Blond Bomber

by: Brandon Coleman

Contact:

Brandon Coleman Mobile Telephone: 618 303 9764 Email: <u>coleman268604@yahoo.com</u> FADE IN:

INT. LINDEN HOUSEHOLD - BEDROOM DOOR - NIGHT

The bedroom door is closed, but yells and screams are heard from a two voices'.

A loud, thud rattles the door.

MASTER BEDROOM INTERIOR

Inside, BETHANY, petite, brown eyed, blonde, is doubled over on the floor with her back pressed against a dresser.

PERRY, tall, dark and square jawed with high arching brows, steps toward her while he wipes blood from his lips.

PERRY

I told you stop hitting me! Now look at you. Look what you made me do!

Bethany curls up against the dresser with her knees pressed firm to her bosoms. Perry extends a hand to her, but she pulls away when he reaches.

> PERRY Damn it I'm sorry! You know how much I love you, Beth.

BETHANY

Is that how you show love, by raising a hand to your wife?

PERY

Beth, don't start another fight. Can't you see I'm trying to--

BETHANY

Shut up! Save it for someone else. Better yet, why don't you run to your slut Nichole? She rises to her feet, her back presses against the dresser. She then sidesteps toward the door, keeps her eyes fixed on Perry.

PERRY Nichole? How many times do I... She's just my assistant.

BETHANY

You're full of it. I can't believe I put my life, my dreams on hold for you.

PERRY

I gave you everything. What more could you possibly want?

BETHANY

I don't give damn about this house or gifts.

She rips her diamond necklace from her neck and throws it at him.

BETHANY

I want you, Perry! When's the last time we took a stroll together or said something other than, "How was your day?"

She moves closer to Perry holding her hand out in a pleading manner.

PERRY

Beth, honey.

Bethany puts two fingers over his lips.

Her hands then run down to his hands. She rubs the back of them then flips them over, rubs his palms.

BETHANY

When did we last cuddled? When is the last time you gave me a hot, passionate, fuck?

Perry opens his mouth but no words come out.

BETHANY

I'm your wife, Perry. I want your passion, your love. When will you understand that--

She proceeds to the door, opens it.

BETHANY --Maybe we'd be better off apart.

As she opens the door wider, Perry sprints toward her. He then pulls her back and slams the door shut.

PERRY

What did you say?

He drags her to the bed.

BETHANY

Nothing.

PERRY I'll be damned if I let you go.

He tosses Bethany on the bed, mounts atop of her. She wriggles frantically and pushes at him, but Perry presses her down with ease.

PERRY No one can have you but me.

He rips Bethany's gown open then slides his pajama pants down, forces his self into Bethany.

BETHANY

No, Perry, stop it.

She kicks, screams and claws at Perry.

He seizes both of her wrists, pins them to the bed. He stretches her arms above her head with one hand then grabs her face with the other.

PERRY This is what you wanted isn't it, a passionate FUCK? He thrusts hard into Bethany. Her face flushes redder with each thrust of his hips. A tear streaks down Bethany's cheek.

INT. LINDEN HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bethany finishes a set of push-ups then reclines in an armchair panting with her hands behind her head.

STEPS

Perry bounces downstairs with a brown briefcase in hand. He then struts into the--

LIVING ROOM

PERRY Beth, I'm off to work.

He leans forward to kiss her. She turns her cheek.

PERRY

Fine.

INT. LINDEN DENTAL OFFICE - DAY

Soon after Perry walks into his office he comes across NICHOLE, mocha complexion, thin waist, curvy physique, and has wavy black hair that stretches halfway down her backside.

NICHOLE

(excited)

Perry.

She rushes up to Perry, embraces him in her petite arms. Perry rests his hands on her hips then kisses her.

> PERRY Baby, the wife suspects something between you and me.

> > NICHOLE

Forget about her.

PERRY I can't. Beth is the mother of

my kids.

Nichole gently pinches his cheeks

NICHOLE Well, Mr. Sensitive, you've got a patient waiting for you in room four.

ROOM FOUR

Perry examines a patient's mouth then places the dental hook and inspection mirror on a tray to the side.

PERRY Mr. Kern, you have one serious cavity. It'll get more painful if it's not filled soon.

ALBERT KERN (47) a husky but very stout man in fighting shape.

ALBERT KERN What's to happen if I postpone the filling for a few days?

PERRY It could get infected and I might have to perform a root canal.

ALBERT KERN In that case, do what you got to do now, Doc.

Perry places a sucking tube in Albert's mouth.

A drill sounds in the background.

INT. CROCKET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

CAFETERIA

Kids eat and talk amongst each other.

FREDRICK LINDEN, age 9, thin, tall for his age, dark haired eats lunch with ALEX, chubby, red-haired, glasses.

Fredrick, bites into his sandwich, chews, spits it out.

FREDRICK Ah! Everyday lunch sucks.

ALEX It's not that bad. I kind of like it.

FREDRICK Are you kidding?

He flips open his sandwich.

FREDRICK I can't tell whether this is ham or roast beef.

ALEX If you don't want it, I'll eat it.

He reaches over and grabs Fredrick's sandwich.

ALEX Why don't you have your mom make your lunch?

He bites into his first sandwich, devours it. Commotion from older boys catches Fredrick's ear.

JASON Staind sucks.

JAMES Yeah, *Slipknot* is way better than those emo chu--

FREDRICK It's a matter of opinion. I think *Staind* is amazing.

JEFFREY Who asked for your input?

FREDRICK I'm not taking ragging on

Slipknot, I like them too, but I like Staind's passion more.

JAMES, JASON, and JEFFREY each wear dark colors with a lot of red and very short hair. They turn to Fredrick and Alex.

Jason Hey, aren't you that kid with the really hot mom?

FREDRICK Careful what you say or I'll make you eat your words.

JEFFREY

I think he is.

Jeffrey ruffles Fredrick's hair.

JAMES Yep, your mom's that hot blonde with the huge tits.

Fredrick balls his hands into a fist.

FREDRICK

(low) Don't talk about my Mom.

JEFFREY She's hot M.I.L.F. My kind of cougar.

JAMES In your dreams, Jeff. Your balls probably ain't even dropped.

JEFFREY Shut up, James.

The three older boys laugh and slap each other on the back. Jason leans into Fredrick.

JASON No, she'll be my ole lady.

FREDRICK

I said stop it!

Fredrick slams his fist on his table. Silence follows the loud thud. Everyone in the cafeteria turn to Fredrick and Jason.

ALEX Cool it, Fred. They're sixth graders.

FREDRICK I don't care. Nobody talks like that about my Mom!

JASON Before you know it, she'll be my little whore… son.

Fredrick grabs Jason by his shirt, slings him to the tile floor. Jason laughs.

FREDRICK

(snarls) Take it back.

JASON (straight tone) Make me.

Fredrick's fist cuts through the air, hits Jason's nose. Blood spurts into the air.

> JASON Get off me you little punk!

James and Jeffrey spring forward, tear Fredrick off of Jason. They then pin him on a table. Jason stands to his feet.

JASON Hold him still!

He lifts Fredrick's chin up, cocks his arm back, and punches him twice in the face.

No.

He spears Jason into Jeffrey. That frees up one of Fredrick's fist. With it, he punches James on the chin, then swings his leg up and kicks him in the chest. James flies off the table.

Jeffrey holds Alex still while Jason knees him in the stomach.

Fredrick picks up a tray, smashes it over Jason's head and whacks him across the face as he spins around.

Jason crashes to the floor. Fredrick elbow drops atop of him.

Jeffrey stares at Jason, he loosens his old on Alex; Alex then uppercut headbutts him. Jeffrey falls to the floor holding his bloody mouth.

INT. CROCKET ELEMENTAY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Principal Thompson sits at her desk. She stares blankly at Fredrick who returns the same look.

The door opens. In rushes Bethany with JESSICA (2) dimpled cheeks, short, curly, light brown haired in her arms. She sits beside Fredrick and lays sleeping Jessica across her lap.

BETHANY Awe, Fredrick, honey look at you--

She rubs her hand along his face.

BETHANY Your face is all swollen. Your dad isn't going to be happy about this. (to Principal Thompson) Sorry I'm late, Regina.

PRINCIPL THOMPSON This is Fredrick's 5th fight in 8 weeks. If he continues this behavior, I will expel him. BETHANY That won't be necessary. I'll see to it he doesn't get into any more trouble.

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON Ok, this is his final warning. No more fighting for the remainder of the year. As of now he's suspended for 3 days.

Bethany, Jessica, and Fredrick exit the office. Once in the hallway, Alex comes to view. Both of his eyes have black rings around them. An older red-haired woman sits beside him.

INT. BETHANY'S CAR - DAY

From the passenger seat Fredrick stares straight ahead. Strapped in her car seat, behind Bethany, Jessica plays with a stuffed lion.

Bethany glances at Fredrick.

BETHANY

Why do you always pick fights with kids bigger than you?

FREDRICK

I don't care how big they are.

BETHANY

What did he say?

FREDRICK You know what they say.

BETHANY Oh, that again... How many of them were there?

FREDRICK

Huh?

BETHANY

One kid alone couldn't have done this to you.

FREDRICK

Put yourself in my shoes. Imagine the things they say? You'd fight as many of them as you needed to too.

BETHANY

(smiles)
...I bet you didn't eat did you?

INT. WENDY'S - DAY

Bethany, Fredrick, and Jessica sit toward front of the restaurant overlooking outside.

On Fredrick's pallet lay a chicken sandwich meal plus two double cheeseburgers.

Bethany cleans smeared ketchup off of Jessica's face. She looks up, two empty sandwich wrappers rest crumpled in front of Fredrick.

BETHANY

How can you eat so much and stay so small?

FREDRICK I don't know. Maybe I get it from you.

Bethany and Fredrick laugh.

LATER

Jason and MARTHA dull with straight dark hair and wearing a blue dress suit approach Bethany.

FREDRICK Mom, there's one of the boys.

Bethany turns, finds herself eye to eye with Martha.

BETHANY

Hi.

MARTHA Is this the boy? Jason's bottom lip is split, a purple bruise on each cheek, and his left eye is nearly swelled shut. He holds an ice pack to his swollen jaw.

JASON

Yes, ma'am.

MARTHA Excuse me. Your boy owes my son an apology.

BETHANY You're mistaken. Your son owes Fredrick an apology. He instigated the fight.

MARTHA

Listen, I don't know what kind of house you run. I'm guessing you let that hooligan run wild. Look at my boy's face--

She pulls Jason forward.

MARTHA

I know all about your son's temper.

She nudges Jason back and then grabs Fredrick's right arm. Her fingers dig deep into him while she lifts him from his seat.

MARTHA

(angered) Apologize right now.

FREDRICK

Ouch. Let go.

Bethany leaps from her seat and throws a crushing right hook.

Martha stumbles back, releases her grip on Fredrick.

MARTHA I see where he gets his temper from. She touches her nose. Blood smears her fingertips.

BETHANY Don't ever, ever, touch my son.

MARTHA

(hysterical) You bitch. You broke my nose.

Martha lunges with her right fist.

Bethany sidesteps right and counters with a right cross to Martha's chin who's stunned on her feet.

BETHANY Don't swear in front of my daughter either.

JASON (to Martha) Mom, don't.

Jason grabs his mother's wrist. She looks back, stares into his eyes.

MARTHA

Ok.

She wipes blood from her upper lip, readjusts her clothes and then staggers away with Jason. She mutters under her breath the entire way to the exit.

Fredrick looks up at Bethany in awe.

FREDRICK

(stutters) I never ever saw you fight. I didn't know you could.

BETHANY Don't get used to it. Fighting is wrong. People should settle their differences with words.

FREDRICK

(cynical) Yeah, yeah, actions speak louder than words.

As Bethany and Fredrick clean off their table, Albert Kern, who had sat at one of the side tables, walks over and taps Bethany's shoulder.

ALBERT

Excuse me.

BETHANY

(queerly)

Yes?

ALBERT

I saw your little scuffle. That's some right hook you got.

BETHANY Yeah, well, she had no right touching my son.

ALBERT You have a lot of potential

BETHANY

Potential?

ALBERT

Boxing. You should consider stepping in the ring.

BETHANY

Me box? I'm not a violent person. Besides, my husband would freak --

Bethany grabs a napkin and wipes Jessica's face clean, brushes crumbs from her lap, and then lifts her up onto her side.

> Bethany --Fredrick, grab your backpack so we can go.

ALBERT My name's Albert Kern. He extends his hand to Bethany, she shakes it.

BETHANY

Bethany.

ALBERT I'm a trainer, former trainer. You're not a violent person, that's fine, but you have a reason to fight.

He looks down at Fredrick. Bethany follows his eyes.

BETHANY I was protecting my family. It's maternal instinct.

ALBERT

So you're a natural and you're stronger than you think.

BETHANY Thanks again but I donno. What would Baron Edward Lytton say?

ALBERT

Baron who?

BETHANY He coined "The pen is mightier than the sword."

ALBERT I prefer the saying "If you wish for peace, prepare for war."

Albert digs into his pocket, pulls out a business card.

ALBERT

Do me a favor, think about it. Here's my card if you change your mind.

Albert hands Bethany his card. She stares at it a moment then takes it from his hand.

We really have to go.

Albert waves to Bethany, Fredrick, and Jessica, as they leave the restaurant.

ALBERT Don't forget to call if you change your mind.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Perry kisses Bethany on her cheek as she and the kids enter.

PERRY What happened at school, Freddy?

BETHANY He got into a fight with a bunch of boys.

She sets her purse down.

Perry hunches over, examines Fredrick's swollen cheek.

PERRY You're bruised up pretty bad. Did you lose?

FREDRICK Do I ever lose a fight?

Bethany sheds her jacket, lays it across the back of the sofa.

BETHANY Trust me, the other kid was worse off.

Perry gives Fredrick a big hug then throws a few playful jabs at him.

PERRY So you showed that punk who's the boss, huh son?

FREDRICK

I guess.

Bethany sits Jessica down in a large, red, playpen across the room.

BETHANY

Jess, play with your toys for a little while. I'll be back in a bit to read you Rapunzel.

JESSICA

Ok, mommy.

Bethany strokes her fingers through Jessica's wavy blond locks, kisses her forehead. She then rejoins the guys.

BETHANY

(to Perry)
I don't like seeing Fredrick
fighting. What if he really
gets hurt next time?

PERRY Honey, we both know he can handle himself.

BETHANY

We should think about getting him counseling to manage his anger more constructively.

Perry

Nonsense, there's nothing wrong with releasing a little aggression sometimes.

BETHANY

He almost got expelled today. Does that even matter to you?

PERRY

Yes, it matters.

FREDRICK

Guys, it's one thing to talk about me behind my back but I'm standing right here.

PERRY

(to Fredrick)
Sorry, son. All I'm saying is a
little aggression is normal in
boys your age.

Fredrick

Normal, right. Anyway mom laid out this one kid's mom. It's a good thing everyone in this house is getting out some aggression, right dad?

PERRY

When?

FREDRICK

This afternoon at Wendy's we were eating then this kid I fought and his mom waltzed in. She was yelling and grabbing all on me--

Perry perks his brow, glances at Bethany as Fredrick continues to talk. He scratches his chin as he approaches her.

Fredrick acts out movements while he talks.

FREDRICK -- Mom stepped aside punched her so hard she stopped stone cold dazed on her feet. It was crazy!

Perry lowers his eyebrows then brushes Bethany's hair back.

PERRY

(condescending)
Aren't you supposed to be the
nonviolent one?

BETHANY It was just a little argument.

FREDRICK

Mom, you broke her nose. That's the biggest little argument I ever saw.

Fredrick flops down on the sofa. He picks up a remote from a coffee table and clicks on a flat screen TV opposite of the sofa.

BETHANY

(to Perry) She harassed our kid. I think that calls for an exception.

PERRY Sounds like Freddy's not the only one with pent up anger.

BETHANY

Fredrick, take your sister upstairs and read her Rapunzel. I'll be up to finish the story in a minute.

FREDRICK

Ok, mom.

He huffs as he clicks the TV off then takes Jessica out of the playpen and proceeds upstairs.

Bethany digs into her jeans and pulls out Albert's card.

BETHANY Freddy wasn't my only admirer today.

She hands Perry the business card. Perry stares queerly at the card, gives it back.

PERRY

Albert Kern. He's one of my patients. I did his fillings today. He was a promising fighter way back when. Now he's hung up on the past and that prize belt he never won.

He walks into the --

Bethany follows.

Perry opens the refrigerator, takes out a cartoon of orange juice, and proceeds to pour some into a glass.

BETHANY I know... he offered to train me.

Perry takes a gulp of his juice.

PERRY

And?

Bethany pauses and, rubbing her hands together, glances down at the floor.

PERRY Beth, what did you tell him?

BETHANY I told him you wouldn't think it was a good idea.

PERRY

And?

He takes another gulp of juice.

BETHANY Boxing would give me something constructive to do. I think I should give it a shot.

Perry gags, juice sprays from his mouth. He slams his glass down and wipes his hands on a dish towel.

PERRY

You what?

BETHANY Don't worry Perry. I didn't tell him yes. As far as he knows I'm still thinking about my answer. PERRY There's nothing to think about, because you're not boxing.

BETHANY

I know you're worried for me but this is my decision to make not yours.

PERRY

You obviously can't make a decision like this on your own so I'm making it for you.

BETHANY Why are you so adamant, Perry--

She approaches Perry, brushes up against him.

BETHANY -- Afraid I'll finally be able

to take you after a bit of training?

Perry strokes his fingers through Bethany's hair; he yanks down on a handful of it.

PERRY

Honey, you don't frighten me. You're my `lil pussycat.

He kisses her lips.

PERRY You're not boxing and that's that.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed Bethany shuffles the business card between her fingers, lays it on a nightstand.

Perry walks in the room. His face is damp and his teeth sparkly white.

He continues to the bed, slides underneath the comforter, and then kisses Bethany's cheek.

PERRY

Goodnight, Beth.

Bethany flicks off the light on the nightstand. Incoming moonlight turns the room a dark pale blue.

She then leans over, nibbles on Perry's right ear, and slowly straddles atop of him.

Perry's eyes snap open. He grins. Bethany kisses his lips then, kisses her way down his stomach while gently running her fingers along Perry's sides.

She then lowers his pajama pants and kisses him down there, and then licks and kisses him back up to his mouth.

BETHANY

Perry.

PERRY

Yes?

BETHANY Albert is going to train me.

She kisses Perry's lips.

PERRY Are you asking me or telling me?

BETHANY

Telling.

She leans in to kiss him again. He stops her and grabs the back of her long, wavy, blonde hair, yanks her off then mounts atop.

> PERRY We already had this discussion. You're not boxing.

Bethany spits into Perry's eyes.

BETHANY You can't control me like some kind of dog. She spits at his face again.

Perry pauses, wipes his face, and then raises a hand high, slaps Bethany hard.

PERRY I can't control you... says who?

Bethany returns a slap Perry across his face.

BETHANY

Says me.

She backhand slaps Perry.

He pauses, mouth ajar. He stares down at Bethany. Her hand speeds toward him, slapping him a third time. A faint, pinkish, handprint marks his cheek.

> PERRY Have you lost your mind?

He pins Bethany's hands against the bed. He continues to slap her but stops short of her face.

BETHANY Albert will train me and that's that.

Perry traces his fingers along Bethany's face, wraps his hands around her neck. A sudden cry wails from outside the room.

JESSICA (O.S)

Mommy!

Bethany pushes Perry off, rushes out the door.

JESSICA'S ROOM

Bethany lifts Jessica from her bed and cradles her in her arms.

BETHANY

You're ok, Jess, mommy's here. You had a bad dream that's all. Jessica and Bethany are at the kitchen table. In front of Jessica is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich cut into four sections.

BETHANY

Hurry up and finish your sandwich, sweetie. We have to go.

JESSICA

(curious)

Where?

BETHANY I told you we're going to surprise daddy at work.

As Jessica picks up a square of her sandwich, Bethany grabs a small pink jacket.

INT. LINDEN DENTAL - DAY

Bethany enters through a glass door. A bell above the entrance chimes.

She approaches JANICE (50's), graying brunette hair, black frame glasses, and white collared blue blouse. Bethany holds a brown bag in one hand and Jessica's hand in the other.

> BETHANY Hi, Janice, is Perry busy?

Janice flips through a planner.

JANICE No, his next appointment isn't for another half-hour.

Bethany glances over at the cloak on the wall behind Janice. It reads 12:30 pm.

JANICE I'll go tell him you're here, Mrs. Linden.

BETHANY

You don't have to do that. I want to surprise him myself.

JANICE

Ok.

Bethany sits Jessica on a rug with a cartoon town design. A children's table stands atop it with Lego blocks, puzzles, thick paged children's books, and other toys.

BETHANY

Mommy's going to give daddy the lunch we packed for him. Be a good girl for Janice.

Jessica eyes fixate on a colorful toy with multiple, looping tubes. Holes through the middle miniature cars are attach one to each tube.

Bethany glances down at the toy.

BETHANY

You can play with the toys, but don't lose any pieces.

JANICE

You go ahead. I've got my eye on her.

Janice crosses the room and moves the looping toy closer to Jessica then kneels down beside her. Bethany kisses her forehead, continues down the hall.

Jessica grabs hold of one of the cars, runs it along the looping tube it's attached to.

HALL

Faint moans resonate through the hall. The sound grows increasingly audible with each door Bethany passes.

She passes several dark unoccupied rooms before coming to a stop in front of the last door on the left, which happens to be the only door shut completely. Effeminate moans and deep groans seep from the other side of the door. Bethany softly turns the knob, inches the door open.

OFFICE ROOM

Nichole lies on Perry's desk; her open blouse exposes her supple breasts. As she moves back and forth on the desk, Bethany opens the door a bit further.

Bare chest and his pants around his ankles, Perry holds Nichole's legs up on his shoulders. He grabs her waist, pulls her closer to the edge, and thrusts faster.

HALL

Bethany's eyes well-up; lips, purse together. She closes door quietly and backtracks to the--

WAITING AREA

JANICE Did you see Dr. Linden?

BETHANY

Yeah.

JANICE Was he surprised?

BETHANY One of us was. Hey, Janice, mind if I wait here till Perry is done at his desk.

JANICE

Nonsense, you don't have to wait. You're his wife. I'll get him right now--

She pinches Jessica's cheek, rises to her feet.

JANICE --Family comes first, that's my motto.

BETHANY

Don't, if I know Perry he'll be done in about ten minutes.

JANICE

Suit yourself.

PERRY'S OFFICE

Coffee colored fingers clinch the desk. Nichole's face lays firm against the desk.

Perry has one hand on her shoulder, traverses the other from the top of her spine to her lower back. Tattooed there on her is a purple serpent wrapped around a heart.

WAITING AREA

SUPER IMPOSE

The clock on the wall ticks seconds away.

END SUPER IMPOSE

Buttoning up her blouse and slicking her hair back, Nichole approaches from down the hall.

NICHOLE

Janice, if a patient comes in for me; tell him I'll be right back.

She pauses before Bethany and Jessica, turns back to Janice.

NICHOLE

I'm going across the street for a Pepsi so I can get my energy back up. You want anything?

JANICE

No thanks, I'm fine. I've got a Snicker's in the desk here.

Nichole continues over to Jessica and kneels in front of her, looks to Bethany.

NICHOLE

Bethany.

BETHANY

Nichole.

NICHOLE Hi, Jessica, how are you, cutie?

JESSICA Mommy say you're not nice.

NICHOLE Of course I'm a nice... once you get to know me.

She gently pinches Jessica's cheek then exits out the glass doors.

Perry comes to view at the mouth of the corridor. Jaw agape, eyes bulged, he gives pause. Bethany looks up to see his awry expression.

JESSICA

Daddy!

She lets go of the looping toy, runs over to Perry with her hands in the air. She trips over her own shoestrings while running and falls to the floor bumping her head. Perry quickly scoops her up into his arms.

> PERRY Be careful, Jess. Don't hurt yourself.

He kisses her forehead.

PERRY Mommy has to tie your shoes tighter next time.

Bethany stands, grabs the brown bag lunch off the table, and continues over to Perry.

BETHANY

Don't worry we weren't waiting long, only about ten minutes. Here's your lunch. She shoves the bag into Perry's hand then reaches under his arm, rubs his side.

BETHANY Hope your ribs aren't too cold.

JESSICA We surprise you, daddy. Are you surprised?

PERRY I sure am, sweetheart. (to Bethany)

Where's Freddy?

BETHANY With his friend Alex. I'm on my way to get him now. Say goodbye to daddy, Jess.

JESSICA

Bye, daddy.

PERRY Bye, sweetheart.

He smooches Jessica's cheek, sets her on her feet.

Bethany leans into Perry, inhales deep. Perry starts to kiss her; she stops him and wipes a red smudge from his cheek. Pulling away, she takes Jessica's hand and leaves.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bethany sits on an easy chair, sips a glass of lemonade, shuffling a business card between her fingers. Jessica sleeps in the playpen.

In the background a door opens and shuts. Perry enters.

Bethany slips the card between the seat cushion.

PERRY Beth, I can explain what you saw today. I was frustrated about last night. Then Nichole...

BETHANY

What are you talking about?

PERRY You walked into my office didn't you?

BETHANY No, Janice said you were busy screwing around with something.

PERRY So you didn't--

BETHANY

--Nope.

Perry starts toward the stairs.

PERRY

Alright. I'm going to hop in the shower. Care to wash my back?

BETHANY

I'll pass.

PERRY Ok, see you when you come up then.

Perry continues upstairs. Water runs in the background.

Bethany removes the business card from between the seat cushion, picks up a house phone, and dials a number.

INT. REGGIE'S GYM - OFFICE - NIGHT

ALBERT

Hello.

BETHANY (O.S) Hi, Albert, it's me, Bethany, the woman at Wendy's with the right hook?

ALBERT Right, yes. I'm glad you called. I started to INT. LINDEN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BETHANY I know. I've been putting things into perspective.

ALBERT (O.S)

And?

BETHANY My answer is yes. I want you to train me.

ALBERT (O.S) What would your friend Baron what's his name have to say?

BETHANY Nothing. He's been dead more than 120 years.

ALBERT (O.S) This won't be some cakewalk.

BETHANY If I wanted cake I'd call Betty Crocker.

ALBERT (O.S) Be at my gym tomorrow at 10 a.m. The address is on the card.

BETHANY Can you make it 11? I have to do some work around my house and restock on groceries.

ALBERT I thought you were serious?

BETHANY

I am.

ALBERT (O.S)

EXT. REGGIE'S GYM - DAY

The exhaust spews from automobiles' tailpipes. Traffic is thick.

Hundreds of pedestrians, casual and business dressed, traverse the sidewalks.

Street vendors crowded with patrons brandishing money in hand.

INT. REGGIE'S GYM - DAY

Sweat drips from the men and women, seeping through their workout clothes.

Two big, burly men, each wearing red, protective headgear, spar in a white top ring.

Along an adjacent wall left of the ring, men and women lift weights on various machines.

Along the other walls guest workout on flat benches, incline benches, and decline benches. They also make use of free weight dumbbells, curl bars, speed bags, heavy bags, and double-ended bags.

FRONT ENTRANCE

Two, big, steel blue doors open. Bethany, Jessica, and Fredrick make their way through the gym.

Fredrick scrunches up his face, wipes his nose vigorously.

Many of the fighters inside dwarf Bethany in size.

FREDRICK You're just as tough as them, mom.

BETHANY We'll find out soon enough.

Albert stands at the base of a black iron--

ALBERT

(booming) Bethany, c'mon up to my office.

Bethany, as well as a few others, pause and turn to Albert. He heads up the staircase, Bethany and the children follow him.

Some inside follow her with their eyes up the stairs. Most notable of the gazers is a man wearing a gray suit, crimson tie and dark sunglasses.

INT. REGGIE'S GYM - ALBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Two large windows inside the office overlook the entire ${\tt gym}.$

Albert takes a seat on a worn brown leather chair behind a thick oak desk.

Atop the desk, folders are neatly organized and a wide, clear, glass bowl filled with Hershey's candy sits near the corner.

Bethany and Fredrick take a seat on two smaller cushioned chairs opposite of Albert. Jessica sits on her mother's lap.

ALBERT

You're late.

BETHANY

I tried to get here at one but time just slipped away from me.

Albert pulls out a mid-sized spiral notebook from the desk's top drawer.

ALBERT

Don't worry about it. Stuff happens, but keep in mind every minute you're late you owe me ten pushups-- Bethany nods.

ALBERT

--Any time you say *I can't* you owe me twenty-five pushups. Got it?

BETHANY

(nodding)

Yes.

JESSICA

Chocolate!

She stretches her tiny hands to the glass bowl as far as they can go.

BETHANY

Jess, that's not yours stop it. I'm sorry, Albert. She goes ballistic over chocolate.

ALBERT

Let her have some.

He hands Jessica a piece of candy then takes another one.

ALBERT Chocolate is my kryptonite too.

JESSICA

Thank you.

She stuffs the candy into her mouth. Albert hands Fredrick a couple of pieces of candy.

FREDRICK Thanks, Mr. Kern.

ALBERT

Ok Bethany, your training starts tomorrow. Today we're testing your fitness. Drop to and do as many pushups as you can.

BETHANY

Right now?

ALBERT

Well I don't mean later.

Bethany stares at Albert for a moment. He unravels a piece of candy, pops it in his mouth, and reclines back. The smile on his face fades as he swallows.

Bethany sits Jessica on Fredrick's lap then gets down on all fours where Albert can see her.

BETHANY Count for me, Fredrick.

She extends her legs, straightens her back. Slowly, her arms flex 90 degrees at the elbow.

FREDRICK One, two, three...

ALBERT And do an extra 20 for being late.

INT. REGGIE'S GYM - DAY

MONTAGE

-Bethany now wears sweat cloths and performs sit-ups while Albert holds her feet.

-Fingers grip a bar. Bethany's face surfaces above the bar

-A long bar with two large plates on each end rest on Bethany's back. She squats down and quickly rises.

-Bethany inhales and exhales quick as she pushes a bar away from her chest.

END MONTAGE

ALBERT Come on. Push it. Get the bar up!

Bethany's face turns pink. Her fingers, clinched tight around the bar, turn cherry red. Veins pop from her neck

and sweat streaks past her green eyes, nearly falling into them.

She releases a loud grunt as she finally clears the bar from her chest and sets it on the rack.

ALBERT You can lift your own body weight. Good.

He runs his finger down a piece of paper on a clipboard.

ALBERT Everything else is good too.

BETHANY I try to get in some anaerobic workouts every morning.

ALBERT You ever worked a speed bag?

SPEED BAG

A small, red, teardrop shaped, ball shoots away then quickly darts back, hitting Bethany's face.

ALBERT Step back. Spread your feet shoulder width apart. Keep your elbows up.

Bethany's hands bat the bag. It ricochets back and forth at a slow rhythmic pace.

FREDRICK There she goes. She's got the hang of it now.

JESSICA

Mommy's good.

ALBERT That's enough for today.

He tosses Bethany a water bottle. She takes a drink then joins Albert and the kids on a bench by the ring.

Albert continues to scroll a pen down a clipboard.

ALBERT You're stronger than I anticipated. You have what it takes to be something special.

FREDRICK Mr. Kern, you think you could train me too?

ALBERT I'm sorry, Freddy, you're a little too young for me to train.

FREDRICK

Oh.

ALBERT Tell you what. You can still come in and workout whenever you want.

FREDRICK

Ok.

Albert

(to Bethany)
Tomorrow you'll start weight
training. We'll do that twice
a week. Any questions?

BETHANY

Just one. Who's the guy in the gray suit and sunglasses staring at me when I walked in?

ALBERT

That's Jeremiah. He scouts the gym every week for raw talent. He seemed interested when I mentioned you.

FAR SIDE OF GYM

Jeremiah strides cool and slow to the exit, takes one look over his shoulder, and continues out the double

doors.

BENCHES

BETHANY You said we're done, right?

ALBERT If that was your only question then, yes, we're done the day.

Bethany steps from the benches, pauses.

BETHANY

There's one thing. I don't know if it's a conflict of interest but my husband's your dentist.

ALBERT Perry Linden? Funny, he never wore a ring.

BETHANY That's Perry. Says it makes him feel claustrophobic.

ALBERT I'm sorry; it's none of my business.

BETHANY

No biggie. He's a cheating bastard. Hey could you do me a favor and keep an eye on my kids while I shower?

ALBERT Sure, no problem.

BETHANY Thanks. I'll only be a minute.

She heads for a door labeled Lockers above it.

ALBERT Same time tomorrow.

Bethany fades through the door. Albert turns to Fredrick.

ALBERT

You know fighting isn't everything. What other ways do you express yourself?

FREDRICK

I like to write. It helps me when I have nothing around to hit.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

The setting sun gives the living room an orange glow. Completely content, Perry awaits his family's arrival with one leg crossed over the other. His fingers tap rhythmically on his knee.

Keys jingle in the background followed by a door creaking open and a pitter-patter of a half dozen feet hitting the hardwood floor.

Bethany and the children enter the living room softly. They freeze in place once they lay eyes on Perry.

BETHANY

Perry, why are you sitting with the lights off? It's too dark in here.

PERRY Where have you been?

BETHANY (to Fredrick) You and your sister go upstairs.

Fredrick takes Jessica's hand and scampers up the steps.

PERRY Where were you?

BETHANY I was at a friend's.

PERRY

Who?

BETHANY Cassandra, Alex's Mom.

Perry gingerly rises from his chair, steps closer to Bethany.

PERRY

Bullshit!

BETHANY

It's the truth.

PERRY

Truth, huh--

He lurches forth, wraps his hand around Bethany's neck.

PERRY

--Did you girly chat with Cassandra before or after you saw that trainer?

BETHANY

You're insane. I don't know what you're talking about.

Perry backs Bethany against a wall, slams her repeatedly against a bookcase adjacent to them.

PERRY

He left a voicemail! You betrayed my trust. Now look what it's come to.

He presses down on Bethany's trachea.

Panting, Bethany grips Parry's wrist with one hand and punches his face with her other.

She strikes him again, a cracking sound echoes; blood trickles from Perry's nose.

Perry lets go.

Bethany holds her hand to her chest, inhales deeply.

BETHANY

You don't know a thing about trust or faithfulness. I saw your dirty secret firsthand--

She picks up a vase from the bookcase.

BETHANY --I saw you screwing Nichole on your desk!

Bethany throws the vase at Perry's face.

He puts his hands up in time to shield himself. The vase shatters to a dozen pieces.

Bethany grabs a thick, hard covered book from the floor, rushes Perry with it and whacks him.

BETHANY You liar! You cheater! You

whore!

Perry rips the book from her hands, smacks her to the floor.

STAIRCASE

Fredrick squats at the top of the steps.

LIVING ROOM

Perry lifts Bethany off the floor by the strands of her hair.

PERRY I'm the man of this house. I do what I damn well please!

Bethany uppercuts his groin, runs toward the kitchen.

Perry trips her ankle before she can make any significant progress.

PERRY I'm not done with you.

Bethany locks eyes with Fredrick while Perry drags her toward his self.

STAIRCASE

Fredrick jumps up and sprints down the hall to the--

MASTER BEDROOM

He flicks on the lights then digs through a black purse, retrieves a small business card.

He stares at the card, grabs a cordless phone off a dresser, dials into it.

EXT. ALBERT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

An office door closes.

A ringing chimes in the foreground.

Albert digs into his pocket, withdraws a mobile phone.

ALBERT

Hello.

FREDRICK (O.S) (low) Mr. Kern, get over here. Now!

ALBERT

Fredrick?

FREDRICK (O.S) It's my Dad, he's hurting my mom.

ALBERT I'm on my way.

He closes his phone, rushes down the staircase, and darts out the gym.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

Perry grabs hold of Bethany's wrist and slaps her three times.

PERRY I gave you everything--

He squeezes his hand around her jaw, pulls her closer.

PERRY

--Everything!

Bethany pounds down on Perry's arm. His grip on her lingers still.

She then spits in his eyes, headbutts his face and then connects a left hook to Perry's jaw.

EXT. LINDEN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Albert drives up to the house in a gray SUV, hops out the car, and bolts to the front door.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Both Bethany and Perry's clothes are ripped and torn. Scratches and bruises cover each of them. Blood stains Perry's mustache and mouth.

Perry chokes Bethany against a sofa. He lets loose one hand, recoils it back.

JESSICA (crying)

Don't hurt Mommy!

FREDRICK

Dad, don't!

PERRY

Go to your rooms!

Jessica picks up a doll from the floor, runs over and whacks Perry's leg with it repetitively.

BETHANY

(strained) Get out of here, sweetheart.

PERRY

Look what you did. You turned the kids against me.

BETHANY You turned them against yourself.

Perry grunts as his shoots his fist forward punching Bethany in the face. Her left eye starts to bruise immediately.

Bethany clinches her fist, knocks Perry's arm from her throat and throws a straight punch to his chest.

Perry stumbles back coughing and accidentally pushes Jessica aside. He cocks back his arm again.

FREDRICK

Don't!

He leaps from the steps onto Perry's back, locks his arms around Perry's throat.

PERRY

Get off, Freddy!

With both hands, he flings Fredrick off and over the sofa, he bounces to the floor.

Perry turns his focus back to Bethany. He reproaches her, outstretches his hand.

Bethany punches him square on the nose. Blood trickles from it again.

Perry backhand slaps her. Panting he presses his hand to his bleeding nose.

Rapid footsteps from afar grow louder.

Albert storms in, tackles Perry and pins him to the floor. The two men lock eyes.

PERRY

You!

ALBERT Real tough guy, huh... let's see you try and hit me. Bethany forces herself to stand upright.

BETHANY Careful, Albert, he's strong.

Perry yells ferociously as he strains to free himself from underneath Albert.

PERRY You bastard! Get off!

Perry squirms, shifting and thrusting his hips up.

Albert presses down with his full weight.

ALBERT

Don't worry, he's not going nowhere. You and the kids get outside to my car.

PERRY

God damn it!

He grits his teeth, clinches his feet. Veins bulge from his neck.

BETHANY

(panting)
Ok, ok. Fredrick, come on. I'll
carry Jess.

Without a word said, Fredrick sprints out front. Bethany groans kneels down and picks up Jessica who has dried tears crusted on her cheeks.

BETHANY Let's go, sweetheart. Dry those tears.

PERRY

Beth, don't you dare take my kids! Beth! Beth!

Albert places a hand over Perry's mouth, squelching his screams. Bethany scurries out the living room.

EXT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

JESSICA

Why is daddy mad?

BETHANY

I don't know, baby. We have to give him some time to himself.

Bethany and Jessica hop in the car with Fredrick.

INT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Albert removes his hand from Perry's mouth.

PERRY She can't leave me. She won't get away with my kids either. They'll all be back. You wait and see.

Albert punches down. Perry goes silent, lies motionless on the floor.

ALBERT You need to know when to shut up.

EXT. LINDEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Bethany sits in the passenger seat of a black Chevy Camaro with Jessica cradled in her arms. Fredrick stares out the backseat window.

Albert appears standing at the front door entrance. He peers over his shoulder, quietly shuts the door and then proceeds to the Camaro.

In moments the car speeds off into the night.

INT. CAMARO - NIGHT

ALBERT

You mind explaining what happened back there?

BETHANY

It's a long story. I'd rather not talk about it in front of the kids.

ALBERT I understand... You can clean yourselves' up at my place.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Inside all is black. Keys jingle in the background. The front door squeaks open softly. Light from streetlamps push several shadows inside.

ALBERT (O.S) Home sweet home.

He swipes his hand along the wall, flicking on the lights as he enters.

Bethany and the kids follow Albert inside. Everything is clean and orderly with nothing too extravagant standing out.

Above a fireplace, along a wooden mantel shelf, portraits of boxers and a younger Albert rest.

Bethany stares at a photo of Albert and a woman in her mid-twenties with features similar to his at the end of the mantel.

ALBERT

Bathroom's down the hall to the right. Clean towels are in the linen closet next to it. I'll find something for you to wear.

He starts across the living room toward an opposite hall.

ALBERT Make yourselves at home.

Fredrick follows behind Albert.

BETHANY Is this your little --

SARA (O.S) -- Dad, is that you?

Music blaring from headphones approaches. It stops as

SARA KERN, tall, strong lean build and cornrowed styled hair enters from the left hall.

SARA Sorry, I didn't know we had company.

ALBERT Come here a minute. (wraps an arm around Sara) This is my daughter Sara.

Bethany moves closer, offers her hand.

ALBERT

(turns to mantel) That last photo there was Sara's first pro fight. (to Sara) Sara, this is Bethany.

BETHANY

Hi. (points to kids) These are my munchkins Fredrick and Jessica.

SARA Hi, my dad's told me a little about you.

BETHANY What'd he say?

Sara pats Bethany's right arm.

SARA

You got strong arms. Maybe I'll get to see that right hook of yours soon.

Bethany exchanges looks with Albert. He shrugs.

ALBERT I'm gonna get the spare rooms ready while ya'll get to know each other. He starts down the hallway again.

ALBERT I hope you don't mind, Sara, but I said Bethany could borrow some of your clothes.

SARA

That's fine.

BETHANY

Albert--

ALBERT (pauses and turns) Yes?

BETHANY

Thank you for helping.

Albert smiles warmly, continues down the hallway.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - BETHANY'S ROOM - DAY

Bethany lies in bed with a pillow clinched to her chest and her knees tucked up to her elbows. She watches Jessica who sits on the floor doodling in a coloring book.

Jessica holds up the page she worked on. Her dark golden curls bounce as she snaps her head up, smiling innocently, to show Bethany the crudely color picture she's proud of.

JESSICA

Look, mommy.

BETHANY That's a beautiful horse, Jess.

JESSICA It's a unicorn, mommy. See the sparkly horn.

BETHANY

Oh you're right. I'm sorry, sweetheart. It's a beautiful

Jessica giggles at Bethany's praise. She lays the book down and starts on a new page.

JESSICA Can we see daddy today, mommy?

Bethany's eyes widen, she sighs.

BETHANY Daddy, daddy needs some alone time, sweetheart.

Jessica pauses, confusion written on her face, and then starts coloring again.

Bethany wipes a bubbling tear from her eye, clinches her pillow tighter.

KNOCK, KNOCK

Albert peeks into the room.

ALBERT

I'm dropping Fredrick off at school then headed to the gym. You sure you don't want to come?

BETHANY Not right now. You go ahead.

ALBERT We don't have to train today. We can just talk.

BETHANY Thanks but I need to clear my head first.

ALBERT Alright, you know where I'm at if you change your mind.

Fredrick whizzes past.

FREDRICK (O.S)

Albert nods at Bethany, waves bye to Jessica who returns the gesture and then continues on his way.

JESSICA

Mommy?

BETHANY Yes, sweetheart.

JESSICA

I'm hungry.

Bethany climbs out of bed and kneels in front of Jessica. She forces a smile.

BETHANY Mommy can make you some French toast.

Jessica pumps her arms up and down.

JESSICA Yay, French toast!

Bethany takes her by the hand.

BETHANY C'mon let's see what all we can whip up in the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Metal scraps against metal as Bethany scoops a piece of French toast off of a griddle and stacks it atop several other pieces. She then carries it and a handle of maple syrup to the table where Jessica waits anxiously.

Bethany quickly cuts the toast into bite-size squares, drizzles syrup atop.

BETHANY

Eat up, Jess.

Jessica shovels a few pieces in her mouth, shivers with delight.

Sara meanders into the kitchen, inhales the lingering aroma in the air.

SARA What smells so good?

BETHANY French toast; you can have some of mine if you want.

SARA

I'd like that.

Bethany separates the remaining stack in half then she and Sara join Jessica at the table.

SARA You alright? You seem down the last couple of days.

BETHANY I'm just feeling overwhelmed since… never mind.

SARA Since what? Girl to girl, tell me what's up.

Bethany lets out a heavy sigh, touches her slightly bruised left eye.

BETHANY Me and my husband got into a fight.

SARA Every couple fights.

BETHANY I bet they don't bloody each other up.

She pauses, glances at Jessica then back to Sara.

BETHANY

(softer)
My husband's very controlling,
but he wasn't always so. He

changed after college.

She circles her fork around the edges of her plate, rests her chin on the knuckles of her other hand.

Sara stares at her a moment, stands up and grabs Bethany by the wrist.

SARA We're going to the gym.

BETHANY

What? Why?

SARA You're going to stop beating yourself up starting now.

INT. ALBERT'S GYM - DAY

Sara holds a heavy bag in place as Bethany squares up to punch it. She throws a jab, followed by a straight left and right hook.

> BETHANY You sure Albert's okay with Jess in his office.

SARA They're fine; focus on the bag. Besides, kids love my dad.

ALBERT'S OFFICE

As Albert and Jessica watch cartoons he unwraps a piece of candy, leans over and offers it to her.

ALBERT

More chocolate?

Jessica, chocolate smears on each cheek, nods excitedly and snatches the candy from Albert's hand.

GYM FLOOR

SARA

This time I want you to do a basic 1-2-3 to the body leading

55

with a left jab.

Bethany hits the heavy bag with a quick left jab followed by a straight right and end with a left hook.

SARA

Again.

Bethany repeats the sequences of punches with a grimaced expression on her face.

SARA You still thinking about him?

Bethany relaxes, exhales heavily.

BETHANY

I'm sorry. I can't help it. All I can see is his face on the bag and my fist in his mouth.

She paces a bit and shakes her arms of few times then rests her hands behind her head.

Sara steps from behind the bag.

BETHANY

It's just, it's just not fair. Everything was picture perfect you know? And then--

She punches the heavy bag as hard as she can. A loud thud booms as her fist makes contact. The bag sways wildly.

BETHANY

--The passion was gone. No more late cruises laughing the night away, random gifts, or making love till dawn. I wasn't enough woman for him anymore.

SARA

I'm sorry.

BETHANY

Me too. Sorry put everything on hold for him. I could have been a teacher like I planned or school counselor.

SARA You went to college, right? You could have still taught.

BETHANY Yeah but I love being a mom. I can't stand the thought of not seeing my kids grow up.

SARA You're still doing it.

BETHANY

What?

SARA Let's see if you can beat me up half as good as you beat yourself.

Sara glances toward the -

SPARRING RING

Bethany and Sara bounce in place at opposite corners of the ring. A few of the other fighters gather round the outside.

ALBERT'S OFFICE

The cartoon playing on the office TV ends. Albert gets up to take the disk out of the BluRay player.

Jessica nibbles on another piece of candy. She moves it too her mouth for another bite but drops it. She scans the floor for it. As she looks over her chair she sees Bethany in the ring through the glass behind her.

JESSICA

Mommy fighting.

Albert peers through the glass just as Bethany and Sara approach each other. He scoops Jessica into his arms, continues to the door.

ALBERT

Yeah she is fighting. Let's go see.

SPARRING RING

Bethany notices Albert and Jessica approach the ring from the stair base from her peripheral.

SARA Hey, stay focused. You're stronger than you think.

They touch gloves and part a few feet from each other.

ALBERT Don't start until I ring the bell!

He makes his way to a tiny table outside the ring then picks up a small hammer and rings a bell atop of it.

Bethany and Sara put up their guard.

Sara bounces on her toes as she approaches Bethany who timidly sidesteps backward in a circle.

Sara throws a jab followed by another.

Bethany blocks both punches and counters with a jab, straight combination of her own, which Sara blocks.

Sara shakes her arms out, grins and then continues with a triple jab, straight, right hook sequence. Her last three punches catch Bethany squarely on the chin.

Sara hops back, dances around the ring a bit as she leers at Bethany gathering herself.

SARA C'mon, where's that punching power you showed earlier?

Bethany shuffles forward after shaking off Sara's attack, throws a hard jab, jab, straight, hook, hook sequence.

Sara bats away the jabs but Bethany's last three punches force her against the ropes. She strikes back with a left straight to Bethany's face and a right hook to the body. Bethany stutter steps back wincing.

Sara moves in closer, throws two more quick body shots followed by a right straight to the chin.

Bethany grunts as she takes the straight on the chin, stumbling sideways. She grabs the rope, plants her feet.

Panting she looks into the crowd gathering around the ring, locks eyes with Jessica who stares back concerned.

Bethany clamps down harder on her mouthpiece, shifts her focus on Sara. Her eyes furrow more intensely than before as she closes the distance between herself and Sara.

She throws two jabs then a long sequence of hard punches: left straight, right hook, left jab, right straight and finally a left hook. Each punch is harder than the last.

Sara guards as best she can using her superior speed to evade a few of the punches but the majority of Bethany's punches land spot on from kidney to jaw.

She bounces on her toes still, though not as exuberantly, as she backs from the center of the ring to the ropes once more.

Bethany continues to pressure Sara around the ring with a melee of body punches. She manages to overpower her into a corner where she unleashes a barrage of straights and hooks ferociously working body to head.

Sara finds a few openings between Bethany's onslaught to counter with a few hard crosses of her own. She sneaks in a snap jab that moves the powerful exchange out of the corner and back to the middle of the ring.

Now with more room to move Sara weaves past more of Bethany's punches but Bethany continues to pressure her with a bevy of hard punches.

Both women grunt with each punch thrown, neither fighter yielding to the other.

Sara slips past a left hook and connects with a right cross to Bethany's chin.

OUTSIDE RING

A young man, LUCIAN, 28, lean chiseled build, Latin, moves closer to the ring. He stares intrigued at Bethany's raw brutish style of fighting and smirks.

INSIDE RING

Bethany regains her footing then follows with a fast jab, hook to the body and then an uppercut.

Sara head flies back as she nearly falls backward on the canvas.

Bethany charges forward, her right arm cocked back and guard wide open.

Sara counters with a straight to the gut throwing all of her momentum into the punch.

Bethany stops in mid stride clinches her stomach.

Sara winds up and lets loose a hard left hook that sends Bethany to the canvas.

Bethany pants as she crawls on her knees, forces herself to her feet. She stares back at Sara who has blood dripping from her nose.

The ringside bell DINGS.

ALBERT

That's enough.

He waves both fighters over.

Sara shakily approaches Bethany, takes off her glove and extends her hand.

Bethany removes her glove and shakes Sara's hand. They continue to the ringside by Albert.

SARA You put up a good fight.

BETHANY Yeah, well, you finally beat some sense into me. They climb out of the ring. Bethany lays her gloves to the side then hoists Jessica onto her hip. Jessica touches her bruised eye.

BETHANY Don't worry, mommy's okay.

SARA

(to Albert) You were right about her, dad, but she's stronger than you said.

ALBERT

Nobody told you to underestimate her.

SARA

You're right. We just gonna have to spar again. I'm hitting the showers. Catch up with you in a bit.

Albert nobs, Sara heads toward the locker room doors. He looks over at Bethany who smiles genuinely at Jessica as they playfully hit fist together.

ALBERT

Hey, Bethany.

BETHANY

Yeah?

ALBERT Follow me to my office. I'll get ya some ice for that eye.

ALBERT'S OFFICE

He digs throw a mini freezer, pulls out a cold compress, gives it to Bethany.

BETHANY (placing compress on eye)

ALBERT

You're mo lighthearted than this morning.

BETHANY

Thanks to Sara. She has a way with words... and her fists.

ALBERT

You have a raw intensity about you. Not many people can pressure Sara in the ring like that.

BETHANY

She is really good. Even with protective gear my head's still a little rattled.

ALBERT You'll get used to the feeling.

BETHANY What do you mean?

ALBERT

Sparring with Sara is the best way for you to become a better fighter.

BETHANY

I... I thank you for this chance but--

ALBERT

It'd be temporary till we set up fights for you.

BETHANY

It's just I have to think about my situation with my husband. I did just take off with the kids.

ALBERT

I know. What I'm offering you

now is a chance at something new for you and them.

BETHANY

I am grateful for everything you've done, I truly am but I'm a little curious. What compels you to help so?

ALBERT

You remind me of a friend I had a long time ago.

He looks over to a wall of pictures, narrows his gaze briefly on a picture of him and a blond haired man with similar facial features as Bethany.

ALBERT

Listen, you hang around today and think about the offer. I'm sure Sara would be happy to workout with you 'lil more.

BETHANY

Thank you, Albert.

ALBERT

No worries. Me and Jessica got plenty of movies and chocolate up here.

JESSICA

Chocolate!

She leans over Albert's desk with her hands cupped together like a miniature bowl.

Albert opens a drawer, takes out a few pieces of chocolate caramels, drops them in her hands.

Bethany rises, letting Jessica alone on the chair, and continues to the door.

BETHANY You behave yourself, little girl.

Jessica nods as she savors a piece of candy.

Soon after Bethany exit Albert quickly turns on a Disney movie, Aristocats. He then focuses on his computer and pulls up a minimized tab.

On the screen shows an obituary article of the blond man, Sonny Redding, who Bethany resembles. Highlighted on the screen is: "Survived by his wife and two sons".

He clicks open another tab of an adoption agency.

INT. ALBERT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Bethany drops a lid onto a pot as she busily stirs boiling penne pasta in another pot. She picks up a wooden spoon from the countertop, slips on an oven mitt and then pulls the lid off the smaller pot.

She dips the spoon and tastes the sauce inside.

BETHANY Needs more brown sugar and red pepper.

Bethany sifts through an adjacent overhead cupboard, takes out nothing.

ALBERT (O.S) Didn't take you long find your way around my kitchen.

Bethany looks up, sees Albert posted against the entryway.

BETHANY Cooking gives me a sense of normalcy.

She checks another cupboards, withdraws a glass jar of brown sugar.

BETHANY You have any fresh red peppers?

ALBERT Try the bottom right bin in the fridge. Bethany opens the refrigerator, finds a rotted bag of peppers.

BETHANY

Eww. No go on the peppers.

She returns to the stovetop, mixes the pots once more then crosses to the countertop, slices up a French roll.

BETHANY

We can make do without it. You wanna give me a hand here?

She points to butter and a bowl of seasoning laid by the French roll slices now on baking sheet.

Albert picks up a butter knife, spreads butter and seasoning on the slices of bread.

ALBERT

Bout what I said earlier, you give it some thought?

EXT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Streetlights press a shadow against the steps. It climbs up, stops at the door. A hand stretches to the doorbell.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

BETHANY Yeah a little.

She pauses as the doorbell rings.

SARA (O.S) I'll get it.

EXT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Locks pop, the door opens. Sara stares at Perry standing across from her.

PERRY

Hello.

SARA Hi, can I help you? PERRY No but Bethany can.

Sara perks her brow.

SARA What's your business with her?

PERRY Personal. She's my wife.

SARA Hmmph, yeah, you should go. Goodnight.

She steps back, continues to shut the door.

Perry wedges his foot in the door.

PERRY I just came by to give her something.

Sara pulls the door open, snarls.

SARA Look, wife beater, I'm a licensed boxer. My hands are weapons. You sure you wanna go this route?

She pops her knuckles.

PERRY Easy now I just came to give her this.

He opens is jacket, a letter sticks out form the inside pocket, he withdraws it.

Bethany appears behind Sara. She walks to the door.

BETHANY

Sara's who's...

She gasps as her eyes fall upon Perry.

PERRY Beth, you're here. Good I got a something for you.

He extends his hand toward Bethany. Her lips quiver.

Sara snatches it from his hand and pushes him back in one swoop.

SARA Thanks, buh bye.

She slams the door shut.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - NIGHT

Sara hands Bethany the letter, she opens it. Bethany's mouth falls agape.

SARA

What is it?

BETHANY Divorce paper. He wants the kids.

SARA What are you gonna do?

Bethany crumples the paper.

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - DAY

Bethany dolled up in fashionable professional clothes, adjusts herself in a mirror. She crosses the room, picks up a folder.

INT. ALBERT'S CAMARO - DAY

Parked outside a large commercial building, she gathers her notebook, peers inside. Copies of her resume line the inside fold.

INT. COMMERCIAL BUILDING - DAY

At an oak desk in a modest sized office Mr. Le Beau (50's) gray haired, wizened features, glances up from a sheet of paper in his hand.

MR. LE BEAU Mrs. Linden, what makes you a good fit for our company?

BETHANY Let's see, I grasp new skills quickly and I'm self-motivated.

MR. LE BEAU Says here in you majored in kinesiology and health education.

BETHANY Yes, sir.

MR. LE BEAU Do you have any office support experience?

BETHANY Not exactly, no, but it won't take long to get me up to speed.

MR. LE BEAU We're looking for someone more well-rounded with experience for this particular position. If you'd like I could put you up for an internship. It's unpaid but it'll help you.

BETHANY That's really not necessary, Mr. Le Beau.

Mr. Le Beau rises from his chair, offers his hand.

MR. LE BEAU I'm sorry to disappoint but I do wish you the best of luck out there.

Bethany shakes his hand.

BETHANY

She collects her purse and folder, continues out the door. Once she's a few paces down she sighs.

MONTAGE

A stiff, pale man with thick glasses shakes his head as he hands back Bethany's resume. Keller Pharmaceuticals title his desk.

Amid a glass office at a gym a gargantuan muscular man shakes his head as he hands back Bethany's resume.

Flowers and vines adorn a botanical style office. A spritely woman with long dreaded hair shakes her head as she hands back Bethany's resume.

Bethany stands opposite of white coated woman in white tennis shoes as an elderly man is wheeled passed them. The woman shakes her head as she hands the resume back.

END MONTAGE

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - BETHANY'S ROOM - DAY

Bethany lies with her face planted in the bed. Her papers spew out from her folder lain on the floor. Soft sobs fill the room.

Sara peaks her head in, hears Bethany's sniffled sobbing then raps on the door.

SARA Hey, you doing anything right now?

Bethany lefts her head, wipes runny mascara from her face. She notices Sara in a hoodie and stretch pants.

Sara jogs in place.

SARA C'mon it'll clear your head.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Trees full of gold and amber leaves dot either side of a

69

pathway.

Bethany and Sara jog along the blacktop shoulder to shoulder.

BETHANY You should have seen the pitying look they gave me.

Sara, gazing ahead, turns to Bethany.

SARA You say something? Kidding. We came out here to forget about that, right?

BETHANY

Yeah but…

SARA

You're a fighter. You'll be alright.

She shoots Bethany a smile.

SARA

There's a dirt path up here that cuts through the woods.

She picks up her pace, veers right onto a dirt path through thick foliage.

BETHANY

Wait up.

Bethany tails close behind.

Thin low lying tree limbs and vines slap against her face as she presses uphill through the woods.

> SARA You gotta move faster if you wanna keep up.

Sara reaches the top of the hill and stares back a moment at Bethany just before she darts down the other side. Careful when you get to the top. It's pretty steep on the other side.

Bethany pauses atop the hill a moment. She watches as Sara nimbly tread around rocks, brush and fallen timber.

BETHANY

(muttering) She's unreal.

She takes after Sara. The mushy dirt squishes beneath her feet. A tree root protruding from the mud nearly trips her up.

Bethany finally comes within a few feet of Sara.

SARA Race ya down to the road below, slowpoke.

BETHANY I don't think that's a good idea. The ground's kinda slick.

SARA

Ready? Go!

Sara whisks through the shrubbery and fallen burnt orange leaves. She sidesteps around a tree and gingerly hops over fallen branch.

She another step and the ground compresses. As she unwittingly pulls her foot forward she snags it on a root.

Her ankle takes an awkward twist and Sara tumbles to the ground, rolling a few feet before coming to a stop. She wails out she holds her lower legs.

Bethany drops down to her side, looks Sara's ankle over. Swelling has already started on it.

> BETHANY Looks like a sprain. Try not to move it.

She withdraws a mobile phone from her jacket, dials a

number.

BETHANY Albert, meet me at Ridgewood Park. Sara's hurt.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Sara lies in bed with her left leg elevated.

Bethany enters the room with Albert in tow.

ALBERT (nears Sara) How'd it happen?

SARA The ground was looser than I thought.

ALBERT This couldn't have happened at a worser time.

SARA Maybe Jeremiah could get the fight pushed back.

BETHANY What fight?

SARA I have a fight scheduled two months from now. Had a fight anyway.

BETHANY I'm so sorry, Sara.

ALBERT (to Bethany) Sara can't fight but...

A toothy grin stretches across his face.

Bethany looks at him queerly with her brow arching up.

BETHANY

ALBERT

Sara can't fight but supposing they let us switch the fighter maybe you can.

BETHANY

I can't. I've never been in the ring like that before.

SARA

Bethany, no one's ever forced me into the ropes like you did. With a little training I know you can win.

ALBERT

You're more capable than you think, Bethany.

BETHANY What makes you so sure?

ALBERT

It's in your genes. You're a natural just like your father.

BETHANY

Albert, I was adopted. I never knew my biological father and my dad wasn't much of a fighter.

ALBERT

I know but I did some digging. My friend you remind me so much of was Sonny Redding.

BETHANY

What were you doing investigating me?

ALBERT

Here me out. The moment I laid eyes on you and saw what you could do I knew there was something more to you. It had to be more than coincidence.

BETHANY This is absurd. This is crazy.

ALBERT

Did your adoptive parents ever tell you who your biological parents were? Weren't you ever curious about them?

BETHANY It was a closed adoption and no my parents never talked about them.

Albert slides a picture out form his pants pocket, shows it to Bethany.

ALBERT

Your birth father was exactly like you: moral, just and compassionate. He always put his family and friends before him.

Bethany stares at the photo.

SUPER ON PHOTO:

A blond haired, brown eyed man, remarkably resembling Bethany, smiles up from the picture.

END SUPER:

She hands the photo to Sara's outstretched hands.

SARA You two do look alike.

BETHANY

If he was all of those things why didn't he ever claim me?

ALBERT

Sonny and your mother met when he was separated from his wife. He never knew she was pregnant with you until after your adoption.

Bethany paces with her hands rubbing her temple.

BETHANY

Where is he now?

ALBERT

He died of heart disease five years ago. Before his death I promised if I ever came across you I'd show you the same kindness he gave me.

Bethany sits on the bed beside Sara.

ALBERT If Sonny saw all you did these last few weeks he'd share the same faith I have in you.

Bethany stares at Albert and Sara a moment.

BETHANY You guys really think I can win?

SARA

Girl, as hard as you hit I know you can. Besides it beats pushing pen to paper all day.

BETHANY When do we start?

INT. ALBERT'S GYM - DAY

Every fighter inside busies himself strength training or hitting various workout bags. A symphony of grunts and thumps resonate melodiously through the air.

In one of the two sparring rings Bethany, fitted with protective head gear and gloves, shuffles her feet as she bobs and weaves Albert's advances.

ALBERT That's it, move. Stay on your Attached to his hands are coaching mitts. He swings a left hook. Bethany weaves back and to the right. She grunts hard as she throws a quick jab to Albert's right mitt.

ALBERT

Good.

toes.

Bethany smiles appreciatively. She relaxes for an instant.

Albert thrusts a right jab; Bethany blocks it. He throws a straight left; Bethany blocks it, then he follows with another left hook.

Bethany stalls on her heels, takes a hit on the cheek and falls to the canvas. She glares up at Albert while he helps her to her feet.

ALBERT

Don't get flatfooted less you wanna get knocked on your ass.

BETHANY

I'll keep that in mind.

Bethany adjusts here mouthpiece and head gear; bounces lightly on her toes.

ALBERT Now alternate punches between the head and body with a jab, straight, bolo, and then a hook.

He demonstrates half-speed starting with a right jab and ending with a left hook.

BETHANY

Got it.

They circle each other taking small sidesteps.

Bethany bats at Albert with a couple of jabs then follows with the jab, straight, bolo and hook combo.

Albert winces after Bethany lands the left hook on his left coaching mitt.

ALBERT Again. Faster this time.

Bethany opens with a quick left, right jab combination and transitions seamlessly into the next combination.

Albert staggers back as he barely manages to get his mitts up fast enough for Bethany to hit.

Bethany tags another left hook and straight right punch onto the original combination and catches Albert off guard.

A loud thud booms throughout the gym as Albert stumbles backward to the ropes.

Albert pauses leaning on the ropes, awes at Bethany.

BETHANY

(grinning) Don't get flatfooted coach.

ALBERT Humph, remind me not to take it easy on you again.

LUCIAN (O.S) She's a natural, Albert.

A few feet from the ring, just beyond the ropes Albert leans against, stands Lucian. He smirks at Bethany.

ALBERT

Lucian--

He steps out the ring and pulls off his couching mitts, pats Lucian's shoulder.

ALBERT

Yeah, she is. Just like her old man. This is Bethany.

Lucian waves at Bethany. She takes off her head gear and nods at him.

LUCIAN Who's her old man?

ALBERT Sonny, Sonny Redding.

LUCIAN I didn't know he had a daughter.

ALBERT Neither did he until just before he died.

LUCIAN

After seeing her in the ring with Sara it all makes sense now. She's got Sonny's power.

ALBERT

Like you said, she's a natural. But she's got Sonny's heart too.

LUCIAN Really. She's going to be a tough one.

BETHANY

Hey, you guys aren't talking about me like I'm not even here are you?

LUCIAN

I was just admiring your moves is all. Mind if I give you a few pointers?

He turns to Albert who gives a go ahead nod. Lucian climbs into the ring.

LUCIAN I'm Lucian by the way.

BETHANY Bethany. So you a friend of Albert's? LUCIAN I'm just a fighter like you. Albert helped me realize what I had left worth fighting for.

BETHANY And what was that?

LUCIAN

Myself and son. After my wife divorced me all I had left was him and this place.

He takes off his hoodie, claps his hands twice.

LUCIAN

Come on. Put your guard up.

Bethany pauses a moment, shares a look with Lucian. She rolls her shoulders, shakes her arms out, and then puts her hands up.

Lucian looks Bethany's stance over. He grabs her wrists, lightly tugs. Bethany stumbles forward a step.

LUCIAN

Spread your feet apart a little more.

Bethany slides her right foot out an inch. Lucian reaches down, pulls her left foot up and out an inch. He then stands back from her with his hands up, palms outward.

LUCIAN Perfect. Now try and hit me.

BETHANY You don't any gloves on.

LUCIAN Don't need any. You're on the offensive, not me.

ALBERT Knock pretty boy's teeth in, Bethany.

Bethany sighs, bounces on her toes. Lucian bounces

lightly as well.

Bethany lurches leading with double jab.

Lucian hops left of the first jab, pushes the second away.

Bethany throws another jab, follows with a quick straight and a strong hook.

Lucian bats the jab away dodges the straight and blocks the hook with his palm.

BETHANY

You're pretty quick.

LUCIAN

And you're pretty strong.

He shakes his hand out, puts his guards back up with palms out.

LUCIAN

Alright, don't stop now. You didn't land a hit yet. Gimme all you got.

He grins as he waves her over.

Bethany charges in with a strong right straight; Lucian hops back. Bethany continues with a left hook.

Lucian knocks her fist away; Bethany follows with a right hook. Lucian absorbs the blow in his palm.

Bethany smirks and continues with a left cross.

Lucian spins to dodge her punch.

Bethany whips around throws a jab, which Lucian dodges, and then fakes a second to the body.

Lucian reacts on it stretching his hand out and leaving his side open.

Bethany throws a left hook but Lucian drops his elbow down and wraps her arm, pulls her in close.

BETHANY

Got cha.

ALBERT

Hey, this ain't a ballroom. If you wanna dance, leave. If you gon train, break it up.

Lucian lets loose Bethany's arm, they step back from each other.

LUCIAN I think my lessons over. You did good.

BETHANY

Thanks.

She walks to the ropes, takes off her gloves. Albert hands her a water bottle.

LUCIAN That's some cut above your eye. Sara give it to you?

BETHANY No and it's nothing.

LUCIAN You sure? I'm pretty good at patching cuts up.

ALBERT You offering to be her cut man, Lucian?

LUCIAN Not exactly but my services are available.

ALBERT Okay, smartass. You're in.

An alarms rings from a duffle bag near the ring. Bethany climbs down, opens the back, and pulls out a phone. She checks the alarm time then the actual time.

BETHANY

(shouting) Albert, I'm going to head out. I have to get my kids.

ALBERT

Alright, call me if you need anything.

BETHANY

Okay.

EXT. HORVATH HOUSE - DAY

The door to a suburban style home opens. Bethany steps onto the porch with Jessica in her arms.

BETHANY

Thank you so much for babysitting, Cassandra.

Also at the door is Cassandra Horvath (35) deep auburn hair, youthful and modest look.

CASSANDRA

Think nothing of it. She was a saint. You can bring her by anytime.

BETHANY You sure you don't mind.

CASSANDRA Sure, Maxine and Megan love playing with her.

MAXINE and MEGAN Bye, Mrs. Linden.

Twin girls (4) cute and red haired liked like Cassandra run to the door and hug Cassandra's legs.

BETHANY By girls, see you tomorrow.

JESSICA

Bye.

EXT. CROCKETT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Bethany waits outside the school in Albert's black Camaro. Jessica fiddles with a stuffed elephant in her booster chair.

At the top of the school a large clock strikes 3:00 and final bell rings. Moments later kids pour out from the building, running, laughing and bickering amongst each other.

Principal Thompson looks out over the kids as some walk home in groups while other approach awaiting parents parked nearby. She occasionally separates rough-housers who get too physical with each other.

Fredrick and Alex appear exiting out from a side door of the school. Alex holds a cupcake in his hand.

ALEX I'm just saying cream filling makes everything better. It's the bacon of dessert.

FREDRICK It's liquid sugar.

ALEX It's not all sugar. Some of it is corn syrup. (holds up cupcake) More foods need cream filling like this cupcake.

FREDRICK If you say so, Alex. I'm just not that big into sweets.

Alex shrugs then eats the cupcake in two big bites.

Fredrick scopes all the parked cars in front of the school, spots the black Camaro.

FREDRICK C'mon, I see my mom over there.

82

ALEX

Fredrick starts toward the Camaro. He bumps into two bigger kids in his haste to the car.

SIXTH GRADER #1 What's your problem kid?

He stares at Fredrick a moment, lip upturned and brow frowned.

FREDRICK

Oh, sorry.

CAMARO

Bethany steps out the car, leans over the hood, waves down the boys.

BETHANY

Freddy!

SCHOOL

The two older kids whip around and marvel at Bethany who, still wearing workout clothes and an unzipped hoodie revealing her sports bra, glistens slightly.

The first sixth grader returns his gaze to Fredrick, his frown now softened to a grin.

CAMARO

Bethany sees the bigger kid in front of Fredrick make a lewd gesture with hands on his chest then vigorously shakes his head.

SCHOOL

Fredrick's eye twitches as he flexes his hands open and shut. Both of the bigger kids laugh hardily. Sixth Grader #1 musses up Fredrick's hair and shoves him.

Faster than Fredrick stutter-steps backward, he punches the kid who shoved him square on the chin.

Sixth Grader #2 sneaks a punch in on Fredrick's

blindside, levels him to the ground. He then kicks Fredrick hard in the gut.

ALEX

Hey!

He rushes the stocky older boy head first; the outstretched leg of Sixth Grader #1 trips him up.

Sixth Grader #2 lifts Alex, pins his arms back, and then thrusts his knee into his back.

SIXTH GRADER #2 What do ya think you're doing, piggy.

Sixth Grader #1 kneels on Fredrick's chest, cups his chin in his hand.

SIXTH GRADER #1 I was only kidding, runt.

He punches down. Fredrick's head bounces on the grass. He lifts Fredrick's head again.

SIXTH GRADER #1 But you had to go and get serious.

Fredrick swings at the lanky sixth grader, misses.

Sixth Grader #1 shoves Fredrick's face to the ground, rubs it against the dirt and grass.

The burly sixth grader cackles while wrenching Alex's arms back. Suddenly a feminine hand yanks the burly kids arm, pulling him away from Alex.

The lanky sixth grader rears his arm back, holds Fredrick's dirty face steady.

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON Are you trying to get suspended!?

She snatches the lanky kid up to his feet.

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON

I could expel you for beating on a boy half your size. Now leave 'em alone.

Fredrick spits out dirt as he strains upright, dusts himself off.

Bethany darts across the street and front lawn; softly places her hands on Fredrick's shoulders.

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON Why am not surprised to see you fighting again, Mr. Linden?

BETHANY Regina, you saw...

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON I know these two boys instigated the situation, but Fredrick still needs to control his temper.

She looks over the two sixth graders firmly grasped within her clutches.

PRINCIPAL THOMPSON As for you two you'd better get ready to explain your suspension to your parents.

She starts toward the building dragging the older kids with her.

SIXTH GRADER #1 What?! That little runt hit me first.

Principal Thompson pauses.

PRINCIPAL THOMSPON (to Fredrick) Starting tomorrow you'll report to the school counselor for a week to resolve your temper issue... This is your last warning, Fredrick. INT. ALBERT'S HOUSE - FREDRICK'S ROOM - DAY

Fredrick punches a pillow against a wall repeatedly. He grunts as he slings it across the room against the door, it creaks open.

A hand pushes the door open.

Sara hobbles in on her crutches. She looks down at the pillow then to Fredrick.

SARA Feathers aren't much of a challenge.

Fredrick faces the door, Sara awes at his blackened eye.

SARA You really are a scrappy one.

Fredrick starts out the room. Sara intercepts him.

SARA Whoa, whoa, rewind. What's eating you?

Fredrick points to his eye.

FREDRICK This wouldn't have happened if Albert taught me a move or two.

SARA My dad's got his hands full but maybe I can help.

Fredrick stares at the crutches.

FREDRICK You're gimp, what can you show me?

Sara hobbles over to Fredrick, lays her crutches against the wall.

SARA Put your hands up. Fredrick meekly puts his fists up.

SARA No, open your palms. I don't need both feet to show you this.

Fredrick opens his palms

Sara pauses a moment in a relaxed stance and then launches three quick punches that push Fredrick against the wall.

He pants while shaking his hands out fervently.

FREDRICK

How'd you do that?

Sara smirks, grabs a crutch and leans on it. She motions Fredrick over with a finger.

SARA You gotta relax. Never fight angry. You lose your cool, you lose the fight.

FREDRICK Okay but what was that you hit me with?

Sara shadows behind Fredrick, grabs hold of his wrists. She fake pumps his right hand, double straights with his left, and throws a hook with his right.

SARA

You can't do this move with the control and speed necessary if you're angry... so relax.

Fredrick blushes as Sara's bosom brushes against his back.

SARA

I get why you're so tense, but you can't let what goes on between your mom and dad affect you. A door opens and shuts in the background. Footsteps pitter-patter nearer.

BETHANY (O.S)

Sara!

Bethany leans into the room, perks her brow upon seeing Fredrick and Sara pressed against each other.

BETHANY

Me and Albert are going to see Jeremiah about the fight. Something new came up. You coming with us?

SARA Yeah, one second.

She picks up her other crutch.

INT. ALBERT'S GYM - OFFICE - NIGHT

Jeremiah perches atop Albert's desk. Albert, Bethany, and Sara sit around him.

JEREMIAH Here's da deal. We gotta move the fight up.

ALBERT How much sooner are we talking?

JEREMIAH Three weeks, Big Al.

ALBERT That's not enough time. We still gotta train her.

JEREMIAH

Hey, either we move the fight up or there's no fight. I think if new girl can hold her own against Sara, she can do the same against the numba one contender.

SARA

Jeremiah, you and I both know Jacquelyn is a whole different animal. She has no conscience and feels no remorse in the ring.

BETHANY

You mean she's some sort of freak of nature?

JEREMIAH

(laughing) She's got alotta issues and pent up anger. Like too many girls in dis business she come up from unfortunate circumstances.

ALBERT

Molested by a junkie stepdad, beat by her husband and every guy before him; "unfortunate circumstances" is putting it lightly.

JEREMIAH

I didn't say this was the fairest of fights, but all things considered this is the best chance you have at making a name for yourself. Think about it.

SARA

He's right. Besides, you can use her anger against her. Once you get her flustered, carpe diem.

BETHANY

Carpe diem?

SARA

Carpe diem. Seize the day or better yet any opening in her defense.

JEREMIAH

So the fights moved up to four weeks from now instead of seven. Everyone copasetic?

ALBERT

What do we get in exchange for this agreement? My fighter's taking all the risk.

JEREMIAH

Hmmph. I knew that was coming and the answer's simple. Bethany gets a bigger purse, 45% instead of 30%. That's \$60,000 more.

Bethany eye dilate, her jaw swings agape.

ALBERT

One hundred and eighty thousand? We can work with that.

INT. ALBERT'S GYM - FILM ROOM - DAY

Lucian rewinds footage of Jacquelyn K.O'ing a woman.

BETHANY

We watched this tape ten times. How much longer do we have to watch the same knockout? What am I looking for?

LUCIAN This woman has a similar charge first style to you. We keep watching until we see an opening.

SUPER ON TV:

Jacquelyn attacks her opponent with a barrage of right hooks followed by two power straights as the opponent stumbles. The opponent freezes stunned on her feet and falls over like a brick hit by a wrecking ball.

END SUPER:

LUCIAN Right there she drops her guard.

BETHANY

Where?

LUCIAN Every time she throws that double hook, double straight.

Lucian rewinds the tape again.

LUCIAN She's tense the whole time then relaxes for an instant, dropping her hands before she unloads.

BETHANY I see it. So how do I counter?

LUCIAN You have to be quicker on defense.

He walks over to a large box on the side of the room, takes out a double ended bag, and hooks it to the ceiling and floor.

LUCIAN Pick up your gloves and come here.

He positions Bethany beside him armslength from the double ended bag.

LUCIAN This bag will help sharpen your reflexes so you can counter faster.

He squares his shoulders, gives the bag a double jab, twists right shielding his head tight, and then throws a right cross.

LUCIAN

Pretend the bag bouncing back is Jacquelyn dropping her guard; when she opens to throw a double straight slip in a hard jab.

He jabs at the doubled ended bag again.

LUCIAN She's going to fight through it. So you shield your face and twist right. Her punch will roll off of you.

He twists again throws a right cross.

LUCIAN Once she's off balance hit her with a right cross. Try it.

Bethany jabs once at the bag. It sways wildly. She jabs three more times, but misses.

BETHANY I'm never going to hit this like you did.

LUCIAN

Yes you can and you will. Remember what you're fighting for.

Bethany closes her eyes, inhales deeply and exhales slowly as she opens her eyes. She thrusts her fist through the air and hits nothing.

LUCIAN

Again.

Once more Bethany exhales slowly. In an instant her fist cut through the air like two red darts. Her right hand pops the bag first, a split second later, so does her left. She then twists right tucking her elbows in tight, and follows with a right cross on the bag.

LUCIAN

Yes!

He claps his hands excitedly.

Bethany grins blushingly.

LUCIAN I think we can move on now.

A loud gurgling grumble catches his attention.

BETHANY Sorry, I didn't eat anything since this morning.

LUCIAN Don't be. You should get some food in you.

BETHANY I better get home then. Sara's watching my kids and they can be a handful.

LUCIAN You like quesadillas? I know this place a few blocks up.

Bethany tosses her gloves in her duffle bag, tosses it on her shoulder.

BETHANY

I shouldn't. Sara and Albert are probably worrying why I'm not home yet.

LUCIAN Treats on me, won't take long.

He heads out the room, Bethany follows behind warily.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The streets are jammed with evening rush hour traffic. Bethany and Lucian walk along the sidewalk, each with a steaming hot quesadilla in hand. A small shop with three mariachis painted on its face sits in the background.

Bethany folds back the wrapping around her quesadilla, deeply inhales its aroma. She unzips her sweatshirt, wind

She bites into her food, pauses mid-step and locks eyes with Lucian.

LUCIAN

I know.

BETHANY (swallows) It's like biting into a gold cloud exploding with rainbows.

LUCIAN

I know.

He casually bites into his quesadilla, savors it.

BETHANY This, this, this is -

LUCIAN --Amazing. I came across Three Mariachis last year. It's the only place I ever get quesadilla from now.

They each take a bite of their food, sighing as they savor each mouthful.

Opposite of them two men in stylish urban dress smoking cigarettes peer at Bethany from a stoop.

A gust of wind blows Bethany's sweatshirt open once more revealing her short purple sports tops and midriff. Her abs flex with each step she takes.

The two stoopers make a b-line toward Bethany. They ravish her with their gaze as block her path.

LUCIAN

Excuse us fellas.

The stoopers continue to look Bethany over as they take slow drags of their cigarettes.

STOOPER #1 No, excuse us. They step aside letting Bethany and Lucian pass.

Stooper #1 feels up Bethany from behind as she walks past.

She turns toward him glaring.

BETHANY What the hell's your problem?

STOOPER #1 My bad, shawty.

BETHANY Grab my ass again --

STOOPER #1

--Okay.

He reaches around Bethany. As he leans in to grab her, she hits him with a right hook.

Stooper #1 crumples to the floor. Stooper #2 helps him to his feet.

Lucian steps between Bethany and the stoopers.

Stooper #1 spits blood out from his busted lip.

LUCIAN If you think she hits hard you don't wanna try me.

STOOPER #2 Be easy, bruh. We ain't mean no disrespect.

He scrapes his friend up and scuttle out of sight.

Lucian lays a comforting hand on Bethany's shoulder.

LUCIAN

You okay?

BETHANY Yeah, just a little upset. Lucian examines her hand. Her knuckles are bright pink and slightly swollen.

LUCIAN We need to get you some ice.

EXT. LUCIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bethany and Lucian enter a tall, brown bricked apartment complex. An iron gate with fleur-de-lis tips separates it from the dozen other apartment complexes lining the streets.

INT. LUCIAN APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A cold compress flops onto a counter top. A door shuts in the background; soon after, a hand grabs the compress.

Lucian comes into view. He continues to - -

DINING ROOM

Bethany waits at a table.

LUCIAN

Hold your hand out.

Bethany extends her hands. Lucian examines her knuckles, presses the compress on her hand and then locks eyes with her.

LUCIAN Don't look too bad. You sure you alright?

Bethany withdraws her hand, holds the compress herself.

BETHANY I'm fine. You should see the other guy.

LUCIAN Yeah, I'm sorry about tonight.

BETHANY I think those guys are sorrier than you. Lucian laughs subtly.

A rapping echoes from the front door.

Lucian shoots Bethany a nonplus gaze.

LUCIAN Give me a second.

He continues to the door, opens it.

MARTA (25) a tall, slender woman with long flowing dark hair barges in. DIEGO (5) a small hazel eyed boy follows in tow.

Marta hands Lucian a small suitcase.

MARTA Here's all Diego's things for a weekend with his papí.

DIEGO

Papí!

He hugs Lucian's leg. Lucian scoops Diego up in his other arm.

LUCIAN Holá, míjo! You're getting so big.

Marta stares briefly at Bethany.

MARTA

Who's that?

Lucian glances over his shoulder at Bethany, sets Diego down, and kneels in front of him.

LUCIAN

Go put your jacket in your room, míjo. When you come back I'll get you a big bowl of hélado. Esta bíen?

DIEGO

Sí, papí.

Lucian tickles Diego's sides, whose cherub-like giggle fills the room.

LUCIAN

Vas rapído.

Diego takes off, makes a quick left at the first door in the hallway.

Lucian, formerly all smiles, sets his focus to Marta.

LUCIAN

(gestures to Bethany) Bethany. She's a friend.

MARTA

Uh huh. Well you and your "friend" keep it PG around our son.

LUCIAN Marta, don't worry about my personal life. I'd never do anything disrespectful in front of Diego.

MARTA And let's keep it that way. I'll be back for him Monday.

She starts out the door, pauses.

MARTA

You know, you really shouldn't give him ice cream this late. He'll never get to sleep.

LUCIAN

Goodbye, Marta.

He shoos Marta out, shuts the door.

Diego comes running out of his room jumping up and down.

DIEGO Papí, can I have my ice cream now? LUCIAN Whoa calm down, míjo. I'll get you some in a second.

Bethany approaches Lucian and Diego.

LUCIAN I'm sorry about Marta. She's cold toward any woman I bring around Diego.

Diego squares his shoulder, playfully punches Lucian. Lucian leans over and puts his hands up.

> LUCIAN Show me what you got, Diego.

Diego gleefully punches Lucian's hands.

Bethany smiles at their playfulness.

BETHANY It's alright. I understand where she's coming from.

LUCIAN That's no excuse not to be civil. You want to stay a while and have ice cream too?

BETHANY Not tonight. I better get home to my little ones.

> LUCIAN (to Diego)

Take a break, míjo. You did good.

He ruffles Diego's hair and then brings himself upright, pulling his son close to his side.

LUCIAN (to Bethany) "Not tonight" huh? I'll take that as a raincheck. She starts opens the door starts down the hall. Lucian grabs her wrist.

LUCIAN

Wait.

He pulls Bethany close, kisses her soft and sweetly.

Their lips part and Bethany gasps, she blushes.

LUCIAN Have a goodnight.

Bethany nods feverishly, too nonplus to talk. She continues down the hall smiling.

EXT. LUCIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Across the street in a parked black BMW Perry watches Bethany exit Lucian's apartment building. She stops and stares at the night sky. Her eyes twinkle like the stars.

Bethany exhales an elated sigh, continues through the iron gate, and down the sidewalk.

Perry gnaws on his knuckle as he starts his car, peels out in the opposite direction of Bethany.

INT. ALBERT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Bethany sits on the hardwood floor coloring with Jessica.

Fredrick reads a book on the couch.

A children's show plays on the television across from Bethany and Jessica. The muppet character holds up a cat drawing.

Bethany looks over at Jessica's picture. It nearly matches the one on TV.

BETHANY Good job, Jess. She hugs Jessica and kisses her forehead. The toddler smiles and giggles.

Fredrick glances at his wristwatch.

FREDRICK Mom, it's 2 o'clock.

BETHANY You sure you don't want to come with me? We can hangout like before... all this.

FREDRICK

I'll pass.

BETHANY Oh… well uh Sara will be home in a few. Keep an eye on Jess until then.

She gathers her purse, kisses Jessica once more, and then starts for the door.

FREDRICK Hey, mom, play ya in Pac-Man when you get back?

Bethany shares a smile with him.

BETHANY You got it, Freddie. Be ready lose to your old lady.

FREDRICK

You can try.

INT. JENSON AND GOLD ATTORNEYS - DAY

VERONICA JENSON (50's) ashen haired, portly and imposing for her short stature, lays a manila folder on her desk and seats herself.

VERONICA

Mrs. Linden, you have chance at full custody of your children but your husband has more of what the court's looking for.

BETHANY

What about a safe, nurturing environment and don't trust Perry around them anymore. Not with his new temper.

VERONICA

His potential danger to the children is why you have a chance. Was he ever temperamental before you two fought?

BETHANY

He's always been adamant about his opinions. At first I figured it was because he wanted the best for us.

VERONICA

Has he ever physically harmed the children?

BETHANY

Outside the incident when I left him, no, but he's changed. I think he'd hurt them to hurt me.

VERONICA

Without a history of violence toward them it's likely the court will regard that one incident as one of passion.

BETHANY

What about what's in the kids' best interest?

VERONICA

Succeeding a divorce the best interest is a situation where both parents have joint custody.

She flips through her manila folder.

VERONICA How did you go from health education into boxing?

BETHANY I kind of fell into it.

VERONICA You never wrote your income.

You are paid to fight right?

BETHANY Technically I haven't fought anyone yet but I have a big purse coming in my first fight.

VERONICA

When?

BETHANY Four weeks from now.

VERONICA I'll get your case pushed back as close to your fight to make a stronger case for you.

BETHANY You can do that?

Veronica closes the manila file, takes off her glasses.

VERONICA Mrs. Linden, this is Jenson and Gold. We're action you can believe in.

Bethany rises and shakes Veronica's hand.

BETHANY Thank you, Ms. Jenson. You have no idea how much this means to me.

Veronica gestures to a picture of teenage girl in high school graduation cap and gown on her desk.

VERONICA

I think I do. I wouldn't be a divorce lawyer if it weren't for my daughter--

She shows Bethany to the door.

VERONICA --You focus on your fight. I'll worry about the case.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Bethany crosses the street from her attorney's building. She takes her phone from her purse and dials in a number. Sara's voicemail answers on the other end.

> BETHANY Sara, I'm leaving and Jenson and Gold right now. My attorney's pretty confident about my case

She unwittingly bumps into someone, fumbles her phone but manages to catch it.

BETHANY --Sorry. You and the kids get dressed. We should go out and...

PERRY O.S

Beth?

Bethany looks up to find Perry and Nichole before her.

NICHOLE I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bump you so hard.

BETHANY It's okay. I wasn't watching where I was going.

NICHOLE

You sure?

She touches Bethany shoulder but is shrugged off. Perry pulls Nichole back.

(to Nichole)
Why don't you go start the car?
I'll be there in a minute.

He drops a set of keys in Nichole's hand, who then continues to a parking lot a few paces away. She hops in a cerulean blue car and starts it up.

> BETHANY So you and Nichole.

PERRY We decided to go for a late lunch. You, you look good.

He grabs Bethany's bicep. She twists away.

PERRY Certainly stronger too.

BETHANY One of the benefits to boxing.

She holds her phone close. The voicemail continues recording.

PERRY

You're 32-years-old. How long do you think you can keep up this ridiculous stunt?

BETHANY I'll do whatever I have to for Fredrick and Jessica.

PERRY As much as I miss those two I have a proposition for you.

He steps closer to Bethany. She watches him cautiously.

BETHANY Keep it. We don't need your help.

Perry gingerly pushes Bethany's hair from her face. She disdainfully glares at him.

PERRY

But you do. When this boxing stint falls flat, and it will, you'll need someone to take care of you and the kids.

BETHANY

It's too late, Perry. You broke up our family when you hand delivered me divorce papers.

PERRY You broke up this family when you walked out on me!

He clears his throat, glances left and right to notice people staring at him and Bethany.

BETHANY You can't control me anymore.

Bethany pulls away from Perry. He holds her steady.

PERRY

I'll drop the divorce. You can even be the primary guardian. All you have to do is quit boxing. We both know I'll win custody if we go down this road and you'll never see the kids again.

Bethany tears away from Perry. Nonplused she shakes her head while back stepping.

Perry grits his teeth as Bethany vanishes amidst the crowded sidewalk.

INT. ALBERT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sara sets a sandwich on the coffee table, flops on the couch, and lays her crutch beside her.

In the background a door opens and slams shut. Thudding steps grow nearer.

Sara perks up, grabs a crutch and continues to the room

entrance.

SARA

Bethany?

Bethany whisks into the room, her hand on her temple.

SARA What's going on?

Bethany paces back and forth.

BETHANY I bumped into Perry and, and he wants to take my babies.

Sara stretches out her hand, holds Bethany in place.

SARA

Slow down.

BETHANY

I have to clear my mind. I need to go to the gym, hit something.

SARA Bethany! What happened?

Bethany takes a few deep breaths.

BETHANY

I saw my lawyer then started to leave you a voicemail. I bumped into Perry. He said I'll never see my kids again if he gets custody.

SARA He can't do that.

Bethany notices a set of keys in a ceramic dish. She snatches them up.

BETHANY I'm borrowing your car.

She leaves out the room.

SARA Where you going?

BETHANY (O.S) I told you. The gym.

INT. ALBERT'S GYM - DAY

Albert trains Bethany in the ring with sparing mitts.

Bethany hits the right mitt, left mitt, and then ducks as Albert swings his arm overhead. She repeats the pattern several times.

ALBERT

Hit, hit.

He hooks his arm overhead again. Bethany ducks, hits the mitts again.

ALBERT

Now let's switch this up a bit.

Bethany watches sees Albert's lips moving but drowns out his voice as she focuses on only the mitts.

QUICK FLASH:

Perry escorts a sullen Fredrick and tearful Jessica away. While in Perry's arm Jessica reaches out for Bethany.

JESSICA

Mommy!

END QUICK FLASH:

Albert's right arm hooks overhead, Bethany ducks and pops back up. Albert's left mitt hooks in hard, hits Bethany square on the jaw.

Bethany crumples to the canvass. Groggy eyed she sees blurred vision of Fredrick and Jessica outside the ring. She rolls over to her back and as she closes her eyes, all fades to black.

> FREDRICK (V.O) Mom, mom! What's wrong with

her?

ALBERT (V.O) I don't know. Give me some room. Wake up, Bethany.

Two slaps sound in the foreground.

Bethany opens her eyes and all comes to view, fuzzy at first and then sharpening until clear.

Bethany sits up on a bench in the --

LOCKER ROOM

She touches her hand to her head.

Albert, Fredrick, Sara, and Jessica gather near her.

BETHANY

What happened?

ALBERT I kind of knocked you out then you blacked out.

Jessica hugs Bethany. Bethany hugs her back.

JESSICA I scared you got hurt, mommy.

BETHANY Sorry, sweetheart. Mommy's fine now.

She kisses Jessica forehead.

ALBERT What were you thinking out there in the ring?

BETHANY I wasn't thinking.

Sara yanks Bethany's shoulder.

SARA Hey, I'm fine with you blowing off steam, but zone off like that you could hurt yourself.

BETHANY I know. I was just a little stressed.

A BOOM thuds in the background. Everyone turns to see Fredrick panting heavily. He slams his fist into a locker again.

FREDRICK You're not the only stressed one here. You never think how all this affects us!

He points to himself as he rocks from one foot to the other.

Bethany looks up Albert and Sara. They nod to her.

BETHANY

(to Jessica) Go with Sara and Mr. Kern, Jess. Mommy has to talk to Freddy okay.

JESSICA

Okay.

Albert hoists Jessica in his arms.

ALBERT Every things alright. Let's get you some candy.

JESSICA

I want chocolate.

Albert walks out the locker with Jessica in arms.

Sara touches Bethany's shoulder then continues out the door.

BETHANY

Come here, Freddy.

Fredrick sits beside Bethany.

When you say "us" you mean you and Jess, right?

FREDRICK

I get that you and dad have problems. I knew that for a while now, but you brush it off like nothing's different.

Bethany wraps an arm around Fredrick's shoulder.

BETHANY Nothing's different as long as I have you and your sister.

FREDRICK Then why do you push us away and distance yourself?

> BETHANY I started doubting this fight and got so caught up in the fear of losing you and Jessica. I, I'm sorry, Freddy.

Tears streak down Fredrick's cheeks.

FREDRICK You know why I'm always getting into fights, mom?

Bethany shakes her head.

FREDRICK

I love you more than anything in the world and I'll be damned if I let assholes mock you and talk crap about you.

He hugs Bethany.

FREDRICK I won't let anyone disrespect you. Not even dad.

Bethany strokes her hand through Fredrick's hair.

You don't have to fight any more, Freddy. This is my fight. I'll win it for us because you and Jess are my world.

MONTAGE:

- Transparently in the background days are 'X' on a calendar.
- Bethany drips sweat as she furiously throws a sequence of punches at a heavy bag. She then moves onto a double ended bag.
- Albert times Bethany as she jumps rope. His stopwatch reads "15 minutes and 22 seconds".
- In the sparing ring Lucian shows Bethany lock her opponent in a hold and how to break them. They nearly kiss when Bethany holds onto Lucian.
- Albert and Bethany watch more tape on Jacquelyn. He points out Jacquelyn's weak points and animatedly demonstrates counters.
- The transparent background calendar to the forefront as an 'X' slashed before the day marked "Fight Night". Bethany continues to the couch where Fredrick curls under her arm and Jessica hops on her lap.

END MONTAGE:

INT. ALBERT'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sara looks on from the entryway at Bethany, Fredrick, and Jessica tickling each other and smiles.

The house phone rings from another room.

SARA

I'll get it.

She limps into the kitchen.

Bethany and the kids all sigh after laughing then lean back on the couch.

FREDRICK Mom, you nervous about tomorrow?

Not really.

FREDRICK That woman is big. What if you don't win?

BETHANY Where do you think you get your scrappiness from? It's not your dad.

She musses up Fredrick's hair. He smirks back.

Sarah limps into the room on one crutch and the house phone in the other hand.

SARA It's for you, Bethany.

BETHANY (to Fredrick and Jessica) I'll be back in a second you two.

She takes the phone from Sara, enters the --

KITCHEN

BETHANY

Hello?

VERONICA (V.O) Mrs. Linden, its Veronica Jenson. I have news about your case.

BETHANY Oh hi. What's the word?

Your trial date is set for tomorrow.

BETHANY My fight is tomorrow.

VERONICA (V.O)

If we don't go to trial tomorrow we won't get another date for three weeks. Then there's still no guarantee we'll win.

BETHANY What time is the trial?

VERONICA (V.O) Two o'clock.

BETHANY I can do them both.

VERONICA (V.O)

Pardon?

BETHANY Nothing, I'll be there tomorrow.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - NIGHT

The doors fly open. Bethany rushes down the steps. She approaches the street curb and Sara pulls up in silver Chevy Impala. Bethany hops in.

INT. IMPALA - NIGHT

Bethany smiles jubilantly and hugs Sara.

Sara clears her throat, puts on a straight face.

Bethany exhales slowly, nods, and then she too puts on a straight face.

EXT. BOARDWALK HALL CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

The front of the convention center is alive with activity as patrons wander the light filled Atlantic City Boardwalk.

Bethany and Sara dart enter the center from a side door.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL CONVENTION CENTER - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Albert and Lucian look up as Bethany enters. Lucian jumps up and hugs her.

LUCIAN

How'd it go?

BETHANY Well Sara's taking a seat with the kids right now.

Albert clears his throat.

ALBERT

It's about time you got here.

He picks up a red robe lain on a chair, brings it to Bethany.

ALBERT

We have 20 minutes to make our way to the ring.

Bethany flips the robe over, reads the lettering on the back.

BETHANY

Blond Bomber?

ALBERT It was your father's moniker. Now it's yours.

Bethany runs her fingers along the stitching, tries the robe on.

Albert nods approvingly.

ALBERT Looks good on you.

BETHANY

Thanks.

ALBERT

Nervous?

Bethany runs her fingers along the edge of the robe.

BETHANY What if I lose in the first minute?

Albert lays his hands on her shoulders comfortingly.

ALBERT You trained too hard to think like that. Now get dressed. We got to head to the ring.

BOARDWALK HALL

Guests fill the seats around the ring while the concert hall standings have about half its seating occupancy filled.

RING SIDE

Fredrick sits beside Sara who holds Jessica atop her lap.

FREDRICK I don't see my mom. When is she coming out?

Sara glances at her watch.

SARA

Anytime now.

The lights dim, Blondie's "Rip Her to Shreds" plays over the loud speakers.

ENTRANCE

Bethany, Albert, and Lucian stand at the Hall's entrance.

ALBERT Remember what we worked on.

BETHANY Never lean against the ropes.

They make their way from the top of the entrance to the ring.

RING

Bethany backs into her corner and stares awed into the crowd. Her gaze falls upon Sara and her kids, who wave at her. She smiles back, sighs in relief.

The Blondie song cuts off. It's replaced by the blaring opening riffs of Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Child".

ENTRANCE

JACQUELYN, 27, thick muscular build, dark olive skinned, wavy hair pulled tight in a bun, appears at the top of the hall's entrance with a posse of people. She dons a gold robe, black trunks with white trim, and black boots.

She and her posse continue down to the ring with her in the middle.

RING

Once inside the ring Jacquelyn takes a lap around. She's met with a mix of applause and jeers. During her once around she sizes up Bethany, snorts, and then finally steps into her corner.

She stares Bethany down, makes a cutthroat gesture.

At the center of the ring an announcer in a black tux lifts a microphone to his lips.

ANNOUNCER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to 10 rounds of welterweight boxing. The winner of tonight's match will be the number one contender for the women's WBC championship.

The crowd cheers.

ANNOUNCER

Introducing first in the red corner: at 5'9" and 145 pounds with a record of 13-2, all the way from Tallulah, LA., Jacquelyn "The Jackhammer" Moreau. Jacquelyn steps forward, arms raised in the air. The crowd gives her a thunderous applause.

ANNOUNCER

And in the blue corner: at 5'7" and 140 pounds making her ring debut from Philadelphia, PA., daughter of former lightweight champion Sonny Redding, Bethany "The Blond Bomber" Linden.

Bethany timidly steps forward, squinting under the bright lights. She bounces on her toes and lifts a hand in the air. She's met with cheers and a slew of intrigued gazes.

The announcer yields center ring to the referee who then motions Bethany and Jacquelyn together.

REFEREE

I want a clean fight. No hitting below the belt. Now touch gloves.

Jacquelyn raises her gloves. Bethany slams her down on them. Jacquelyn arms barely budge an inch.

Each woman takes her corner.

Albert rubs Bethany shoulders.

ALBERT

Loosen up and play this limber. Don't let her power tense you up.

Bethany nods. She faces center ring, rolls her neck and bounces on her toes.

The opening bell dings.

Jacquelyn closes in fast. The two women exchange light jabs to each other's defense.

Bethany lunges forward, sneaks in a straight to the body.

Jacquelyn absorbs the hit and throws a hard left hook too fast for Bethany to react.

Bethany's face whips around on contact; she crumples flat to the canvas. She looks up dazed at the referee who begins the 10-count.

The crowd lets out a disappointed sigh in unison.

RINGSIDE

Fredrick and Sara jump to their feet.

FREDRICK Get up, mom!

SARA Shake it off!

RING

Their voices echo to Bethany's ears. She wipes the dizziness from her eyes, stands up at the count of six.

The referee, checks her hands and eyes. Bethany nods. The referee backs away continues the fight.

Jacquelyn saunters up to Bethany, her stance relaxed.

JACQUELYN Barbie, likes pain, huh? Okay, Barbie.

Jacquelyn squares up, throws a snap jab. Bethany lets it roll of her gloves, counters with a quick right jab, left straight.

Both punches catch Jacquelyn, who stutters steps, off guard. She gathers her legs under her, but walks into a four punch barrage.

Bethany hits Jacquelyn with a jab, straight, left hook, and crushing right hook combination to the body that sends her stumbling backward to the ropes.

The crowd roars to life as Bethany attacks Jacquelyn on the ropes.

ALBERT Watch for the hook! Bethany and Jacquelyn exchange punches blow for blow. Jacquelyn leans on the rope, launches forward throwing a right hook.

Bethany manages to put her guard up but still recoils as she flies back three feet.

Jacquelyn slips away from the ropes, follows her first hook with another.

Bethany takes it on the jaw. She starts to stumble and quickly wraps Jacquelyn up.

JACQUELYN

Bad move, Barbie.

She throws several hard up close punches to Bethany's gut. Bethany gets in a couple punches to Jacquelyn's head before the referee separates them.

Panting, the women ready to pounce on each other again. Then the closing round bell dings.

Jacquelyn grins as she saunters to her corner.

Bethany, with a look of relief, retreats to her corner and plops down on the awaiting stool.

Lucian applies Vaseline to Bethany's face. Albert squirts water into her mouth. Bethany swishes it around, spits out it out.

ALBERT

Not bad for the first round. Not bad at all.

BETHANY She punches like a wrecking ball.

Albert touches a bruise on Bethany's ribs under her arm, she flinches.

ALBERT

When the bell rings, dance around her. Move your feet and look for openings.

Okay.

She stands. Albert and Lucian leave the ring. Lucian pulls the stool.

The round bell rings.

Bethany bounces from left to right.

Jacquelyn aggressively approaches and throws a few once she's close.

Bethany hops around Jacquelyn jabs, continues to bounce around the ring.

Jacquelyn cuts off Bethany's path but she quickly bounces the opposite direction.

JACQUELYN Prance all you want, Barbie. I'm still gonna get cha.

She lunges forward with a quick right jab.

Bethany sides, throws a hard right cross.

Jacquelyn eats the punch on the chin and then thrusts Bethany against the ropes. Bethany whips off the rope and into right straight punch to the body.

Bethany strains to hold herself upright. She drops her elbows and twists right to getaway.

Jacquelyn blocks off her retreat and throws a left hook to the body so hard it pushes Bethany into a corner.

ALBERT Get out of her!

Jacquelyn rushes Bethany, shoving her against the corner pad. She winds up and unloads a right hook to the body followed by a left straight to the head.

Bethany staggers left but Jacquelyn shoves her into the corner once more.

Jacquelyn throws another right straight to the body.

Bethany wraps her arm around her hand and slings Jacquelyn into the corner.

She catches Jacquelyn with three hard jabs, ducks her looping left hook, and pops her again with another three hard jabs.

Bethany steps back, bounces left to right once more.

Jacquelyn, looking more furious than before, growls as she pounds her hands together and steps out from the corner.

She throws a lunging jab, Bethany bats it away. She throws a right straight, Bethany sidesteps letting the punch roll off her gloves and then counters with a jab.

Jacquelyn wildly throws a left hook to the body.

Bethany thrusts her hips back, avoiding the blow then quickly pops in with another hard jab and hops out bouncing on her toes.

She continues to hop about the ring dodging Jacquelyn's punches or letting them roll off her gloves.

JACQUELYN Quit dancing and fight!

BETHANY

Gotta catch me.

Again Jacquelyn charges Bethany who presses her gloves closer herself.

Jacquelyn unleashes a barrage of hooks to the body, which Bethany drops her elbows to block, pumps right, and finishes with a left hook to the head.

Bethany stumbles left.

JACQUELYN

Got cha

She closes on Bethany, connects with two quick jabs, pumps left then throws a crushing right straight.

Bethany loses her bounce as she backs away with her guard tight to her face.

A cut forms above her eye. She blinks rapidly and shakes her head as a bloody sweat drips into her eye. She wipes her glove over her face.

The round bell rings.

Jacquelyn bumps Bethany as they continue to their corners.

As soon as Bethany sits on her stool Lucian wipes her cut with a damp towel and swabs it with a soaked cotton swab. Next he puts another soaked swab to the cut then greases the area.

> LUCIAN Don't let her psych you with the pump fake or this cut'll get worse.

ALBERT We got her frustrated. Mix it up some power shots in with those jabs. You can catch when she leans in.

Bethany nods.

ALBERT Bethany, remember what you're fighting for.

Bethany stares ringside at Fredrick and Jessica. They, and the people around them, clap their hands cheer for her.

RINGSIDE

FREDRICK

(to Sara) She's not doing too bad.

SARA Yeah, as long as she keeps the fight off the ropes.

RING

The round bell rings.

Bethany stands, takes a deep breath then bounces on her toes as she meets Jacquelyn head on in the middle of the ring.

She baits her with a few jabs.

Jacquelyn lunges at Bethany's midsection and misses as Bethany forward and away to deliver a left straight.

Bethany follows up with a double right jab and another left straight.

Jacquelyn's knee nearly touches the canvas but she catches her balance and throws a hard uppercut as Bethany approaches.

Bethany's stunned on her feet.

Jacquelyn continues to bombard her with a series of power punches, each one more devastating than the last.

JACQUELYN

Game over, Barbie.

Bethany teeters near the ropes.

Jacquelyn throws a left jab and a right straight that send Bethany bouncing off the ropes.

Bethany slips past Jacquelyn and wobbles to the center of the ring.

Jacquelyn take a deep breath and unloads a right hook to the body, left hook to the body, and finally a left hook to the head that crumples Bethany to the canvas.

The world fades black around Bethany.

FLASHBACK

INT. COURTHOUSE - MEDIATION ROOM - DAY

In modern, minimalist meeting room a MEDIATOR, an ashen haired and wizen featured man, glosses over a checklist

Bethany and Perry sit opposite of the Mediator but apart from each other with their attorney.

Bethany glances Perry's direction, finds him sneering at her. She averts her eyes to her twiddling thumbs.

MEDIATOR

Shall we proceed?

JOHNSTON STONE (40), the mild mannered, clean cut lawyer beside Perry stands.

JOHNSTON

Ladies, my client has no interest in divorce. To do so would be detrimental to his children.

VICTORIA

Your client's temper is detrimental to the children.

JOHNSTON

Mr. Linden has no history of violent behavior. The instance you refer to was one of passion.

VICTORIA

Mrs. Linden recalls the relationship differently.

JOHNSTON

Truth is Mr. Linden has been hurting since Mrs. Linden abruptly ran away with their children.

MEDIATOR

Counselors, we're not here to place blame. We're here to work out solutions. (to Bethany) Now, Mrs. Linden, are you willing to go through a separation or is divorce the only option?

BETHANY

My husband broke our marital bond. I saw him have sex with another woman. So for me divorce is the only option.

MEDIATOR Did you in fact breach your marriage, Mrs. Linden?

PERRY Yes, but it was a onetime thing, a fling.

BETHANY Didn't look like a fling last time saw you two together.

PERRY That part of my life is over.

Bethany stares into Perry's wistful eyes.

BETHANY

Still willing to give us another try if I quite boxing?

PERRY

Absolutely.

BETHANY And grant me full custody?

Perry clears his throat. His sad eye look turns into an intense glare.

JOHNSTON What is she talking about?

Veronica lays a voice recorder on the table.

VERONICA This conversation was recorded while my client was on the phone when she bumped into Mr. Linden. She presses play on the voice recorder.

PERRY V.O When this boxing stint falls flat, and it will, you'll need someone to take care of you and the kids.

BETHANY V.O It's too late, Perry. You broke up our family when you hand delivered me divorce papers.

PERRY V.O You broke up this family when you walked out on me!

BETHANY V.O You can't control me anymore.

PERRY V.O I'll drop the divorce. You can even be the primary guardian. All you have to do is quit boxing. We both know I'll win custody if we go down this road and you'll never see the kids again.

Johnston and Perry exchange a concerned grimaced look. They whisper back and forth to each other.

Victoria holds the voice recorder in her hand.

VICTORIA Mr. Linden tried to coerce my client to control her.

Everyone's eyes turn to Perry.

PERRY

It's not how it sounds. I didn't mean that. All I wanted was family back, but it don't look like that'll happen.

MEDIATOR

Shall we discuss visitation days?

BETHANY

I don't love you anymore, Perry. Although I'm moving on and don't trust you I will allow you to see the kids if they want to see you.

PERRY I take it you'll come by the house to get your things?

BETHANY Maybe after my fight. We'll see.

PERRY

One last thing. Why are you fighting?

END FLASHBACK

INT. BOARDWALK HALL CONVENTION CENTER - RING - NIGHT

The referee moves Jacquelyn to a neutral corner then hovers near Bethany and starts the 10-count.

The blinding lights above the ring awaken Bethany. She strains to sit upright.

Bethany looks rings to her kids and Sara then to her corner at Albert and Lucian.

BETHANY

(low) I fight because have to and I will not lose.

The referee reaches the count of seven. Bethany forces herself to her feet.

The ref checks her eyes, which burn with intensity, and nods. He resumes the fight.

Bethany bounces with more pep in her step.

JACQUELYN You must like the way that canvas taste. Don't worry, I'll knock you down for a third helping.

Bethany smirks then in a flashes rushes Jacquelyn with a barrage of body punches.

Jacquelyn laughs as she blocks every punch.

JACQUELYN Finally, now that's more like it.

Bethany grunts as she winds up and lets loose a hard straight to Jacquelyn's chin. The punch rolls of Jacquelyn's glove and grazes her cheek.

Jacquelyn counters with right cross.

Bethany stumbles back a step but charges in again.

Jacquelyn throws light jab hard right straight, misses on both as Bethany sidesteps and delivers a shot to the gut.

Bethany dances around Jacquelyn again then grunts as she unleashes a machine gun-like volley of left jabs backing Jacquelyn across the ring into a corner.

Jacquelyn slips between Bethany's punches and counters with a bolo uppercut, freeing her from the corner.

Bethany catches herself on the ropes. She picks her guard up in time to block another uppercut and counters with her on right hook.

Jacquelyn, hit squarely on the chin, falls to a knee. The referee separates the women then starts the 10-count.

The crowd roars to life. Chants of "Bomber" fill the convention hall.

The referee gives Jacquelyn the go ahead nod resumes the fight.

ALBERT Don't hold back, Bethany. Take At the center of the ring Bethany and Jacquelyn exchange punches again.

Cheers from the crowd grow deafeningly loud as neither fighter backs down from the other.

Jacquelyn takes a deep breath and connects with a hard right hook to Bethany's gut knocking the wind out of her. She continues with hard left hook that leaves Bethany gasping and wobbling.

JACQUELYN

Lights out, Barbie.

She pump fakes a right cross but Bethany reads it doesn't bite on it.

Bethany instead guards high and braces herself. She absorbs the final left hook.

With Jacquelyn right side now totally exposed Bethany musters strength and leads in with a hard left straight. She throws her full weight into the punch.

Jacquelyn's face whiplashes left to right as both fighters tumble to the canvas.

The referee begins the 10-count.

The crowd roars, willing the fighters to get up.

Jacquelyn lies flat on her back motionless while Bethany pants face down on the canvas.

The referee reaches the count of four and both fighters start to stir.

Bethany brings her knees and elbows under her while Jacquelyn rolls onto her side, lifting her upper body.

ALBERT C'mon, Bethany, c'mon.

The referee reaches the count of seven. Bethany shakily pushes herself up. She wobbles backward but catches herself.

Jacquelyn clings to the middle rope, straining to pull herself up.

REFEREE

Nine… ten.

He notices Bethany standing and Jacquelyn collapsing onto the ropes. He waves his hands and the ringside bell rings.

The crowd erupts into cheer as the fight ends.

Jacquelyn's corner men help her off the rope and onto her feet.

Albert and Lucian leap into the ring and catch Bethany in their arms.

ALBERT You did it. You won.

LUCIAN

(to Bethany) I knew you had it in you.

Bethany stares at Lucian hazy eyed and smiles.

BETHANY Was there any doubt?

She kisses Lucian's lips softly.

FREDRICK (O.S)

Mom!

Bethany turns to see Fredrick, Sara, and Jessica in the ring. Jessica leaps into her arms and Fredrick hugs her tight.

The crowd again cheers as Sara hoists Bethany's fist high.

FADE TO BLACK

ANNOUNCER (V.O) And the winner by knockout is Bethany "Blond Bomber" Linden. THE END