks one leg on a pole, pirouettes around. Now, we know Oomph is as badass as they come. But turns out she's *seductive* as well.

OOMPH

Gotta be ready for any tempo. Any  
beat thrown your way. You feel me?

She pushes her back against Saunders, starts swaying to the track. He matches her rhythm but keeps his arms at a distance, careful not to misread the situation and overstep.

OOMPH (CONT'D)

This ain't prom.

She grabs his hands, leads them to her hips.

OOMPH (CONT'D)

Lemme ask you something.

She arches her head back and whispers in his ear.

OOMPH (CONT'D)

You in your head right now?

He swallows hard. Listens to the intoxicating synth beat. Feels her body pressed against his body.

SAUNDERS

No. I'm with you.

The sleeping trains stay whisper quiet as the two teenagers continue their slow dance.

PRELAP: Wiz Khalifa's "Young, Wild & Free" as we begin --

**THE COME UP MONTAGE.**

-Saunders quickly eats breakfast and zips out the door.  
Khalil notices: Why's he so amped about summer school?

-Rise & Shine hit on the train. In a big way. With Saunders in the mix, their earnings are on point.

-Big Man finger counts their stack. Looks to Preston and smiles like a shark. Preston nods back. Alright then.

-The Rise & Shine Dubsmash page. More likes, more followers, more views. Living that #dancefluencer life.

**END MONTAGE.**

**INT. KHALIL'S CONDO - NIGHT.**

Khalil plates two filets of salmon next to asparagus. The Davis/Coltrane duet "Kind of Blue" plays in the background.

Saunders rushes out the door but before he escapes --

KHALIL

Yo?

SAUNDERS

(quick thinking)

My boy from Calhoun just got the  
new Madden.

Khalil mulls it over. Decides to play it cool.

KHALIL

Don't stay out late. School night.

SAUNDERS

Bet.

Saunders splits. Khalil locks the door after him.

KHALIL

Bet?

He shakes his head. Looks like it's dinner for one.  
Jazz trumpet spills out of high end Harman speakers.

**INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

A Ron Browz fire beat blasts from a bluetooth speaker.

Youtube and Big Man are tethered to the TV, clowning each other over a heated Madden game.

Saunders, Oomph, Preston, and Keisha dig into styrofoam containers of fried rice and General Tso's chicken.

PRESTON

This my jam right here.

Preston tears open two sweet and sour packets, slathers the noxious goo on the fried rice. He hands a few packets to Saunders. Bon appetite.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Flavor to taste.

SAUNDERS

Is this Szechuan or Hunan?

OOMPH  
 (cracking up)  
 It's hood Chinese, man.

KEISHA  
 You know. Bulletproof-glass window.  
 Order by the pictures.

Saunders nods, chomps on an egg roll. Hood Chinese isn't really a staple at Chez Khalil.

KEISHA (CONT'D)  
 I'm thirsty.

She slowly and theatrically rotates her head to Preston.

PRESTON  
 (sigh)  
 I'll get us some drinks.

Preston heads to the kitchen. Keisha regards the young man sitting in front of her for a beat.

KEISHA  
 Haven't seen him like this for a minute.

SAUNDERS  
 Whatcha mean?

Keisha shakes her head, smiles.

KEISHA  
 Got that fire back. That take on the world look.  
 (a secret)  
 Might got something to do with you.

Saunders shakes his head, embarrassed.

BIG MAN  
 Look at this face! He's blushing.

SAUNDERS  
 Shut up. This is just...my face.  
 (shifting attention away)  
 Lemme ask you something. How come you let us hit on the trains?  
 Like...couldn't you get in trouble?

KEISHA  
 My job's to make sure the trains run on time. I take it seriously.  
 How folks use the trains?  
 (MORE)



KEISHA (CONT'D)

Not up to me. Long as you pay your fare, don't bother no body, you can do as you please. The trains belong to the people. I believe that.

Preston returns with a teapot and cans of Arizona Iced Tea.

PRESTON

Arizona Iced or Bronx Hot?

Saunders points to the kettle.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

My man.

BIG MAN

(yelling)

I'll take Arizona. Two. Two cans.

The crew continues eating. It's messy and chaotic and loud and uncouth. And Saunders grins from ear to ear.

**EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAY.**

A beautiful summer day. The park is brimming with NYU students, tourists, chess grandmasters, and bucket drummers.

Saunders and Oomph sit at the fountain, sharing a pair of earbuds that snake from her phone.

They both nod to the same beat. She looks to him shyly.

SAUNDERS

Not like the usual stuff. It's darker. More emotional. It's got more...bite.

OOMPH

Bite?

SAUNDERS

It gets inside you.

OOMPH

(embarrassed)

Just something I've been messing around with.

We sees how sensitive and careful Oomph is when it comes to beats in progress. Sharing them with Saunders is a big deal.

SAUNDERS

I dig it.

They look into each other's eyes. A moment.

He swallows hard, summons up all his courage.  
Fuck it, you only live once, carpe diem, do or die.

He moves in for the kiss, mere inches from her face when --

DEON (O.S.)  
What time is it?

CREW (O.S.)  
Showtime!

On the other side of the fountain in the courtyard, we see a throng of about 60 tourists surrounding the Showtime Crew.

SAUNDERS  
Let's bounce.

OOMPH  
Come on. You scared?

SAUNDERS  
(yes)  
No.

She pulls a reluctant Saunders through the throng.

#### **COURTYARD.**

Deon has lined up a nervous tourist family of 5, shoulder to shoulder. The crowd eats up the well worn routine.

DEON  
And remember. If I don't make it,  
y'all don't make it.

He takes a running start and sprints towards the family.  
Right in front of the bug-eyed Dad, he skids to a stop.

DEON (CONT'D)  
I don't know. Not sure I can make  
it. I just don't know.  
(to the crowd)  
Whatcha think? Y'all ready for dis?

The crowd applauds.

DEON (CONT'D)  
Nope. You ain't ready. One more  
time. Y'all ready for this?

Louder applause. Deon spots Saunders and Oomph in the crowd.  
He skips over with some flash.

DEON (CONT'D)  
(to Oomph)  
What's good, shorty? Couldn't stay  
away from these moves?

Oomph rolls her eyes. Gestures at the routine.

OOMPH  
Just cuz you the ringmaster doesn't  
mean you not a clown.

Deon smiles broadly.

DEON  
Tell you what. Ditch Khaki Jack and  
come to Rucker tonight. I'll show  
you some real moves.

He goes back to working the crowd.

DEON (CONT'D)  
I gotta know you mean it.  
One more time. You ready for this?

The crowd applauds with vigor. A furious Saunders keeps his  
arms crossed, not having it.

DEON (CONT'D)  
Just what I thought.

Deon takes a running start, sprints towards the family.

He launches into a double flip, sailing right over the  
tourist family and landing perfectly on the other side.

The crowd goes nuts. He bows theatrically.

And as he rises in SLOW MOTION, he looks right at Saunders,  
that menacing look sending shivers down his teenage neck.

**EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - LATER.**

Saunders and Oomph walk around the park perimeter.

OOMPH  
Don't even sweat those guys. Been  
doing the same routine for years.  
At this point they're a tourist  
attraction. Statue of Liberty,  
Empire State building, Showtime.  
What we do is way fresher.

SAUNDERS  
 (intimidated)  
 If you say so.

OOMPH  
 I say so. Everyone else will too  
 once we splash at the Dome.

SAUNDERS  
 I don't know. Steep price to enter.  
 And even steeper price if we fall  
 flat. Think it's worth it?

Oomph stops in her tracks. She faces Saunders.

OOMPH  
 Is it worth it? I'll put it this  
 way. You see the love my beats get  
 online? How you think that  
 translate in dollars? Nada. And the  
 studio I work at? My boss won't  
 even give my SoundCloud a listen.

SAUNDERS  
 That's messed up. Only a matter of  
 time before a junior engineer  
 becomes a senior engineer.

OOMPH  
 I'm not actually a junior engineer.  
 (hard to admit)  
 I'm the receptionist.

Oomph's posturing was concealing a much more direr situation.

OOMPH (CONT'D)  
 Music ain't a hobby. It's my way  
 out. For Big too. If I can't prove  
 financial stability, we could  
 lose...*everything*.

The thought of being separated from Big Man makes her eyes  
 glassy with tears. Saunders grabs her hands. Gets real close.

SAUNDERS  
 I won't let that happen to Big. And  
 I won't let that happen to you.  
 We're going to Kingdome.

OOMPH  
 Promise?

SAUNDERS  
 Promise.

**EXT. BRYANT PARK - SUNSET.**

Green island in a sea of midtown grey. New Yorkers claim territory on the lawn in front of a large movie screen. Saunders leads Oomph and Big Man to an open patch of grass.

BIG MAN  
This is crazy.

SAUNDERS  
Right? Free movie every Monday  
night during the summer.

OOMPH  
How'd you know about this?

SAUNDERS  
My parents used to take me here.  
(wistful)  
Back in the day.

Oomph knows better than to pull on that thread.

OOMPH  
So where should we sit?

Saunders unfurls a blanket from his backpack.

SAUNDERS  
M'lady.

She takes a seat, smiling at the chivalry. But Big ain't having it. He stares at Saunders: "You gotta be kidding me?"

So Saunders produces a Snickers from his backpack. Big Man accepts the bribe. That'll work.

**LATER.**

The trio are sprawled out on the blanket watching "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." Indy and Elsa wander through the Venetian catacombs.

Saunders carefully sidles up to Oomph.

BIG MAN  
(whispers)  
Easy does it, GQ Smooth.

SAUNDERS  
(whispers)  
I don't need a chaperone.



NORA

Are you?

SAUNDERS

C'mon. I know you've been picking up the slack here. I just been busy with some important shit.

NORA

Excuse me?

Saunders pulls out his phone. Shows Nora one of Youtube's videos: *Saunders hitting on the trains.*

SAUNDERS

Crazy right?

NORA

That is crazy. Crazy that you would leave me solo on this project so you can...dance on subway cars?

That stings. Bad.

SAUNDERS

I'm still about Herman. But this is 1's and 0's. Academic. Out there? That's real life. When I'm on those trains it's just --

He puts his hands over his chest simulating a heartbeat.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)

I feel free.

NORA

Sorry this is so oppressive for you. Some of us actually enjoy it.

SAUNDERS

It's an out of body experience. You wouldn't understand.

She nods solemnly. Turns her face away to conceal the tears.

NORA

No. I guess I wouldn't.

SAUNDERS

Nora. That's not what I mea--

NORA

When you look like me, you never  
know what it's like to be out of  
your body. The world can't help but  
to constantly remind you.

(beat)

But I don't need you to.

She gets up and rushes to the hallway. And Saunders is left  
solo, wallowing in his callousness. He looks at Herman the  
robot, who lays motionless.

SAUNDERS

Hell you looking at?

He gets out his phone and taps out a quick message: "Yo"

**INT. STATION/TRAIN - LATER THAT DAY.**

We follow Saunders and Oomph as they rush to hop on train.

SAUNDERS

Can you believe that shit?

OOMPH

Maybe she's right.

SAUNDERS

What?!?!?

OOMPH

You got a good thing going,  
Saunders. But this shit here is  
extracurricular for you. We do this  
because we *have* to.

SAUNDERS

You kidding me? Before this summer?  
There was iPhone glass between me  
and Rise. Between me and you.

(hard to find the words)

I had to keep a part of me hidden.  
Buried. But the last few weeks...I  
don't know. It's like I feel awake  
for the first time. I feel alive.

He watches the station lights flash by, white streaks  
disappearing into the past.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)

You think I can go back to how it  
was? Back to watching on a screen?

(MORE)



SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
 I've been an observer my whole  
 life. Now I got a stage.  
 (shaking his head)  
 This is something I *have* to do.

Oomph nods at the confession. It clearly means a lot to her.  
 She scrolls through her phone, presses play on an ethereal  
*Space Odyssey*-inflected track.

OOMPH  
 Then let's do it.

The track builds. Saunders "listens" to an imaginary headset.

SAUNDERS  
 Ladies and gentlemen, can I have  
 your attention? I'm getting word  
 from NASA. Looks like we're  
 experiencing sudden gravity loss.  
 Hold on to your seat!

As the beat drops, Saunders jumps up on the hand rails,  
 hanging upside down from them.

Oomph jumps up on the rails as well.

With the two of them hanging upside down, the camera rotates  
180 degrees. The passengers are now "upside down" and our  
 couple is "right side up."

Saunders and Oomph astronaut walk using the hand rails. The  
 sides of the frame go blurry as the two teenagers, literally  
 head over heels, go through their lost in space routine.

It's as if the only thing in the world that makes sense to  
 them is this suspended moment. Right here. Right now.

But the moment is harshly interrupted as the inter train  
 doors open to reveal a bearded DOOMSDAY PREACHER (70's). He  
 carries a bible and has fury in his eyes.

DOOMSDAY PREACHER  
 Behold, the glory of Christ.  
 His kingdom cometh. Beware the twin  
 serpents of greed and doubt.

Oomph and Saunders jump off the rails and stand up.

OOMPH  
 Yo. Train's taken.

The preacher takes wind of the insult.

DOOMSDAY PREACHER  
Beggars, the scourge of society.

OOMPH  
Does it look like I'm begging? I  
don't got a piece of cardboard with  
a scribbled sob story. I got a  
smile on my face. I got a spring in  
my step. You the one spouting sky  
is falling nonsense.

The preacher gets right up in Oomph's face.

DOOMSDAY PREACHER  
Fire and brimstone. She that  
blasphemes the word of God.

OOMPH  
You wanna battle, let's battle.

Saunders tries to hold her back.

DOOMSDAY PREACHER  
Repent! Repent or judgement shall  
be visited upon you.

The preacher pushes Oomph. This flips a switch in Saunders.  
He harshly throws the preacher to the ground.

Commuters either relocate or get out their cell phones.

#### **INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - SAME.**

The train doors open. Passengers stream out. Saunders and the  
preacher spill onto the ground, grabbing limbs.

OOMPH  
Saunders!

Oomph points to the far set of stairs where TWO COPS hustle  
towards the melee. She tries to free Saunders from the  
preacher's hold but it's no use. He's got Old Testament grip.

SAUNDERS  
Go!

Caught between a rock and a hard place, Oomph jumps back on  
the train just as the doors close.

The cops separate Saunders and the preacher. And as the train  
leaves the station, Oomph watches in horror as the cops put  
bracelets on Saunders.

**INT. JUVENILE HOLDING CENTER - DAY.**

A COP processes Saunders from the intake line.

SAUNDERS

I already told you. He started it.

COP

Got multiple witnesses. You and your girlfriend were disturbing the peace. And panhandling.

SAUNDERS

(outraged)

I wasn't panhandling.

(disappointed)

And she's not my girlfriend.

COP

Regardless. Dancing on the train is a quality of life crime.

SAUNDERS

Says who?

COP

Says Bill Bratton.

Saunders throws up his hands. Who?

COP (CONT'D)

Pioneered the broken window theory. Small crimes lead to big crimes. Since he became commissioner, we got an entire squad dedicated to you people.

SAUNDERS

Us people? Gimme my ticket so I can get up outta here.

Saunders is livid. Couldn't get any more upset.

COP

This is baby booking. Can't release you without a parent or guardian. Have a seat. Your Dad's on his way.

Turns out he can get more upset.

**INT. HOLDING PEN - WHAT FEELS LIKE AN ETERNITY LATER.**

Saunders hangs his head, the dark thoughts swirling.

COP (O.S.)  
Saunders Bell?

Saunders braces for the fury.

COP (CONT'D)  
Let's go.

He buzzes them out of the holding pen into the intake area.  
Khalil, dressed in business casual, signs release paperwork.

SAUNDERS  
Hey.

Khalil sees him, gives him the long once-over.

KHALIL  
C'mon.

**EXT. STREET - SAME.**

Khalil and Saunders walk through a busy street. No one pays them any mind. They got their own dramas to contend with.

SAUNDERS  
I can explain.

Khalil stops in his tracks. Stares hard at his son.

KHALIL  
What? Whatcha got to say, man?

SAUNDERS  
I'm sorry. I didn't think --

KHALIL  
No. You didn't. What happens to  
your applications if I can't get  
this expunged? You think MIT admits  
kids with a rap sheet? What happens  
to your financial aid package? I  
can't afford to send you to school  
on my salary. You think about any  
of that? You think about *anything*?  
(pains him)  
No. You didn't. Instead you're  
dancing for singles with a bunch of  
knuckleheads. Wearing them goofy  
ass shoes.

Saunders looks down at his winged shoes. And they've never  
looked so pathetic - so unable to take flight.

SAUNDERS  
They're not knuckleheads.

KHALIL  
No? Who are they?

SAUNDERS  
(meekly)  
The Rise & Shine crew.

KHALIL  
(shaking his head)  
The Rise & Shine crew.

He strong arms Saunders away from foot traffic behind scaffolding, the two men bisected by a steel pole.

KHALIL (CONT'D)  
You're willing to throw it all away  
for *that*? For that dollar in a hat  
hustle. Think that's the realness?  
(beat)  
Lemme tell you something, Saunders.  
You got it all twisted. Handling  
your business. Keeping your people  
safe. Doing the hard thing. Not the  
easy thing. *That's* the realness.

SAUNDERS  
Being trapped is not the same thing  
as being safe.  
(a risky gambit)  
Just ask Mom.

That definitely stings. But Khalil doesn't fold easily.

KHALIL  
You live in my house you will  
follow my rules. I find you dancing  
with those losers again, your  
senior year's gonna be at ROTC.  
(fury)  
Believe me.

Khalil descends the subway leaving Saunders in the stench of the confrontation. Check mate.

**INT. KHALIL'S APARTMENT - MORNING.**

Saunders gets ready for school. He's rooting around his closet. Khalil appears in the doorway, holding the AFIs.

KHALIL  
Imma hold onto these.

SAUNDERS  
What? Why?

KHALIL  
Why? So you don't jeopardize your  
scholarship. Lose everything we've  
been working towards.  
(beat)  
Don't you get it? I'm trying to  
save your life, man. Let's go.

SAUNDERS  
Huh?

**EXT. STREET - DAY.**

Khalil walks Saunders to the Tremont train station.

SAUNDERS  
This is the B,D.

KHALIL  
That's right.

SAUNDERS  
I need a 2,3.

KHALIL  
This drops off Central Park West.

SAUNDERS  
That's not my route.

KHALIL  
Is now.

Khalil's no fool. Saunders gets what he's up to.

SAUNDERS  
You don't need to treat me like  
some sort of child.

KHALIL  
Act like a man, I'll treat you like  
a man.

Saunders starts to protest. Realizes it's futile. He descends  
into the station under his father's watchful gaze.

**INT. SUBWAY - SAME.**

Saunders shuffles to the train station. He checks his phone.

IPHONE TEXT FROM OOMPH: "U ok?"

Saunders is torn. Not sure what to say. So he pockets the phone. And boards the arriving train.

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO - BREAK ROOM - DAY.**

Oomph looks down at her phone, waiting for a reply that doesn't come. A STUDIO ENGINEER hands her a sheet of paper.

STUDIO ENGINEER  
Can you take care of this?

The engineer heads back to the live room and starts bullshitting with an EAGER BAND. All dudes.

Oomph looks down in her hands to find: their lunch order.

**RECORDING STUDIO OFFICE.**

Oomph punches in the restaurant's phone number into the office phone. The beeps sync up with a melancholy Litefeet track which continues into --

**INT. UPS FACILITY - DAY.**

Preston loads boxes onto the truck. He scans them in one by one. The beeps from the scan sync up with the track.

**INT. BODEGA - DAY.**

Youtube tags Goya products with a label gun, punctuating the beat. Mrs. Tube and Bo carefully monitor his progress.

**INT. OOMPH'S APT. - SAME**

Big Man watches cartoons while pouring a Pixie Stick down his throat. This sprinkles some flavor on the track.

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - LAB - DAY.**

Without Litefeet, Saunders has rededicated himself to Herman who is now moving a good bit more.

It's almost as if he's doing a herky jerky robot to the beat.

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO - NIGHT.**

Everyone's gone for the night. It's all dark. Except for one single light in the corner which spots onto a body hunched over a Midi keyboard. Oomph.

With utter focus, she puts the finishing touches on the melancholy track we just heard.

And now we get it. Just as Saunders turns emotion into dance, Oomph has the same special alchemy with music.

She lets the final note die out, leaving her in silence.

Then she turns off the lights so we can't see her tears.

**INT. KHALIL'S CONDO - NIGHT.**

Saunders and Khalil eat dinner. Not a word between them.

**LATER.**

Khalil does the crossword. Saunders finishes the dishes.

**INT. SAUNDERS BEDROOM - LATER.**

Saunders lays in bed looking at his phone. But it's not a Litefeet clip. It's the Alvin Ailey Youtube page.

*PHONE INSERT: Balletic modern dancers perform dramatic choreography on a starkly lit stage.*

Tight on Saunders's eyes as he pinch zooms in --

*PHONE INSERT: His mother, lithe and muscled. Leaping with abandon, utterly free and unencumbered.*

And that's when he feels the eyes. Watching him. He goes to the Alvin Ailey poster of his Mom, graceful and free. He stares hard at the poster, tears welling up.

Her freedom came at a cost. Not just to Khalil. But to him.

IPHONE DING.

He grabs his phone to find himself tagged in --

*AN INSTAGRAM STORY: A dance battle taking place at Rucker Park. Rise & Shine are there. And so are Showtime.*

He's got a tough decision to make. He looks back at his mother who stares right back at him.



SAUNDERS

I'm done.

Time to bury this side of himself. He removes the push pins. Shoves the poster under his bed.

He carefully opens his bedroom door, looks into the hallway. Khalil's door is closed, no light from the gap.

**EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT.**

Saunders carefully climbs down the fire escape.

At the bottom rung he jumps off, landing as softly as possible. He looks back up, the lights still off.

Saunders heads into the night.

**EXT. RUCKER PARK - NIGHT.**

Harlem. 155th and Fredrick Douglass Blvd.

A basketball court but not just a basketball court. This is hallowed ground: Kareem, Dr. J, and Wilt all plied their trade here.

Flood lights splash onto bleachers filled with a few dozen B-BOYS, B-GIRLS, and VARIOUS FANS.

On the court, Showtime are putting the finishing touches on an elaborate routine that has the crowd in a fever pitch.

Six Showtime dancers fall into formation and execute a perfectly choreographed break dance routine.

Deon takes a running start from the baseline and does two aerial flips over all six men.

He sticks the landing, holds out his arms: ta-da. The crowd erupts into applause.

IPHONE POV: *We see the whole proceedings.*

PRESTON (O.S.)

Will you put that down?

Wider to reveal Oomph, Preston, Big Man, and Youtube all sitting in the bleachers.

YOUTUBE

Doin' it for the gram.

Off of Preston's withering look, Youtube pockets his phone.

PRESTON

We're up.

The crew doesn't move.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

What's the problem?

BIG MAN

Built our routine around Saunders.  
And...we got no Saunders.

PRESTON

We're a team with him. We're a team  
without him. So what's it gonna be?

Big Man, Oomph, and Youtube all look to each other.

BIG MAN

Cried two tears in a bucket. Fuck  
it. Let's take it to the stage.

They look at Big Man. He nods. Course he's seen *House Party*.

They hop onto the court - centerstage. Oomph plugs her phone  
into an amp. A retro-inflected Litefeet banger rings out.

Then they launch into Kid'N'Play's famous one footed hop  
dance into two thread-the-needles.

They go for a few hat tricks and body throws. They don't  
quite land. So they tap out. Preston and Youtube take over.

They launch into a spirited Litefeet routine: Synchronized  
Gangsta Lean into an Aunt Jackie. But they're out of sync.

The energy is draining out of the bleachers.

And that's when Saunders steps out of the shadows.

Youtube fist pumps. Big Man runs over, gives Saunders a hug.  
But Oomph hangs back, maybe hurt from the ghosting. Or maybe  
sensing the sea change in Saunders.

PRESTON

Where you been?

SAUNDERS

Busy with school I guess.

PRESTON

Phone stop working too?

Saunders stands there. Defiant.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Doesn't matter. Time to battle.

They circle up around Preston. But Saunders stays outside. He summons all his courage for what he has to say.

SAUNDERS  
This is it for me.

PRESTON  
What are you talking about?

SAUNDERS  
After this, I'm done.  
(can't meet their eyes)  
I wanted to tell you in person.

Oomph tries her hardest to fight back tears. And in the smallest voice possible, she states what she believed in her heart was an indisputable fact --

OOMPH  
You promised.

SAUNDERS  
This has been the best summer of my life. But I'm supposed to be on a different track.  
(resigned)  
Gotta get off while I still can.

Oomph steps away, not willing to let him see how badly this hurts. And he watches her go, clearly pained.

YOUTUBE  
Dome's in three days, man. Crush it there and a bullshit misdemeanor becomes a badass extracurricular.

SAUNDERS  
And what if we don't crush? What then? I can't risk it. I'm sorry.

Preston gets up in his face.

PRESTON  
So you're a tourist? A fair weather fan? Taps out when the going gets tough? Is that it?

SAUNDERS

You don't know me. You don't know  
what I gotta deal with.

DEON

(calling out)

Ay yo. Y'all gonna flirt or y'all  
gonna dance? Cahmon now.

An impasse. No one makes a move.

PRESTON

I know all I need to know.

Saunders looks at the crowd. At his team. His former team.

SAUNDERS

No. You don't. None of you do.

(to the crowd)

I'm not doing this for them.

(to Rise)

And I'm not doing this for you.

(beat)

I'm doing this for me.

Saunders walks to the amp, hooks up his phone. Scrolls to a  
Litefeet track from SoundCloud.

He presses play. An intense Litefeet banger plays.

We haven't heard this one. Head down, Saunders walks to  
center court, all eyes on him.

# **BEGIN RUCKER PARK DEMOLITION DANCE.**

We circle around our man twice.

His hand pounds against his chest to the beat. The track's  
beat, yes. But his heartbeat too.

He revs up. And then he goes for it. Leaping with abandon.  
A spastic, furious, impassioned dance.

We see the pain and the ecstasy. The brain and the body.

His controlling father. His free spirited mother.

We pick out faces in the crowd, enraptured by this young man  
leaving everything on the blacktop.

YOUTUBE'S IPHONE: *immortalizing the routine in 1's and 0's.*

And finally Saunders ends the routine with increasingly angry  
Lock In's. One after the other. Again and again.

A jackhammer looking to get to the center of the earth.  
Trying to bury this side of him once and for all.

The song ends.

**AND THE DEMOLITION IS OVER.**

A hush over the crowd. Silent. Stunned.  
All we hear is the rush of the Harlem River.

And the blood pulsing through the veins of a 17 year old boy.

With tears streaming down his face, Saunders heads out into  
the dark night.

Alone.

FADE OUT.

**OVER BLACK.**

The sounds of a train speeding through a track.

**INT. TRAIN - DAY.**

TWO TWEENS in oversized NBA jerseys hawk bags of M&M's.

TWEEN #1  
One dollar. One dollar.

TWEEN #2  
Peanut M&M's. Only peanut left.

TWEEN #1  
Raising money for team uniforms.

Saunders watches their routine. He used to work these trains.  
But no longer. Still. Gotta respect the hustle.

He fishes out a single. Tween #2 skips over, grabs the bill.  
Offers Saunders a bag. He glumly shakes his head no.

TWEEN #2  
You don't want it?

SAUNDERS  
Nah.

KID #2  
So why you pay for it?

Saunders exits at his stop. Game recognize game.

**INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - LAB - DAY.**

Saunders and Nora work in the lab. Nora at the computer.  
Herman, obeying their code, attempts to pick up a box.

NORA

You gonna mope all day?  
(nods to Herman)  
Got one pile of junk not pulling  
his weight. Don't need another.

Saunders takes a stab at the code. Presses enter. The robot  
is stiff and rigid. No traction on picking up the box.

SAUNDERS

I spent so much time perfecting the  
moves. Honing them. Working them  
within an inch of their lives. And  
I won't even get a chance to show  
em off when it really counts.

Saunders tries again. Presses enter. Herman does a bit better  
but still can't perform the task.

NORA

Maybe that's not what it's about.

SAUNDERS

Huh?

NORA

Maybe the goal isn't perfect.  
Maybe the goal is to just let go.

Saunders looks at her. Chewing over the words.

SAUNDERS

To let go.

Saunders heatedly types code into the console.

**INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY.**

In the live room, a spirited recording session takes place.  
Musicians, entourage, producers. All bobbing to the music.

Oomph watches hungrily from behind partitioned glass. The  
studio engineer at the console looks over a menu book.

STUDIO ENGINEER

Left your ProTools session open  
last night.

Oomph's eyes go wide. Is that a fireable offense?

OOMPH

Shit. My bad. Everyone was gone for the night. I was just messing --

STUDIO ENGINEER

Try adding a high hat on the 2 and 4. And pitch your snare an octave.

(beat)

Pretty dope.

The studio engineer hands Oomph his lunch order, goes back to fiddling with the EQ knobs. Oomph smiles proudly. A small win.

OOMPH

I'll go call this in.

#### **INT. CALHOUN SCHOOL - LAB.**

Saunders is focused intently on the computer console.

NORA

You can't introduce that much randomness. The executive function will hiccup on the variables.

He presses enter. A beat. Then Herman bends at the waist but can't quite get purchase on the box. Saunders goes back to the keyboard, adjusting his code.

SAUNDERS

You said it yourself. It's not about controlling every single variable. So what if we try ceding a measure of control in favor of guided randomness.

NORA

Guided randomness?

Saunders nods, a truth about robotics now dawning on me. But also, maybe, so much more.

SAUNDERS

It's like...does your brain control your heart? Or is it the other way around?

Nora sees where he's going. She takes over the console and adds a few lines of code.

They go back and forth, their collaboration picking up speed. And then they step back to admire their handiwork. Not half bad. Saunders gestures to the keyboard.

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
Ladies first.

NORA  
I insist.

Saunders presses enter. And this time, Herman bends at the waist, grabs onto the box and...miraculously picks it up.

Nora yelps in joy. Mr. Veasley comes over.

MR. VEASLEY  
What was in that code?

NORA  
Created a feedback loop where each node could respond to data from the other as opposed to the executive function determining each action.

SAUNDERS  
Loose instead of tight.

MR. VEASLEY  
Loose instead of tight?

Saunders remembers a sage piece of advice he was once told.

SAUNDERS  
Gotta be willing to fall on your ass. Then trust your body to do the rest.

MR. VEASLEY  
Don't remember that specific analysis being in the curriculum but whatever gets you there. Let's see if you can replicate with non-standard geometries.

Veasley walks away.

Saunders should be beaming with joy. But he's not. There's something almost melancholy about him.

NORA  
What's the matter? We're so close.



SAUNDERS

It's easy for Herman to embrace  
uncertainty. He's got no baggage.  
No memories of the past, no dreams  
for the future.

(beat)

He doesn't know what it's like to  
disappoint the people you care for.

Nora sees how much missing Kingdome weighs on Saunders. She  
checks her calculator watch.

NORA

You know, if you hustled, you still  
could make it to Coney.

SAUNDERS

My Dad would kill me. Plus we gotta  
iterate with non-standard  
geometries.

NORA

Yeah, you're right.

(beat)

But I could take care of that.

SAUNDERS

I already let down one team. Can't  
let down another.

NORA

You've been riding my coattails  
since middle school. I'm used to it  
by now. It's up to you, Saunders.  
You just have to figure it out.

SAUNDERS

Figure it out?

NORA

Does your brain control your heart?  
Or is it the other way around?

She used his line on him! The nerve. He thinks long and hard  
on what that essential question means for him. And then he  
lets out a small smile, knowing what he has to do.

He holds out his fist for a bump. Nora slaps it away.

And gives him a hug.

**INT. AD AGENCY - DAY.**

Open floor plan, business casual as far as the eye can see.

MARKETERS find the cure for cancer. (Work on a Macy's ad.)  
Khalil, an IT admin, types on a computer while a CREATIVE  
DIRECTOR peers over his shoulder.

KHALIL

You have to deselect the firewall.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

I did, bro.

The "bro" definitely chafes. But Khalil knows the game, turns  
his wince into a smile. After a few keystrokes, et voila.

KHALIL

There we go. Lightning fast  
internet. Up and running.

A YOUNG CREATIVE dripping in Supreme gawks at his phone.

YOUNG CREATIVE

Apple doesn't fall far from the  
tree does it? Check out your kin!

KHALIL

Huh?

YOUNG CREATIVE

World Star!

He slides his Aeron over to Khalil. Gives him the phone.

YOUNG CREATIVE (CONT'D)

(softly)

World Star. Saunders is on the  
front page. Look.

IPHONE: *We see the Rucker Park dance that Youtube captured.  
Saunders, leaving the storied park in rubble with his moves.*

Khalil's face clouds over with rage. He keeps watching as we  
see his distorted reflection in the screen's glass.

YOUNG CREATIVE (CONT'D)

Uhm. Can I get my piece back?

Khalil walks straight to the elevator, a man on a mission.

The elevator doors close.

**INT. BRONX RIVER HOUSES - AFTERNOON.**

The elevator doors open.

Out comes Preston, wearing his UPS browns, exhausted. He walks to his unit. Saunders waits for him.

PRESTON  
Hell you want?

SAUNDERS  
Need to talk to you.

PRESTON  
I'm busy.

Preston unlocks his door, enters. But he can't close it. Saunders has put his shoe in the threshold.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Move your foot.

SAUNDERS  
Kingdome's in two hours.

PRESTON  
Move your foot.

Saunders stays put. Preston throws his hands up, walks inside. Saunders follows.

**INT. PRESTON'S APARTMENT - SAME.**

Preston puts a kettle on boil. Crosses his arms, a statue.

SAUNDERS  
If we leave now, we'll --

PRESTON  
You got some nerve coming round.

A tense moment.

SAUNDERS  
I made a mistake. Input the wrong variable. Made a choice out of fear. I tried hard to bury something that I don't want buried anymore. But I can't resurrect it on my own. I need your help. Rise & Shine's help. Please. Give me the chance to correct it.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)

I finally get it, Preston. I get what it means to get lite.

PRESTON

You held up a mirror to what this whole pipe dream really is. Now please leave me alone. All I want is to drink my tea in peace and head out on the truck.

SAUNDERS

You're scared. I am too.

(beat)

But we gotta shoot our shot. Make em recognize.

The kettle starts to boil.

PRESTON

Make em recognize? Lemme tell you something, man. I was your age? I was living in a group home in East Tremont. Used to tie my shoes to my wrist while I slept. Otherwise they'd be gone in the morning.

The kettle whistles. He pours the boiling water in a mug.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I came up. Got me a girl. Got me a team. But that don't erase the fact that I'm an overweight black man from the Bronx without a high school diploma who drives for UPS. There's a limit to what my life can look like.

(beat)

You don't have that limit. Not yet. So enjoy it while it lasts. Because it don't last forever.

Preston drops a bag in his mug. Watches as the clouds of tea spread and twist in the hot water. Random and unpredictable.

SAUNDERS

(one last try)

Please. We rise and shine as family. Or not at all.

He looks up at Saunders. Resolute.

PRESTON

Not at all.

**EXT. BRONX RIVER PROJECTS - LATER.**

Saunders walks across the courtyard of the public housing complex to a different section. He presses a button on an intercom system. It buzzes.

BIG MAN (O.S.)  
(intercom)  
Wasssssup?

SAUNDERS  
It's Saunders.

BIG MAN (O.S.)  
(intercom)  
What's good shun?

SAUNDERS  
What's good?!? We got two hours  
till Kingdome. What are we doing?!?

**INT. OOMPH'S APT. - SAME.**

Big Man in boxers and a wife beater. Speaks into the intercom. Behind him, Oomph makes macaroni and butter.

BIG MAN  
You know I'm with it.

OOMPH  
Who's that?

BIG MAN  
Saunders! Wants to go to Kingdome!  
Let's do this thing!

OOMPH  
Hang up.

BIG MAN  
You serious?

She nods. Dead serious.

**INTERCUT AS NEEDED.**

BIG MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(intercom)  
You know I'm down for the cause but  
cuz is straight trippin'.

SAUNDERS  
Put her on.

BIG MAN  
 (to Oomph)  
 Wants to get at you.

Oomph shakes her head.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
 (intercom)  
 No dice, man.

Saunders hangs his head. It's a lost cause. Or is it?

He balances his phone on the callbox, scrolls through Oomph's SoundCloud. And then jams a penny into the intercom button.

SAUNDERS  
 Tell her to come to the window.

BIG MAN  
 (to Oomph)  
 You gotta see this.

Oomph comes to the window and looks down at --

Saunders presses play on the phone, cueing up the emotional track that Oomph played for him at Washington Square Park. The one with "bite."

Like Cusack in "Say Anything," he screams up at the window.

SAUNDERS  
 Oomph!

OOMPH  
 Go away!

SAUNDERS  
 I know you're mad. You don't have  
 to talk to me. But I'm not leaving  
 till you peep this.

Saunders takes a deep breath. And launches into a routine where he evocatively portrays two sides of a budding teenage relationship.

The courtship. The push. The pull. The love. The pain.

He does a one legged flip to indicate head over heels. He then splays out on the ground - a body on life support, one hand indicating heartbeat, the other showing the EKG wave.

We see Oomph's stone cold expression begin to thaw.

BIG MAN  
Prep school got game.

And indeed he does. Cusack never had moves like this.

**EXT. PROJECTS - LATER.**

Oomph exits the apartment complex with Big Man. She gently pounds a fist on Saunders's chest.

SAUNDERS  
I messed up. I didn't...I'm sorry.

Oomph hangs him out to dry for a beat. Then --

OOMPH  
I didn't come down to hear some  
mumbly mouth apology. I just don't  
like to disappoint my fans. Don't  
go getting a big head now.

Out of the doghouse, he can't help but smile.

SAUNDERS  
Never.

The two of them get close, grinning like school yard crushes.

BIG MAN  
I don't mean to interrupt. But if  
y'all are done flirting, Kingdome  
is in less than two hours and --

He opens up Piggy Bank.

BIG MAN (CONT'D)  
Our stacks are depleted. So  
according to my calculations...  
(his counting routine)  
We need more cabbage.

OOMPH  
I got an idea.

Oomph grabs an arm from each and pulls them away.

**EXT. DYCKMAN TRAIN STATION - LATER.**

A YOUNG STREETWEAR ENTHUSIAST stands impatiently.

In front of him, Youtube holds a shoebox against his chest. This is clearly painful, dropping a kid off at school for the first time painful.

Oomph, Big Man, and Saunders stand a few feet behind.

YOUTUBE  
(to the crew)  
I don't think I can.

OOMPH  
It's okay. You can do it.

Youtube opens up the shoebox revealing the iciest pair of custom tiger camo Jordan 3's - a collector's item.

YOUTUBE  
(to the buyer)  
You'll treat em right? Clean em with a tooth brush? Never wear em in rain? Store em in a temperature controlled dry environment? Not too dry though! Otherwise it'll micro-crease the leather.

STREETWEAR ENTHUSIAST  
(what's wrong with him)  
Yeah man. For sure.

Youtube gives up the box in exchange for a wad of cash. Streetwear Dude heads out with his new pair of kicks. Youtube, heartbroken, calls after him.

YOUTUBE  
Send me pics every few weeks okay?!  
Just so I know they're okay.

Big Man, Youtube, and Saunders comfort their friend.

OOMPH  
You did good, man. You did good.

BIG MAN  
Yo. Are you crying?

YOUTUBE  
(wiping his eyes)  
This shit is mad emotional.

Big Man rolls his eyes, finger-counts their stack.

BIG MAN  
Still about fitty short.



YOUTUBE  
Imma get em back.

Before he can catch the Jordans, Saunders holds him back.

SAUNDERS  
We'll make it up on the way.

BIG MAN  
Registration ends in an hour.

SAUNDERS  
So we better stop wasting time.

PRELAP: One of Oomph's beats ramps up...

SAUNDERS (CONT'D)  
And start hitting.

**INT. TRAIN STATION - MOMENTS LATER.**

SLOW MOTION inserts punctuating the beat:

-Metro-card sliding through the swiper.

-Turnstile advancing.

-An escalator sucks grey steps into its metal mouth.

-Train lights blast out of a dark tunnel.

-The crash of commuters, exiting and entering.

-Winged AFIs and one pair of loafers run on the platform.

The doors close shut as we enter --

**INT. TRAIN - AS THE BEAT BREAKS.**

Our team starts to hit. Even without Preston, they still make a mean troupe.

Youtube does a few mournful hat tricks to commemorate his Nike chickadees leaving the nest.

But then he comes on strong with a Tic Tac Toe into a Needle and Thread. He lands it and takes a bow.

A smattering of applauses from the captive audience.

Now Saunders and Big Man take pole position. Literally.

The child and the teenager jump onto the vertical metal, hoisting themselves parallel to the ground.

Oomph spins them like a pinwheel. First they move slowly.

Then they pick up speed, twirling faster and faster. Round and round they go.

The commuters are jarred out of their subway stupor and begin to pay attention. Dollar bills start flashing in the air.

#### **ANOTHER TRAIN.**

Oomph throws on a track for herself. She air keyboards to the beat for her rev up.

And then jumps on the handrails and links her feet to them.

Upside down, she "walks" on the ceiling until she gets to a pole and catapults down into a James Brown split. She pulls herself upright by the collar.

And this makes the register go ca-ching.

#### **AND YET ANOTHER TRAIN.**

Saunders's solo routine.

He revs up with his head down, slowly bobbing and weaving.

And then he jumps to the base of the pole, every muscle in his body straining as he lifts himself up.

And as the beat starts to build, Saunders climbs the pole, hand over hand.

He goes higher and higher, his face a contortion of concentration and ecstasy. He's still climbing.

And once again we break from reality.

As Saunders climbs the pole, it stretches impossibly higher, the roof of the car no longer the terminus. It seems to stretch to infinity.

The commuters must be 100 feet below, looking up in awe.

And we feel the speed. The height. The weightlessness.

This is what it feels like to get lite.

BOOM!

The fantasy sequence is interrupted as the inter train doors open to reveal the doomsday preacher.

DOOMSDAY PREACHER  
 Unholy works of the flesh.  
 The scourge must be smote.

The preacher pushes through commuters to wage his holy war.

YOUTUBE  
 C'mon!

Saunders catapults off the pole. He and Youtube book to the opposite inter train doors. Oomph scoops up her amp. Big Man collects the last bill.

# **NEXT CAR.**

Rise enters the next car where they find --

A group of GIRL SCOUTS hawking thin mints and Samoas.

GIRL SCOUTS  
 Thin mints. Samoas. \$5 a box!

SAUNDERS  
 (to the crew)  
 Keep moving!

They "pardon me/excuse me" their way through annoyed commuters. Almost to the next car.

But as Big Man passes the girl scouts, time SLOWS DOWN.

GIRL SCOUTS  
 (slowed down/distorted)  
 Thin mints. Samoas. Thin mints.

This siren call has shipwrecked many a sailor/dieter.

OOMPH  
 Big! Close your ears! Don't listen!

But it's too late. Big Man reaches into the lunch box, counts out ten singles. Does the deal.

BIG MAN  
 Two boxes of thin mints.

GIRL SCOUTS  
 (seductive)  
 No Samoas?

She's got a point. Big Man opens the lunch box again. But before he can spend more earnings on his sweet tooth, Saunders grabs him under his arm.

BIG MAN  
(thrashing)  
No!!! The Samoas!!!

And just as the preacher enters this car, they rush to the --

**NEXT NEXT CAR.**

Finally. Safe.

But then we hear it. The soft strumming. A mournful trumpet.

The Mariachis are on this car.

OOMPH  
You gotta be kidding me.

BIG MAN  
They tryin' to take Pelham 123.

SAUNDERS  
Hurry!

They navigate to the far side intra train doors --

**IN BETWEEN CARS.**

Saunders opens the doors to the next next next car. And that's when he spots them on the far side: TWO COPS.

They clock him as well.

COPS  
Stop!

Straddling subway cars ain't legal and he's caught dead to rights. The cops push through the throng of commuters.

SAUNDERS  
Head back!

But the preacher is gaining ground from the other side.

YOUTUBE  
Keep going!

Stuck between a rock and a hard place. And that's when Big Man sees it: The emergency break.

OOMPH

No!

Too late. Big Man hops on top of a seat and pulls the lever.

SCREEEEEEEECH!

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

(intercom)

Ladies and gentleman please remain calm. There is a situation on the train. The police have been notified. We should be moving shortly. Please be patient.

Chaos and confusion.

Commuters are pissed/scared. The preacher and the Mariachis start beefing. And the cops are closing in.

BIG MAN

This way!

Big Man abandons the lunch box, climbs on top of the train. The other three look at each other. This is crazy.

But they've come too far to fall.

So they climb.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - AGENT BOOTH - DAY.**

Keisha counts a few bills, hands a MetroCard to a customer. The dispatch intercom crackles alive.

DISPATCH (O.S.)

Downtown N train stopped between 25th street and 36th street stations in Brooklyn. Four panhandlers in tunnel. Last seen dancing on West End Line. Three adults, one child. Police notified.

This description gets Keisha's attention.

She walks to a subway map and traces Brooklyn's West End Line. All the way to Coney Island.

She looks to her co-worker who is filing paperwork with headphones on, oblivious to the call.

Keisha looks at the intercom, weighing bad options.

**INT. TUNNEL - SAME.**

It's 100 degrees and in Smell-O-Vision you'd get hit with a waft of garbage, exhaust, and urine.

Rise fires up their torches (iPhone flashlights). The cones of light strobe through the dark tunnel.

They crouch low and move carefully along the train top.

OOMPH

Are you insane?

BIG MAN

There was no other way.

OOMPH

Pulling the e-brake's a felony. We could go to prison.

BIG MAN

Ain't afraid of the clink.

OOMPH

You had to sleep in bed with me after I let you watch Tales from the Crypt.

BIG MAN

Crypt Keeper is scary!

SAUNDERS

(pointing)

Next station's around the bend.

YOUTUBE

Gonna be cops waiting for us.

SAUNDERS

We'll beat em if we hurry.

Behind them, in the not too far distance, we see the crawl of flashlights from the transit cops.

Saunders grabs Oomph's hand. They put the pedal to the metal.

Eventually, they reach the end of the train.

OOMPH

What now?

SAUNDERS

(pointing)

Gotta get to that catwalk.

YOUTUBE

What about the third rail?

OOMPH

Perhaps avoid it. Fuck you think?

They shine their phones onto the ground. A family of bloated rat scurries out of the muck.

Big Man's eyes go wide.

BIG MAN

(a la Indiana Jones)

Rats.

**EXT. STREET/INT. UPS TRUCK - DAY.**

Preston drives the truck. A stocky know-it-all co-worker, UPS GREG (30's), rides shot. They're both in brown short sleeves and short shorts. Styling graciously provided by UPS.

UPS Greg holds a big bottle of vitamins, his most recent get-poor-quick scheme.

UPS GREG

...and I get a piece of every customer who I enlist. And they get a piece of every customer they enlist. On and on and on. First check I got was like whoa. You gotta be shitting me.

PRESTON

That's a pyramid scheme.

UPS GREG

Works great if you're towards the top of the pyramid. Plus that's not even my side hustle. That's my side *side* hustle. Do home reno too.

Preston rolls his eyes.

PRESTON

(not convincing)

I'm fine driving a truck.

UPS GREG

You gotta be shitting me?

**INT. TUNNEL - "DAY."**

Rise walks along the catwalk that hugs the tunnel wall.

They're almost at the platform of the next station when they clock two NYPD COPS among the rush hour commuters.

YOUTUBE

How are we gonna get outta here?

Big Man snatches the amp from Oomph.

BIG MAN

I'll hurl it and yell bomb.

YOUTUBE

Are you crazy?

Youtube and Big Man tug of war with the bomb/amp.

CONDUCTOR VOICE (O.S.)

This is a Coney Island bound Q  
express train.

OOMPH

Wait. Did you hear that?

**INT. TRAIN PLATFORM - SAME.**

An express train has been "inexplicably" rerouted to this station. The doors open, rush hour commuters spill out. The cops do their best to keep above the fray but it's no use.

SAUNDERS

Now!

Rise emerges from the platform and disappear into the throng of people, slipping away undetected.

**EXT. STATION/GREENWOOD CEMETERY - 5PM.**

Rise exit the crowded station at 36th street. Once they're above ground, they sprint two blocks away from the melee.

They post up near Greenwood Cemetery and catch their breath. Naturally, Youtube posts a story.

IG STORY: *On the way to the Dome!*

OOMPH

Put that away.



YOUTUBE

A narrow escape's not a narrow  
escape I don't catch it on video.

SAUNDERS

Where are we?

OOMPH

Sunset Park.

YOUTUBE

Close to Coney.

OOMPH

We'll slide in with time to spare.

YOUTUBE

How much money we got?

Everyone looks at Big Man. He hangs his head in shame.

BIG MAN

Piggy Bank's on the train.

**EXT. STREET/INT. UPS TRUCK - LATE AFTERNOON.**

UPS Greg drop off two packages. We can kinda hear him pitch  
the household on vitamins and home renovation.

Preston shakes his head. Looks at his phone.

IPHONE: *Youtube's geotagged post -- "On the way to the Dome."*

Off a wistful look on Preston's face --

**EXT. GREENWOOD CEMETERY - LATE AFTERNOON.**

Youtube grabs Big Man by his shoulders.

YOUTUBE

How could you man?

BIG MAN

I'm sorry! There were cops and  
priests and girl scouts and  
Mexicans and --

YOUTUBE

Are you crying?

BIG MAN  
(tearing up)  
This shit is mad emotional.

Youtube throws his hands up.

YOUTUBE  
Makes sense we end up at Greenwood.  
Perfect place to bury Rise & Shine  
once and for all.

SAUNDERS  
We're so close.

YOUTUBE  
This is Kingdome, man. You either  
come correct or not all.

The four of them take a seat on the curb, the summer sun  
rapidly beginning its decent.

Time's a ticking.

**EXT. EXPRESSWAY/INT. UPS TRUCK - LATER.**

Preston driving. UPS Greg in shot.

UPS GREG  
You wouldn't believe these flips,  
bro. Expose some brick. Throw in a  
washer/dryer. Double your money in  
six months. No joke, bro.

They're about to take the exit to Brooklyn Navy Yard.

But Preston has a change of heart. Swerves the car away from  
the exit lane just in time.

UPS GREG (CONT'D)  
You gotta be shiiiitting me?!?!

**EXT. GREENWOOD CEMETERY - 6PM.**

Funereal music plays. RIP the Rise & Shine crew.

OOMPH  
There's always next year.

SAUNDERS  
Yeah. Always next year.

The two of them look at each other, both fully aware of the very real chance they won't be in the same city next year.

Or ever again.

YOUTUBE

We gotta split up. Cops might still  
be on look out.

No one moves.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)

We had a good run. But it's over.

Saunders doesn't wanna believe it. But he knows its true.

And just as Youtube peels off we hear --

BEEP BEEP BEEP!

The UPS truck pulls up. Preston leans out the window.

PRESTON

Coney's the other way.

BIG MAN

Preston!

Big Man, Youtube, and Oomph run up to the truck.

YOUTUBE

Man. You will not *believe* what it  
took to get here. Hold up. Hold up.  
How'd you find us?

PRESTON

(shakes his phone)

Not only am I leader of Rise &  
Shine. I'm also a follower.

We clock Youtube's geo-tagged story on Preston's phone. The celebratory mood dissipates.

BIG MAN

Doesn't matter. We're short on the  
entrance fee. I lost Piggy Bank.

Preston gets out of the car while UPS Greg rolls his eyes all the way back in his head.

Preston looks at the crew. *His* crew.

They are a sorry sight indeed - misfits covered in subway grime, shiny with sweat. But what's clear is their hustle. Their scrap. Their fight.

He takes out a Credit Union bank card from his pocket.

PRESTON

I'll crack my own piggy bank.

YOUTUBE

Are you serious right now? What about your rent? What about --

PRESTON

I may be an overweight black man from the Bronx without a high school diploma who drives a truck.

UPS GREG

(under his breath)

You gotta be shitting me.

PRESTON

But we rise and shine as a *family*. And that's what we're gonna do.

He looks to Saunders, magic hour kissing his protege's face as he beams in the golden light.

**INT. UPS TRUCK/EXT. STILLWELL AVENUE - 7PM.**

The UPS truck barrels down Coney's main artery.

Past Neptune Avenue, past Mermaid Avenue.

BIG MAN

Look!

A banner hangs across the entrance to the Boardwalk:

- WELCOME TO KINGDOME -

Throngs of NEW YORKERS stream into the event.

They reach Surf Avenue. Preston throws the car in park.

PRESTON

(to UPS Greg)

You got this?

GREG

You good for three vitamin packs?

PRESTON  
 Absolutely not.  
 (to the crew)  
 Let's go!

Rise barrels out of the car and book it to the entrance of --

**EXT. KINGDOME - DUSK.**

The isle by the sea. Cool, calm, and serene?

Not quite.

Kingdome has the whole peninsula on fire.

A shirts/skins basketball game takes place under floodlights.

New Yorkers of all stripes are packed in. Some watch from nearby rooftops. A few hang off tree branches. NYC crowd ingenuity - Anything for a sight line.

We pick out a few familiar faces:

Street ball legend RAF ALSTON (aka Skip to my Lou), NBA eccentric RON ARTEST (aka Metta World Peace), sneaker aficionado BOBBITO GARCIA (aka Kool Bob Love).

Basically, if you don't have an insane alias, what are you even doing here? Take your ass to Coachella.

Under a Hot 97 banner, FUNKMASTER FLEX mans the 1's and 2's.

And then we see her. The one. The only. CARDI B.

She grabs a mic, throws her head back, and unleashes --

CARDI B  
 Okuuuuuuuuuuuuuuurrrrrr!

Her Bronx trumpet echoes throughout the entire peninsula announcing that the games have begun.

The boardwalk jumps up and down to the beat. Any more bass and it'd crack off into the ocean.

We dolly zoom into Saunders's stunned face, completely overwhelmed by the spectacle.

Welcome to Kingdome, indeed.

But before Rise can jump into the melee and take the crown, we hear *that voice*.

KHALIL

Saunders.

Saunders whips around to find his father, clawing through the crowd, a messenger bag on his side.

SAUNDERS

Dad.

They size each other up. Then: Khalil holds out his phone showing the Rucker Park video that's gone viral.

KHALIL

Saw your video. Turns out I wasn't the only one.

SAUNDERS

Must be the algorithm.

KHALIL

Must be.

Khalil looks over at the Rise & Shine crew - Saunders's newfound family for whom his son is risking *everything*.

The crew knows well enough to give these two some space.

SAUNDERS

I fucked up. I'm sorry. But you have to understand why I came. This is something --

KHALIL

No. You listen to me. There's something I need you to hear.

The longest beat yet. Maybe ever. Saunders braces for it.

KHALIL (CONT'D)

When I was your age, all I wanted was to be an emcee.

Saunders's eyes bug out. *This* is what he wants to say?

KHALIL (CONT'D)

KRS. Melle Mel. Slick Rick. If you headed to Disco Fever on Jerome on any given weekend? Odds were you'd catch one of them in a cipher. Hell, I battled Pete Rock before anyone even knew who he was.  
(picturing it)  
Came correct too.

Saunders wraps his head around this version of his father.

KHALIL (CONT'D)

But when I took up with your  
Mom...well...that dream kinda faded  
away. Her dance career was just  
starting. Wasn't room enough for  
both of us to be chasing.  
Especially when you came along.

(beat)

And, if I'm being honest, I  
resented her for it. She got to  
pursue her passion.

(beat)

I...took a job in IT.

SAUNDERS

Dad --

KHALIL

That was my choice. And I'm good  
with how things shook out. Truly. I  
am. But know this. I'm not gonna  
punish someone I love for pursuing  
their passion. Not again.

(beat)

When I saw you dancing in that  
video, it was --

(choking up)

Saw a side of you I never seen  
before. You got something,  
Saunders. Something special.

He zips open his bag and pulls them out - the winged AF1's.

KHALIL (CONT'D)

I can't make your choices for you.  
But whatever they may be? I need  
you to know. I'm down for them.

He hands over the shoes. Saunders is tongue-tied.

KHALIL (CONT'D)

Put em to good use.

Saunders hugs his Dad. Holding on to him hard. The man who  
clipped his own wings so his kid could fly.

BIG MAN

We gotta go!

Khalil lets go of Saunders, finally ceding control.

KHALIL

Good luck.

Saunders doesn't know what to say. To acknowledge all that his Dad has done for him. Is doing for him.

He settles for --

SAUNDERS

Thank you.

PRESTON

We gotta register.  
(grabbing hands)  
Link up!

Like 3rd graders on a field trip, they form a chain link and wade through the crowd.

Youtube is at the end of the chain so he can record with his free hand. Preston is the tip of the spear. Saunders, in the middle, turns around as his Dad recedes into the crowd.

By looking back, Saunders jerks the chain and accidentally causes Preston to take a bad step - straining his ankle.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Damn!

SAUNDERS

You alright?

He hops a bit, trying to take pressure off the bad foot.

PRESTON

I'll be fine.

Saunders supports him as they make it to the --

# **REGISTRATION TABLE.**

Manned by two VETERANS, imposing old school hip hop heads.

This tournament's been going for decades and these guys are the gatekeepers. They've seen it all. They are not interested in any of your bullshit.

Youtube and Big Man rush the table.

YOUTUBE

Rise & Shine. Litefeet clique.

VETERAN #1

Registration is over.



BIG MAN  
But...

VETERAN #1  
Over.

The crew steps to the side.

BIG MAN  
(to Preston)  
What do we do? These some hard men.

YOUTUBE  
It's like the DMV run by DMX.

PRESTON  
I got this.

Preston limps up to the table.

PRESTON (CONT'D)  
Fellas. My apologies for the  
tardiness. That's on me.  
(plops down a stack)  
But we got the entrance fee.

The veterans confer for a second. Begrudgingly sign them up.  
Youtube looks over the clipboard.

YOUTUBE  
It's an ampersand. The "and."  
Rise ampersand Shine.

The veterans punish him with a withering gaze.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)  
Your way's fine too. All good.

VETERAN #2  
You're short. Late fee registration  
is six hundo. Only five bills here.

This is all the money Preston has in the world.

PRESTON  
Please. I'm good for it. I'll hit  
you next week. Word is bond.

VETERAN #1  
Can't do it.

A tense moment. And then --

DEON (O.S.)  
I got the late fee.

Deon, along with the rest of Showtime, emerge from the crowd.  
He peels off five twenties. Looks right at Preston.

DEON (CONT'D)  
Got history with this OG. Used to  
be one of us. Matterafact, last  
time he hit with Showtime was at  
Kingdome. You remember that don't  
you, Preston? Back in the day?

Preston stays quiet.

DEON (CONT'D)  
We was ready to snatch the crown.  
Routine on lock. Center stage. Jump  
onto the court and...all a  
sudden...we down a man.

SHOWTIME DUDE  
Straight Houdini'd. Poof!

Saunders looks to Preston: Say something! Defend yourself!  
But Preston says nothing, clearly ashamed at the memory.

DEON  
That's right. Bitch ass got stage  
fright. Left us high and dry.  
(beat)  
We lost that year. But it made us  
stronger. Kings of the dome ever  
since we 86'd this dead weight.

Showtime slap hands. Pumping themselves up.

DEON (CONT'D)  
(to Preston)  
So what you say? Gonna snatch the  
crown this year? Or you gonna  
disappear again?  
(deadly)  
No excuses this time, patna.

Showtime walks into the crowd followed by their entourage.

We hear an airhorn blow. The street ball game is over. Time  
for the dance competition. The veterans close up shop.

VETERAN #1  
Good luck.

Preston nods to the veteran. Then looks to his crew. Oomph, Big, Tube, Saunders. Each realizing what they're up against.

And it's steep.

**EXT. KINGDOME - CENTERSTAGE - LATER.**

A group of high school DOUBLE DUTCHERS swing rope. The crowd shows em some love.

Cardi B and Flex watch from a cordoned-off area. FAB FIVE FREDDY has joined them as well as JAQUEL KNIGHT (Beyonce's choreographer).

These are the judges.

At the far side of the bleachers, Rise has carved out a little section for themselves. Oomph stares at the judges table, wide-eyed in awe at being this close to her heroes.

OOMPH

This is crazy.

YOUTUBE

(shooting)

Imma need a bigger data plan.

Preston ices his foot.

BIG MAN

You good?

PRESTON

I'm good.

Saunders takes a seat next to him. The other three continue spazzing out about the nearby talent.

SAUNDERS

How is it? For real.

PRESTON

It's fine. Trust me.

SAUNDERS

Can I?

Is he talking about the ankle? Or something else.

PRESTON

Past is the past, man.

A blur of feet and legs navigate the impossibly fast revolutions of the nylon jump ropes.

SAUNDERS

You sure about that?

PRESTON

I can't explain it. I wanted it so bad I could taste it, man. Believe me: I *wanted* it. I had the goods. And then, when they called our name...when it was in front of me --

He shakes his head.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

I don't know. I panicked.

(beat)

Took a while for me to bounce back from that. I was in a stupor, man.

He looks to Saunders, his foot throbbing. His *heart* throbbing.

PRESTON (CONT'D)

Rise & Shine ain't just a name.

It's a wake up call.

Saunders chews it over as the Double Dutchers take a bow which brings us to --

#### **THE CONTENDERS MONTAGE.**

-The judges score the Double Dutchers.

-Then the Rock Steady Crew - famous breakers - take center stage. They windmill, robot, head slide, and baby spin.

-Judges confer and take notes.

-Some West Coast Krumpers do their thing - stomps, jabs, chest pops, and arm swings.

-Rise watch from the bleachers. The competition is fierce.

-It's standing room only and still the crowd keeps growing.

#### **END MONTAGE.**

The flood lights turn off. Center stage is dark.

VOICE (O.S.)

(PA system)

New York City. What time is it?

CROWD  
Showtime!

VOICE (O.S.)  
(PA system)  
I can't hear you!

CROWD  
Showtime!!

VOICE (O.S.)  
(PA system)  
What time is it?

CROWD  
Showtime!!!

CA-CHUNK.

Every flood light fires up full blast.

All 9 members of Showtime run out onto the basketball court, hyping the crowd into a frenzy.

NYC has real love for Showtime.

Deon leads the troupe in an 8-man weave that includes rolls, jumps, somersaults, and flips.

They work a routine in perfect unison, like some mixture of Busby Berkeley meets the Harlem Globetrotters. On steroids.

The crowd goes ape.

Cardi, Flex, Fab, and Jaquel applaud from the judge's booth.

Deon conducts the orchestra like a maestro.

He points to the left side - 3 Showtime dancers, flat on the ground, start fish jumping over each other.

He points to the right - same thing.

The 6 "fishes" form the base layers of a pyramid.

He points up and two dancers comes flying in, adding to the human structure.

And then Deon takes a running start and hurls himself onto the top of the pyramid. Boo ya!

Ladies and gentlemen.

*That is Showtime.*

**BLEACHERS.**

Thunderous applause.

Rise & Shine look more like Seated and Dimmed.

BIG MAN

We have to go after *that*?

Showtime run to their corner receiving a hero's exit.

VOICE (O.S.)

(on PA)

Next up is Rise & Shine.

All five members remain seated, the fear palpable.

Impatient murmurs from the crowd.

Oomph summons up all the courage she can muster and walks over to the judge's table, hands Funkmaster Flex her iPhone.

FUNKMASTER FLEX

What's this?

OOMPH

A bomb. Press play to detonate.

The judges all look at each other. Who is this fearless warrior queen? Flex plugs the explosive device to the amp.

A Litefeet banger comes on. It's fiercer and more intense than what we've heard previously.

Youtube and Big Man join her center stage.

They launch into a "Monkey in the Middle" routine where Big Man climbs up one of them and then flips to the other.

The audience eats it up like a Nathan's hot dog.

We pick out a familiar face in the crowd - Mrs. Tube!

And of course Youtube's Mom sports a flat brimmed Mets cap. She cheers wildly.

Saunders propels from his seat to join them.

He revs up and busts an Aunt Jackie into a Slattery Guap.

Then all four break into a Brotherhood Shuffle.

It's heated and impassioned.

Now time for the group routine.

Saunders looks over to the bleacher section for their leader.

But it's empty. Preston nowhere to be found. Another disappearing act. Saunders winces but keeps moving.

SAUNDERS  
(to the crew)  
Follow my lead.

Saunders live steps to the basketball hoop.

He uses the basketball pole as if it were a subway pole, pirouetting around and around.

The crowd goes nuts at the ingenuity.

Big Man runs over, catapults off Saunders onto the hoop. He does his signature hat tricks hanging from the rim. And 1!

Youtube and Oomph jump on as well, all three spinning in tandem at different heights but at the same speed.

From the far baseline, out of the shadows, emerges an overweight man with a severe pimp schlep. He "limp dances" onto the court and posts up at the half court line.

The crowd whips up into a frenzy.

The crew hears the added excitement. Why the extra commotion? They look center stage as a spot light blasts on --

On Preston.

As the track grows, he turns himself into a one-legged crane.

That's right: Just like Daniel-San in *Karate Kid*.

On the working leg, he carefully whips around, seeing the judges, the crowd, the Showtime crew.

And after 360 degrees, he stops. Still on one leg. Facing his crew. His team. He looks right at Saunders.

PRESTON  
Rise?

Saunders slowly smiles. He knows what to do.

SAUNDERS  
And shine.

Preston nods. He looks to the others.

PRESTON

Rise?

THE OTHERS

And shine!

PRESTON

(to himself)

That's right.

Preston, clearly in pain, crouches low on his one good leg and after a beat -- launches into the air, landing the Webster (tricky one legged flip).

The crew runs over to him, propping up their leader.

SAUNDERS

Not bad for an old man.

PRESTON

Think you can do better prep school?

SAUNDERS

I can try.

(to Oomph)

Got a beat for me?

OOMPH

Thought you'd never ask.

Oomph runs over to the judge's table. Works her phone.

FUNKMASTER FLEX

Wait. These are *your* beats?

OOMPH

Course. Act like you know.

CARDI B

Hell yeah.

Flex and Cardi B look at each other: which one of us is signing her. But before they can draw up a term sheet, a familiar beat comes on --

*Saunders's Theme.*

But this time it's more filled out and dramatic. Oomph, Big Man, Youtube, and Preston gather at the sidelines. And our man takes center stage.

In the background we can see the Cyclone, Coney's near hundred year old rollercoaster. It climbs to its apex.



As it does, Saunders revs up, working himself into a fury.

The Cyclone reaches the top. The Atlantic undulates below. We see the crowd swaying to the beat.

And then CRASH.

The Cyclone dives down, twisting and turning.

Saunders hits the floor, a rapid fire tornado spin.

The Cyclone picks up speed, threatening to fly off the rails.

Saunders in a flow state, letting go as his limbs take on a life of their owns.

After the third turn, the train enters a camelback hill.

Oomph, Big Man, Youtube hold their breath. On Saunders, sweat kicking off him like sparks off a fire.

The train hops again, barrels towards its final drop. Tight on Preston. Willing him to do it.

And as the train hits its final drop, we go SLOW MOTION.

As Saunders launches into it. That's right.

#### **THE EVIL KNEVEL.**

Lights flicker. Sound drops out. The background goes blurry.

And for now, it's just our man. Rotating in space. All we hear is his breathing. He's alone up here. Untethered.

The twinkles of cell phones from the crowd creates a constellation of planets and stars.

He finishes one turn. Moves to the next. At this speed, the torque is powerful.

He wobbles a bit. Then finds his way. Moves through the final turn, twisting and turning at the same time.

If only he could stay up here. It's easier. No expectations. No demands. But it's time to land.

And as he hits the Kiss of Death, we resume REGULAR SPEED.

#### **MISSION COMPLETE.**

In the crowd, the glass on every cellphone shatters, the Evil proving impossible to capture.

And even though they're gonna need serious phone repair, the crowd nevertheless bursts into applause.

Rise rushes center stage to hoist up their man, his legs wobbly from being in a different atmosphere.

Youtube holds up his phone.

YOUTUBE

Shatter proof casing. I got it.

Oomph puts her arms around Saunders.

OOMPH

I like your moves, Prep School.

Saunders looks into her eyes and realizes he has some unfinished business to attend to. And that's when he grabs her and kisses her like his life depended on it.

And maybe it does.

**EXT. KINGDOME - LATER.**

The judges confer among themselves, comparing notes and scorecards. A gold trophy on the table in front of them.

And in the crowd, we pick out faces of all of our dancers -

Rocksteady, Showtime, Double Dutchers, Krumpers, Rise.

CARDI B

(on the PA)

Oooooopa! This was no easy decision.  
Y'all were fire, oh my God. Up to  
me, I'd dole out hardware to all  
y'all.

(beat)

But the winner of this year's  
Kingdome Classic is --

The sound cuts out. We get close on the faces of our crew.

They're sweaty and exhausted yet adrenalized with nervous anticipation. Hoping that the Gods of Hip Hop and the Angels of New York City shine down on them on this most holy day.

All are looking up, except Preston. He looks at his winged shoes, a slight smile on his face.

FADE OUT.

**OVER BLACK.**

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)  
The next - Manhattan Bound F train -  
will be departing in - 2 minutes.

**EXT. CONEY ISLAND F TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT.**

This is where the F train starts. And where our story ends.

A car sits on the tracks, its doors open as passengers board.

Rise & Shine sit on the platform bench, in no hurry to board.  
Saunders holds a trophy. He should be ecstatic. But he's not.

And now we'll notice that the trophy is silver.

SAUNDERS  
Second place. After all that.

Big Man thumbs through a stack of bills.

BIG MAN  
Second still pays.

SAUNDERS  
But we had it. We *had* it.

Big Man walks into the train, continues organizing their  
earnings. Oomph drapes her arms around Saunders.

OOMPH  
There's always next year.  
Assuming you stay in town.  
(cherry on top)  
And I'm not on tour with Cardi.

He smiles at the bravado. It'll suit her well at the heights  
to which she's destined to climb. He looks down at his shoes.  
The winged AF1's, battle-worn.

OOMPH (CONT'D)  
Don't worry, Prep School. I got  
you.

She heads in after Big Man. Youtube looks at his phone.

YOUTUBE  
Your Evil is off the charts. I'm  
already getting partnership offers.

And then he sees it, peeking out: the coveted blue check.

YOUTUBE (CONT'D)  
I got verified. I got verified!  
(tearing up)  
This shit is mad emotional for me  
right now.

Youtube walks into the train. Big Man gives him a hug. Down to two. Preston limps over, puts an arm on Saunders.

PRESTON  
Proud of you, man.

SAUNDERS  
Why? Showtime won. We lost.

PRESTON  
We didn't lose. Not even close,  
man. Not even close.  
(beat)  
Thank you, Saunders.

SAUNDERS  
What for?

PRESTON  
Taught this old dog a new trick.

They dab it out. Preston limps onto the train.

And now it's just Saunders. He looks out at Coney, a magical place he won't soon forget. And even if it doesn't last forever, in this moment - right here and right now - you can see it all over his face:

He's found his lite.

CONDUCTOR  
(on PA)  
Stand clear of the closing doors.

He hops off the bench and walks into the train. The doors close as he links up with his crew.

And as the train departs the station, we catch just a glimpse of Saunders as he does a final spin move on the rail.

Yes indeed.

One ride can change your life.

**FADE TO BLACK.**