

CHANCES

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FADE IN:

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

Gasps. Hard and fast.

A stuffed Halloween scarecrow holds a sign that warns: ENTER AT YOUR OWN PERIL!

A BOY flashes past the scarecrow and runs down a corridor shaved into the cornfield.

All around, cornstalks tower like walls and slap the Boy's terrified face.

From above, the cornfield looks like a labyrinth, corridors winding into circles, or to other corridors, or to dead ends. This is a Corn Maze - what the scarecrow warned us about.

The Boy makes lefts, rights, trapped in the maze, losing breath, stumbling. He peeks over his shoulder with a glimpse of terror.

A BIG KID is chasing him, gaining ground.

The Big Kid leaps. Knocks the Boy to the ground.

Blackness.

CORNFIELD - LATER

Cornstalks sway in the wind, in the afternoon sunshine. They stand tall, row upon row, tower above.

A scarecrow, hitched to a post, looms over the tips of the stalks; its outline shows dark against the sun.

Wait, look closer, it's not a scarecrow at all - it's the Boy, 11 years old, a cute kid. His knee kicks a bit.

The Boy - CHANCE ELLIOT - has his arms spread out like wings and his head hangs down. He may have been crying. Straw covers parts of his hair and shoots from his sleeves and pockets.

CHANCE (V.O.)

My name is Chance. Chance Elliot.
My friends call me "No Chance."
That's me, strung up like a
scarecrow. Don't worry, Dad's
coming in a minute. He'll set me
down. He always does.

A man approaches by a lazy stretch of highway. This is TOM ELLIOT, Chance's dad. He ambles up - no hurry here - shakes his head. Gazes eye-to-eye with his son.

TOM
Enjoying the view?

Chance squirms.

CHANCE
Don't touch me. I can get down myself.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOVING

Chance wiggles in the passenger's seat, pulls hay from his shirt.

His father, driving, glimpses at Chance.

TOM
Who was it this time? Carl's boy?

Chance stares out the truck's window. Cornstalks blur past.

Tom smiles at him with an equal mix of affection and worry.

TOM
You've got straw in your hair.

INT. CHANCE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

A rock CD blares. Smoke plumes off the stove.

MAGGIE MAY - only 5, eyes like saucers, adorable - jumps up and down on the couch.

MAGGIE
Something's burning! Something's burning!

RAYMO and MIKE, both 15, wrestle over a video game control.

WESLEY, 15, leaps over and smacks Raymo in the forehead.

WESLEY
Give it up, cheezo!

The front door bangs open; Chance dashes in.

CHANCE
Dad's coming!

Everybody freezes - for one entire moment - then Wes slings an irritated glance at Chance.

WESLEY

Put the mouth on mute.

Wes, Raymo and Mike tumble over the couch and thud to the floor, scrambling for the controller.

WESLEY

Cheezo, give it up!

Maggie resumes screaming her tiny lungs out.

MAGGIE

Something's burning! Something's burning!

EXT. CHANCE'S HOUSE

Through the kitchen window, Chance and the others are seen.

Tom looks through the window. His reflection shows a moment in the glass.

INT. CHANCE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Tom enters with a smoldering glare that says it all: Get the hell outta my house.

Raymo and Mike climb off the floor, fist-bump with Wes and shuffle out. But Raymo spins back to Tom.

RAYMO

Mr. Elliot, what a delight seeing you this evening.

Smart-ass. Tom's glare hits nuclear level. He steps to Raymo.

RAYMO

Sir, I'd adore to chit-chat but my curfew is beckoning.

Raymo and Mike scurry out, giggling like twits.

Tom swings his nuclear glare to Wesley.

TOM

What the hell you doing?

WESLEY

Stuff.

TOM
 Stuff. Damn stuff.

Tom smacks his son lightly on the head.

TOM
 Did you feed Maggie?

WESLEY
 Food's cooking.

CHANCE
 Food's ruined.

WESLEY
 (to Chance)
 Withhold all meaningless
 information. In other words, shut
 up.

CHANCE
 In other words, you're a platinum-
 card member to Club Idiot.

Tom clears his throat - in other words, shut up, the both of
 you.

Maggie tugs on Tom's arm.

MAGGIE
 I'm starving, daddy.

Tom looks at his children, one by one.

TOM
 Pizza?

MAGGIE
 Again?

WESLEY
 Ugh.

TOM
 Alright, I'll make something. What
 do you want?

MAGGIE
 Pizza's fine.

WESLEY
 Yeah, fine. I'd prefer Carmine's
 \$10.99 Special for the next, oh,
 eternity.

Tom looks at Chance but the kid has zilcho enthusiasm.

CHANCE
Eternity sounds good to me, dad.

KITCHEN

Wes and Chance clean up the kitchen as two brothers do. Soda bottles thrown in the fridge. Plates shoved in the dishwasher. Done in 23 seconds.

Chance turns to leave but not so fast.

Wesley slams the empty pizza box into his chest.

WESLEY
Journey to the intergalactic garage
and dispose of this toxic debris,
young warrior.

Chance slams the box back to Wes.

CHANCE
Make the journey yourself.

WESLEY
Attitude.

Chance splits - I'm outta here.

LIVING ROOM

Tom sits here in the dark. The only light flickers from a TV playing a home video.

On the screen: a shaky image - a 39-year-old woman with long reddish hair, freckles, Ivory Snow complexion, a beauty of beauties.

She is - was - ALICE, Tom's wife, Chance's mom.

Tom stares at the screen. It's obvious: Behind his stare is anguish; beneath his skin are the scars on his soul.

Alice rocks on a playground swing, singing.

ALICE
Night breezes seem to whisper I
love you/ Birds singing in the
sycamore trees/ Dream a little
dream of me.

Chance stands behind his father - he's been watching - the same anguish in his eyes, as if life took a wrong turn and now he's lost.

CHANCE
She was pretty.

Tom cocks his head around and smiles - a sad smile.

TOM
Pretty girl with the strawberry
curl.

They watch as if the video is real. Haunting. Like she's in the room. Life in bits and pieces. Life all busted up.

From nowhere, the TV sparks off, startling Chance and Tom.

Wes stands behind them, remote control in hand. Chance grabs for the control.

CHANCE
Give me that.

Wes acts like he's handing over the remote, but flips it across the room. Then glares at his father.

WESLEY
Stop being a ghoul. She's gone.

Wes storms away. Tom leaps up and follows.

TOM
Wesley!

Chance strides through the darkness and flicks on the TV.

Images of his dead mom fill the screen, glinting him like a specter. Yet all he hears: the yelling between his father and brother.

EXT. CHANCE'S HOUSE - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Chance lies on the rooftop. Scrunched into a sleeping bag. His face bathed in moonshine.

He holds an impenetrable gaze, staring at the stars as if searching for answers.

INT. CHANCE'S SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Bell rings.

Typical junior high school scene: jocks, tough-guy wannabes, A-plus-plus geeks, preppified snobs.

GWYNETH PAULEY, 11, is a preppified snob. She holds her books just so in front of her designer clothes. Her perfect hair swings to sweep the tips of her shoulders. She smiles her perfect white teeth and crinkles her perfect nose.

By his look, Chance is in love. He watches Gwyneth as if she's a vision.

She walks toward him, her GROUPIES at her heels.

RON WHEATON, 11, strolls beside Chance.

RON
I know you like her.

CHANCE
What?

RON
Gwyneth.

Chance hears nothing but the sound of Gwyneth's legs as they brush against each other.

CHANCE
Who?

Gwyneth is a few feet away. So close Chance can smell her hair.

He looks into her perfect eyes - gapes as it turns out - when:

BANG! Chance slams to the ground.

Hulking above Chance: Derek Boswell, an 11-year-old glandular abnormality - remember him? The kid who chased Chance in the first scene. (Everyone just calls him BOSWELL.)

Boswell nods at two or three of his CRONIES. The Cronies grab Chance by the knees, flip him upside down and shake him like a piggy bank.

Boswell clearly enjoys this.

BOSWELL
Got change?

The Cronies laugh as quarters trickle from Chance's pockets. Boswell scoops up the silver.

Ron shrinks back. No guts.

Gwyneth feigns concern.

GWYNETH

Put him down.

Great. Not only is Chance humiliated, but his dream girl has more balls than he does. He kicks up a feeble upside-down struggle as Boswell gives a thumbs-down to his Cronies.

The Cronies drop Chance at once. Chance lands on his head.

Boswell turns to Gwyneth and preens his hair.

BOSWELL

Hey goddess, see you at the Corn
Maze.

Boswell sneers back at the still crumpled Chance.

BOSWELL

And I better not see you anywhere.

EXT. CORN MAZE FESTIVAL

Stretched across two posts, a giant banner reads:

WELCOME TO THE CORN MAZE!

Beneath the banner, look who dared to show up - Chance. But he's barely budging.

Ron pulls Chance along the straw-covered path.

RON

Come on. If you see Boswell here,
you can take him.

CHANCE

I'd need super strength to take
him. Super almighty strength.

From down the pathway, a clamor rises - hooting and hollering, bells, the sounds of a festival.

Both boys look toward the enchanting noise.

Ron glances back to Chance.

RON

Look, Gwyneth is here, and she
finally talked to you today.

CHANCE

She didn't talk to me. She told Boswell not to pop me like a pimple.

RON

She referenced you, didn't she?

CHANCE

Big deal.

RON

In regards to the modern female mind, referencing is huge these days.

Ron nods at Chance. Like a little huckster.

Chance takes a deep breath and trudges toward the fair.

Ron grins, slapping his pal's back.

RON

When Gwyneth sees you, she'll know you got guts. Females dig guts.

The boys reach the entrance. Squeeze past hay bales stacked high.

Chance wears a low-profile look. Roves his eyes like security cameras. And Ron? Tantalized.

Chance sees pumpkins, cotton candy, a pizza tent, moms squeezing lemonade, mooing cows, scurrying pigs.

An incessant clunk of a cowbell grows louder - clunk - clunk - clunk...

This is it - The Corn Maze Festival - the grandest shindig for this cornbread town, a fair where, you might say, pig slop meets pumpkin pie.

Ron nods toward some pretty girls.

RON

Let's prowl.

But Chance steps back. Sees the Scarecrow with the sign that reads: ENTER AT YOUR OWN PERIL!

Beyond the sign, kids hurry into the entrance of the Corn Maze and disappear.

Ron walks over to Chance.

RON

Chance?

Chance turns around and catches a horrifying sight - Boswell!

Chance hesitates.

Boswell looks over. Does he see Chance?

Chance ducks behind a wall of humans. Vanishes.

RON

Chance!

Chance weaves between adults, kids, farm animals, running like a maniac, running for his life, ducking, darting.

He dashes for a vendor tent, barrelling through a dark purple curtain, gone, inside. The tent has a neon sign:

MOTHER GENCOZMO
FAMOUS FORTUNE TELLER

The purple curtain, shrouding the entrance, ripples after Chance runs past. Let's see what's inside...

INT. FORTUNE TELLER'S TENT

Spooky and dark. Portraits of angels and devils cover one wall. On another: tarot card faces, palm-reading charts, shots of planets, stars, other mystical devices.

A sign near the entrance reads: SPELLS CAST

And there's Chance, coiled over, gasping for oxygen.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Do you want to know the future?

He leaps around and locks stares with a beautiful woman. A woman of mystery. A woman named FIGEN, dressed in a white dress with a river rush of raven hair.

Chance stares blankly, hypnotized by her presence.

She raises her brow - well?

Chance snaps out of his trance, shakes his head.

CHANCE

I'd rather change the past.

FIGEN

All things are possible.

She smiles at the boy, as if she just divulged a secret.

FIGEN

What is your name?

CHANCE

Chance.

FIGEN

What a wonderful name. Chance. Like life, no? Anything can happen.

She puts out her hand.

FIGEN

My name is Figen. Nice to meet you.

Figen calls in a strange tongue to someone in the back of the tent, demanding this person appear.

An ancient woman emerges from behind a dark purple curtain.

MOTHER GENCOZMO is old, but her magic is older. Her hair is gray, not white, pulled away from her face. Under her eyes, dark circles. On her face, no makeup. To her, the occult is like a shawl around her shoulders - formfitting and snug.

From her look, she is possibly evil.

FIGEN

Chance, this is Mother Gencozmo. The Famous Fortune Teller. Barons in Europe used to come see her. Her words were like whispers in their ears.

The old woman smiles a toothless grin. Her eyes shine dark.

FIGEN

Now she is a carnival attraction. Life is cruel sometimes.

Mother Gencozmo sits behind a round table covered in red velvet. A crystal ball shines on its surface.

Figen gestures to the empty chair.

Chance slides into the chair. Realizes the old woman is nearly blind.

She stretches out her wrinkled hand - it looks like a map of the world, so many lines.

A heavy croaking broken accent:

MOTHER GENCOZMO
Cross my palm with gold.

CHANCE
What?

FIGEN
All things must be paid for in the
spirit world.

Chance reaches in his pocket, gives the old woman a coin.

From under the table Mother Gencozmo grabs a black silk bag. Dumps the contents. Multicolor stones fall across the red tablecloth.

FIGEN
Stones from the Black Sea.

CHANCE
What does she do with them?

FIGEN
Sees the world.

Mother Gencozmo sweeps her hands across the table, scatters the stones. Peers vaguely at the array.

The stones glimmer. Then spin in a circle - without the touch of Mother Gencozmo - like a magic trick. Spinning and spinning.

Chance bugs his eyes with astonishment.

The stones drop back to the table. Mother Gencozmo reads their configuration.

MOTHER GENCOZMO
I see much pain in you.

The old woman gazes at the stones.

MOTHER GENCOZMO
Your future is mixed in your past.
You want what you have not. No
focus in you.

From under the table the old woman pulls out a giant, dusty book.

MOTHER GENCOZMO

I give you focus. I give you...

Scratched in gold on the Book's cover are the words:

THE BOOK OF ULTIMATE POWER

MOTHER GENCOZMO

Your future.

The old woman arches back. Bellows an incantation in a bizarre language. Distorted, like a cry. Power not evident before. Scary.

Chance isn't sure but he thinks the table shakes.

He leaps up, scoots back.

CHANCE

I'd better go now.

Figen slides a red scarf from off her wrist and wraps the Book with the scarf. She gives the Book to Chance.

FIGEN

No worries, Chance. We're old friends now.

Mother Gencozmo points a twisted finger at Chance and speaks in her strange tongue.

CHANCE

What's she saying?

FIGEN

She said, "Your secrets have been opened."

Chance shudders at the words.

On the wall, portraits of Tarot card faces flicker in candlelight. Chance's eyes settle on the face of The Fool.

INT. CHANCE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Two hands - the hands of Chance - grip The Book of Ultimate Power.

Chance opens the massive Book and a glow beams from the pages. A brilliant glow.

Chance fans through the pages. All blank.

The pages not only glow but glitter. Sparkle. Whisper. Is it magical? No doubt about it.

Chance falls into hypnotic enchantment. His eyes glimmer. His mouth crinkles a smile, then murmurs:

CHANCE

Whoa, man.

Chance flicks to the first page and sees an ancient cryptic script. He reads aloud, hushed but assertive.

CHANCE

"This is The Book of Ultimate Power, where your dream comes true for twenty-four hours."

Chance pauses, processing what he read. His brow squeezes into a tight pinch as he continues:

CHANCE

"Write what you want, your deepest desire. Wake from your slumber more potent than fire."

He tightens his grip on the Book. His murmur, now harsh, repeats...

CHANCE

More potent than fire.

His body tilts back. His hands tremor. His stare glints of a battle: curiosity versus fear.

He slams shut the Book, flings it to the floor. Fear wins.

Chance hears a voice - his dad's:

TOM (O.S.)

"Still she haunts me, phantomwise..."

MAGGIE'S BEDROOM

Tom sits and reads "Alice in Wonderland" to Maggie, tucked in bed.

TOM

"Alice moving under skies. Never seen by waking eyes..."

HALLWAY

Chance moves through the dimness. Sees inside Maggie's room.

TOM

"In a Wonderland they lie. Dreaming
as the days go by, dreaming as the
summers die..."

Chance hears his father's voice as he turns back to his room.

TOM (O.C.)

"Ever drifting down the stream.
Lingering in the golden gleam.
Life, what is it but a dream?"

CHANCE'S BEDROOM

Dark. Except for moonlight slivering through the curtains.

Chance lies in bed. Awake. Fidgeting. A tense stare.

He rips off the covers. Reaches under the bed. Pulls out...

The Book of Ultimate Power.

He jumps back in bed and creaks open the Book.

The pages glow like gold, flecking with sparks, glimmering
the boy's face. No doubt, this is a magical possession.

No longer is Chance afraid. In fact, his eyes sparkle, purely
tantalized.

CHANCE

Ultimate power.

He opens to the first page. Scans the scripted passage.

Chance snags a pen from his nightstand, flips to the first
blank page and scrawls this request:

GIVE ME SUPER STRENGTH

Chance holds a glare on those words. Shuts the Book and the
glow is gone. Nothing but darkness.