

## Ramblings from the author & gratitude for the supporters

Peace y'all.

Thank you for being here, with this text in your hands.

It isn't every day that a person gets the chance to share their dreams with others — fearlessly and earnestly. By the magical melding of an arduous journey and your loving encouragement, here we are; I am sharing my dream with you.

My name is Reet Starwind. For the better part of my young life, I have made it my mission to create and refine a fictional universe that encompasses all that I've come to know, learn, and love about this grand adventure that we share.

Through its interconnecting parts, this story is a tale of hope, a tale of the possibility found deep inside oneself when all other options seem lost. It is a tale of destiny, family, history, and heritage; of friendship, of love, of loss, and of every other feeling that reminds us: we are here, and a part of something greater.

A special thanks to Janice L. Taylor for ensuring I kept a book in my hand from the moment I could read. Deep thanks to Lisa Taylor for keeping a roof over my head and cable on at the crib. My mind was allowed — encouraged — to explore realms unknown and unseen.

Another thanks to Mr. Wilbur G. Githens for noticing a gift in me I'd long neglected. Thank you to every writing teacher I had for making that Black kid feel at home in his wit and in his humor.

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To Hayao Miyazaki and every cog in the Ghibli machine for showing me there's no need to sacrifice magic, meaning, or meticulous detail to create a timeless classic, for it's these elements of which timeless classics are made.

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And last but not least, sincerest thanks to Criger, who's got big spoilers over everyone on how this whole thing ends. We'll talk about it with him soon enough, but that's all the heart pouring you'll get from me here.

The rest is in the scripts, the art, the music, and the animations.

With that, it is my pleasure to formally open the doors of this story.

Now playing, on a screen or in a mind near you: *Dreamers' Playlist*.



## How to screenplay

A lil' key for any of you who aren't familiar with the format:

- INT./EXT. – Interior/Exterior, i.e., where the shot is taking place
- CUT(s) – ends one scene and transitions to another
- **SOUND & SPECIAL EFFECTS** – are presented **in bold** for emphasis
- *Dialogue* – is written *in italics* to further distinguish the characters' voices from scene descriptions
- (Parentheses) – describe how a character is speaking or feeling

1997

**0A EXT. CALIFORNIA - SUNSET****0A**

Colors stretch across the borderless horizon. Beachgoers turn to leave. Daylight dwindles. Against the crowd, a young boy stands, crowned by his large afro. Eyes locked on the ocean, he takes in every detail.

The boy marches toward the call of the crashing waves. Each little step in the sand leaves footprints. Each print washes away with the lap of a wave.

Ocean wind rushes through the curls on his head - his senses start to blur.

THE BOY'S THOUGHTS

This feels... like home. The sand,  
the sky, the water. . .  
(trails off)

Piece by piece, the world around flows together seamlessly. In this moment, THE BOY experiences harmony. His eyes never waver.

THE BOY'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

Wonder what it's like out there.

Track 1: And So It Begins (Intro)

2004

**0A EXT. ROSACÉ, CALIFORNIA - NOON****0A**

Honking horns from the highway traffic feed into the small city, blaring in chorus with police sirens rolling throughout.

RADIO HOST

Riise and shine Ro-Sa-Saaaay!  
My favorite rose garden's showin'  
her thorns early today. Must be that  
summer madness settin' in.

**0A INT. OFFICE SPACE****0A**

A beautiful, tan-skinned woman in her 30s leans back from her desk. Tired and wiping her eyes, she yawns.

RADIO HOST (CONT'D)

Law enforcement's still searching  
the streets for suspects in last  
night's shootout. If you're headin'  
in or outta downtown, expect a  
looong ri-

The woman turns a knob on her desktop radio, tuning to a music station. She lifts her mug, uncovering a framed photo of herself beachside, smiling cheek-to-cheek between two young boys.

MATCH CUT TO:

**1 INT. SCHOOL BUILDING**

**1**

A brown-skinned man in his been-doing-this-job-too-damn-long 40s Mr. Marshall, adjusts the framed certificates on his office wall. Across a certificate in gold print reads: "ROSACÉ SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT LOGAN MARSHALL." His office, a small room, is overrun but kept neat. Lining the frames up just right, he steps back to admire his work.

**BOOMPH!** His office door flings open. In rushes a male, middle-aged teacher.

TEACHER 1

Mr. Marshall!

The force of the door slamming into the wall shakes the certificate frames crooked. Bothered, Mr. Marshall removes his glasses and grips the bridge of his nose.

MR MARSHALL

How can I help you?

TEACHER 1

It's over at the high school. We don't know what to do with Jeysin Ortega.

The superintendent lowers his brow, turning to stare at the man.

MR MARSHALL

What do you mean you "don't know what to do with him?"

The teacher fidgets with his hands.

TEACHER 1

Not sure how to phrase it without sounding nuts but, it's like we've got nothing left to even teach him.

The district's never been known for academics, but still!

QUICK CUT - HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

Jeysin, an eleven-year-old, golden-brown-skinned boy sits atop a stack of chairs, scribbling on a chalkboard as a classroom full of students and a handful of teachers watch in silence. Bushy, dark-brown curls are atop his head, faded low on the sides. A way-too-big white tee drapes over him. A graphic of a blue anime dragon stretches along the back of the tee, which is half-tucked into his indigo-colored basketball shorts. Black crew socks, a blue wristwatch, and blue, low-top sneakers complete his look.

JEYSIN

Factor in the wealth gaps along class lines, with rates of population growth, plus bulls-eyes on their backs from being their time's "first-world" societies, both the Greek and Roman empires were bound to fall. Don't know why they're always called the peak of mankind.

Jeysin turns around in his chair. His big brown eyes are not surprised to see his audience at a loss for words.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

I'm guessing you guys don't either, right?

Rubbing the back of his head, Jeysin chuckles to himself. One teacher tosses their papers into the air. Students begin to pack their bags and shuffle out of the room.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

And now it's weird.

QUICK CUT - MR. MARSHALL'S OFFICE

TEACHER 1

Kid's got us beat. And every teacher in that program has been at it since before he was in diapers!

(Under his breath)

Was probably a smart ass back then, too...

MR MARSHALL

Fine, fine, send him in. I'll- I'll think of something.

Mr. Marshall turns to re-straighten the framed certificates on his wall.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)  
 (to himself)  
 At least it's him for once. Not his  
 godforsaken brother—

As Mr. Marshall carefully slides the last frame into place, a woman teacher rushes through the open doorway to his office.

TEACHER 2  
 (hurriedly)  
 Mr. Marshall! Mr. Marshall!

Upon entering, she grabs the wall surrounding the doorframe to catch her balance. The force of her grip rattles the wall and knocks all of the framed certificates crooked once more.

Mr. Marshall takes a deep, impatient breath.

MR MARSHALL  
 (visibly annoyed)  
 What's the issue?

TEACHER 2  
 It's over at the middle school!

The breath deepens into a hefty sigh.

MR MARSHALL  
 Let me guess. It's Jak Ortega again?

JUMP CUT TO:

**2 EXT. SCHOOLYARD**

**2**

Ash-gray asphalt spans in every direction, tattooed with profane tags and faded-chalk hopscotch squares. Tall metal gates split up the different classes for lunch and recess.

A frail, brown-skinned, twelve-year-old boy drops to the ground in a heap. On his feet are only socks. He raises his head to a trio of young teenage boys, bullies who are all much bigger and stronger than he. The bullies are tossing around a pair of fresh, white sneakers. The tallest of the trio (lanky, dark-skinned) laughs, pointing to the kicks.

BULLY 1  
 (to Bully 2)  
 Damn, those are fresh! Where'd you  
 get 'em?

His brown-skinned friend of athletic build dangles the shoes before the lanky bully's eyes and grins widely.

BULLY 2  
 (to Bully 1)  
 These right here? Just fell into my hands. Must be my lucky day.

The third of the group, a big-bodied, tan-skinned boy, reaches out and snags the shoes.

BULLY 3  
 (to Bully 2)  
 Man, lemme see these . . .

He reads the tag on the inside of the shoe tongue and laughs.

BULLY 3 (CONT'D)  
 (to Bully 2)  
 They ain't even your size!

Bully 2 snatches back the shoes.

BULLY 2  
 (to Bully 3)  
 I seen 'em, I liked 'em, so they my size!

The shoeless boy looks down at his feet. Frustrated and angry, he fumbles to his feet and launches after the trio.

SHOELESS BOY  
 Gimme back my sneaks!

**WHAM.** Bully 2 extends a stiff arm, ramming the boy back to the blacktop. Blood trails from the boy's nose and tears well up in his eyes. The three bullies begin to walk off, shoving each other around playfully while tossing the shoes back and forth among themselves.

**YOINK.** A hand clad with a red, white, & blue wristband snags the shoes from mid-air by their laces. The three bullies stop in their tracks, watching as a large afro passes through them.

Whimpering, the shoeless boy's eyes are closed. As he wipes and reopens them, he sees a boy his size in front of him, sunlight glaring from behind his curly crown.

JAK  
 (to Shoeless Boy)  
 See you're the one rocking out with your socks out, so I'm guessin' these are yours.

He tosses the fresh, white kicks before their rightful owner.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Might want to hold your nose back —  
try not to drip on them.

BULLY 2  
(to Jak)  
We been hearing about you.

BULLY 1  
(to Jak)  
You're that kid that stay in someone  
else's business.

The boy with the afro turns to face the bullies. He is visibly unimpressed. A scar runs across his left cheek, matching the scratches and bandages that adorn the rest of his golden-brown skin. He's dressed in a red tee, Americana-colored wristbands, black basketball shorts with star graphics on each side, and high-top sneakers with noticeable mileage.

JAK  
Is that what they're saying about  
me?  
(Smirking)  
All I usually hear is how I can't  
keep my hands to myself.

Kids around the schoolyard notice the scene building and form a circle, crowding around the boy with the afro and the three bullies. Afro boy loosens his wrists, cracks his neck. **YANK.** A girl snatches him up by the back of his hair.

JAK  
Ow ow ow ow!

MARIE  
(Quietly, angrily to Jak)  
What in the world do you think  
you're doing?

Curls coil from the waves of the thick, black hair that runs past her shoulders. A blue graphic tee, a green hoodie tied around her waist, light denim shorts, black knee socks, and matching trainers complete her look. From behind her thin-framed glasses, her big, brown eyes are filled with worry.

MARIE (CONT'D)  
Today must be the day you finally  
lost your damn mind.

JAK

Chill out Marie! You're cramping my cool.

MARIE

You're the one that needs to chill, Jak!

She releases her grip.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Always in. a rush to get yourself killed.

Now released, Jak plays it off, stumbling into leg stretches.

JAK

That's because I got a lifesaver in my corner.

He brushes up against her, shoulder-to-shoulder with a grin. She slaps his shoulder away and points a finger between his eyes.

MARIE

I'm studying to be a nurse, not a shaman! No amount of gauze or rubbing alcohol is going to put a soul back into your body.

JAK

Then I'll just have to win.

He closes his eyes and steps back from Marie.

JAK (CONT'D)

(Grinning)

It's on my pride as a real man.

More kids flock over to the circle. Teachers call for backup.

MARIE

(Unamused)

And what better way to prove your manhood than violence?

JAK

You know that's not it at all. We've seen how they get down. Someone was gonna have to put 'em in their place sooner or later. Just happened to be me. And sooner, not later.

The bully trio marches toward Jak and Marie. Marie's fists tighten as Jak walks ahead to meet them.

MARIE  
(shouting after Jak)  
Just be careful!

Without looking back, he raises a thumb-up in her direction and responds:

JAK  
Careful's like my middle name.

Marie kneels down to open up her backpack and quickly digs through to reveal a first-aid kit.

MARIE  
Careless is more like it.

JUMP CUT TO:

**3 INT. MR MARSHALL'S OFFICE**

**3**

Mr. Marshall's door opens and Mr. Marshall, seated behind his desk, tenses at the sound for fear the framed certificates will once again misalign. Jeysin enters.

JEYSIN  
Good afternoon, Mr. Marshall, sir.  
You wanted to speak with me?

He gently closes the door behind him. The frames remain put.

MR MARSHALL  
Yes. Please, make yourself at home.

Mr. Marshall stands to dig through an accordion folder while Jeysin settles into a chair.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)  
I've dedicated my life to education.  
Been in the field for decades now,  
traveling up and down the coast. In  
all that time, you are the only  
prodigy like yourself I've ever  
seen.

Jeysin's eyes wander the room, looking for anything to focus on other than Mr. Marshall.

JEYSIN  
It's no big deal to me, honest-

MR MARSHALL

No need to be so modest, son.

JEYSIN

(speaking over Mr.  
Marshall)

-Oh and again, I promise I'm not  
cheating!

MR MARSHALL

At this point, even if you were  
cheating, that'd be just as  
impressive. Your natural talent is  
remarkable, and I'm not the only one  
who's taken notice.

He places a pile of decorative papers before Jeysin.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)

The only mail we get around here  
from any boarding school or  
university has your name on it. Yet,  
every time you're asked about  
transferring-

JEYSIN

(finishing Mr. Marshall's  
sentence)

-I turn it down.

MR. MARSHALL

What's the reason, son? Is all the  
attention uncomfortable?

Jeysin's fake smile falls away.

JEYSIN

No. . . Well, yes. But that- that's  
not it. Not all of it.

He grabs a long curl of his hair, twisting the lock between  
his fingers. Mr. Marshall sits on the side of his desk. He  
makes direct eye contact with his student, hoping for  
answers.

MR MARSHALL

Tell you what. Level with me, and  
I'll never buy you with the stuff  
again.

He points towards his temple, then gestures toward Jeysin's.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)

What's going on up there?

QUICK CUT

**3A EXT. SCHOOLYARD**

**3A**

Sweat rolls from Jak's forehead. The trio of bullies surround him and creep forward. Marie is treating the shoeless boy's nose in the crowd, and they watch. Jak's heart pounds harder with each breath. Time seems to slow as his breaths grow heavier and heavier.

From the sun above, to the shouting around, to the stress inbound, his senses flood. The world around him sways side-to-side.

Then, for a moment, every separate thing felt as though it were one and the same.

Fighting to regain focus and control, Jak notices Marie calling to him. The sight of her calms his nerves. His breathing and the world around him return to normal.

Bully 2 snaps the air with a strong punch. The crowd winces, anticipating the hit. Jak dodges the punch with the perfect timing. Marie adjusts her glasses.

JAK  
(to himself)  
How did I-?

BULLY 2  
(to Jak)  
Hold still!

Bully 2 attempts to land another punch, but Jak stings him with three bullet-fast punches of his own. Bully 2 stumbles back, and Bully 3 rushes in, swinging wildly. Jak dips and dodges each one of his punches, then strikes Bully 2 hard, and he falls back onto his rear. Seeing his friends down, Bully 1 hesitates to make a move on Jak.

Marie sighs with relief as the crowd erupts. Newfound strength sets in, and Jak bounces on his feet, banging his knuckles together like a boxer.

JAK  
(to Bully 1)  
Get it while it's hot! Ass whoopins  
like this ain't handed out every  
day!

QUICK CUT

**3B INT. MR MARSHALL'S OFFICE****3B**

Jeysin stops twisting his lock and nervously meets eyes with Mr. Marshall.

JEYSIN

But those are just my ideas. What do you think?

MR MARSHALL

I think-

He places a hand on the boy's shoulder.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I think everyone around here, your age and mine, could learn a lot from following your lead.

QUICK CUT

**3C EXT. SCHOOLYARD****3C**

Jak darts around the blacktop with the trio of bullies in hot pursuit. Teachers fight to contain the students swarming around the action. Bully 3 chases Jak to the tetherball courts. Jak smirks as he dodges a throw and the boy lures himself headfirst into the metal tetherball pole. While Bully 3 is dizzied, Jak drills the ball with a fierce punch and it whirs around in a blur, wrapping Bully 3 to the pole. Bully 1 rushes in.

BULLY 1

(to Jak)

I've had enough of you!

Jak dances across a row of hopscotch squares to evade his attacks. While Marie shakes her head at his showboating, the crowd eggs him on for more. Losing his footing, Jak stumbles backward into a gate.

BULLY 1

Nowhere to run now!

Bully 1 steps in with a heavy fist, but Jak squats down to slide beneath the punch. Using his new strength, he stretches open a hole in gate, which catches Bully 1's arm. Now stuck in place, Bully 1 kicks at Jak. Jak knocks him down with a strong fist to his unprotected gut.

Feeding off of the applause, Jak raises a hand to his ear for more of the crowd's cheers, but Bully 2 stalks him from behind. Marie notices, but her warning call reaches Jak too

late. Jak turns his head in her direction, and Bully 2 drops Jak to one knee with a strong hook. The crowd hushes. Marie clasps her hands over her mouth.

BULLY 2  
 (shouts at Jak)  
 Ain't too tough now, is you?

Bully 2 punts Jak in the ribs, causing him to roll across the concrete. A stream of blood runs from the corner of Jak's mouth as he struggles up to his feet. At the sight of red drops on the ground, Marie rushes to his aid, but Bully 2 snatches her up by her backpack before she reaches Jak.

BULLY 2  
 (to Jak)  
 Maybe I should put the hurt on your girlfriend here, too.

Jak wipes his mouth and spits.

MARIE  
 (to Bully 2)  
 Get your grimy hands off me!

She swings her arms and legs frantically to try and break free from Bully 2's grip. Pounding a fist to the ground in anger, Jak stands to his feet. Neither pain nor worry show on his face. Marie looks relieved Jak's standing, seemingly okay.

JAK  
 (to Bully 2)  
 Girlfriend? I don't think Marie's my type.

It's clear by Bully 2's face that he doesn't know what to think.

JAK (CONT'D)  
 She freaks out way too easy. The punch hardly hurt, but she's over there about to piss her pants.

Jak spits again and his facial expression returns to a smirk. Marie's expression sours from relieved to angry.

MARIE  
 Jak, you jackass! I'll beat you up myself!

JAK  
 (to Marie, in reference to Bully 2)

You might do it, too. Hit a hell of a lot harder than he does.

Bully 2 drops Marie. She lands hard on her rear, glares angrily at Jak, and rubs her back.

BULLY 2  
(to Jak)  
You just keep runnin' your mouth!

Fists clenched, Bully 2 fires his strongest blow. **SHAK.** Jak catches the punch in his hand with ease.

JAK  
(to Bully 2)  
See? No horsepower.

Jak tightens his grip on Bully 2's fist. Unable to shake free, Bully 2 throws another fierce punch with his other arm. Jak blocks again in the same way. Gripping both fists in his hands, Jak brings Bully 2 down to his knees.

JAK (CONT'D)  
And you wanna talk toughness?

Helpless, Bully 2 looks up to Jak with fury in his eyes. Jak releases his grip and quickly blasts Bully 2 into the blacktop with a punch. **WHOOSH!** A gust of wind fans out from the force of the strike and silences the schoolyard. Standing tall, Jak shakes out his left hand.

JAK (CONT'D)  
That's how tough I am.

The crowd erupts and Jak stands at the center of the frenzy with a grin.

JAK (CONT'D)  
(addressing the crowd)  
Thank you, thank you. You're all too kind.

Another teacher pokes his head out from the flood of kids. Raising an arm to speak, he is beamed in the head with a carton of strawberry milk. The man huffs, clears his throat, and tries again to speak.

TEACHER 3  
Jak Ortega to the superintendent's office this instant!

School security approaches, and Jak raises his arms in surrender like he's been reprimanded like this before. More teachers arrive to break up the crowd. In the middle of it

all, Marie notices the shoeless boy. He clutches his white shoes closely, eyes watery with joyful tears.

QUICK CUT

**3D INT. MR MARSHALL'S OFFICE**

**3D**

Mr. Marshall is pacing back and forth across the small room, rubbing a hand across his chin. Jeysin sits patiently in his chair.

MR MARSHALL

Now just to figure out what to do with you. . .

A sudden, strange surge shoots through Jeysin's head. He places a hand to his temple, face grimacing in pain.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)

School year will be wrapping up soon. Gives us plenty of time to think about-

JEYSIN

(cutting Mr. Marshall off)  
I do have one request sir, if it wouldn't be too much trouble.

His head rings.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

Would it be possible to be dismissed early today? I've been having the weirdest headaches lately.

MR MARSHALL

Then it sounds like you should get some rest. Can't afford to have anything hindering our star student.

Mr. Marshall grabs a pen and notepad and quickly jots up a note.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Show this at the nurse's office and they'll take care of you.

JEYSIN

Thank you so much, Mr. Marshall.

Swiping the note, Jeysin stands to shake hands with Mr. Marshall.

MR MARSHALL

The pleasure's been mine, Mr.  
Ortega. Take care now.

Jeysin exits Mr. Marshall's office and turns right down the hall. A beat passes, and two security guards escorting Jak enter from the left side of the hall. Jak enters Mr. Marshall's office and plops down in the same chair Jeysin was just sitting in.

JAK

(to Mr. Marshall)  
Yo, Marsh. How you livin'?

Jak leans back and put his feet up on an empty chair. Mr. Marshall gestures the security guards to leave. They exist and close the door behind them.

MR MARSHALL

(Sternly)  
This isn't a joke, Jak. Sit upright  
and put your feet down.

JAK

I know this isn't a joke. It's a  
waste of time.

Jak sits up, crosses his arms, and closes his eyes.

MR MARSHALL

(Temper slipping)  
A- A waste of time, you say?

JAK

Because we both know how this is  
going to go.

Mr. Marshall walks over to a nearby filing cabinet and begins searching through it.

JAK (CONT'D)

Another nice, long pep talk  
preaching to me about how it's wrong  
for me to "solve problems with  
violence" and how, at this rate,  
I'll end up "going nowhere," and-

MR MARSHALL

(cutting Jak off)  
Your ticket to nowhere is right  
here.

Mr. Marshall pulls out a paper that's so long, as it unfolds, it reveals it's been folded five times. It is covered with

marks and writing.

MR MARSHALL (CONT'D)  
 12-years-old and already have the  
 single most dubious disciplinary  
 record in the history of this school  
 district. Do you have anything to  
 say for yourself?

Jak shrugs his shoulders.

JAK  
 (nonchalantly)  
 I'll be 13 next month, if it makes  
 you feel any better.

Marshall slams the paper onto his desk.

MR MARSHALL  
 (loudly)  
 That's your problem right there!  
 Treating everything like some damn  
 joke.

Jak looks away.

JAK  
 (Lowly)  
 Not true.

Mr. Marshall approaches Jak and bends over to match his eye level, but Jak doesn't meet his eyes.

MR MARSHALL  
 What was that? Any other time your  
 mouth's writing checks you can't  
 pay, but now we're talking about you  
 and you-

JAK  
 (cutting Mr. Marshall off)  
 I said that's not true!

Jak stands, hands shaking, and looks Mr. Marshall in the eyes. Emotion rings through his voice:

JAK (CONT'D)  
 (pointing to a scar along  
 his forearm)  
 Wasn't joking when some creeps  
 started stalking Marie for not  
 talking to them.  
 (pointing to a scar across  
 his left cheek)

Wasn't joking when high school kids were mad at my brother for getting better grades than them.

(pointing to a bandage on his nose)

And I wasn't joking today, when some dude I don't know got his sneakers jacked. Get sick of seeing the same crap every day, so I do something about it! You tell me solve things "with my head and not my hands," but at least I solve my problems! Don't tell me I don't take anything seriously!

Jak looks now to the ground, his hands no longer shaking. Mr. Marshall sighs and sits behind his desk.

MR MARSHALL

Look, I get it. You want to "be the man," be the tough guy and stick up for others. But I cannot condone violence, especially not on school grounds. I'm going to have to suspend you again. Five days. A full school week.

JAK

That's it? Sweet.

Like a switch, Jak returns to his carefree mood.

MR MARSHALL

(Almost sinister)

You'll also spend the rest of the day and an additional hour after school in detention, to make the deal even sweeter.

JAK

Wow, a whole day full of fun stuff. I must be the luckiest man alive.

MR MARSHALL

You'd be even luckier if I hadn't talked with that wonderful brother of yours, earlier. I trust that you'll be on your best behavior in detention, correct?

Jak motions with his fingers across his mouth like he's zipping a zipper closed.

JAK

It'll be like I'm not even there.

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGING

**4 EXT. ROSACE - AFTERNOON**

**4**

Marie walks the city's streets, her mind lost in thought. Cars cruise by on the roads, bouncing arrhythmically from either potholes or hydraulics. She enters a block of abandoned property and approaches an alley closed off by wooden panels. She looks over each shoulder then slides a loose plank aside. Following the path to a side entrance, she turns the doorknob and steps inside.

**5 INT. THE HIDEOUT**

**5**

Inside was an old gym with high ceilings, wide walls, and a basketball hoop bracketed up on the far side. Sun sneaks in through the few windows not boarded from the inside. Patches, burn marks, chipped paint, and exposed brick color the walls. Marie walks under the hoop and across the room to the sound of buttons clicking & pixelated explosions.

In the far corner of the room was a large, fatback TV, two large cardboard boxes, and tall stacks of martial arts VHS tapes and video game cartridges. Jeysin sits at the center of it all, legs crossed and eyes locked on the screen. Despite being alone, he plays from the Player 2 slot.

Marie peeks at him from behind a tower of movies.

MARIE

You're at it early.

JEYSIN

Having a weird day, so I hurried here to play video games. Things make sense in video games.

Marie smiles and shakes her head. She walks to stand beside him.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

Jak's not with you?

MARIE

He's gonna be a while. Our day got pretty weird, too.

She takes a seat and tunes into the happenings onscreen, following Jeysin's character. A blue-colored action hero

takes cover in the corner, dodging the fire from the robot enemy that fills up half of the screen.

JEYSIN  
Another detention?

MARIE  
Yep.

JEYSIN  
Another fight?

MARIE  
Yep.

JEYSIN  
Dang. Was waiting on him to beat this game. We made it so close last night!

MARIE  
You know your brother. He treats real life like it's his video game.

JEYSIN  
Word around the high is he tied some kid to a pole and shoved another through a fence?

MARIE  
Happened in front of my face and I still don't believe it.

She removes her glasses and cleans the lenses on her shirt. Jeysin's video game character fires the finishing shot at the enemy boss. The screen is aflame in 2D. "NEW HIGH SCORE" blinks in white lettering at the top of a dark loading screen.

MARIE (CONT'D)  
He's a pain any other day, but now he's got me wondering if he has superpowers.

JEYSIN  
Superpowers?

"NEW HIGH SCORE" still blinks onscreen.

MARIE  
Took out three guys twice his size, and showed off the whole time. No clue how he did it, but while he was

fighting, something in the air felt.  
 . . different.

She taps a finger to her chin.

MARIE'S THOUGHTS

(to herself)

Some explanation. He probably thinks  
 all that's ridiculous.

JEYSIN

(to Marie)

I don't think it's ridiculous at  
 all, actually.

Jeysin's video game character spawns in the game's next  
 level, so he hits pause.

MARIE

Alright cool, because it's been on  
 my mind all day and—

She stops mid-sentence. Her face drops.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(shocked)

How did you hear that?

Jeysin rubs his head and chuckles nervously.

JEYSIN

Like I was saying, today's been. . .  
 weird.

Marie grabs him by the shirt and shakes him back and forth.

MARIE

Reading minds is a little bit more  
 than weird!

She releases him and quickly retrieves a notepad and pen from  
 her backpack. She clicks the pen with purpose. **CH-CHIK.**

MARIE (CONT'D)

Alright. Spill the details.

Jeysin grabs the twisted lock of his hair and winds it around  
 his finger while he retraces his thoughts.

JEYSIN

It all started in the nurse's  
 office.

FLASHBACK

## 6 INT. HIGH SCHOOL

6

Jeysin sits in the nurse's office, a tight room, and sits beside an older boy on a short bench.

JEYSIN (V.O.)

(to Marie)

This headache I've been having cranked up to a ten out of ten.

SFX: PHONE RINGING FAINTLY IN BACKGROUND

JEYSIN (V.O., CONT'D)

(to Marie)

Each time, it felt like something outside was trying to tap into my head. My brain was like a balloon trying not to pop!

Jeysin fights to keep a straight face through the pain. The boy next to him writhes in pain, clutching at his stomach.

JEYSIN (V.O., CONT'D)

A sensation filled my skull, some kind of mass. . . or force. Fought so hard to contain whatever it was that I let a little slip and-

BOY IN NURSE'S OFFICE THOUGHTS

Why I let them dare me into eating all those meatloaves? I'm a dumbass, man...

SFX: PHONE RINGING CONTINUES, LOUDER

Jeysin tilts his head toward the boy.

NURSE (O.S)

(cranky)

I'm on it, I'm on it!

Rubbing the palm of his hand on his temple, Jeysin turns and shakes his head. The nurse enters onscreen and picks up the ringing phone.

NURSE

(into the phone)

What's the problem? (beat) Yeah? (beat) How am I supposed to know? (beat) Maybe try cutting him from the pole first before calling the nurse's office!

## BOY IN NURSE'S OFFICE THOUGHTS

(worriedly)

They've been in that bathroom  
forever! I don't know if I'm a make  
it. . .

Every moment he spends sitting between the boy and nurse,  
Jeysin grows more and more uneasy.

## NURSE

(into the phone)

Fine. Send 'em to my office.

She slams the phone down and addresses the two boys waiting.

## NURSE

(directed at the boys)

Next!

Jeysin gets up and stands before her desk, waiting as she  
looks over the note Mr. Marshall had given him.

## NURSE

(to Jeysin)

You're all set, kid. Make sure you  
stop by the main office on the way  
out.

She signs and returns the paper slip.

## JEYSIN

(to Nurse)

Thank you.

Jeysin makes his way out, but stops at the door and turns  
over his shoulder, focusing for a moment on the nurse.

## NURSE'S THOUGHTS

The way my back is hurtin',  
someone's gonna have to send my ass  
home early, too.

QUICK CUT

**6A INT. HIDEOUT****6A**

## JEYSIN

(to Marie)

Turns out the picking and poking at  
my brain were thoughts from other  
people. Go figure.

Marie reaches the end of lines on a page on her notepad and flips it over to the next.

MARIE

How would you describe it? The whole brain sensation, mind-reading thing?

JEYSIN

It's like. . . tuning to a radio station. I can pick up signals from anyone, but they're fuzzy.

The same sensation that overcame Jak hums gently inside Jeysin's head. He taps two fingers to his right temple.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

Unless I focus on one signal. Once I'm in tune, I hear every song. Commercial free.

MARIE

So, to work effectively, your power requires specific action. That's more than enough to work with!

Marie finishes making a bullet point of her idea. She tucks her pen behind her ear as she stands. Sunlight reflects from her glasses.

MARIE (CONT'D)

And now that we've got our data, how about we do a little testing?

**6B MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**6B**

Early evening sun shines onto the school building. Carefully, Jak looks both ways. With the coast clear, he hops onto the ground from the first-floor classroom window. Left inside, his elderly teacher sleeping behind his desk, mouth slightly ajar. "JAK WUZ HERE" is written down the middle of his balding forehead.

**7 EXT. ROSACE - MAIN STREET**

**7**

Hands behind his head, Jak strolls carefree as the town bustles around him.

JAK

(to himself)

Mom might actually kill me once she finds out I got suspended again and I'm running low on good excuses.

Maybe I should skip town. . . Nah,  
she'd still find me. She's got like  
five senses or something. Wonder if  
I- hold up.

Jak's monologue is cut short with thoughts of the fight that  
pop into his head.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Can we talk about that beatdown  
earlier?

He looks down to his hands - tops and palms - still amazed by  
his strength.

JAK (CONT'D)  
There was no stopping me!

He shuffles his feet in fighting rhythm, throwing jabs at the  
air.

JAK (CONT'D)  
I was so strong, so fast, so smooth,  
so-

A P.O.V. shot of his surroundings depicts collapsing and  
fire-damaged buildings, shattered windows, gang tags and so  
many "FOR SALE" signs. Mostly vacant storefronts lined the  
sides of the main street. Link-ups on corners are spied on by  
cop cars.

JAK (CONT'D)  
It doesn't even matter. It doesn't  
even matter because nothing here  
gets the chance to matter!

He tightens his hands into fists.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Wish I had a way out. . .

MACK (O.S.)  
(raspy, to Jak)  
You don't even know how right you  
are, youngin'.

The stranger's voice catches Jak off-guard, and he looks  
around for its origin. He spots an older man beneath the  
shade of a crumbling shop's awning. He's draped in worn-out  
clothing, and his eyes hide behind a pair of dark sunglasses.  
Twisted, gray hairs spread across his head and jut from his  
chin. Leathery, brown skin shows his age. Jak raises an  
eyebrow at the man.

JAK  
(to Mack)  
What am I so right about?

MACK  
'Bout this city and the way they run  
it. Turned us into a buncha cattle.  
This around us was a different  
world.

The stranger gestures toward the neighborhood with the sweep  
of an arm.

MACK (CONT'D)  
There was love in these streets, a  
pulse in this city. You could feel  
it beatin' every day. All the mom-  
and-pop shops on this block used to  
be boomin'.

JAK  
In this dump?

He points a thumb over his shoulder and shakes his head.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Nah. No way.

MACK  
Those times is long gone now. Been  
gone since before you was born.

JAK  
What made everything change?

Jak walks over to and sits before the man, meeting him at eye  
level.

MACK  
Can't keep a good thing without  
someone comin' along tryin' to take  
from it. Outsiders rolled in, taking  
everything they could. Took our  
money, took our blocks, our votes,  
our lives. By the time they's done,  
all we had were regrets.

Jak hangs his head low, visibly troubled by the stranger's  
tale.

MACK (CONT'D)  
But I tell you one thing can't no  
one ever take. . . A dream.

JAK

A dream?

MACK

A certain somethin' special that means more than life itself. I know you got one! I can feel it! It's why you need your ticket outta here, right?

Jak laughs and a smile forms on his face.

JAK

Hell yeah, you're right.

MACK

Didn't seize mine when I had the chance. All this time later and I'm still here looking to find my place out there. Got the feeling if I keep on searchin', I'll find it somewhere.

The stranger places his hand to his forehead and chuckles.

MACK (CONT'D)

So you've gotta promise me something, little dreamer boy.

Jak locks in on the man's words.

MACK (CONT'D)

Don't put your dream aside for anything. The will of a dreamer can make any fantasy reality.

The stranger flashes a wide grin with as many missing teeth as gold ones.

JAK

You know. . . some people would call you crazy, old man.

Jak stands, dusting his shorts off with his hands.

JAK (CONT'D)

But I've been called crazy, too. So we must be on to something. Thanks for the pep talk.

Jak turns and begins to leave, but turns around and approaches the man once more.

JAK (CONT'D)

"Old man" probably isn't your  
government name, is it?

The stranger laughs.

MACK

Mack. You can call me Mack.

JAK

Old Man Mack it is then.

MACK

Got a ring to it.

The new friends share a fist bump.

JAK

My name is Jak. I swear, on my word,  
I won't let you down!

Jak turns sharply and takes off running, inspired. Mack  
watches in the boy's direction, nodding his head.

MACK

(to himself)

So full of life . . . Kid's a rare  
breed. Hope he don't lose focus. . .

Mack looks straight ahead, flashing a grin, his gold teeth  
sparkle.

MACK (CONT'D)

I ain't losin' mine again.

**8 EXT. ROSACE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**8**

Jak cuts down a path that opens up to a large field. Kids  
gather, playing soccer and baseball on a lone stretch of clay  
dirt & grass in between clusters of buildings. **CLINK**. A metal  
bat slugs into a baseball. A home run hit soars from home  
plate to the far side of the field.

Jak sees the ball and picks up speed. That same sensation  
from the fight returns, flowing down into his feet as he  
pounds the pavement. He runs so quickly that beats the ball  
to its landing spot, catching it with ease while trotting  
casually to a stop. From the corner of the park opposite home  
plate, he uses some of his power and fires the ball back to  
whence it came.

JAK

(to himself)

Strong and fast?

He looks down to his legs.

JAK (CONT'D)  
I could get used to this.

Dreamers' Playlist

Track 1

Dreamers' Playlist

Track 1

**9 INT. HIDEOUT - WEIGHT ROOM - SUNSET**

**9**

Marie clicks her pen repeatedly on her notepad and looks up to Jeysin.

MARIE  
Okay. How did it go?

Jeysin breathes deeply and exhales.

JEYSIN  
I feel. . . everything.

Jeysin feels the sensation spread evenly throughout his body. Arms raised, he lifts 100-pound weights in each hand. Marie continues taking notes.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)  
Every fiber of me is running a one thousand percent, yet . . .

Marie pauses her writing to look at him.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)  
I still just feel like me. It's all so.... natural.

He lowers the weights to the ground, startled by their **THUD**. Marie gets up to examine his arms and check his pulse.

MARIE  
Heart rate's about the same. No sign of any muscle strain, either. It's like we thought. Whatever you two found today boosts the body in insane ways.

Jeysin looks at his hands, opening and closing them, over and over.

JEYSIN

If that package somehow includes  
psychic powers, there's no telling  
what else we can do.

MARIE

(excitedly)

This discovery could change the  
medical world! I'm gonna need a  
bigger notebook.

Marie kneels down to her bag, but a streak of sunlight across  
the ground catches her eye. Outside, the sun begins to set.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Shoot! Told my parents I'd be  
studying tonight.

JEYSIN

That exam is coming up soon, right?

MARIE

It was nice not having to think  
about it for a little while. I'll  
catch up with you guys tomorrow.

Marie gives Jeysin a quick hug and heads for the door.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Be safe.

JEYSIN

Hey, Marie?

She stops and looks back to Jeysin.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)

Don't be so hard on yourself.

He smiles at Marie and brings one to her face, as well.

MARIE

Thank you.

CUT

10 EXT. CORNER STORE

10

Two teenage boys post up outside a neighborhood shop, sipping  
big cans of iced tea. A blur shoots into the open store door  
behind them.

TEEN 1  
 (in disbelief, to Teen 2)  
 You see that?

The blur speeds back out of the store. Teen 2 boy takes a long sip from his drink.

TEEN 2  
 Nah.

TEEN 1  
 Word. . .

Teen 1 takes another sip from his drink.

TEEN 1  
 (confused, to himself)  
 Did- Did I see that?

**11 INT. GYM HIDEOUT - MAIN FLOOR**

**11**

Jeysin stands before the TV - mirroring the movements of the martial artists in the retro Kung-Fu flick on screen. Hearing the outside door open, he turns up the volume and steps further away from the screen. Jak enters, carrying a black plastic bag.

JAK  
 (aloud)  
 Yoooo. Anybody home?

On the TV, one martial artist stands against another. Jeysin stands across the room from Jak, striking a Kung-Fu pose.

JEYSIN  
 (bad lip-synching, to Jak)  
 "What do you want?"

Jak smirks, dropping his bag, striking up a pose of his own, and taking on the role of the opposing character in the movie.

JAK  
 (bad lip-synching, to Jeysin)  
 "Is that one-eyed bastard here?"

The brothers change poses and take a step closer to one another with each of their respective lines.

JEYSIN  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "You dare call our boss that?"

JAK  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "You bums obviously don't know me."

JEYSIN  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "Oh, we know you. You're one of  
 Luu's men. The one they say can kick  
 like a mule."

JAK  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "Well, if you know me, then that's  
 the best that'll come out."

JEYSIN  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "You better watch it! You're on our  
 home ground now."

Raising their arms forward, the brothers meet wrist-to-wrist,  
 eye-to-eye.

JAK  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "I couldn't give a damn who this  
 area belongs to! Where I am always  
 belongs to me!"

JEYSIN  
 (bad lip-synching)  
 "Then maybe I'd like to find out. .  
 . If that's the truth!"

Jak and Jeysin exchange strikes and parries - countering one  
 another and matching the movements in the movie step-for-  
 step. The two opponents clash powerful punches. Jak and  
 Jeysin end their spar with a quick embrace.

Some time has passed. Cut with a **SWUSH** that is also in sync  
 with the **SWUSH** of a basketball shown splashing through a  
 basketball net.

Standing below the hoop, Jak catches the ball. He takes the  
 last bite of his empanada and hurls the ball across the room.  
 Jeysin, who's finishing snacking on his own empanada, catches  
 the ball with one hand, takes aim, and drills another shot.

JAK  
 With these powers, you can probably  
 skip college next year and go  
 straight to the league.

Jeysin chuckles, as he's lining up again for another shot.

JEYSIN  
 Mom would cry if she ever saw me  
 playing for the Lakers.

Jeysin swishes a third shot.

JEYSIN (CONT'D)  
 Kobe.

Jak grins ear-to-ear.

JAK  
 (referring to Jeysin and  
 Marie)  
 Leave it to the two smartest people  
 I know to already have this power  
 stuff figured out.

He spins the ball on a fingertip.

JEYSIN  
 Marie took the lead on this one. I  
 was just the guinea pig. She ran  
 home to study, so we've still got a  
 lot of questions.

JAK  
 Then let's get us some answers.

A speedy montage ensues of the brothers testing themselves in various sections of the gym.

1) Losing his balance, Jak plops onto the padded floor in the tumbling area. On the palms of his hands, Jeysin walks by him effortlessly.

2) Punching bags dangle from chains in the boxing room. Jeysin knocks a training dummy to the floor with precise strikes. Jak focuses his power to his left hand and steps into his massive punch. The impact rips the chain loose, flinging the bag across the room and into a wall.

**12 EXT. HIDEOUT ROOFTOP**

**12**

Side-by-side, the brothers sit and stare at the horizon. The sky blazes with color. Jeysin stretches out his arms and yawns.

JEYSIN  
 This view is unbeatable.

Jak taps a foot to the ground, his mind turning.

JAK  
Think so?

He peeks over to his brother to gauge a reaction, then looks out to the horizon again.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Wonder if it really is.

JEYSIN  
(endearingly)  
Here we go again.

Jak raises an eyebrow.

JAK  
Whatchu mean?

JEYSIN  
The speech about how badly you want to get out of here and "see the world"—

JAK  
(quickly interjects)  
Because it's true!

Jak shoots up to his feet.

JAK (CONT'D)  
There's a whole world out there waiting for us to see it, but we've been stuck here seeing the same ol'.

Jack pauses, glances directly below at the shady streets.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Know what, though?

Jak looks to his hands. His grin returns.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Things are different now. Us finding this power is just the start of it.

**13 EXT. ROCASE - MAIN STREET**

**13**

The lights and sounds of Rosacé blur by. The setting sun swaps places with a dark, night sky. Mack remains seated on the street corner where he had previously spoken to Jak, his eyes focused.

## 14 INT. ORTEGA HOME - NIGHT

14

The brothers sit in their living room watching TV together. The front door opens slowly. The woman from the office job sneaks in and shuts the door behind her.

JULISA  
(sighing)  
I'm so tired I could just-

JAK & JEYSIN  
(in unison)  
Mon! Mom! Mom! Mom!

JEYSIN  
(to Julisa)  
We have so much to show you!

JAK  
(to Julisa)  
We got these powers, and-

JULISA  
(to Jak and Jeysin)  
Can't I at least unwind for a moment before you two bombard me? You know I'm a zombie when I work both jobs.

Jak and Jeysin's mother kicks off her shoes.

JAK  
This ain't your usual bombarding, trust me! And, if you don't trust me, at least trust Jeysin.

JEYSIN  
Your day as Julisa Ortega, secretary and administrative assistant, may be over, but your night as Julisa Ortega, mother of two, begins now. You're in for a surprise.

JULISA  
Clocking in.

She presses her back to the door and slides to the floor.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
(referring to Jak)  
Does the surprise have anything to do with mister prize fighter over there getting another suspension?

Julisa leers at her eldest.

JAK

(nervously)

It does, but not how you think! I won the fight that earned me my vacation, as always. But that's when I discovered my superpowers!

Julisa tenses up, but holds a straight face in front of her boys.

JULISA

You did what now?

JEYSIN

I have them, too! Plus, I'm telepathic.

JULISA

(sarcastically)

Didn't we have to take Jak to the doctor's for that last year? What are they putting in those damn lunches these days?

She rises to her feet.

JEYSIN

You have to hear us out, at least this once!

JULISA

This once? For years you two have either been telling me stuff that belongs in a comic book—

She turns to Jak.

JULISA (CONT'D)

—or something that makes my brain hurt.

She turns to Jeysin.

JULISA (CONT'D)

Now, I come home from a double and an hour in traffic to the news of you two somehow magically developing superpowers at school today, and I'm just supposed to believe it?

The brothers looked to one another. After a moment of silence, they nod their heads, implying she needs to just believe them. Julisa huffs and groans.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
 Alright, come on. Let's see these  
 powers.

JAK  
 (excitedly)  
 Bet. Check this sh\*t out!

With one hand and little effort, Jak hoists a fully stacked bookshelf into the air. Julisa is awe-stricken. One of her cheeks twitches from the shock.

JULISA  
 (to herself)  
 It's finally happened . . .

She takes in a deep breath.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
 (exclaiming to Jak)  
 What the hell did you just say?

He drops the bookshelf, its contents raining down on him. He lays dazed, buried beneath the pile of books. Julisa puts a hand to her face, runs it through her hair, and looks away.

JULISA  
 (to herself)  
 Terry and Nate were supposed to be  
 here for this. . .

JEYSIN  
 (puzzled, to Julisa)  
 You knew about this? And what does  
 it have to do with dad and Uncle  
 Nate?

JULISA  
 (to Jak and Jeysin)  
 It has everything to do with them.  
 Follow me.

Jeysin follows her from the room immediately. Jak digs himself out of the book heap before doing the same.

JULISA (O.S.)  
 (to Jak)  
 You're cleaning up those books when  
 we're done talking.

Jak stops in his tracks.

JAK  
 (lowly, to himself)

Damn it!

JULISA (O.S.)  
 (to Jak)  
 I heard that!

Jak scurries into the next room.

**15 INT. JULISA'S BEDROOM**

**15**

Jak plops onto Julisa's bed next to Jeysin. Standing atop a stool, Julisa searches through the top shelf of her closet. She descends with a large box.

JULISA  
 With all the digging you do up  
 there, I'm surprised you didn't find  
 this before I got the chance to show  
 it to you.

JAK  
 (baffled)  
 You knew? Uh, I mean—

Jeysin cuts off Jak.

JEYSIN  
 How did you know?

JULISA  
 Give me some credit. Your mother  
 knows a lot more than you'd think.

Julisa drops the box on the bed in front of her sons and wipes the dust from its lid. The contents of the box sparkle in gold as the room's light shines on them.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
 And it's time you two knew a little  
 more.

Julisa removes the variety of items stored inside: newspapers, videotapes, photographs, and medals.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
 Long story short, there are two  
 kinds of people in this world.  
 Normal folks, like me, and those  
 like you two, your father, and your  
 uncle.

She picks up a VHS tape and dusts it off with her hand.

JULISA (CONT'D)

Their powers made them professional fighters in the SFC.

JEYSIN

The. . . Superhuman Fighting Classic?

JAK

(not impressed)

Isn't that the cheesy, fake fighting thing with all the crazy effects? I stopped believing that was real when I was like nine.

JULISA

(to Jeysin)

Yes.

(to Jak)

And no. There are no special effects.

She puts the tape into the VCR atop her TV and presses play.

JULISA

(to Jak and Jeysin)

See for yourselves.

She seats herself on the bed in between the boys. Footage rolls, showing shots of a large stadium filled with cheering fans. In the center of it all sits a single wrestling ring.

ANNOUNCER

(excitedly and articulate)

The Superhuman Fighting Classic: a combat sport spectacle unlike any other! Every four years, the world's greatest fighters answer the call of this showcase of spectacular strength and sensational skill. Broadcasting from the Hampton Coliseum in Norfolk, Virginia to television sets across the globe!

Under bright lights, a variety of fighters show off their techniques.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The fifth event, kicking off on June 25th, 1980, would surely become one to remember. Making their debut were two young scrappers, a sure bet for SFC stardom: Terry "Turbo" Omega,

the 15-year-old boxing specialist  
with raw power and ferocious spirit.

Terry's shown as a muscular, brown-skinned teen with a large, perfectly rounded afro and a confident smirk. His fitted white tee is tucked into his blue jeans, which are cuffed to sit just above his high-top red trainers. His thin gold chain shines under the lights and his fingers are taped, leaving the knuckles bare. His highlight reel is full of fierce, fire-coated punches.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And his brother, Nathaniel "Nitro"  
Omega, a 16-year old master of an  
unnamed style. His ever-smooth  
methods and moves leave fans and  
fighters in awe!

Nate is thinner than Terry. His attitude is calm and collected and his long, silver dreadlocks are tied back into a ponytail. A fancy medallion rests on the open chest of his karate top. Matching pants and simple footwear complete his look. In his highlights, Nate breezes through opponents without breaking his cool.

In one fight on the highlight reel, Terry shakes the ring floor with a powerful leap upward. Nate is shown dashing through the air without touching the ground. A side-by-side shot shows the brothers standing in ring. Julisa pauses the tape.

JAK

(in awe)

That was the coolest thing I've ever  
seen!

Jak immediately downplays his own hype.

JAK (CONT'D)

(much cooler)

Who's have thought our old man  
wasn't always such a bum?

JULISA

(sternly)

Jak, your father is not a bum.

JAK

Maybe he'll show up one day and tell  
me that himself.

Jak folds his arms.

JAK (CONT'D)

And what's with the Omega thing?

JULISA

Big stars of all kinds use stage names.

(fondly)

"Turbo and Nitro, the Brothers Omega" was theirs.

JEYSIN

So every competitor in these tournaments has powers like ours?

Julisa and Jak turn to Jeysin.

JULISA

Your powers make it all possible. It's said that out there in the world are special people—

She gently rustles her boys' hair.

JULISA (CONT'D)

—who turn their will into talents the rest of us could only dream of. For one reason or another, most of 'em become wannabe superheroes or fight pro.

Jak resumes the video. He studies the footage of Terry and Nate.

JEYSIN

And to think this has been sneaking by the public all this time. Looks like the best place to hide anything is in plain sight.

JULISA

Fans think what they're seeing is fake and they're supposed to. If word on these powers ever got out, all hell would break loose. The scary part is not being able to tell who has it. Whoever does can use their power for anything.

CUT

The space Mack sat previously is now vacant. Across the street, neon lights flash from the one business still open, a jewelry store. The jewelry store owner is a middle-aged, white-skinned man in a business suit. He secures the lock on a silver briefcase and taps a code into his security console on the store door. He peeks around nervously. Now armed, the security console beeps and blinks a red light. The owner sighs with relief, but then jumps at the sight of a stranger lingering behind him.

HUNGRY STRANGER

'Scuse me, sir. Hate to botha ya.  
Just tryna grab me a bite to eat  
tonight. Anything at all you can  
spare a hungry vet? I'd really-

The jewelry store owner cuts him short.

JEWELRY STORE OWNER

(glaringly)  
No! I do not!

He clutches the briefcase in both arms.

JEWELRY STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

And if you want food so bad, work  
for it your damn self.

Brushing past the stranger, the jewelry store owner then bumps into another figure.

JEWELRY STORE OWNER

(to Mack)  
Watch it, pal!

Mack stands before him, grinning.

MACK

(to the Jewelry Store  
Owner)  
Nothin' personal, man. We hungry out  
here.

Mack snatches the briefcase from the jewelry store owner, throwing him to the ground with one swift movement. Slung the case over his shoulder, he strolls away. The owner pulls a black handgun from inside his jacket.

JEWELRY STORE OWNER

(after Mack)  
Don't screw with my money!

**POW.** He fires a shot directly into Mack's back, halting him mid-stride. Although the bullet hit its mark, it stops dead

in its tracks and falls to the ground. The jewelry store owner can't believe his eyes.

MACK  
 (to the Jewelry Store  
 Owner)  
 See, why'd you have to go and get  
 all hostile?

In a single step, Mack rushes the man, striking him over the head with the briefcase and knocking him out cold. Mack checks his back for blood with his hand. He smiles at his clean fingertips and rubs them together. He kneels down and rips the locked case open. Taking out a stack of money, he tosses the cash to the hungry stranger the owner had blown off.

MACK  
 (to the Hungry Stranger)  
 Treat ya self to somethin' nice. You  
 deserve it.

**17 INT. JULISA'S BEDROOM**

**17**

Julisa, Jeysin, and Jak sit upon Julisa's bed.

SFX: Punches being landed and other fighting sounds in the background as the VHS is still playing.

JEYSIN  
 Are the winners rewarded well?

JULISA  
 Yes, and they should be. Lives are  
 on the line out there and those  
 fights get real ugly, real fast.

Jeysin and Jak wince at a hard hit shown on screen.

JULISA (CONT'D)  
 Only makes sense the winners get  
 paid-

Jak cuts Julisa off mid-sentence.

JAK  
 (exclaims)  
 One million dollars?

Jak stands to his feet. His face sours.

JAK (CONT'D)

If they're so rich, why are we still here?

JEYSIN

And I thought they were away, deployed on military duty?

JULISA

After fighting, they were recruited for a force of super soldiers.

Julisa lifts a partially folded photo of Terry and Nate in their 20s. Depicted with more uniform haircuts, they smile for the camera, dressed in army-green jumpsuits.

JULISA (CONT'D)

They go off the grid for jobs so secret that I hardly have contact.

She signs.

JULISA (CONT'D)

Last I heard, they'd be back this summer. But, 'til then, I've been doing the best I can.

JAK

That settles it.

JULISA

Settles what, sweetie?

Jak tightens his fists.

JAK

I'm going to enter the SFC!

Jeysin's visibly thrilled at the thought. Julisa waves it off.

JULISA

Your dad would be so proud to hear that. Maybe one day when you're a little older you can-

Jeysin chimes in.

JEYSIN

If the tournament takes place every four summers, and this tape is from 1980, there should be one happening this year!

JAK

Done deal.

Jak high-fives his brother.

JEYSIN

The event kicks near July. You've got no time to waste!

JAK

School's almost out anyways, and I'm already suspended for a week of that.

Julisa dreads how quickly she's lost her boys to the idea.

JULISA

(joking in desperation)

And I'm just supposed to take off work to drive my previous preteen sons coast-to-coast for superpowered gladiator matches?

JAK

Nah. I should be good. If I can survive this town, I can make it anywhere.

Jeysin twists his braid and looks to the ceiling to think.

JEYSIN

(to Julisa)

Using public transit, he should have just enough time to get to Virginia and train along the way. If anyone can pull it off, it's definitely Jak.

Julisa palms her face.

JULISA'S THOUGHTS

They're joking. They have to be joking.

JAK

(to Jeysin)

As if you weren't coming with me!

JEYSIN

(excitedly)

You mean it?

JULISA'S THOUGHTS

(mopily)

He's supposed to be the good one. .

JAK  
 (to Jeysin)  
 Of course I do. This will be the  
 wildest stunt I've ever pulled.

Jak throws an arm around Jeysin's shoulder.

JAK (CONT'D)  
 No way I can pull it off without my  
 super genius brother by my side.

Julisa quickly ejects the tape and packs up the contents of  
 the box.

JAK  
 (to Julisa)  
 I was still watching that! At least  
 rewind the tape first.

JULISA  
 Not happening.

JAK  
 Rewinding the tape? But don't you  
 always tell us to-

Losing patience, Julisa cuts Jak off.

JULISA  
 You two entering that tournament is  
 not happening. I'm already  
 regretting even mentioning it.

She switches the TV back to cable from the VCR and begins  
 flipping through the channels.

JAK  
 But pops got to do it when he was  
 only 15!

JULISA  
 15 - not 12. End of story.

JAK  
 I'll be 13 next month, and 13's  
 like, the new 15, I think.

Jak looks to Jeysin, but Jeysin can't back him up.

JULISA

I said end of story. I'm done  
talking about it.

Julisa begins surfing for channels on TV. Frustrated, Jak digs deep into the box. He discovers a dog-tag necklace engraved with "TURBO OMEGA." He peeks over at his mother, who doesn't see him, and he tucks it into his pocket. Julisa's channel search lands on local news and a reporter, in her 30s with tan skin and long brown hair, appears onscreen.

REPORTER 1

We're on scene in east Rosacé where the police continue their pursuit of an armed thief at large. The victim alleges 20,000 dollars worth of cash and precious gems were stolen from Luciano Jewelers on Federal Street.

Julisa turns up the volume. The brothers lean in closer as the reporter continues.

REPORTER 1 (CONT'D)

I'm joined now by an officer who has been on the hunt for the criminal.

The officer is an older, white-skinned man with a short haircut and mustache.

OFFICER 1

Anyone in the east Rosacé neighborhood should remain indoors until we've apprehended the suspect. Suspect confirmed aggressive and dangerous. Last two men close on his trail were knocked out cold.

JAK

(to himself)

I know that corner. . .

TV sets all around town tune into the news as the story develops.

**18 INT. MARIE'S HOME**

**18**

Marie's father, Mr. Rivers (big, brown-skinned man) and her mother, Mrs. Rivers (thin, dark brown-skinned woman) watch the news from their living room sofa.

OFFICER 1

We're still figuring out what measures are needed to bring him in.

Shots have been fired, but so far  
our efforts have been ineffective.

The officer sounds unsure in his statement.

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

Again, all residents of east Rosacé  
are advised to remain in their homes  
until the situation is resolved.

MR. RIVERS

First job I find out of this time,  
we're leaving and never looking  
back!

Mr. Rivers loosens up the tie on his short-sleeve, sweat-  
stained dress shirt. His wife wraps up her dark curls into a  
head wrap, then takes his hand.

MRS. RIVERS

It's all just chaos and order baby.  
This will pass too.

MR. RIVERS

If it's not one thing, it's another!  
Our own daughters gets assaulted by  
some punks at that school today, and  
now this!

Marie overhears them from her room. With a lamp above as her  
only light, her eyes scan the large textbook opened on her  
desk.

MRS. RIVERS

All this fussin' ain't gonna help  
you none. Marie's just fine-

MR. RIVERS

Due in no part to that friend she's  
always hanging around That boy is  
just like everything else in this  
town nowadays - reckless and out of  
control!

MRS. RIVERS

Try and ease up a little. She's been  
studying for her exam since she got  
home.

MR. RIVERS

When she passes, she'll be the first  
one of us to finally get out of  
here. It can't happen fast enough.

Marie sighs and adjusts her glasses.

MARIE  
(to herself)  
I couldn't agree more, dad.

She turns to the next page in her textbook.

19 INT. JULISA'S BEDROOM

19

JEYSIN  
(upset)  
Wish people weren't always so mean  
to each other.

JULISA  
I've always tried to teach you guys  
to think that way. Glad to see it's  
sticking.

She puts a hand on Jeysin's head, messing with his hair and smiling.

JAK  
I think we should go.

His words shift the tone in the room.

JAK (CONT'D)  
I think we should go out there and  
find the guy. See if we can bring  
him in.

JULISA  
*You're always putting yourself out  
there, Jak. I get it. That's how you  
are. But wanting to track down a  
dangerous criminal on the loose?  
You're really out of line today.*

JAK  
(emotional)  
I feel like I have to!

He looks to Jeysin, who gives him a nod.

JAK (CONT'D)  
Like, we have to! Whoever's out  
there wasn't hurt by bullets. They  
must have powers, too! Me and Jeysin  
spent all day practicing how to use  
ours.

JULISA

A day? One day? And now you think  
you can go take on the world?

JAK

Someone has to step up!

JULISA

"Someone" doesn't have to be you  
two! You're just boys. Why don't you  
get that?

JEYSIN

(calmly)

We may be the only people who can  
make a difference here. We owe it to  
those around us to at least make  
that effort.

Julisa tries to argue. Her words never make it out. She walks  
from the bed, and is surprised to be caught by her sons  
wrapping their arms tightly around her waist.

JAK

I know this is hard, mom. But, right  
now, more than ever in my life, I  
feel like I'm about to do the right  
thing. I can't turn that down.

JULISA

(teary)

I love you two so much. Just please  
please, please be careful.

JEYSIN

We will.

The brothers share a look.

JAK

Let's go.

**20 EXT. ROSACÉ BACKSTREETS - NIGHT**

**20**

Using their powers, Jak and Jeysin speed through the  
neighborhood.

JAK

Good job with the words back there.

JEYSIN

Times like these I wish I could  
trade my words for your nerves. Are  
you ever afraid?

JAK

Me? Nah. You got my back and I got  
yours. What more could I need?

Jak turns to run backwards to face and grin at his brother.

JAK (CONT'D)

Besides, you won't make history for  
being afraid.

Following a path of debris, they reach a wide alley littered  
with garbage. An injured policeman lies at the entrance, his  
forehead bruised. At the other end of the alley, a dark  
figure carries a briefcase. One streetlight flickering above  
and a pair of burning trashcans give the alley low-lit,  
orange glow and a haunting atmosphere.

The brothers creep forward. **CRINK**. Jeysin steps onto a shard  
of broken glass. The figure freezes, then peeks over his  
shoulder. Jak and Jeysin stand firmly, side-by-side. They  
brace themselves as the figure approaches. Jeysin is visibly  
nervous, but Jak is overcome with surprise as the figure  
comes into the light.

JAK

(surprised)

Old Man Mack?

Mack greets them with a grin.

MACK

(to Jak)

Ah, little dreamer boy. What brings  
you 'round these parts at this hour?

JEYSIN

(to Jak)

You know this guy?

Jeysin keeps his eyes on Mack.

JAK

(unsure, to Jeysin)

Met him today headed home from  
detention. He seemed mad cool. . .

(to Mack)

It was you that robbed that store?

MACK

Guess the word got out.

Mack chuckles.

MACK (CONT'D)  
 Found something I really wanted and  
 made it mine. Don't even know how,  
 but I did it.

Mack pats the briefcase proudly.

JEYSIN  
 (to Mack)  
 Stealing and hurting others is  
 wrong!

MACK  
 (to Jeysin)  
 Wrong, right. It's all relative,  
 little dude. Life's much grander  
 when ya chalk the rules.

Listening to Mack's words, Jak becomes conflicted.

JAK  
 (to Mack)  
 So, you got some money. Now what?

MACK  
 Get the hell up on out this city.  
 I'd still be invisible and worthless  
 to every no-good bastard in this  
 bear trap if I ain't act for myself.  
 Can't let anything get in my way.

Mack drops the case to the ground.

MACK (CON'T)  
 Or anyone.

JAK  
 Mack, you really don't need to do  
 this, man. There's gotta be a better  
 way.

MACK  
 Oh contraire, little dreamer boy. I  
 took a stand on what I wanted most.  
 Ain't no turning back.

Mack cracks his knuckles.

JAK  
 Then we're gonna have to stop you!

MACK

Best of luck with that.

Mack kicks the briefcase, sending it sliding across the ground, and the boys follow it with their eyes. Mack lunges in and strikes Jak into an alley wall with a right hook. Jeysin hesitates before making his move, but then strikes Mack with a pair of kicks. Mack knocks Jeysin away with a backhand, and Jak returns and lands a strong punch onto Mack's cheek. Mack grips the boy's leg and flings him onto Jeysin.

MACK

Seems you boys have found your  
somethin' special, as well. Bullets  
ain't hurt one bit, but I felt those  
hits.

Mack's dark sunglasses are now cracked from Jak's last strike, revealing one crazed eye.

MACK (CONT'D)

What else ya got?

The brothers' quickness and teamwork are a fair fight up against Mack's strength and size. Missed attacks from all three leave dents in dumpsters, craters in the ground, and holes in the brick walls lining the alley. The fight slows to a standstill. The brothers catch their breath. Mack cracks his neck.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

(to Jak)

Jak, can you hear me?

His voice runs through Jak's mind. Jak rubs his head.

JAK'S THOUGHTS

(to Jeysin)

Yeah, but I don't see you talking.  
He must've hit me harder than I  
thought.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

(to Jak)

I'm using my telepathy to reach you,  
so we can think up a plan without  
him hearing us.

Jak nods and looks to Mack.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

(to Jak)

Rushing him at the same time isn't  
working. The powers are new to all

of us, but he's got a natural advantage in strength.

JAK'S THOUGHTS

(to Jeysin)

So what's the remedy?

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

(to Jak)

Attacking in waves may be our best bet for a clean hit.

Waiting for action, Mack taunts the boys.

JAK'S THOUGHTS

(to Jeysin)

Lead the way. I'll be right behind.

Jeysin gulps.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

Here goes something.

Jeysin dashes toward Mack again. The man readies a punch, but Jeysin baseball slides between his open legs. Mack looks up to see Jak trailing in. Mack prepares to block, but is knocked from his feet by Jeysin's sweeping kick from behind.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

Down low—

Jak connects with a flying kick, driving Mack into and cracking the alley wall. **KRICK!**

JAK'S THOUGHTS

Up top!

Motionless, Mack falls to the ground. The brothers are relieved until Mack begins struggling back to his feet. Shards of his shattered glasses rain to the ground.

MACK

A lot tougher than you look, the both of ya. . . Only wanted to get you off my tail, but now I'll have to put you down.

JAK

Not if we take you down first!

Jak dashes in. **CRACK!** Mack seizes a wood plank from the ground and whacks him across the head. Jeysin tries to follow, but Mack catches him by the throat. He strangles the boy with one hand, lifting him from the ground as he fights

to break free. Reeling from the last hit, Jak shakes his head. Blood gently rolls down his temple.

Mack charges power to his free hand. Jeysin gasps for air. Fists shaking in anger, Jak bursts forward. Jeysin grimaces, anticipating Mack's last strike. **THUMP**. Jak stomps hard, pivoting his body to pour out his full force.

**RRRACK!** Jak rockets a devastating punch into Mack's ribs. The force ripples through the air, breaking Jeysin free, and sending Mack tumbling down the alley.

Exhausted and emotional, Jak marches over to Mack where he lies. He grabs Mack by the shirt to lift him from the ground, then raises a fist. Mack chuckles between coughs, blood runs from his nose and the corner of his mouth.

MACK

(to Jak)

You made me proud, little dreamer boy.

Jak loosens his grip.

MACK (CONT'D)

We're of the same breed. People pushin' for what they want, no matter what. Don't. . . ever lost that. . . fire roarin' inside you. .

.

Mack cracks one last grin before falling unconscious.

JAK

I won't, Old Man. I promise.

**21 EXT. ORTEGA HOME - MORNING**

**21**

Local news plays on the Ortega's living room TV, next to the now upright bookshelf.

REPORTER 2

The manhunt for the jewelry thief has come to a close. Described as a miracle, not even the heroic officer responsible could explain.

OFFICER 2

I'm telling you all, it's true! One sec I got clobbered, and the next thing I knew, the perp was gone and the briefcase was in my hand.

His fellow officers celebrate behind him. In silence, Jak and Jeysin are in their bedroom, packing their bags and preparing to sneak out the window.

**22 INT. HIDEOUT**

**22**

At the gym, they box and lock up their collection of movies and games. On the rooftop, they reflect on the time spent in their hometown. Jak looks to the early morning sun. Jeysin looks at him and recalls his talk with Mr. Marshall.

JEYSIN'S THOUGHTS

The opportunities would no doubt be life-changing, but they'd mean nothing without my family. We're not the richest, and neither of us even have any memory of our father being in our lives. Even still, we've always had one another, and that's something I can't give up.

**22A INT. MARIE'S ROOM**

**22A**

Marie is awakened by the morning light peering through her window. Having dozed off studying late into the night, her now-crooked glasses leave a mark on her face.

She walks to her window, just after Jak, who was waiting outside of it to find the courage to see her, turned and walked away.

**23 EXT. ROSACE TOWN LIMITS**

**23**

Bag at his side, Jeysin sits on a bench, looking to his wristwatch. Jak approaches.

JEYSIN

How were the goodbyes?

JAK

I chickened out.

JEYSIN

She isn't going to be happy with us when she finds out we skipped town.

JAK

She's going to yell and throw stuff at me anyways. Rather deal with that once I can get her a gift to make up for it. (beat) Ready to roll?

JEYSIN

If you are.

Julisa approaches the bench from behind.

JULISA

Cool the jets, you two.

Jak and Jeysin are startled.

JAK

Mom? Jeez, where did you come from?

JEYSIN

How did you know we were here?

JULISA

All good moms have a sixth sense  
about their kids.

JAK

(to himself)

I knew I forgot one!

JULISA

From the looks on your faces when  
you saw Terry and Nate in action, I  
knew I wouldn't be able to stop you.  
Just sorta wished I had a bit more  
time before my babies were ready to  
take on the world.

Julisa lovingly plays with her boys' hair and pulls them in  
close.

JULISA (CONT'D)

Take care of each other, and make  
sure you call me whenever you can,  
so I don't have a heart attack.

The brothers get on their way. Jak keeps his attention  
forward, trying to be strong. Jeysin fights back tears,  
waving goodbye to their mother. Julisa blows kisses to her  
boys as they move further from her sight.

JULISA'S THOUGHTS

Terry. . .

She wipes away her own tears.

JULISA'S THOUGHTS (CONT'D)

They're more like you two than you  
ever dreamed.

Rosacé is left in the horizon behind the brothers as the sun fully rises over the ocean. Jak playfully nudges his brother in the arm as the two hike onward.

JAK

(to himself)

All I ever wanted was to see the  
world. . .

Jak pulls his father's necklace from his pocket, placing it around his neck and tucking it beneath his shirt. Jeysin smiles as Jak looks to the sky.

JAK (CONT'D)

And I think I might just do it.

The best, is yet to come.