

The Irish Rover

An Original Screenplay

by

Ben Lay

Address: Flat 3, Marys House, 180-182 Mile End Rd., Stepney,
London, E1 4NN

Phone Number: +44 07902 736 588

E-mail: benvla@gmail.com

*"For a sailor it's always a bother in life,
It's so lonesome by night and day,
That he longs for the shore,
And a charming young whore,
Who will melt all his troubles away.
Oh, the noise and the rout,
Swillin' poitin and stout
For him soon the torments over,...
The old salt from the Irish Rover."*

The Irish Rover

FADE IN

PERFECT SQUARE OF WHITE

We know that we are looking at something because its surface is marked, scratched and grimy.

At the bottom left hand corner of the square a pool of red begins to ooze its way in.

The FAINT SOUND of the INSTRUMENTAL to the song THE IRISH ROVER can be heard playing over the top.

As we pull back we see a MAN, PAUL MAGUIRE lying unconscious in a pool of blood on the cold white tiles of a kitchen floor, a knife laying by his side.

BOXING EXPERT #1 (V.O.)
Yeah I remember the Rover...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

A BOXERS dressing room prior to fight time.

The surroundings CLEAN and SPACIOUS.

The SOUND OF HIGH UP TEMPO MUSIC FILLS THE ROOM.

A CUT MAN arranges his tools of the trade in a small pouch off to the side.

A TRAINERS SECOND wraps some red masking tape around the outside of a plastic water bottle.

A couple of HANGERS ON/FRIENDS, JOE (27) and MARK (26) drift about aimlessly, slightly giddy with the pre fight adrenaline that hangs in the air.

PAUL MAGUIRE(23), in better circumstances, is in the centre of the room, he sits on the edge of a rub down table, legs dangling, cool as a cucumber, head bouncing to the beat of the music.

Crouched over him, holding his left fist tightly in his grasp as he finishes taping it up, is his trainer TONY, a durable looking man in his early fifties.

Paul, handsome in a rough hewn sort of way, wears only a dark green pair of boxing shorts, with the legend "The Irish Rover" emblazoned in white lettering down the left hand side, and a pair of unlaced boxing boots. A thin film of sweat covering his upper torso.

He appears relaxed, confident, in his element, joking and laughing across the room towards Joe and Mark.

Tony finished with the taping looks up.

TONY

OK?

Paul makes a fist of his left hand and bangs it a couple of times into the open palm of his already taped right, smiles and winks cocksure to Tony by way of an answer.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

One by one THREE BOXING EXPERTS captured in BLACK & WHITE speak directly to camera giving their views and opinions to questions we do not hear.

BOXING EXPERT #1

...He was a good little fighter...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #2

...didn't know what it meant to back up, just kept coming at you full on...a real handful...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #3

... he had the ability, definitely. Others might say different,... but he had something alright...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The AUDIENCE BUZZING, excitement and anticipation in the air as they wait for the action to begin.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul lets loose a series of lightning fast punch combinations into the training pads that Tony wears on his raised hands.

INT. ARENA/BOXING RING - NIGHT

A CLEANER makes a quick sweep of the ring canvas for any debris that might be lying about

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #2

...at the end of the day, it's a straight forward enough game. You got your four basic punches, jab, cross, hook, uppercut. Get them down, learn what your about, take it from there...

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul dances about, loosening up.

An OFFICIAL pops his head round the door to announce:

OFFICIAL

Five minutes lads!

Paul continues bopping up and down, starting to let fly with quick bursts of punches into the air, forcing the breath from his body in loud grunts as he does so. WE NOTICE how razor sharp he seems, the definition of a finely honed athlete in his prime.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #2

...But it's not just about this (Taps fist), this has a big part to play as well (Taps head)...a big part.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tony reaches down into a small sports bag lying on the floor, and pulls from it a naggin of JAMESON IRISH WHISKEY.

Opening it he fills a capful, making his way over to Paul.

Paul stops bouncing, opens his mouth and tilts his head back as Tony pours the whiskey in.

TONY

Slainte.

Tony quickly refills the cap and downs one for himself.

PAUL

Slainte.

Paul rolls his shoulders and resumes his shadow boxing.

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/RINGSIDE - NIGHT

A TV INTERVIEWER canvasses an OLD PRO turned Fight Analyst for his opinion on the upcoming fight.

OLD PRO

...He's still gotta a couple of things to learn, but he's been looking good. I don't know, if it was me I might have him just have those couple more fights before I'd start talking about putting him with a champion like Chavro, gain that little bit more experience. But what he needs tonight though is to put on a good show, then you can start looking further ahead. It's all in his hands and you couldn't ask for more than that...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR

Paul stands in the centre, surrounded by HANDLERS and members of his TEAM, waiting.

He continues to bounce, the nervous energy pulsing through him now, he snorts the air from his nostrils and snaps his head sharply from side to side.

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/BOXING RING

An ANNOUNCER, microphone in hand, climbs through the ropes, making his way to the centre of the ring.

ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen...

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #3
His old man was a fairly decent fighter in his day. (Pause) Yeah. (Shrugs) I don't know what happened between the two of them to be honest. I think from when he was a kid it was the old man got him involved in the game you know, he was the one behind him, pushing him on with it, but...you know (Shrugs) Fathers and sons...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/RING

The Announcer in full swing now, in the background the other BOXER having arrived in the ring paces, with his TEAM milling about around him.

ANNOUNCER
...an undefeated record of 19 and 0, Dublins finest, the one, the only...Paul "The Irish Rover" Maguire!

On this the ROUSING FIRST CHORDS OF THE IRISH ROVER BY THE POUGES AND RONNIE DREW SOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE ARENA.

INT. ARENA/BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR

One of the EVENT SECURITY pulls back the heavy curtain and Paul is led into the Arena.

INT. ARENA - FLOOR/AISLE

Paul follows tight behind Tony, gloved hands resting on his shoulders, as they make their way towards the ring.

The crowd whips itself into a frenzy, SHOUTING and ROARING their approval for him.

Paul breathes it all in, his life blood.

INT. ARENA - RING SIDE

A delicate looking creature, MARIA (28), Pauls girlfriend, her face a mixture of apprehension and nervous excitement, stands applauding and looking towards where Paul makes his entrance. She appears oddly out of place in this environment, and she knows it, but she throws herself into it as best she can.

INT. ARENA/RING - NIGHT

Paul climbs through the ropes, held open for him by Tony and his second DENNIS. He dances to the centre, playing to the crowd.

His opponent, an intense looking POLISH FIGHTER (34) stares across, malevolence in his eyes.

Paul, disrobes in his corner.

Tony makes a couple of quick last minute adjustments, pulls the waist band of his shorts up an inch or two higher, applies a little extra Vaseline around the eye area.

The REFEREE calls the Fighters to the centre of the ring.

REFEREE

OK boys, we went over the rules in the dressing room. Good clean fight, no punching on the break. In the event of a knockdown go to the far corner, 3 knockdown rule is in effect, the bell saves only in the last. Any questions? Good, touch gloves and lets go!

CUT TO:

INT. RING - NIGHT

The BELL SOUNDS and Paul storms out from his corner.

The Pole looks to start cautiously, working from behind his jab.

Paul goes to work, comes in crouching low letting his punches fly a mile a minute, straight from the off.

There's an INFECTIOUS ENERGY to his all out fighting style and it's what the CROWD loves about him.

He bobs and weaves, eyes darting about as he searches for that opening, a faint smile even seems to play across his lips.

WE SEE Tony as he watches intently from the corner, through the ropes.

INT. RINGSIDE - NIGHT

Maria in her seat, on edge as she watches, the nervous excitement taking hold.

INT. RING - NIGHT

The Pole throws out his jab furiously as he back pedals, trying to find some space.

Paul piles on forward, crowding, taking the fight to him, not giving an inch.

CUT TO:

INT. PUB - SAME

The fight plays on an OVERHEAD TV above the bar. It's all but ignored by the CLIENTELE, except for the BARMAN and some OLD TIME REGULARS holding up the bar.

An AGED MAN, mid fifties, looks older, sits nursing his pint, WATCHING the action through tired eyes.

BACK TO:

INT. RING

The fight is into the MIDDLE ROUNDS.

Paul's face shows a little wear and tear, some welts developing about the forehead and eye area, but nothing too serious.

His Opponent, on the other hand, sports a nasty gash, just below his left eye, from which the blood flows freely.

His breath comes in heavy gasps as he struggles to deal with the relentless pace Paul sets.

The BELL SOUNDS ending the round and they head back to their corners.

INT. RING/PAULS CORNER

Paul, sits, smiling, a man in complete control.

Dennis administers some water as Tony hunkers down in front.

TONY

Doin good lad. Breathing through his arse. How's the hand holding up?

Paul spits into the bucket Dennis holds out.

PAUL

Grand, not a bother, good as new. He's gonna go next round...

TONY

Just keep doin what your doin,.. down to the body, open him up for the right to the head, it's been doing the job all night...

PAUL

I know, I got him,... I got him..

Paul LOOKS around Tony, over to the far corner, where the Pole sits weary on his stool.

Tony gives him a sharp tap to the cheek bringing his attention back.

TONY

Listen to me, he's gonna get desperate now, keep on top of him, don't give him a fucking chance. Get him in the corner and bash the bastard up.

PAUL

(Nods)
Uh huh, yeah...

TONY

Good lad.

Tony reinserts the gum shield, as the BELL SOUNDS signalling the next round and Paul rises making his way back out into the fray.

CUT TO:

INT. RING - LATER

It's an ALL OUT BRAWL now, Paul really going for it, piling it on, just how he likes to fight, standing on a penny and banging away.

The fight is slowly seeping out of the Pole, he gamely tries to mix it up, but it's just too much for him.

The Pole makes a grab at Paul holding on, trying to play for time but Paul just shrugs him off and goes to work on his body.

Desperate now, the Pole steadies himself as Paul comes on strong again. Stepping quickly to the side he goes low with a vicious left hook that catches Paul flush to the groin.

The CROWD sees it and REACTS VOCIFEROUSLY.

Paul recoils, staggers backwards, hurt.

The Referee pushes in between the Fighters. He warns the Pole and signals to the judges to deduct a point.

He heads over to Paul, who is bent over, grimacing.

REFEREE

Do you want to take the two minutes to recover?

Paul rights himself, shaking his head.

PAUL

No...grand,...I'm grand, let's go...

REFEREE

You sure?

PAUL

Yeah, c'mon,...let's go.

Tony SHOUTS from the corner.

TONY

Take the two minutes!

Paul ignores him, motions to the Ref that he's ready to go on.

PAUL
I'm OK, I'm OK...

The Ref relents calling them together.

REFEREE
OK, fight!

Tony shakes his head at the stupidity.

Paul, moves about gingerly, still feeling the effects. The Pole senses this and it gives him a second wind, he lets loose a series of telling punches.

For the first time tonight Paul is shifting some punches as he struggles to get back into his rhythm.

Luckily the BELL for the end of the round SOUNDS, before the Pole can take advantage of the situation.

INT. RING/PAULS CORNER

Paul lowers himself slowly down onto his stool as Tony gets straight into his face.

TONY
(Furious)
What are you playing at! If your hurt, take the time, recover,...for fuck sake!

PAUL
I'm grand, I'm grand...

TONY
Your not fucking grand, Jaysus Christ...

Still apoplectic Tony douses the back of his neck with the cold sponge, as Paul sucks in air.

CUT TO:

INT. RING - LATER

Fight over now, the Referee stands in the centre, Fighters on either side, as the Announcer finishes reading out the Judges scorecards.

ANNOUNCER

...and Judge Terence Scott scores the bout 118 to 111, for the winner by unanimous decision and... still undefeated...Paul "The Irish Rover" Maguire!

The CROWD ERUPTS.

The Referee raises a jubilant Pauls arm in victory.

INT. RINGSIDE

Maria beams, clapping heartily.

INT. RING - NIGHT

Tony comes up behind lifting him high in a bear hug, as members of his TEAM, HANGERS ON, FRIENDS all crowd into the ring, converging on him.

Paul steps outside his celebrations for a minute, heading over to commiserate with his beaten Opponent.

Done he turns and rushes over to the far corner, climbing the turnbuckle, SALUTING and CELEBRATING with his FANS as OUR GAZE holds on him, capturing his moment of glory.

CUT TO:

INT. PUB - SAME

The Aged Man WATCHES on TV,... a hint of pride in those tired eyes.

BACK TO:

INT. ARENA - RING APRON - NIGHT

A TV INTERVIEWER talking to camera, tries desperately to get hold of Paul who bounces about the place, full of adrenaline.

TV INTERVIEWER

...we're...we're just going to have a word here with...(Laughs) if we can get a hold of him...

Paul finally manages to seat himself, but no sooner is he down than he's hopping back up again, SHOUTING across to SOMEONE unseen, off camera.

Finished, he sits back down again, grinning from ear to ear.

PAUL
(To Interviewer)
Sorry,...OK, yeah.. sorry,.. how's
it going?

TV INTERVIEWER
So a successful nights work for you
there Paul?

PAUL
Yeah, I'm delighted with it you
know, got the decision, he was a
tough fu...(stops himself, laughs),
sorry, tough lad, came to fight, no
hiding. But everything went grand.
And the hand felt great not a
bother, so no complaints you
know...

TV INTERVIEWER
Looked like he caught you with some
low blows there near the end?

PAUL
Yeah, he did, he did, caught me in
the knackers a couple of times
alright, but you just get on with
it, part of the game, he never
really had me in any trouble...

TV INTERVIEWER
So what's next from here?

PAUL
Well, I'll have to sit down and
have a chat with me manager and
trainer, but I'm definitely looking
at Chavro now, he's the one I want.
That's the step up I'm looking
for...

TV INTERVIEWER
Lets just bring your manager Alex
Turner in here for a quick word and
see what he has to say...

In from the side comes ALEX TURNER (49), dressed impeccably
in a well tailored suit, not a hair out of place.

TV INTERVIEWER
So Alex, Chavro next?

ALEX
Well we'll certainly be looking
into it Sean, I think the timing is
just right for Paul. He's had his
problems in the past,..

Paul LOOKS on from the side as Alex speaks.

...but when he knuckles down and has his head on right, the results like we saw tonight speak for themselves. I don't think there's anyone out there at light welter that he needs worry about. On this form he's capable of holding his own and more with anyone.

TV INTERVIEWER

(Turning back to Paul)

OK, we'll leave the last word with you Paul.

(Knowing tone)

I'm sure there'll be a few drinks had in celebration tonight?

PAUL

(Laughs, with a wink)

Jaysus, wouldn't be me now if there wasn't, would it?

TV INTERVIEWER

(Laughing as he turns to camera)

OK, gentlemen, we'll leave it there and hand...

Paul cuts in quickly.

PAUL

Wait, wait, hang on a sec...

He drags a reluctant Tony in from off-side.

PAUL

(Quickly)

Just want to say a big thanks to me trainer Tony, and wish his daughter Sarah a happy birthday, 19 last week. (Shouts) Happy birthday Ser!

Tony echoes Pauls sentiments with a little, self conscious wave to camera.

TV INTERVIEWER

(To camera)

And on that, it's back to you in the studio...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

The victory celebration is in full swing, LOUD AND RAUCOUS.

Paul sits at a table, Maria by his side, assorted FRIENDS/HANGERS ON around them.

Paul pulls Maria close whispering into her ear, she recoils in mock horror, laughing wickedly. He leans in kissing her.

A COUPLE OF WELL WISHERS make their way over to Paul, shaking his hand, getting an autograph, he receives them in good spirits, with a smile.

On the table in front of him sit a COUPLE OF EMPTY BEER BOTTLES.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER

Paul at the bar now, saying good bye to Tony.

The two men hug warmly and Tony makes his way on out.

Paul takes a pint of Guinness proffered by the BARMAN, draining a long and tasty sup.

He leans in on the bar, LOOKING about him. He catches the eye of a COUPLE OF DOLLY BIRDS at the end of the bar. They SMILE up at him. Unable to help himself he gives them a CHEEKY WINK, pushes himself off the bar and heads on back over to his table.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER STILL

Paul seated at the table, Maria still there, looking a little ill at ease, she's been squeezed into the background as Paul HOLDS COURT with the LADS.

His BEHAVIOR is noticeably BIGGER, more BOISTEROUS.

EMPTY BOTTLES and PINT GLASSES litter the table in front of him.

His buddy Joe heads over, fresh from the bar, laden down with a tray full of TEQUILA SHOTS.

PAUL
(Loud)
Go on Bob the Builder!

JOE
 Fuck off yeah punchy cunt!

Joe lays the shots down on the table and the BOYS get stuck in.

Maria LOOKS on.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER STILL

Maria, tries to have a quiet word with Paul off to the side.

He smiles drunkenly at her, having far too much of a good time to call it a night yet. He plants a kiss sloppily on her forehead by means of placating her, before hurrying back over to the LADS.

She doesn't look placated.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - LATER STILL

Another round of TEQUILA SHOTS going down.

Paul sinks his, enjoying the bitter taste. Finished he slams his glass back down on the table,... but with a little too much force, SHATTERING IT ON IMPACT.

The table erupts in a CHORUS of LOUD CHEERS.

LADS
 Waa Haaay! Sack the Juggler!!

Paul raises his arms above his head, joining in the CHEERS,...a stupid, happy, drunken grin on his face.

He stumbles up from the table and begins to weave unevenly across the pub, over to the toilets.

He LOOKS around THROUGH HIS DRUNKEN HAZE as he goes.

His gaze falls on the DOLLY BIRDS from earlier,...and he decides to make a detour.

Sidling up, he drapes his arms over their shoulders, squeezing in between them.

PAUL
 Alright girls, how's it going?

DOLLY BIRD # 1
 (Giggling)
 Great, and you?

PAUL
 Couldn't be better if I tried
 darlin'.

Dolly Bird # 2 notices a RED WELT above his eye from the
 fight earlier and she begins to rub it.

GIRL # 2
 Oww, that looks sore.

PAUL
 Jaysus, you should see the other
 fella.

They laugh as...

From across the pub MARIA LOOKS ON.

One of the DOLLY BIRDS fishes an ice cube from her glass and
 playfully rubs it against the swelling, while Paul laughs
 drunkenly along, lapping up the attention.

INT. NIGHT CLUB/TOILETS - NIGHT

Paul stands at the urinal, forehead resting against the cool
 tiles.

INT. NIGHT CLUB/OUTSIDE TOILETS - NIGHT

Maria waiting outside the toilets, collars Paul as soon as he
 emerges.

MARIA
 Can I have a word with you outside?

PAUL
 Why?

MARIA
 I want to have a word with you
 outside, c'mon.

With that she turns and heads for the door, Paul shrugging to
 himself reluctantly trails out after her.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB/DOORWAY - NIGHT

Outside it teems down with RAIN.

The cold night air stings at Pauls senses.

Huddled in the doorway, Maria gives it to him with both
 barrels.

MARIA
So what do think your playing at?

PAUL
What are you talking about?

MARIA
You know what I'm talking about
Paul. In there.

PAUL
Ah look Maria I'm not in the humour
for this.

MARIA
How do you think that makes me
look? In front of everyone?

PAUL
Nothing happened...I was just
talking to them...

MARIA
...You couldn't care less...

PAUL
Nothing happened.

MARIA
...So much for turning over a new
leaf...

PAUL
(Turns to go)
Look I'm going back inside...

MARIA
(Grabs his arm)
Paul...

PAUL
(Pulls away)
Don't start fucking dragging out of
me.

MARIA
You don't give a fuck about anyone
but yourself...

PAUL
(Laughing)
Ah here we go...

MARIA

Laugh go on. (Indicates inside) But if they all knew what you were really like Paul...

PAUL

What and you know me do you luv?

MARIA

Yes I do Paul. I do.

PAUL

(Snorts)

Yeah you think so. (Pause) If I'm that bad why don't you piss off then? Huh? Make Mummy happy?

MARIA

Pathetic...

PAUL

I'm pathetic!

He turns, waving her off derisively as he walks away, out into the rain.

PAUL

You don't have a fucking clue luv.

MARIA

Paul!

He swaggers on down the street, ignoring her.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Paul as he carries on down the street, walking without aim. His jacket left back at the pub, his shirt sticking to his skin with the rain.

He mutters to himself, shaking his head, as he goes.

PAUL

Fuck sake...over nothing, a big fucking thing over nothing...for fuck sake...

He reaches a set of steps and sits down heavily.

He SMACKS himself hard, frustrated, to the side of the head with both hands.

WE WATCH as he sits, staring ahead, out into the rain.

Nothing to be done, he rises, heading over to the road to hail down a TAXI.

Successful at the second time of asking, WE WATCH as he scurries up to the TAXI and climbs in the back seat.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Paul sits, drenched, STARES vacantly out the window as the STREETS OF DUBLIN go by.

The TAXI DRIVER studies him in his REAR VIEW MIRROR.

TAXI DRIVER
Aren't you that boxer? Maguire?

Paul glances up towards him, before returning his gaze to the world going by outside.

PAUL
Yeah bud. The one and only,... the one and fucking only.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/SUSANS HOUSE - NIGHT

The rain eased off now. The TAXI comes to a stop outside a SMALL TWO BEDROOMED HOUSE on a WORKING CLASS ESTATE.

The estate is pretty much deserted at this time of night, the exception being a group of TEENAGE LADS, who stand around down the bottom of the street, necking from a two litre of cheap cider that they pass around.

INT. TAXI - SAME

Paul from the back seat.

PAUL
What's the damage?

TAXI DRIVER
Twelve-fifty.

PAUL
(As he gets out)
Right give us a sec.

EXT. SUSANS HOUSE/GARDEN

Paul exits the taxi, hurrying up the garden and ringing the front door bell.

As he waits for an answer, his LOOK falls on the YOUNG LADS, up the street, drinking.

Then:

An UPSTAIRS WINDOW creaks open, as SUSAN peers out.

PAUL
(Looking up)
Alright sis, it's only me.

SUSAN
OK, gimme a second.

Paul LOOKS across to the Taxi Driver, who sits, impatiently, he gives him a quick thumbs up.

The DOOR IS UNLOCKED and OPENED by a sleepy-looking Susan (29), she takes in the drowned rat standing before her that is her brother, and doesn't seem overly surprised.

PAUL
Alright luv, sorry about the time...

SUSAN
It's OK, come in...

PAUL
Could I eh...bum the money off yeah for the taxi? I left me wallet...

SUSAN
How much is it?

PAUL
Twelve-fifty..

SUSAN
Hang on...

She turns to go get her purse.

In the background EMMA (7) dressed in her pyjamas, can just be SEEN at the TOP OF THE STAIRS.

EMMA
Mammy?

SUSAN
It's OK luv, it's only your Uncle Paul, go back to bed, OK?

Paul leans in the door, waving up to her.

PAUL
Hiya darlin'.

Smiling, assured, she heads back into bed.

The Taxi Driver gives a couple of SHARP TOOTS ON HIS HORN.
Paul turns and holds up a finger, indicating "Just a Sec".
Turning back around he MUTTERS to himself...

PAUL
Hungry fuck.

...as Susan, purse in hand, comes back out into the doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSANS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Paul follows Susan in, pulling the door closed behind him.

SUSAN
(As she heads up the
stairs)
You know where the sofa is, you can
tell me about it in the morning,
night.

PAUL
Cheers luv, night.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul comes into the living room, not bothering with a light,
he slouches over to the sofa and flops down heavily on it.

Head back, he closes his jaded eyes and tries for
sleep...couldn't even be arsed to remove his damp clothes.

FADE OUT.

INT. SUSANS KITCHEN - MORNING

Paul sits at the kitchen table, red eyed, clothes dried on
the bone, looking like something the cat dragged in.

He sips at a strong cup of tea, flicking absent mindedly
through last nights paper.

Susan at the kitchen sink, prepares the kids breakfast.

From the living room comes the HYPERACTIVE SOUND OF EARLY
MORNING KIDS CARTOONS COUPLED WITH LITTLE GIRLS LAUGHTER.

SUSAN
(Looking over)
How's the head?

Paul glances up, making a "You don't want to know" face.

SUSAN
That bad.

PAUL
Yeah.

Susan turns back pouring milk over two small bowls of Rice Krispies.

PAUL
Did you watch it last night?

SUSAN
You know I don't. (Knowingly) So tell me was it your fault or hers.

PAUL
Ahh (Pause) Mine I suppose...mine.(Pause) Don't know where the fuck I was when brains were being given out.

She laughs and He goes back to flipping through the paper.

Susan moves over to the table, plonking down the bowls of cereal.

SUSAN
(Calling into the living room)
Girls! Breakfast!

She goes back over to the sink, turning her back to Paul she starts clearing away some dishes

SUSAN
I went to see Da on Tuesday.

He doesn't bother to look up, all of a sudden very interested in his paper.

PAUL
Uh huh.

SUSAN
Yeah, he's not doing the best, but...he's OK considering, I suppose.(Pause) He was asking for you?

PAUL
Yep.

SILENCE. She dries the dishes, while He keeps his focuses on his paper.

Finally, going for it:

SUSAN

Are you gonna go see him?

PAUL

No.

SUSAN

(Turning to him)

Paul c'mon...

PAUL

Luv I'm not getting into this. I don't want to argue with yeh. I wont be goin' to see him and that's that. End of story.

SUSAN

Look Paul I felt the same as you but...what's done is done, there's no use going over the past...

PAUL

There's every use. It's how I feel right and I'm not going to be a fucking hypocrite. Him and me having nothing to say to one another.

SUSAN

So that's what I am a hypocrite?

PAUL

That's not what I'm saying. If that's what you want to do fine, grand, good luck to you. But I won't be.

SUSAN

I know he wasn't the best but he wasn't the worst either...

PAUL

That's no fucking excuse! Ah he wasn't a child molesting fucking serial killer, Jaysus we should all join hands and do ring a ring a fucking rosy. For fuck sake.

SUSAN

You know what I mean.

PAUL

Look luv at the end of the day we're never gonna agree on this.

(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)

You've got your version of him and I've got mine. You were the girl so you got off a damn sight fucking easier. You never had to take the full force deadeners off him when you were a kid. You never had him wrap his fucking hands around your throat in one of his tempers and start shaking you by it because you were seven years old and you couldn't stop crying and then have him throw you down and call you a fucking cry baby, did yeh? No. So do me a favour and don't tell me how I should feel about that fucking cunt thanks very much.

Susan stands by the sink tea towel in hand, looking to her Brother.

Paul puts his attention back on the paper.

SUSAN

I just think...it'd be better for yourself. Wont do any good, that's all I'm saying...

PAUL

(Without looking up)
Yeah well it does me just fine alright.

She considers for a second to push it some more but decides against it.

SUSAN

OK.

She notices the Rice Krispies still lying there untouched and makes for the living room.

SUSAN

Where are these other two?

WE stay with Paul as he turns the pages of his paper.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/PAULS APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

WE WATCH as Paul steps out of Susans car. Going around to the back window, he says goodbye to his nieces Emma and CLAIRE (4), by squishing his face up against the glass, as THEY WATCH, giggling inside.

Smiling he makes his way towards the entrance of his building.

He comes to the front of it, pressing NUMBER 6 on the intercom and waits.

MARIA (O.S.)

Yes?

PAUL

Heya, it's me.

She BUZZES HIM IN without response and he heads on up.

INT. STAIRS/LANDING - MORNING

Paul as he climbs the last couple of stairs and heads in through the partially opened door.

INT. FLAT/HALLWAY - MORNING

He enters the flat, closing the door quietly behind him.

INT. FLAT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MORNING

He has a quick LOOK around the living room as he comes in, no one there. He goes over to the kitchen and fills the kettle for a cup of tea.

He stands by the sink for a beat, then turns and makes his way out.

INT. FLAT/BEDROOM - MORNING

The BEDROOM DOOR opens gently and WE SEE Paul come through it.

Maria lies curled up on the far side of the bed, covers drawn tightly around her.

PAUL

(Softly)

Hey.

No response.

He lowers himself down onto the bed, lightly caressing her leg outside the covers, she draws her leg up into her, away from him.

PAUL

I'm an eejit.

Silence. He tries again.

PAUL
 Look, I know I...I was bang out of
 order...

More silence.

PAUL
 Look what do you want me to say
 Maria?

MARIA
 (Into her pillow)
 I don't want you to say anything.

He lies down on the covers and brings his body up against hers, lightly stroking her face as he does so.

PAUL
 Hey.

MARIA
 (Pulling away)
 Don't...

WE WATCH from above as they lie like that, neither one speaking...until:

PAUL
 (Softly, whispers it)
 I love you Maria.

She starts.

PAUL
 I do...I do.

He brings his hand back up and starts stroking her face again, she doesn't pull away this time.

She turns in, facing him.

MARIA
 What do you do it for Paul?

He shrugs, helpless...

PAUL
 I don't...

...the answers not there.

They lie for a long beat just looking at each other.

MARIA
 We can't keep doing this.

PAUL

I know.

They continue to lie there until:

PAUL

(Meaning it)

I'm sorry.

MARIA

Shh.

She quietens him, and gently draws herself in closer.

WE WATCH as the Fighter lies with his Woman.

FADE OUT.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM - BACK OFFICE - DAY

A FIGHT VIDEO BLARES out from a TV SCREEN.

On the video, ONE BOXER desperately tries to cover up as he is assailed from all angles by a DAZZLING ARRAY OF PUNCHES.

THE BOXER on the attack, has the name "CHAVRO" writ large across the band of his trunks.

PAUL (O.S.)

(Admiringly)

Fuck me he's fast.

Paul, Tony and Alex all sit around the small, cluttered back office, giving the once over to the tape.

Alex sits back, feet up on a table, chewing gum as he views the action dispassionately.

Tony and Paul both lean forward in their seats, almost in the TV itself.

TONY

Yeah,... look at that upper cut, one after the other, the way he gets it in there (Mimics the motion) bang, bang, bang... He's a tough bastard...

Alex straightens up in his seat, smoothing out the folds in his trousers.

ALEX
 Alright down to brass tacks. (To Paul) You think you can live with him sunshine? Think your ready?

PAUL
 (Looking from the video to Alex and back again)
 There's no way he's gonna back me up like that...no way.

Alex watches Paul closely as he speaks.

ALEX
 Big step up in class? Gonna have to be at the top of your game?

PAUL
 Wont be a bother...I've got the beating of him...I know it.

Alex nods giving nothing away, looks to Tony.

ALEX
 Tony?

TONY
 (One eye still on the TV)
 He's a nights work alright, no denying that. But there's a couple of things you could work on there, catch him out with,...yeah...

Alex RISES from his seat, CROSSES to the TV, turns the sound down and stands before the men.

ALEX
 Right cards on the table. It's gonna take a shed load to get him out of his hiding hole in Madrid, but we do this right, get the result we want then they're all gonna sit up and take notice. (Pause) Now I'll go to work put the money up and get him for you, but this is getting into the big time here, so no fucking around anymore. (To Paul) Head down, in the gym morning, noon and night when the time comes. Live and breath this fucker. You with me?

Paul meets his stare head on.

PAUL
 Definitely. No messing about.

ALEX

Good. You get through this guy,
then it'll be set up on a plate for
you. It's up to you whether you
take it or not.

Paul nods in agreement, liking what he hears.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/CAR PARK - DAY

Paul a spring to his step, bounces over towards his car.

WE SEE Pauls progress towards his car from SOMEONE ELSE'S
VANTAGE POINT across the street.

Paul reaches his car, bending down to unlock the door.

MAN (O.S.)

Alright son.

Paul, LOOKS UP sharply, across the bonnet of his car...

...To see his FATHER, MICK, the Aged Man from the pub
earlier, standing in front of him.

Ignoring him swiftly, he goes back to opening his door and
getting into his car.

MICK

(Approaching)

Son wait, give us a second...

Paul LOOKS up, dead at him.

PAUL

I don't have to give you a fucking
thing. And DON'T fucking "son" me.

WE WATCH as Mick attempts a reconciliation.

MICHAEL

I'm not well Paul. (Pause) I'm
dying.

Paul STARES STRAIGHT AT HIM, holding it for a BEAT ...then
without another word he quickly gets into the car, slams the
door, starts the engine and screeches away.

Mick stands in place, WATCHING him go.

INT. PAULS CAR - DAY

Stopped at traffic lights a ways down the road, Paul struggles with the anger inside him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mick, slowly makes his way back over to where his TAXI is parked.

INT. MICKS TAXI - DAY

He gets in, sitting behind the wheel, STARING OFF into the distance.

Nothing else he can do, he starts it up and drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. MICKS TAXI - EVENING

Mick DRIVES along the Quays in Dublins City Centre. PEOPLE and CARS crowding the streets and roads on both sides.

Out of the corner of his eye he catches a MAN IN A PINSTRIPE SUIT flagging him down by the side of the street as he passes by.

He pulls in waiting for Pinstripe to catch up.

MICK
(As Pinstripe gets in)
How's it going?

PINSTRIPE
Merrion Square please.

MICK
Righto.

He checks his side mirror and edges back out into the traffic.

INT. TAXI - LATER

They sit snarled in the midst of the heavy Dublin evening traffic.

Mick stares ahead blankly, well used to it by now.

Pinstripe occupies himself with a raft of papers he's taken from his briefcase.

He GLANCES UP at the congestion outside.

PINSTRIPE
(With a wry smile)
Good old Dublin.

MICK
(Half turns, laughs)
Yeah. Tell me about it.

Pinstripe goes back to his documents and Mick, he goes back to waiting.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI GARAGE - EVENING

Back at the garage, shift over, Mick gives the inside of the taxi a quick clean.

INT. TAXI OFFICE - EVENING

Exiting the locker room, Mick fixes the collar of his jacket as he goes.

Passing by reception, where JACKIE (42) talks busily into her headset having ten conversations at once, he gives her a quick wink and a wave as he slips out.

EXT. STREET. - EVENING

He shuffles along the busy street, lighting one up as he walks.

Inhaling deeply on the cigarette, a HARSH RASPING COUGH comes from him as the smoke hits his lungs.

EXT. ENTRANCE - MINI MART/SPAR - EVENING

A YOUNG COUPLE, arm in arm exit the shop, Mick pauses to let them past, and heads in.

INT. MINI MART/SPAR - EVENING

He heads straight for the back of the shop, opening a freezer and picks up his nightly quota...EIGHT CANS OF CIDER.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN - TENEMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Mick forces open the heavy cast iron gate, heads through the overgrown garden and down the steps to the BASEMENT FLAT.

INT. FLAT/BEDSIT - EVENING

He closes the door behind him and turns to take in his "Home Sweet Home".

A small, cramped, grubby all in one bedsit badly in need of a lick of paint and then some. Although an effort has been made to keep the few belongings in as neat and tidy an order as possible.

He heads on over to the kitchen area, stooping down to deposit his cans in the little fridge.

Straightening up with a groan, clutching one of the cans in his hand, he pops the ring and takes a long needy swill.

As an after thought he opens an overhead press, picking out a BOTTLE OF PILLS from the three or four that sit in there, knocking a couple out into his hand he downs them with another drain of cider.

Satisfied as best he can be, he heads on into the living room.

CUT TO:

INT. MICKS BEDSIT - LATE NIGHT

Mick, sits slouched on the sofa bed in the darkness, lit only by the GLARE of the TV, empty cans about him, he watches through heavy lids, the TINNY SOUND OF GUNSHOTS AND EXPLOSIONS echoing from the screen.

FADE OUT.

INT. PAULS BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul lies sprawled in bed, WATCHING MARIA LUSTILY, as she puts the finishing touches to her make up in the mirror.

Done, she turns to him, smoothing out imagined creases in her skirt.

MARIA

Well?

He takes in the sight of her for a beat... then letting out a MOAN OF SATISFACTION, LUNGES ACROSS THE BED TRYING TO GRAB HIMSELF A PIECE.

MARIA
(Pulling away, shrieking)
Noooo! Behave.

He lies back down,...very reluctantly it has to be said.

PAUL
Spoil sport.

She waves a playful, admonishing finger at him and goes over to the dresser, fidgeting about.

WE WATCH as finally she picks up a small bottle of her "Happy Pills", knocks out two and downs them like Smarties.

Paul LOOKING OVER, SEES THIS ALSO, a frown creasing his forehead, but he bites his tongue nevertheless.

He rolls over, hands behind his head, staring up at the ceiling.

PAUL
Nervous?

MARIA
Ah a little, you know, first day...

PAUL
You'll be grand, have them eating
out of your hand in no time
darlin'.

She smiles across hopefully, closes her bag and makes her way over to the bed.

MARIA
(Bending down for a kiss)
OK, wish me luck.

As he kisses her, he tries to pull her down onto the bed beside him.

MARIA
Noooo.

She extricates herself, giving him the "What are you like?" look.

MARIA
Bold boy.

He leans across...

PAUL
Get out of here and stop teasing
me.

...and gives her arse a slapping.

MARIA
Oww. (She leans in giving him
another quick kiss) Right, bye.
Have to go. Be good.

PAUL
Seeya later. We'll do something
tonight, alright?

MARIA
OK. Bye.

And off she goes, out the door.

Paul SHOUTS after her:

PAUL
Do you have the keys?

MARIA (O.S.)
Yeah, thanks.

He stretches back lazily in the bed, a man of leisure.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS BEDROOM - LATER

He rises making his way over to the bedroom window in no
great hurry.

Parting the curtains he LOOKS OUT on the world below, PEOPLE
scurrying along as fast as they can, CARS whizzing by up and
down the road, everybody in a hurry to be somewhere.

He moves away from the window, grabbing a pair of trackie
bottoms and t-shirt that are slung over the back of a chair,
pulls them on, and moves out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #3
Now the really great ones, your
Leonards, Dempseys, Armstrongs,
when they were at their peak
nothing got in their way. It's like
a one track mind.
(MORE)

BOXING EXPERT #3 (cont'd)
 Family, friends, anything from the
 outside. It didn't matter, they'd
 just shut it all out, get in there
 and get on with it...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #2
 ...it is funny but in a way that is
 the easiest part,...You know what's
 needed, everythings set up, laid
 out for yeh. You just have to go in
 there and do the business when the
 bell rings. It's the other part
 when your not fighting, waiting
 around, don't know which end of you
 is up that's where you start to
 lose track and go off...you know...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #3
 ...I don't think it's something you
 can teach, it's either there or
 it's not. (Pause) That's what makes
 them winners isn't it?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Paul strolls barefoot into the kitchen, heading over to the
 press and takes out a LARGE FRYING PAN.

Next he opens the fridge, clapping his hands together in
 anticipation, before filling his arms with the makings of a
 great big fry up, sausages, eggs, rashers, black pudding...

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The MEAT in the PAN HISSES and SIZZLES as he cooks away,
 SINGING ALONG BROKENLY with the RADIO in the background.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

He moves quickly across the kitchen over to the table, his
 "heart attack on a plate" in one hand, a mug of steaming hot
 tea in the other.

He sits down, ATTACKING THE FOOD WITH GUTSO.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

On the TV a SORRY LOOKING EXCUSE FOR A MAN listens intently as a "RELATIONSHIPS EXPERT" tells him what he needs to do to be a better man for his girlfriend, while the studio audience APPLAUDS along like a bunch of SPASTIC CLAP-HAPPY SEALS.

Paul lounging on the sofa, watching, remote in hand, mutters to himself:

PAUL
Crock of fucking shight...

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 1:12 PM

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paul still on the sofa, wearied now, he leans forward, FLICKING THROUGH THE CHANNELS in the vain hope of finding something decent to watch at this hour of the day, all the while munching on a big, king-size bar of chocolate.

ON THE TV:

AUSTRALIAN SOAP
"What do you mean you don't know?
Bruce was here just five minutes
ago?"

"Yeah I know but I didn't have time
then did I mate?"

"So what am I supposed to tell Nat?"

Flick:

IRISH NEWS
"So just how do we stop the carnage
that is happening on Irish roads
today? Earlier I spoke with
Assistant Commissioner Tony
Williams.

(MORE)

IRISH NEWS (cont'd)

"Well I think one of the first things we can all do is to take a better collective responsibility when we're out on the roads, be aware, be vigilant..."

Flick:

GAME SHOW

"And welcome to another edition of everybodys favorite game show EMPHASIZE!. We've got some great prizes on offer today, so lets not waste anymore time and let's go meet..."

Giving up he SWITCHES OFF the TV, throwing the remote onto the couch.

He sits, bored, listless.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - LATER

He MOOCHEs about the flat.

Picking up a magazine from the table, he scans through it for a few pages before throwing it back down.

He moves over to some DVDS resting on a nearby shelf, giving the titles a quick once over to see if anything grabs his fancy...it doesn't.

He sits down, sighing to himself as he drums his fingers along the table top.

He stares across the room.

Then with decision:

PAUL

Fuck it.

He jumps up and strides across the room, picks up the telephone and starts dialling. He looks off out the window while he waits for an answer.

He doesn't have long to wait:

PAUL

Alright ya bollocks,.. what are you up to? (Pause) (Laughs) Fancy a game of pool? (Pause) Houricans? Grand,.. what? (Pause) (Laughing) Fuck you, yeh baldy cunt! Right I'll see you in about an hour, right, good luck.

He drops the phone back down into its holder, grinning to himself as he takes off out of the room.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Washed and dressed now Paul throws on a well worn, faded denim jacket and heads for the door, stopping he turns and goes back over to the bedside locker and has a quick rummage around the junk on top. Not finding what he wants, he carries on out.

EXT. STREET/OUTSIDE FLAT - DAY

Paul comes out of the building at a trot, heading for the NEWSAGENTS on the corner.

INT. CORNER SHOP - DAY

Strolling up to the counter he greets MAX, the proprietor with a warm smile.

PAUL
Alright Max, how's it going buddy?

MAX
Ah Paul, good and you?

PAUL
Doin great. Doin that well in fact
I pity anyone who isn't me.

Paul takes a packet of CHEWING GUM from the rack on the counter and digs for the change in his pocket.

MAX
That it?

PAUL
(Handing over the cost)
Yeah, cheers bud.

MAX
Thank you.

PAUL
Talk to you later Max, have a good
one.

MAX
All the best Paul.

And out he heads.

INT. DART CARRIAGE - DAY

Paul sits in the near empty Dart carriage staring out the window as it trundles along.

INT. HOURICANS BAR - DAY

Pauls regular haunt. A SMATTERING of DRINKERS here at this time of the day.

No nouveau cuisine or fancy decor to be found here, just the basics that a pub really needs along with a tasty pint and a good bit of banter to go with it.

Paul comes striding in through the door, full of tuck.

One of the Drinkers at the bar, a hardened looking old fella by the name of BILL, looks towards the SOUND of his entrance.

BILL
(Perks up)
Aye, Aye, here comes trouble!

Paul bounds over to the bar, smiling broadly.

PAUL
(Shakes his hand)
Billy boy! How u doin? Keeping well?

BILL
Not a bother son, not a bother.

PAUL
That's the way, that's the way.

Paul keenly greets the others at the bar, all happy to see him.

CUT TO:

INT. ART GALLERY - SAME

Maria at work in her new job guides a WELL TO DO COUPLE through the finer details of the works of MODERN ART on display, nervous but hiding it well.

MARIA
...and this is from a young Venezuelan artist who lives right here in town, he recently had an exhibition in New York that was...

The Couple listen closely as they appraise his work.

CUT TO:

INT. HOURICANS PUB - DAY

The ATMOSPHERE and NOISE LEVEL among the patrons of the pub seems to have gone up a notch since Pauls arrival.

Joe, "the baldy cunt", Pauls buddy has arrived now and the boys get down to business.

JOE
Right, what you having?

PAUL
Ah I'll just have a glass of coke,
cheers.

JOE
(Laughing, eyeing the
others about him)
Get to fuck...

PAUL
No serious...

One of the Old Timers at the bar pipes up:

OLD TIMER
Must be that time of the month for
the poor girl.

Paul responds, smiling with a RAISED MIDDLE DIGIT.

Joe gets them in regardless.

JOE
(To the BARMAN)
Two pints of Guinness Patsy,
cheers. (Chuckling) "A glass of
coke"...

Paul gives in, leaning against the bar as he shakes his head ruefully.

PAUL
Ah your an awful influence
lads...awful...

JOE
(To the others)
Says bleedin' him!

The LAUGHING and JOKING continues while they wait for their pints.

INT. HOURICANS PUB - DAY

Paul a quare few pints sunk, moves about the pool table
STUDYING HIS SHOT, milking it for all it's worth, as Joe
LOOKS ON.

Satisfied at last, he hunkers down over the white.

PAUL
(To Joe)
Watch this for a bit of skill.

Concentration etched on his face, he lines it up just right,
pulls back and lets fly...and in she goes!

PAUL
Get in there you little beauty!

JOE
Jammy fuck!

Joe drains his glass.

JOE
Another?

Paul a little unsure, checks his watch.

JOE
What she do cut the bollocks off
you?

PAUL
Yeah she wears them as a pair of
fucking earrings. Go on.

JOE
Good man.

Joe heads for the bar, as Paul begins to set them up for
another game.

Looking up from the table he SHOUTS across to Joe:

PAUL
Get a couple of chasers as well
Joe.

Joe gives the idea the THUMBS UP and a smiling Paul goes back
to racking them.

CUT TO:

INT. ART GALLERY - EARLY EVENING

Maria first day over at last, pleased with herself, says her good-byes to her NEW COLLEAGUES.

INT. HOURICANS PUB - SAME

The pub starting to PACK OUT now, it seems like Paul knows each and every PERSON there.

Right now he's where he wants to be, having a laugh and a joke, plenty of drink in him, not a care...or a thought for anything in the world, just one of the lads.

INT. CAR/MOTORWAY - EVENING

Maria driving along the motorway on her way home...she really is chuffed with herself.

INT. FLAT/HALLWAY - EVENING

She arrives home, bounding in through the front door.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - EVENING

She comes into the living room, finds no one there.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Has a QUICK PEEK into the bedroom, empty as well...a knowing, disappointed look begins to creep across her face.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 7:34 PM

CUT TO:

INT. HOURICANS PUB - EVENING

Paul, oblivious, laughing and joking with the Boys. Right now, as far as he's concerned he's already "home", the night just warming up.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #3

...Thing you've got to remember when your in there is that every punch has consequences, good or bad. It's about picking your shots...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #2

...Yeah being a fighter that's pretty straightforward, but being an ordinary Joe Soap? Now that's a different kettle of fish...

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXS OFFICE - DAY

The base for Alexs' fledgling operation.

Two desks occupy the small room, one for himself and the other for his ever harried PERSONAL ASSISTANT, VANESSA (33). Numerous fax machines, phones, laptop computers and documents are scattered about.

Right now Alex sits behind his desk, phone glued to his ear as a look of concern stretches across his face.

ALEX

As far as I'm concerned we had a deal. Now what are you telling me? Is he fighting this other guy or what? Yes or no?

CUT TO:

INT. A.P. SPORTS PROMOTIONS - OFFICE/LONDON

Lounging in his leather arm chair, very much at home in the surroundings of his palatial office, where framed, glass encased fight posters of his previous triumphs adorn the walls is ARMAND PIQUET (47), the main maker and fixer on the European boxing scene.

He scans casually threw a set of papers in his hands as he addresses Alex via the speakerphone on his desk.

ARMAND

Alex, Alex, you have to look at it from his point of view.

(MORE)

ARMAND (cont'd)
If you were offered twice the money
and you don't even have to leave
your home town for it, what would
you do?

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXS OFFICE - INTERCUT

ALEX
The bottom line is he doesn't want
the fight, doesn't want to take the
risk...

INT. A.P. SPORTS PROMOTIONS - OFFICE/LONDON

ARMAND
(Laughing)
Alex, he's the champion. He doesn't
have to take any risk unless it's
made worth his while. If you
believe in your boy then I'm afraid
your the one who has to take the
risk my friend.

INT. ALEXS OFFICE

Alex sits, considering.

ALEX
How much?

INT. A.P. SPORTS PROMOTIONS - OFFICE/LONDON

ARMAND
Three million guaranteed pay or
play and I'm pretty sure you'll
have your man.

INT. ALEXS OFFICE

ALEX
You want the filings from me
fucking teeth as well?

INT. A.P. SPORTS PROMOTIONS - OFFICE/LONDON - DAY

ARMAND
You want a seat at the top table
then you've got to pay the price.
(MORE)

ARMAND (cont'd)
 If your boy does the job like you
 believe he will,...then surely
 you'd simply look upon this as an
 investment for the future, no?

INT. ALEXS OFFICE - DAY

Alex weighs it up, knowing it's shit or get off the toilet
 time.

CUT TO:

INT. HOURICANS PUB - EVENING

Another day, but the USUAL SUSPECTS are to be found propping
 up the bar.

Joe babbling away, plays to his audience which includes Paul.

JOE
 ...he's no stranger to a fish
 supper in anyway. One time he was
 playing, ball was up the other end
 cunt was over by the corner flag
 eating a bleedin' Mars Bar. Swear
 to fuck.

As they LAUGH Pauls PHONE RINGS and he steps outside of the
 GROUP to answer.

PAUL
 Hello?

INT. ALEXS OFFICE - SAME - INTERCUT

Alex behind his desk, listening as Paul answers.

ALEX
 So do you want the good or the bad
 news?

INT. HOURICANS PUB - EVENING

Paul moves to a quieter part of the pub.

PAUL
 Ah Alex, how's it going buddy? Go
 on give us the bad then.

INT. ALEXS OFFICE

Alex straightens up in his chair.

ALEX

Well your gonna have to get your
fucking arse out of the pub for
one. (Pause) Because we got the
bastard.

INT. HOURICANS PUB

WE look closely at Pauls face.

PAUL

You serious?

INT. ALEXS OFFICE

Alex smiles, pleased with himself.

ALEX

Better believe I am.

INT. HOURICANS PUB

A ROAR OF DELIGHT ECHOES from across the pub getting the
ATTENTION of EVERYONE at the bar.

PAUL (O.C.)

You little fucking beauty!

Paul as he comes running up to the bar...

PAUL

Who wants to buy the next bleedin'
champion a drink?

...the smile on his face beaming from ear to ear.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The FIRST THING THAT WE NOTICE as we come into the room are
the cheesy, over sized FELT GREEN TOP HATS and SPANISH
SOMBREROS that are dotted about the walls, facing off against
each other.

Up on the RAISED PLATFORM where he sits Tony considers one
of the SOMBRERO HATS that sits in front of him with a
quizzical expression.

Up there beside him are Paul and Alex while at the far end of
the long table sits a group of dark skinned SPANIARDS.

A REPORTER from the SMALL GROUP OF MEDIA gathered below fields a question to the CHAMPION.

REPORTER #1

...and how does he feel about coming to Dublin to defend his title?

CHAVRO (31) solid, with a face that looks as if it was carved from pure granite, looks to the INTERPRETER who sits beside him and repeats the question for him in SPANISH.

Chavro gives a quick curt, no nonsense reply and the Interpreter relays it to the press with a little added PR shine of his own.

INTERPRETER

Emilio is very happy about coming to Dublin, the Irish have a great fighting tradition, very similar to Spain, and he's very much looking forward to the contest.

Another REPORTER pipes up this time with one for the Challenger.

REPORTER #2

Paul how do you rate your chances?

Paul a bundle of energy, unable to sit still in his seat.

PAUL

Well he's a great fighter you know, but I'm feeling on top of me game right now. (Looks to Tony) We're going to get stuck into training camp and I'm just ready to mix it up, can't wait, wish the fight was tomorrow to be honest with you, I just want to be in there getting stuck in...

Another QUESTION.

REPORTER #3

How do you think the fight will go?

PAUL

(Laughing as he looks down towards Chavro)
Well with the two of us, I don't think it's going to be a fucking tickling contest that's for sure...

This brings a LAUGH from all gathered as the press conference rumbles on.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - LATER

All over now Tony and Paul make their way out.

TONY

What was he thinking, bringing him over, lad doesn't even speak English? Waste of bleedin' time, we could be training.

A smiling Alex OVERHEARING as he comes up behind them, drapes his arms casually over their shoulders.

ALEX

Ah ye of little faith, ye of little faith.
You see Tony it isn't the fight we're selling here today, no, it's the idea... The Fighting Irish against the Spanish Bull. Put the idea in peoples minds they'll do the rest themselves, that's what sells it.

Tony looks far from convinced.

ALEX

Anyway I've done what I said I would. (To Paul) It's over to you now sunshine.

WE WATCH as Paul nods, agreeing, a strange quiet circumspection to him for once,... as on they walk.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

This MONTAGE covers "A Day in the Life" of Paul as he trains for the fight.
It's the routine that keeps him in check, both mentally and physically, preparing him for the fight to come. No fan-fare involved. It's just the daily grind that must be gone through to get him where he needs to be.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An ALARM CLOCK goes off...

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 5:30 AM

CUT TO:

...Paul rises leaving a sleeping Maria in bed, behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

Sleepy eyed he throws some water in his face and steps on the BATHROOM WEIGHING SCALES.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Paul sits on the edge of the bed, tying his runners nice and tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

A light early morning jog along the cold, empty streets to get started.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Fresh from the shower, sits at the table mulling over a spartan breakfast of plain grey oatmeal.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 9:30 AM

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Back in bed, Paul sets the alarm clock, and rolls over.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 11:00 AM

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Nap time over, up and away we go again.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/CAR - MID MORNING

Paul loads a large gym bag into the boot of his car.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/CHANGING ROOMS - DAY

Paul as he CHANGES into shorts and singlet.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 12:00 PM

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/TRAINING AREA - DAY

Some stretching exercises on the floor to loosen up...

...followed by some light skipping to get warmed up.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/RING - DAY

Next up it's into the RING and some COMBINATION WORK ON THE PADS with Tony.

CUT TO:

SPARRING SESSION. On his toes chasing his PARTNER about the ring.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/TRAINING AREA

POUNGING THE HEAVY BAG, crunching lefts and rights to the body of the bag, as Tony holds it steady for him...

CUT TO:

...Sitting on a bench now, building his strength up, straining AS HE PUSHES A WEIGHTED BARBELL ABOVE HIS HEAD...

CUT TO:

Finishes up by toughening up the bread basket, STANDING SIT UPS as Tony holds his ankles tight.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 4:30 PM

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/CHANGING ROOMS - DAY

EXHAUSTED he sits on a low bench in the changing rooms, REFUELLING... absentmindedly CLENCHING AND UNCLENCHING HIS LEFT FIST.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM - DAY

Dressed now, gym bag over his shoulder it's a quick good luck to Tony and the Lads and then out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - EVENING

At home, he picks at a not very appetizing meal of chicken and pasta

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Time to relax,... easier said than done. He sits watching TV with Maria. Programme over he gets up kissing her atop the head and makes for bed.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

A last QUICK CHECK ON THE WEIGHT before we call it day.

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN - SUPERIMPOSED IN WHITE - 9:30 PM

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tucked up, he sets the alarm and OUT WITH THE LIGHT...till we do it all again tomorrow.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TAXI/ROAD - DAY

Mick behind the wheel, he looks pale, peaky as he ferries a CUSTOMER.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT TAXI - DAY

He hands the Customer their change through the window.

MICK
Cheers chief, have a good one.

Sitting back he shifts about, uncomfortable.

Trying to ignore it, he starts the car and drives off.

INT. TAXI OFFICE - DAY

He heads through the office on his way to the toilets in back.

He passes by a fellow driver DENNIS who is jawing with Jackie at the reception desk.

DENNIS
Alright Mick. (Taking him in)
Jaysus you don't look the best. You alright?

MICHAEL
Ah yeah. I think I got a dodgy pint last night.

DENNNIS

Owww. Fuck that.

MICHAEL

I know. Tell me about it.

He continues on past them.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Bracing himself against the sink, he STARES at his REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR, worried.

He reaches into his pocket removing a small bottle of pills, popping a couple in his mouth he downs them with a mouthful of tap water.

Straightening up, he clears his throat, trying to think himself right.

Without warning he's HIT WITH A CRIPPLING PAIN TO HIS SIDE that doubles him up almost bringing him to his knees.

He staggers over to the toilet bowl, supporting himself against it as he begins to WRETCH VIOLENTLY...BLOOD mixed in with the BILE as it comes up.

INT. BACK OF TAXI OFFICE - DAY

Jackie a concerned look on her face, heads back towards the toilet, where MICK can be HEARD RETCHING.

She knocks gently on the door.

JACKIE

Mick?...Are you alright?

INT. BATHROOM

Trying hard to steady himself against the pain, he manages to answer.

MICHAEL

(Breathless)

Yeah Jackie,...I'm grand...I just...

With that he's hit by a fresh attack, much worse than before, an agonized moan escaping his lips before he FALLS UNCONSCIOUS to the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

A bunch of 6 & 7 year olds stand, full of giddy excitement in the shallow end of the pool listening and watching their SWIM INSTRUCTOR as he speaks.

Emma, looking as cute as a button in her water wings and swim cossie, WAVES UP TO HER MOTHER, who WATCHES proudly from the over head gallery.

Susan hoists Claire up so that she can see her big sister.

SUSAN

(Smiling)

Wave to her. That's it. And when you get a little bit bigger you'll be able to be down there to.

CLAIRE

Yeah?

SUSAN

Yeah.

Just then the PHONE in her bag RINGS.

Putting Claire down she reaches over to retrieve it.

SUSAN

Hello? (Pause) Yes it is...

Worry and concern seep into her face as she listens.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR PARK - EVENING

Paul, the hard graft done for another day, bangs the car boot closed and makes his way around to the drivers side.

INT. CAR - EVENING

He gets behind the wheel just as his mobile begins to RING. Taking it from his pocket he SEES THE CALLER DISPLAY READS "Susan".

PAUL

(Answering)

Alright sis.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SAME

Susan paces anxiously along a hospital corridor.

SUSAN
(Concerned)
Heya, listen,... Da's been taken
bad, he's in hospital.

INT. CAR

Paul key in the ignition, about to start her up, stops, sits
back.

PAUL
OK.

Silence follows.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Susan lowers herself into a chair along the wall.

SUSAN
Are you gonna come?

INT. CAR

Paul contemplates the question.

PAUL
How bad?

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Susan shifts in her chair.

SUSAN
(Quietly)
It's not looking too good.

INT. CAR

He shakes himself sharply from his reverie, the defenses
coming down.

PAUL
No I wont be going. There's no
point.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

As she stands.

SUSAN
He's still your father Paul...

INT. CAR

Paul steadfast.

PAUL
Doesn't mean anything to me luv.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Susan begins to head back up the corridor the way she came.

SUSAN
(With difficulty)
Do it for me.

INT. CAR - EVENING

No dice.

PAUL
Don't start that.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Susan stops walking, coming to a small window, where she look in to see Emma and Claire at play in the nursery, carefree not a worry in the world.

SUSAN
At the end of the day we're all
he's got.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Paul stares out the window, already trying to shut himself off from the conversation.

PAUL
Yeah well that's something he
should have thought about before
now isn't it.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Susan, her REFLECTION VISIBLE in the glass window.

SUSAN

None of us can see the future Paul.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Discussion over, he makes to start the car.

PAUL

Yeah right. Listen I gotta go alright. If you need anyone to look after the kids or anything gimme a shout. But apart from that...

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

Susan nods to herself, nothing else she can say.

SUSAN

Yeah sure. That's OK.

INT. CAR - EVENING

PAUL

OK then. All the best.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

SUSAN

OK. Bye.

INT. CAR - EVENING

He ends the call. As he leans forward to start the engine there is the briefest of pauses as he STOPS, HIS HAND RESTING ON THE KEY...but over before it begins he STARTS the car and BACKS out of his parking space.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul lies on the bed, shirtless, staring blankly at the small TV in the corner of the room. Distracted he half listens as Maria whittles on in the background.

MARIA
 ...and so Jonathan has everything
 arranged, it's going to be a huge
 surprise for them...

She stops becoming aware that Paul isn't really giving her
 his full intention.

MARIA
 Everything OK?

PAUL
 (Looks over)
 Yeah grand, not a bother.

MARIA
 So your OK with it?

PAUL
 (Lost)
 With what?

MARIA
 Going to my parents anniversary
 party the week after next.

PAUL
 Ah I don't know luv...I'm in
 training you know that.

MARIA
 C'mon Paul it's only for an hour.
 It's not gonna do any harm, we just
 have to show our faces that's all?

Paul, not really wanting to be having this conversation right
 now.

PAUL
 We'll see OK, I'm not making any
 promises.

Maria LOOKS to him again..

MARIA
 Are you sure everythings alright?

PAUL
 (Snapping)
 Jaysus luv everything is grand.
 Will you stop asking me the same
 thing over and over again...for
 fuck sake.

He goes back to staring at the TV, as Maria LOOKS ON,... her nose *just about* still there.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM - DAY

Paul at work in the ring, SPARRING...a little too intensely for Tonys liking.

TONY
C'mon ease it up a bit.

He backs off, rolls his shoulders, trying to shake his limbs loose, his body a mass of tension.

He moves to the side of his SPARRING PARTNER, flicking out his right jab as he does so.

TONY
That's it work the jab, nice and easy.

He continues to move about the ring, stilted, awkward, finding it hard to relax and get into his rhythm.

He WATCHES his Sparring Partner in front of him THROUGH THE OUTLINE OF HIS HEADGEAR.

As he WATCHES him...

JUMP CUT TO:

An IMAGE OF HIS FATHER takes his Sparring Partners place.

BACK TO:

The action in the ring continuing.

Paul seeing an opening comes in hard throwing a quick right jab, following through with an overhand left,...but his timing is off and the LEFT carries far too much on it for a sparring session, as it reaches its point of impact his Sparring Partner has already dropped his chin and moved a fraction of an inch forward so that THE PUNCH CONNECTS FLUSH WITH THE HARD CROWN AT THE TOP OF HIS HEAD.

Paul immediately pulls up sharp.

PAUL
Owww! Fuck.

He holds his left hand up in the air.

Tony is through the ropes in a second.

TONY

What's wrong? What's wrong?

PAUL

The fucking hand again, the fucking hand. (To Sparring Partner) What the fuck are you doing coming in with your head down like that?

TONY

OK, OK, let me see.

Tony begins to carefully unlace the glove as Paul curses his...luck?

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - LATER

Paul sits with Tony, his right hand now lightly bandaged. His face wears a scowl as he listens to the DOCTOR go over the results of his X-RAY.

DOCTOR

...there is nothing broken this time, but theirs bruising and swelling to the ligament area here, around the base. It means your going to be looking at a period of rest...

PAUL

(Cutting him off)
How long?

DOCTOR

Excuse me?

PAUL

How long am I going to have to rest it for?

DOCTOR

At least ten days, two weeks, till the inflammation goes down, give the damage a chance to repair itself and then we can have another look at it.

It's not the answer he wanted to hear.

CUT TO:

EXT. RED CARPET - BLACK TIE GALA - NIGHT

Alex looking impressive in his penguin suit, heads up the carpet at a CHARITY EVENT attended by the great and the good of the Irish social scene.

He laughs easily as he fends off a REPORTERS query.

ALEX

...No, no, he's fine, it's nothing serious, just a precaution, everythings still going ahead as scheduled. We've put the date back a couple of weeks just as a precaution but come November 12th now I'm sure he's going to do the business.

Alex gives the best mega watt smile he can muster, slapping the Reporter benevolently on the shoulder as he moves off and on to bigger things.

FADE OUT.

EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAY

Susan looking tired and drawn, makes her way across the bustling hospital courtyard from the car park.

She trots up the handful of steps that leads to the Hospital Entrance and slips inside.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

Down the corridor past the ORDERLIES and NURSES who go about their daily business.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD

She comes to her Fathers bedside, removing her jacket and placing it on the back of the chair as she sits.

Mick, stirs fitfully in a troubled sleep, the weight he's lost during his hospital stay starkly evident in his hollow cheeks.

She reaches across placing a soothing hand to his forehead and looks on, a wish to ease his suffering contained within her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Paul dressed in a smart black shirt and his underpants, looks down at the weighing scales he stands on, not happy with what he sees.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Looking beautiful in a well fitting evening dress and heels, Maria puts the finishing touches to her make up in the dresser mirror.

Behind her Paul stomps in, dropping himself down like a ton of bricks onto the side of the bed.

She darts a FURTIVE GLANCE over at him through the mirror.

He sits there, LOOKS OVER to where Maria busies herself with her make up, turns back and picks up his trousers from where they are laid out for him on the bed and begins to get into them.

PAUL
(Muttering, under his
breath)
I don't know why I even decided to
go to this fucking thing.

Maria's back stiffens slightly, but she lets it pass, pretending she hasn't heard him, trying to keep the mood light.

MARIA
Sorry honey?

As he buttons his trousers...

PAUL
Nothing, never mind.

...and sits down abruptly to put on his shoes.

Maria sighs inaudibly into the mirror and works on fixing her lipstick.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Paul drives them in silence to the party...the atmosphere between them possible to cut it with the proverbial knife.

INT. ANNIVERSARY PARTY/MARIAS PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

A DRINKS PARTY in full swing. The look of the large, high ceilinged room shouts money straight away. A group of 20 to 25 guests, stand around chatting politely, MUSIC PLAYING LOW in the background, a very sober, staid affair.

Into this come Maria and Paul, greeted almost immediately by ALAN (60), Marias scholarly looking father.

ALAN
(As he hugs her warmly)
Sweetheart!

Maria returns the hug just as affectionately, kissing him on the cheek.

MARIA
Hiya Daddy.

Paul stands off to the side, watching.

ALAN
You look wonderful honey.

MARIA
Thanks.

He turns to Paul, extending his hand genially.

ALAN
Paul how are you? Nice of you to come.

Paul accepts the hand, returns the smile.

PAUL
How's it going Mr. Stevens?

ALAN
Alan, please. (To Maria) Your mother will be delighted to see you.

Maria forces a smile.

Alan leads them off towards her Mother, Paul trooping along behind.

They haven't got very far when they are intercepted by LINDA (54), Marias mother, a woman who looks like there hasn't been a moment in her life where she wasn't in complete control and on top of everything.

She embraces Maria extravagantly, who finds it a little awkward but tries to hide it.

LINDA
Darling! Let me have a look at you?

Holding her at arms length, she takes her in from head to toe, as Maria gives a nervous titter.

LINDA
Have you lost weight? Your looking a trifle thin.

MARIA
I don't think so, no.

LINDA
I think you have, yes.

ALAN
Give over Linda she looks wonderful, a picture.

He's right she does.

LINDA
Oh hello Paul, how are you?

PAUL
Grand Mrs. Stevens not a bother and yourself?

LINDA
Fine, thank you. (Back to Maria)
Come, your brother will be delighted to see you.

And off she drags her,...leaving Paul standing awkwardly with Mr. Stevens.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIVERSARY PARTY - LATER

A small cluster of WELL TO DO'S stand about, sipping from their drinks graciously discussing the topics of the day.

Paul stands on the periphery of the group, nodding along half heartedly with what's being said, not making much of an effort to involve himself. It's clear from his Demeanor that these are not "his type of people".

He sips often from the glass of orange juice he holds in his hand. Looking across the room, he sees Maria standing with another group, which includes her brother Jonathan, she laughs and smiles freely and easily, enjoying herself.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIVERSARY PARTY - LATER

As Paul traipses across the room over towards where Maria stands.

Her brother Jonathan (32) is the first to SEE him coming upon them.

JONATHAN

(Loudly)

There he is, the man himself.
Ireland's very own Rocky!

PAUL

How's it going Jonathan. (To Maria)
Can I have a quick word Maria?

MARIA

Sure yes.

They head off to the side, as Jonathan WATCHES THEM GO, with a dismissive shake of his head in Paul's direction.

INT. ANNIVERSARY PARTY - WITH MARIA & PAUL

PAUL

Look I'm not feeling too good OK,
I'm gonna head.

MARIA

But we only just got here Paul?

PAUL

Hang on if you want, I'm just not
in the humour...

MARIA

Ah Paul c'mon...

PAUL

Listen luv don't...I'm going OK.
You do what you want.

On that he turns and walks off, leaving her there, WATCHING him go.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - LATER

Paul sits at the table eating a small bowl of cereal.

In the background we HEAR the front door being opened.

Maria comes in heading straight for the kitchen, where she NOISILY commences to make a cup of tea.

Paul sits, MUNCHING his cereal.

The SILENCE between the two of them builds...until:

PAUL
I told you I didn't feel like going
luv.

She continues to ignore him.

Paul shrugs to himself and goes back to his cereal.

Finally after another LONG BEAT OF SILENCE:

MARIA
I mean a couple of hours? Is that
too much to ask?

PAUL
You know that's not my kinda
thing...

MARIA
And everything you do is mine?

PAUL
That's your choice.

Paul rises from the table, and brings his empty bowl over to the sink.

MARIA
Your problem is you don't want to
make any effort Paul.

As he rinses the bowl in the sink.

PAUL
Uh huh. Yeah.

MARIA
You're a grand fella once everything
is going your way, but as soon as
it's something that doesn't suit
you, forget about it.

Turns on her.

PAUL
What are you talking about?
"Doesn't suit me". I don't have a
problem with anything. What do you
want me to do?
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
Waste me time talking with a bunch
of stuck up cunts like that? That's
not me. Fuck sake...bunch of dry
shites.

MARIA
They weren't stuck up, just because
they don't go on...

PAUL
Weren't stuck up? Bollicks. What
about your brother, huh?

MARIA
What about him? He didn't say
anything to you?

PAUL
Yeah right.

He turns and walks away back into the living room.

Maria follows him in.

MARIA
You just took off in the car, ypu
didn't even care how I was going to
get back home, did you? You don't
want to put yourself out for
anyone, especially where I'm
concerned, it's all about you.

As he sits down on the couch and switches on the TV.

PAUL
Whatever you say.

Maria walks around the sofa to look him in the eye.

MARIA
(Incredulous)
Like,... you stand there and judge
everyone, stuck up cunt this, dry
shite that. Who are you to judge
anyone? Who the fuck are you to
judge anyone?

Looks up.

PAUL
Why don't you find someone else
then, huh? One of those nice
barrister boys there tonight?
That'd make Mummy and Daddy really
proud now wouldn't it?

Maria stands shaking her head...then begins to walk away,
giving up on it.

MARIA

You talk to me about your father?
Where's the difference, your just
like him.

Paul takes this in. He considers her for a beat as she walks away.

Then with a SUDDEN FURY THAT'S ALL THE MORE SHOCKING FOR ITS UNEXPECTEDNESS he lets fly with a lamp from a nearby table.

It smashes violently against the wall behind Marias head, who SCREAMS OUT in fright.

Paul following through, jumps up from the sofa, coming right up to her, as she cowers.

PAUL

I am nothing, *nothing*, fucking like
him!

Maria, begins to strike out, hitting him ineffectually in the chest.

MARIA

(Through tears)
Get out. Get out.

He turns and storms out of the room and the flat.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Sitting in the drivers seat, he bangs himself against the steering wheel in frustration.

He stops, sits back, LOOKS UP towards the flat.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET/CAR - NIGHT

The CAR pulls away sharply from the side of the road and drives off.

INT. FLAT/LIVING ROOM

Maria slumped against the bottom of the wall, her legs pulled up into her as she sobs.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - NIGHT

Mick lies alone, in the darkness of the hospital ward.

His eyes, stare through slits at the ceiling above. His breath comes short and raspy, a struggle.

His body goes into a brief spasm, then lies still...the HEART MONITOR beside the bed SOUNDS into FLATLINE.

CUT TO:

INT. LATE NIGHT BAR/CLUB

Paul alone, at a corner table in an unfamiliar, half empty club, knocks back the hard stuff, eyes beginning to glaze over dangerously.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT\BEDROOM

Maria recovered, decisive, packs belongings into an overnight rucksack.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL/ROOM - NIGHT

A DOCTOR sits opposite Susan.

DOCTOR
...just wasn't anything we could do
in the end,...the cancer was gone
too far.

Susan nods vacantly.

INT. HOSPITAL/DIFFERENT ROOM - NIGHT

Her Fathers body lies on a trolley, a white sheet pulled up to mid chest.

A NURSE leads Susan into the room and leaves.

Susan, doesn't move, stands on the far side of the room
LOOKING towards him.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT/LIVING ROOM

Maria talks on the phone, quick, to the point.

MARIA
 ...no tonight...I'll pick up the
 rest later...thanks.

She hangs up and heads out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Susan smokes a cigarette slowly outside the Hospital Entrance. She removes her mobile phone and makes a call...

INT. FLAT/LIVING ROOM

We HEAR the FRONT DOOR OF THE FLAT BEING CLOSED BEHIND SOMEONE AS THEY LEAVE, just as Pauls MOBILE PHONE begins to RING where he left it, on the kitchen table,... it ECHOES OUT through the empty flat.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - SAME

...Susan listens as the phone turns over to VOICEMAIL.

PAUL (O.S.)
 "Hi this is Paul, yeh can leave a
 message and I'll get back to yeh,
 cheers" BEEP

SUSAN
 Hi, I know you said you didn't want
 to know, but...Da died earlier
 tonight,... you can give me a call
 back if you want,... OK. Seeya...
 bye.

She finishes her cigarette, stubbing it out, turns and heads back into the hospital.

INT. LATE NIGHT BAR/CLUB - NIGHT

The club thinning out now, closing time. Paul stares out before him, an empty glass sitting on the table in front of him.

The BARMAN comes over to his table, leans down.

BARMAN

Sorry buddy we're closing up now.

Pauls head jerks around at the sound of the voice, he stares up dumbly at the Barman, who moves off to round up the rest of the stragglers.

Paul rises unsteadily to his feet and begins to make his way from the club.

EXT. STREET - LATER

He exits into the cold night, looking around, car keys in hand, disoriented.

He heads over to a STRANGE CAR, trying his keys in the lock, yanking at the door handle.

No success. He stumbles away, stops, and looks about him again.

Confused, he turns and lurches away down the street.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Paul rants incoherently, drunkenly to himself under his breath as he walks.

PAUL

...fuck 'em...pigs bastards...they know me?...don't have a fucking clue...(Shouts)Pack of cunts!

He comes to a CAR parked outside a HOUSE. Stops. He tries to open the door, becoming more frustrated and angry as it refuses to give way.

Finally it all becomes too much for him, and he lashes out, cursing the car as he strikes at it.

PAUL

...CUNT FUCKING BASTARD, I FUCKING HATE YOU...

A LIGHT goes on in the HOUSE behind Paul.

A MAN, mid thirties, dressed in tee-shirt and boxers, appears in the doorway, and rushes down towards him.

MIDDLE AGED MAN

Hey, Hey,...what the fuck do you think your doin?...

The Man reaches him, grabbing his shoulder.

Paul spins around, finding a new outlet for his anger. He grapples with the Man, hitting him about the head and knocks him to the ground. He gets astride of him and begins to strike out, cursing...

PAUL
...fucking bastard...FUCKIN'
BASTARD...BASTARD... bastard...

...his anger and rage overpowering him at this stage, making his blows all but impotent.

Leaving the Man lying there he rises and staggers off down the street crying and mumbling to himself as he goes.

A FRIGHTENED WOMAN (29) runs from the house, down to where the Man lays.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Paul carries on along, distressed, laughing, crying, a conflict of emotions battling inside of him.

In the BACKGROUND the SOUND of POLICE SIRENS can be heard APPROACHING.

FADE OUT.

INT. POLICE CELL - MORNING

Paul sits slumped on the mattress in his cell, head hanging. The DOOR to his CELL is unlocked, and a GARDA ushers him out.

GARDA
Right, c'mon.

He rises wearily and follows him out.

EXT. POLICE STATION/STREET

Tony and Paul come down the steps of the Police Station and out into the morning light.

They trudge over to where Tony is parked.

INT. TONY'S CAR/MOTORWAY

They drive along in silence, Tony STEALING GLANCES across at his charge.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE/KITCHEN

Paul sits, quiet, elbows leaning on the table.

Tony places a mug of hot tea in front of him.

TONY
There get that down yeh.

PAUL
(Glumly)
Cheers.

Tony sits down across from him, unsure what to say. He shifts about in his seat, clears his throat.

Paul stares down into his tea...searching for answers he's not going to find.

Breaking the gloom SARAH (19), Tony's daughter, enters the room breezily.

TONY
Hiya luv.

She smiles at her Father in response, looking over to where Paul sits:

SARAH
Hiya Paul.

PAUL
(Forces a smile)
How's it going Ser.

She goes over and opens the presses above the sink.

TONY
So you in college today luv?

SARAH
Yeah. Not till ten though.

Paul scrapes at a tea stain on the side of his mug.

Sarah finding what she came in for, makes to head out and leave the Men to it.

She leans in giving her father a quick peck on the cheek.

SARAH
I'll see you later Da.

TONY
Take care luv. Gimme a shout if you need a lift when your coming home.

SARAH
Thanks. Bye Paul.

PAUL
All the best Ser.

She leaves and the Men are alone again.

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Tony talks quietly into the phone.

TONY
He's OK,...but...I don't know...his
head's not in the right place.

INT. ALEX'S OFFICE - SAME - INTERCUT

Alex, wearing a hole in the carpet as he paces.

ALEX
So what are you saying to me Tony?
You want to cancel? Because I'll
tell you here and now, that's not
an option...

TONY
I'm just saying, what with the hand
and getting down to the weight as
well, now this, it just mightn't be
the best time.

ALEX
Mightn't be the best time? Mightn't
be the best time? So what? He still
has to fight,...no way. It's bad
enough now the fucking mess he's
after creating...what the fuck was
he trying to do stealing a car in
the first place? No it's too late
now, I've had to postpone it once
already, no, there's no way he's
pulling out...

TONY
So you want to send him in there
with his head not right?

ALEX
No Tony, I want him to stand up and
be a fucking man. He's a fighter,
that's what he's supposed to do,
fight.

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)
 "His heads not right" for fuck
 sake...when has it ever been.
 (Calming) If he doesn't get in that
 ring Tony, that's it I'm through.
 I've had enough of this, and no one
 else is going to want to have
 anything to do with him either...
 I've never come across the fucking
 likes of it.

Tony listens, ill at ease with what he's hearing.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Tony comes back into the kitchen TAKING IN Paul , who sits,
 still rooted to the same spot, wallowing in self pity.

TONY
 C'mon and I'll give you a lift
 home.

Paul looks up, nodding in agreement.

INT. TONY'S CAR/MOTORWAY - DAY

Tony talks as they drive along.

TONY
 ...you've just got to put it all
 behind yeh...had a bit of bad
 luck...(Pause) I know it's
 tough...but...you've got a great
 opportunity here...forget
 everything else, get your head
 down, back in the gym, turn it
 around...

Paul looks on ahead, non committal either way.

EXT. STREET/OUTSIDE PAULS BUILDING - DAY

Paul exits the car giving Tony a weak thumbs up as he walks
 away and into his building.

Tony's WATCHES him go, concern etched on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS FLAT/HALLWAY - DAY

Paul enters through the door, throwing his keys reflexively
 onto the hall table

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

He enters the room, stands there somberly looking about him. His EYES STOP on the FRAGMENTS OF BROKEN LAMP, where they lay at the bottom of the wall, a result of his actions last night.

He walks over slowly, hunkers down and picks them up piece by piece.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Sitting now at the table, the fragments of lamp spread out in front of him, he attempts to piece it back together.

Noticing his phone on the table he picks it up to SEE THE MESSAGE SIGN BLINKING.

Pressing the button to play the message he cradles the phone in the crook of his shoulder and continues on with his patch up job.

We HEAR SUSANS MESSAGE from last night as it plays low in his ear.

SUSAN (O.S.)

"Hi, I know you said you didn't want to know, but Da died earlier tonight,...you can give me a call back if you want... OK. Seeya... bye."

He places the phone slowly back down on the table. Sits there,...the repair of the lamp forgotten.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXS CAR/MOTORWAY

Alex drives along, looking none too happy.

The RADIO plays along in the car, the SONG coming to an end and the perennial sunny voice of the DISC JOCKEY filling the airwaves.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.)

"There we have it another great song on Magic 102.3 FM... Looking through the papers today, (Laughs)... it seems the boxer, Paul Maguire, the Irish Rover, is in a spot of bother AGAIN..."

Alex snaps the radio off, his mood made even worse.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS FLAT/HALLWAY - EVENING

Paul comes back in dressed in sweats, fresh from an evening run.

INT. LIVING ROOM

He comes into the living room,... stopping dead in his tracks as he SEES MARIA and JONATHAN.

His EYES LIGHT on a PACKED SUITCASE that stands against the wall.

Maria turns to face him, struggling to hold his eye.

Jonathan picks up the packed suitcase...

JONATHAN

(To Maria)

I'll take this down to the car. You OK?

MARIA

(Nodding)

Yeah. Fine.

...and brushes out past Paul.

Maria LOOKS to him, shrugs.

MARIA

(Simply)

I just can't do this anymore.

He LOOKS to her, but doesn't respond.

EXT. STREET/CAR

WE WATCH as Jonathan climbs in behind the wheel, starts the car and pulls away, Maria STARING OUT AT US through the rain flecked windshield.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Paul sits, alone, in the dimming light.

FADE OUT.

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM/RING - DAY

Tony moves around the ring with the TRAINING PADS held high for Paul to aim at.

TONY
OK, 1, 2, 3.

Paul responds with a SLUGGISH combination, dropping his hands to his sides when he finishes

Tony cuffs him quickly about the side of the head with the pads, trying to shake him out of his lethargy.

TONY
Concentrate!

He rolls his shoulders, trying to get his head in gear.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - SAME

A CHURCH that has seen better days. A PRIEST at the pulpit presides over the service. A COFFIN on the altar before him.

The PEWS around the church have a handful of PEOPLE dotted about them.

Up at the front Susan sits alone, looking up towards the ALTAR and the PRIEST.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM - LATER

Paul braces himself on the edges of a TREADMILL, while Tony leans in, setting the program.

TONY
Right, nice and strong now, lets go.

The belt begins to rotate, Paul moving to its rhythm.

He EYES himself in the mirror in front of him as he runs.

TONY
That's it nice and steady.

He trots along keeping pace with the machine.

Tony reaches in, pressing buttons.

TONY

Now get ready to push it out for a lap.

The MACHINE BEGINS TO SPEED UP. He digs in going with it.

As he runs he begins to ZERO RIGHT IN on his FACE in the mirror.

The bustle of the gym, Tony at his side, the noise of the treadmill as it whirs away,...all begins to RECEDE INTO THE BACKGROUND.

WE begin to HEAR what is going on INSIDE PAULS HEAD. A TORRENT OF NOISE comes from it. A HUNDRED VOICES, THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, MEMORIES right now all competing to be heard at once.

The TORRENT begins to INCREASE IN VOLUME working towards a PITCH...as he runs numbly, legs pumping, WATCHING himself in the mirror, sweating, fighting, struggling to keep it all under control...

...But he just doesn't have anything left in the tank and he knows it.

He reaches out his hand, STOPPING THE MACHINE, as it winds down he holds himself up on the sides, head and shoulders sagging.

Dumbfounded Tony looks to him:

TONY

What's wrong?

He doesn't respond, just shakes his head and steps down from the machine, walking away.

Tony calls to his departing figure:

TONY

Paul?

He doesn't turn, just keeps walking,... HOLDING A HAND UP IN THE AIR THAT SAYS IT ALL.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul sits alone in the lightless room, sipping readily from the can of booze he holds.

The INSISTENT RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE can be heard in the background...which Paul completely ignores.

CUT TO:

INT. ALEXS OFFICE - SAME

A furious Alex paces relentlessly, phone to his ear, listening to the unanswered ringing coming back at him from the other end.

ALEX
Fucking bastard!

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Paul sits, slowly becoming anesthetized to it all now as the booze takes hold.

FADE OUT.

INT. BOXING EXPERTS

BOXING EXPERT #3
...(Smiles) Yeah I was doing grand then around about the ninth, tenth round, BANG right hand over the top, didn't see a thing of it...When I looked back at the video of it later I could see I'd being setting meself up for it the whole fight...left me right on the seat of me arse to...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #1
...Part and parcel of the game, comes with the territory. It's all about what your gonna do when it does happen, that's the thing...

CUT TO:

BOXING EXPERT #2

...Look you go in with a simple plan and you take it round by round, adapt it as you go, depending on what the other guy throws at you,...deal with it and keep going at it...when it comes down to it, (Shrugs) that's all you can do isn't it?...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

A mucky, dusty BUILDING SITE on an unusually hot summers day in Dublin. WORKERS mill about as the messy work of digging and laying the foundations is done.

A LABOURER in hard hat, fluorescent jacket and mud-caked jeans, pushes a loaded wheel barrow along, over uneven ground, head down.

As he reaches the skip, we see that it's Paul. His face looks tired, drawn.

He begins to unload the top layer of the barrow by hand, heaving the heavy cinder blocks and junk up into the skip.

Lightened, he takes hold of its handles and with a hard push hefts it up the heavy 2 x 4 that serves as a ramp, up to the mouth of the skip, where he tips the rest of its contents inside.

Done, he rests for a moment, removes his hard hat, and wipes the sweat from his face with the back of his hand.

Then it's back to it... scooping up the wheel barrow and across the site for another load.

INT. SITE OFFICE - EVENING

Paul, dirty and grimy from his days graft, clocks out his time card and heads off for the day.

EXT. SITE/CAR PARK - EVENING

Tramping across over to his car.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHIATRISTS OFFICE - LATER

Paul still in his grubby work clothes, sits on the expensive leather couch in the plush office, leg crossed, hands resting in his lap, chewing gum as he stares belligerently across the desk in front of him.

Across the desk, sits the occupier of the office, DR. ALEXANDER LEWIS, (47), a slight man, dressed neatly in slacks and polo shirt, rimless spectacles perched on the bridge of his nose.

He considers Paul as they sit in SILENCE.

DOCTOR LEWIS

So...?

Paul continues to chew.

DOCTOR LEWIS

I'm not sure where exactly this gets us Paul...week after week?

PAUL

Not my choice to be here.

DOCTOR LEWIS

True.

PAUL

Besides what difference does it make to you? You still get paid... either way.

DOCTOR LEWIS

(Smiling)

This is my job Paul.

Paul raises his eyes to the ceiling.

Doctor Lewis leans forward on his desk.

DOCTOR LEWIS

The court will expect to have a progress report...

PAUL

(Smiles)

Write whatever you want. They said I had to come here so I do. End of Doc.

DOCTOR LEWIS

You were sent here as a means to help, not as further punish...

PAUL

(Cuts him off)

Oh yeah to help me,... get the anger under control, isn't that it? Find out why I like to get pissed, what's behind it, all that kinda shite, right? (Nodding) Ah yeah. Tell you what Doc I'll give you the whole shebang right? Mammy didn't love me enough, Daddy used me as a punchbag, I'm hurt, I'm confused, it's societys' fault, the worlds a big bad place, I need the drink to see me through...la di da, la di da, la di fucking da. Use whichever one of those ticks the right box for yeh OK and we'll leave it at that.

He returns to chewing his gum, staring ahead not even bothering to conceal his contempt.

CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE/OFF LICENCE - LATER

Paul makes his way to the counter, laden down with cans of cheap booze and a small bottle of orange.

A slim, young ASIAN girl waits behind the counter to serve him.

Paul dumps his purchases on the counter and points:

PAUL

And can I get a naggin of vodka as well, cheers.

The Girl nods, turning to retrieve it.

EXT. STREET/GROCERY SHOP

Paul shuffles on over to his car.

INT. PAULS CAR

He gets in, throwing his bags onto the passenger seat. He rummages around inside pulling out the NAGGIN OF VODKA and BOTTLE OF ORANGE.

He quickly unscrews the orange, lowers his window and dumps two-thirds of it out onto the street below.

Holding it between his legs he picks up the vodka, uncaps it and begins pouring it into the orange.

Done he casts the empty aside, puts the top back on the orange bottle and shakes the mixture together.

Satisfied he opens it up, puts it to his lips, throws his head back and downs it greedily.

Finished his arm drops to his side holding the empty bottle and he sits back in his seat breathing heavy.

After a shortwhile, revived, feeling the warm buzz of the alcohol taking hold, he leans forward starting the car.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS NEW FLAT - EVENING

Circumstances changed home is now a cramped, over sized bedsit.

We see him sprawled on top of his bed, completely out of it, empty cans littering the grubby floor below him.

A LOUD KNOCK on the door stirs him from his stupor.

Disoriented, he comes round slowly,...the KNOCKING REPEATED, ACCOMPANIED BY:

SUSAN (O.S.)
Paul, are you there?

He manages to get himself up, puts his feet to the floor.

PAUL
(Groggy)
...Yeah,...yeah, gimme a sec...

He makes a half arsed attempt to clear up some of the mess that litters the place.

Heading for the door he rubs the sleep from his eyes as he goes.

As he opens the door...

CUT TO:

INT. HALL/DOORWAY

...Susan takes in the sight of her little brother as he stands before her

PAUL
Alright luv, how's it going?

SUSAN
Hiya...What happened you?

PAUL
(At a loss)
Huh?

SUSAN
You were supposed to pop by for
dinner tonight?

PAUL
(Covering quickly)
Oh yeah, ah...I got held up in
work, was working late, forgot all
about it...sorry...dozed off when I
came home.

SUSAN
Ah OK no problem. (Pause) Can I
come in?

PAUL
Yeah, yeah. Sorry, miles away,
sure, c'mon.

He steps aside, and Susan passes on into the room.

At a glance she takes in the surroundings without comment.

Paul following in behind her:

PAUL
Sorry about the mess, I haven't had
a minute lately...

SUSAN
(Smiling)
This is nothing, you should see my
place with the kids.

They laugh politely, followed by a brief awkward silence,
before:

PAUL
Eh, do you want a cup of tea or
anything luv?

SUSAN
Yeah, that'd be great, thanks.

He heads over to what passes for a kitchen, filling the
kettle.

Susan makes herself comfortable at the table as best she can.

SUSAN
So...how's things?

With his back to her.

PAUL
With me? Ah not a bother, not a
bother, going grand.

She looks over to him.

SUSAN
That's good.

She LOOKS OUT the surprisingly large window at Pauls "VISTA VIEW": Someones back garden, concreted over, clothes flapping on the flimsy washing line.

She turns back towards him.

SUSAN
Girls were looking forward to
seeing you...

PAUL
(As he busies himself at
the sink)
Yeah? Ahh, would of been good to
see them...

SUSAN
(Smiles)
Yeah, all I kept hearing was, "When
is Uncie Paul coming, when is Uncie
Paul coming".

PAUL
(Laughs)
Ahh, I'll have to pop by and see
them.

SUSAN
You will.

PAUL
(As he makes the tea)
How many sugars do you take again
luv?

SUSAN
Two and just a little sup of
milk,...thanks.

Teas made he brings them over, setting them down on the table and pulling out a seat for himself.

PAUL
Careful, might be a little hot.

SUSAN
(Taking a sip)
No it's grand, thanks.

They sit in silence. Susan smiles over at him. He returns it,...a little self conscious, awkward.

SUSAN
So have you seen Tony at all lately?

PAUL
Ehh no...I haven't (Pause) I'll have to give him a call.

SUSAN
Yeah. (Pause) Are you drinking?

PAUL
Me? No. I might have one or two, but that's about it.

SUSAN
Uh huh.

PAUL
How are the kids doing in school?

SUSAN
Grand. Loving it, the two of them.

PAUL
That's good.

SUSAN
Yeah. (Pause) Paul what are you doing?

PAUL
Nothing, I'm grand.

SUSAN
Paul for fuck sake come on. Look at yeh. One or two. Your better than this.

Paul rises from the table, heading back over towards the sink.

SUSAN

We've both seen were this is headed. I thought that'd be the last thing you'd want?

PAUL

(Shrugs)

Maybe it's all I'm fucking good for. A chip of the old block, huh?

SUSAN

Ah woes me. You can blame him for this that and the other as many times as you want, but at the end of the day were's it going to get you? Fuck all that's were. (Pause) Your better than this little brother, alot better and it's a fucking crying shame to see it.

Paul stands by the sink,... the words stinging home despite himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

Another day another...

Paul toils away in the HEAT with his WORKMATES, unloading heavy planks of scaffolding from a truck bed, the work sweating all that booze out of him.

The RADIO PLAYS in the TRUCK CAB.

DISC JOCKEY (O.S.)

"...and it's another beautiful summers day in Dublin. Hope your making the most of it wherever you are..."

Paul hoofs another plank up onto his shoulder and starts on his way...

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

Over the other side of the site now, he hefts broken cinder blocks up into his wheel barrow.

Tired, he stops, wiping the sweaty grime from his eyes.

He looks all about him at the ACTIVITY ON THE SITE:

BULLDOZERS digging NOISILY into the earth.

SCAFFOLDING being hastily erected.

BUILDERS, LABOURERS, BRICKIES sharing a laugh and a joke while they sweat.

He then LOOKS down to the PILE OF BLOCKS still waiting to be disposed of.

PAUL

Fuck this.

Shaking his head, he removes his work gloves and starts off towards the FOREMANS OFFICE.

INT. FOREMANS OFFICE - DAY

SID (47), a heavysset, ruddy country lad, the SITE FOREMAN, stands behind his desk, sipping from a bottle of water as he pours over the set of building plans laid out before him.

A gentle knock at the door lifts his head up and he LOOKS OVER to where Paul stands.

PAUL

Alright Sid, can I have a quick word?

Sid beckons him in.

Paul approaches, hard hat in hand.

PAUL

Is it alright if I take off early...

Sid weighs him up, mindfully.

PAUL

...just that I think I'm coming down with a doze of something...haven't felt the best all week (Pause) I've got most of the back lot cleared away, I can finish off the rest tomorrow...

Sid sits down in his chair gathering the plans together on his desk.

SID

Ah Paul now I don't know, this has been happening a bit too often now lately. I know your a friend of Joes, but...it doesn't look good to the rest of the lads.

Paul shifts defensively on the spot.

PAUL
I do more than me fair share around
here Sid...

SID
I know, I know, but...

As Sid tries to explain where he is coming from his voice is cancelled out by the THOUGHT IN PAULS HEAD.

PAUL (V.O.)
(As he stares at Sid)
"One right hook that's all I'd need
yeh culchie cunt. Sort yeh the fuck
out. Who the fuck do yeh think yeh
are, talking to me like that?...Fat
fuck."

SIDS VOICE comes BACK UP.

SID
...and that's really all I'm
saying. If your not feeling well,
then go on, go on ahead. But we'll
just have to keep an eye on it for
the future, OK?

Paul gives a slight jut of his chin in acknowledgment...

PAUL
(Low)
Yeah. Cheers Sid.

...as he stares down at him.

EXT. BUILDING SITE

Bristling, Paul comes down the steps leading from the office and heads off towards the car park.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

In the playground SMILING MOTHERS play with their CHILDREN in the BRIGHT SUNSHINE.

Pushing them on SWINGS.

Holding hands as they descend gently down a SLIDE.

Watching carefully as they RUN ABOUT, FULL OF BEANS.

YOUNG COUPLES, relax in the warmth of the sun, PLAYFULLY TEASING one another as they LAUGH AND JOKE.

A MIDDLE AGED MAN throws a BALL across the park for his EAGER DOG to CHASE.

REMOVED from all this sitting by himself on a patch of grass is Paul, bare chested, leaning back on his elbows, as he sips from a warm can of beer, watching.

He puts down his beer, lying back on the grass, staring up into the cloudless sky at the sun,...which brings him no joy.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS CAR - DAY

He sits behind the wheel, drinking from a fresh can, STARING OUT across the street from where he's parked...

...at the front of ST. MARYS BOXING GYM.

He brings the can up to his lips again, draining it.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARYS BOXING GYM - SAME

Tony guides an ENTHUSIASTIC YOUNG FEATHERWEIGHT from his vantage point at the side of the ring as he SPARS.

TONY

...that's it double up with the left, step back, see if it's on, then follow through over the top with the right...

BACK TO:

INT. PAULS CAR

Paul sits, staring across before he guns the engine and drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. ART GALLERY - LATER

Maria on her way out of the gallery at the end of the day, waves across to a COLLEAGUE, who balances atop a ladder affixing a painting to the wall.

MARIA
Bye Jodie.

JODIE
(Turning)
Bye-Bye Maria, have a nice evening.

MARIA
Thanks, you to.

As she makes her way out the door, WE NOTICE A CHANGE IN HER APPEARANCE, she has her hair cut shorter now, and the smart skirt suit she wears shows her tanned legs off to good advantage.

The most noticeable difference though is how SHE CARRIES HERSELF, there is a POISE and CONFIDENCE to her that wasn't there before, she seems MORE AT EASE, MORE COMFORTABLE IN HER OWN SKIN.

EXT. STREET/ART GALLERY - EVENING

Maria steps out into the evening sunshine, adjusting the shoulder strap of her bag as she sets off up the street.

PAUL (O.S.)
Maria.

Turning she SEES Paul walking towards her, he is still dressed in his work clothes from earlier. Her surprise at seeing him is evident.

PAUL
(As he reaches her)
How's it going?

MARIA
Hi. It's, ... it's going well,
thanks. (Pause) How have you been?

PAUL
Ah, can't complain.

Maria nods, not really knowing what to say and so there they stand.

PAUL
Listen I just thought maybe you'd
fancy going for a drink?

MARIA
Eh, ...I can't right now, I'm...
meeting someone.

PAUL
 Ah that's OK. (Pause) No
 probs,...maybe another time?

Maria pauses, uncomfortable.

MARIA
 I don't think that would be a good
 idea Paul,...it'd be a bit
 strange...

PAUL
 (Shrugs)
 What? It's only a drink?

MARIA
 I just...(Shaking her head)...no.

Paul stands, looking about him, taking it in.

PAUL
 Alright.

MARIA
 You OK?

PAUL
 Me? Sure, yeah grand, grand,...I
 just thought...

He trails off.

Maria looks at him, at this moment there's nothing she can
 truthfully say for good or bad.

Until:

MARIA
 Sorry but I really have to go,
 I'm...running late as it is...

PAUL
 Sure, sure, yeah go on.

MARIA
 OK then.

She doesn't move.

MARIA
 It was nice seeing you.

PAUL
 You to.

MARIA
 OK then. Bye.

PAUL

Seeya.

She turns and heads on up the street,...we are close on Pauls face watching her go as we...

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Paul and some FRIENDS stand around the club sharing a laugh and a joke.

Paul looks across the crowded club and catches the eye of Maria who sits at a corner table with some GIRLFRIENDS. She smiles shyly at him and turns away quickly.

CUT TO:

INT. NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Paul and Maria alone at the corner table now, laughing and joking as they enjoy their first conversation.

BACK TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Paul as he stands there still, watching Maria walk off in the distance, away from him.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS FLAT - LATE NIGHT

Paul, VERY DRUNK NOW, staggers about the room, clutching a bottle of vodka that he swigs readily from.

On the table a small, beat up CD PLAYER, is playing THE IRISH ROVER BY THE POGUES WITH RONNIE DREW AT FULL VOLUME.

Paul SINGS ALONG, BITINGLY with the TRACK.

PAUL

(Singing)

...of a maid, he is never
afraid....and...(Loudly) The Irish
Rooverrr!!!!

As the SONG plays out, Paul holds himself up against the table, banging the bottom of his bottle hard against it's top, for added emphasis to the closing lyrics.

He looks up, staring out the window, laughing wryly as he refocuses in on his OWN IMAGE staring back at him. He holds on it, taking in what he sees.

Breaking the moment, he begins snarling and gurning at himself in the window. Stops. Stares again.

PAUL
(Simply)
What fucking use are yeh.

Turning away in disgust he begins to weave his way across the room but STUMBLES and FALLS onto the floor.

Lacking the will to rise right now, he remains there,... sucking long and hard from his bottle.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS FLAT - LATER

Staggering into the kitchen now he holds himself up by the sink.

Reaching across he pulls a steak knife from the knife block on the counter.

Steadying himself now against the counter he begins to hack away and saw clumsily at his up turned wrist with the knife,...A DISTURBING mixture of laughter and tears coming from him as he seems to glory in the temporary relief it provides.

As we look at Pauls face up close, a SERIES OF IMAGES begin to appear in quick succession:

- (A) Paul holding MARIA close to him in bed, both smiling warmly.
- (B) Someones POV as a BOXING GLOVE closes in on their face.
- (C) An EMPTY PARK on a COLD MORNING.
- (D) A FADED PICTURE of a YOUNG BOY 4 or 5, sitting on the lap of a YOUNG WOMAN, both laughing freely in the picture.
- (E) MARIA from earlier, WALKING AWAY up the street.
- (F) A DRUNKEN MAN standing in a hallway, singing and yelling loudly.
- (G) A CLIP of the start of the A-TEAM as it plays on an old TV.

- (H) TONY applying Vaseline to Pauls face in between rounds, silently encouraging him.
- (I) A YOUNG BOY like the one in the FADED PICTURE, cowering as he is hit hard by the BACK OF A GROWN MANS HAND.
- (J) His NIECES laughing.
- (K) His sister SUSAN.
- (L) MARIA.
- (M) A HAND, FINGERS SPLAYED as WHITE BOXING TAPE is LOOPED around it.

MATCH CUT TO:

Pauls left wrist, now a BLOODY, SLASHED MESS.

He turns the knife over and makes to start in weakly on his right wrist.

As he does so he stumbles, his legs going out from under him. His arms shoot out to steady himself, but his feet can't find a grip on the slick mess that the kitchen tiles have become.

Falling to the side, the back of his head catches sharply against the jagged corner of the kitchen unit. Ricochetting from there he falls to the floor too fast to steady himself and his head crashes sickeningly against the unforgiving hardness of the tiles.

There he lies as we first saw him, unconscious, motionless. Blood from his head and wrist beginning to ooze out onto the dirty white of the tiles.

FADE OUT.

EXT. LANDING - DAY

Pauls LANDLORD, (59) knocks sharply on his door.

LANDLORD
Hello?...rent.

He waits,...gets no response, tries again.

LANDLORD
Hello?...

Annoyed, he digs out a key from the chain on his belt. Bringing it up to the lock he drops it, cursing he bends down to retrieve it:

LANDLORD

Shag it.

Finally, he unlocks the door and enters.

INT. PAULS FLAT - DAY

He opens the overhead press nearest the door, finding nothing there he frowns.

Walking in a little further, he STOPS...CATCHING SIGHT of the unconscious figure of Paul on the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL/EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Paul, on the table in the Emergency Room a DOCTOR shining a pen light in his eyes.

DOCTOR

Paul? Paul?...Come on Paul...

INT. HOSPITAL/WAITING ROOM

Susan, ashen faced, sits, holding a Styrofoam cup of coffee limply in her hands.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Paul lies comatose now in a bed, hooked up to a battery o machines.

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S CAR - EVENING

Tony sits, waiting outside a Third Level College, as the STUDENTS make their way out.

He smiles as he sees Sarah approaching the car.

TONY

(As she gets in)
Hiya luv.

SARAH

(Kissing him on the cheek)
Hiya Da.

He starts the car...

INT. TONY'S CAR/MOTORWAY - LATER

Tony and Susan drive through the busy early evening traffic.

TONY
So how was school?

SARAH
(Laughing)
College Da.

TONY
College, school.

SARAH
It was grand, I had a...

Just then Tony's MOBILE RINGS, cutting her off.

TONY
(As he answers)
Sorry luv. (Into phone) Hello?...Ah
hiya Susan, long time...(Pause)
Jesus is he OK?

Sarah looks across at her father.

TONY
...yeah,...what hospital?...OK,
yeah, no,...I'm on me way, yeah,...
OK right, bye.

Tony, shaken, ends the call returning the phone to the dashboard.

SARAH
What's wrong?

TONY
It's eh Paul, he's in the
hospital,...

SARAH
Is he alright?

TONY
Eh,...they don't know, they're not
sure. I'm gonna head over...do you
want me to drop you off?

SARAH
No, no. I'll come with you.

TONY
Right.

Tony indicates to move over into the right hand lane of traffic and on they drive.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Susan slowly enters the room, pulls up a chair to her Brothers bedside, the RHYTHMIC CHURNING of the machines filling the quiet of the room.

She sits, taking him in.

SUSAN
(Quietly)
You stupid, selfish bastard.

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S CAR/MOTORWAY - EVENING

Tony drives along, lost in his thoughts.

He comes to a stop in the line of traffic with the lights red at an intersection.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - SAME

A DELIVERY MAN, as he drives along, running late for his last pick up of the day, making up time anyway he can.

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S CAR - EVENING

The lights change to green and Tony rumbles along in the traffic line.

Just as Tony reaches the LIGHTS they change to flashing amber, he continues on through.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - SAME

The DELIVERY MAN see's the LIGHTS CHANGING and puts the foot down, cutting ahead sharply of a 4 X 4 in front of him.

CUT TO:

INT. TONY'S CAR - EVENING

As he drives across the intersection he reaches for the mobile phone on the dashboard, handing it to Sarah.

TONY

Better give your Ma a call let her know where we are.

Sarah reaches into her pocket to retrieve her own phone.

SARAH

Your grand I can use mine...

At that moment, the car is shunted at the back, spinning sharply.

EXT. MOTORWAY/INTERSECTION - SAME

WE SEE TONY'S CAR spins across the intersection, the VAN having careened off its back end.

INT. TONY'S CAR - EVENING

TONY struggles to bring the car under control.

EXT. MOTORWAY/INTERSECTION - SAME

Tony's car fishtails around. A couple of drivers coming towards him on the intersection manage to frantically manoeuvre out of the way, ...but an oncoming HATCHBACK isn't so lucky and the TWO VEHICLES meet in a head on collision, IMPACTING HARD .

Eventually when all comes to rest, the TWO CARS lie there silently, a crude display of broken, twisted, metal and glass.

CUT TO:

INT. VAN - SAME

The Delivery Man, unhurt, stares about him at the carnage on the roads the shock beginning to register on his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOTORWAY/INTERSECTION - EVENING

In the HATCHBACK, the driver slumped over the steering wheel begins to slowly come to, a cry of pain and fear slowly rising.

TONYS CAR, having borne the full force of the impact, is a crumpled heap,...no sound or movement coming from within.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - SAME

Paul unconscious in his bed, oblivious to all.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

BILL (52), a Sports Presenter, talks to camera, cheerily addressing the audience at home.

BILL

OK, next up we have a fighter who hasn't been seen in a long time now. Paul Maguire at one time the "next big thing" of Irish boxing. (Turning to Panel of Experts) So gentlemen what do we think of this belated comeback? Is it a lost cause or...

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOM - NIGHT

A SOMBRE, SERIOUS looking Paul, looking older now, sits on a low bench at the back of the heaving communal changing rooms.

FIGHTERS and their TRAINERS mill about in front of him.

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/BOXING RING - NIGHT

The CROWD, it's attention focused on the ring, where TWO YOUNG FIGHTERS go at it toe to toe.

An AUDIENCE MEMBER close to the ring, SHOUTS OUT words of encouragement to his man of choice.

One of the mens TRAINERS, watches the action through the bottom rope, concentration etched on his face, in there with them throwing and taking every punch.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOMS - NIGHT

Paul, his hands being taped by his NEW TRAINER.

NEW TRAINER
(Finishing)
Alright?

Paul clenches and unclenches his fist a couple of times, shakes his head...

PAUL
I like it tighter around the
knuckles.

...and begins to unravel the tape himself.

INT. ARENA/RING - NIGHT

A FIGHTER on the canvas, looking dazed, the REFEREE looming over him as he counts.

REFEREE
...Four. Five. Six...

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOMS - NIGHT

Paul WORKS THE PADS, limbering up, trying to get a rhythm going.

CUT TO:

INT. SUSANS HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Susan at the ironing board, getting the kids clothes ready for the morning.

At the far end of the room the TV plays the pre-fight broadcast, we catch a snippet of Alex as he is being interviewed at ringside.

ALEX
"...good fighter yes...time will
tell...it's all about picking the
right fights now...

A VOICE from upstairs calls out.

EMMA (O.S)
Mammy!

Susan smiles to herself as she puts the iron down...

SUSAN
(Shouts)
Coming.

...and makes her way out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOMS - NIGHT

Paul dances about on the balls of his feet, loosening it up.

CUT TO:

INT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

Bill wraps up his discussion with the PANEL.

BILL
...true, very true. (Turning to
camera) OK then before we go to
the fight we have a quick interview
in our ongoing series that our
reporter Darryl did with Maguire
yesterday...

CUT TO:

INT. CHANGING ROOMS - NIGHT

Paul sits on the edge of a table, taking deep breaths,
expanding his rib cage wide, holding it, then pushing the air
out strong.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/PAULS INTERVIEW

Paul sits in what looks very much like the room of the Boxing
Experts, talking to the INTERVIEWER, who remains off camera,
his questions heard only by Paul.

PAUL
...yeah,...trainings gone well, all
done now...just...looking forward
to getting back in there...you
know...

INT. CHANGING ROOMS - NIGHT

Paul sits, gloves on, robe draped lightly over his shoulders,
waiting.

An OFFICIAL pops his head in the door.

OFFICIAL
Time lads.

Paul and the others gather themselves together and make their
way out.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...I think I'm alot more, (Pause) I
wouldn't say careful,... but you
know...wiser...a wiser fighter,
definitely. It used to be I'd go
rushing straight in at the first
bell...all guns blazing, there's
still a bit of that there, but... I
can see things alot better in there
now...clearer...I pick me moments
to fight...the right ones...that's
what comes with experience...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

The AUDIENCE shifts about as they wait for the next fight to
begin.

BACK TO:

INT. PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...he was a big influence on
me,...the biggest...always will be.
I'll miss him not being there.
(MORE)

PAUL (cont'd)
(Pause) It's hard to get over
something like that...He was a good
man you know...good man...

CUT TO:

INT. BACK STAGE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Paul and his team make there way along the corridor towards
the Arena.

BACK TO:

INT. PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...I was on the outs with boxing
for a long time, what with the
accident and the injury and all
that... it's something I've been
doing since I was a kid...but now
you know, I know what it means to
me... I always knew it was
something I'd come back to, or that
I wanted to come back to... it
wasn't finished, kinda thing, I
hadn't done what I was capable of
with it...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

Paul, his Team around him makes his way along the aisle, the
CROWD on either side.

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...There's alot of things I wish I
could change,...alot of things
believe me. (Pause) But you have to
come to terms with that, there's no
other way...

JUMP CUT TO:

THE IMAGE OF MICK, PAULS FATHER, as he appeared in the
EARLIER SCENE, approaching him in the car park.

BACK TO:

INT. PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...otherwise you just let it eat
you up inside, and there's only one
way to go from there...

CUT TO:

INT. ARENA/RING - NIGHT

Paul and his team as they climb up onto the ring apron and go through the ropes and into the ring.

PAULS INTERVIEW continues in VOICE OVER.

PAUL (V.O.)
I have another go at it now
...it's on me, up to me to make the
most of it, and...do the best that
I can,...

CUT TO:

INT. PAULS INTERVIEW

PAUL
...that's all anyone can ask for
really.

Questions over, Paul looks directly into camera, as it holds on him for an inquiring beat.

CUT TO:

INT. RING

The BELL goes for the first round and Paul and his OPPONENT, an out of shape journeyman who has seen better days, head out to meet each other in the centre of the ring.

Paul circles his Opponent, throwing out a speculative left jab, cautious, the balls to the wall, fire and brimstone style of his youth noticeable by it's absence.

His Opponent throws a slow looping right over the top, a punch Paul should see coming a mile off, but he's still cold, the rustiness obvious, the punch catching him square.

Feeling the weight of the shot he steps off, dazed, moves away, trying to recover his bearings.

He manages to survive it, his head clears, he rolls those shoulders...and heads back into the thick of it.

FADE OUT.