

SOUTHPAW

by

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A champion is someone who gets up when he can't.

-- Jack Dempsey

The Fighters

BILLY "THE GREAT" HOPE - 33, white, compact, muscular. Billy is a Junior Middleweight champion. A southpaw. An aggressive, offensive fighter. Adopting LaMotta's "bully" style, he stays close, taking big punches in order to land big punches. What he lacks in style and finesse, he makes up in brute strength and pugilistic belligerence. Billy's greatest foes are the ones of his own making - self doubt, ego, rage. His life and career are fueled by a desperate need to prove himself worthy of love and success. Boxing is all he knows.

TITUS "TICK" WILLIS - 42, black, lean. Tick is a former fighter who was forced to retire after he lost an eye. He has one good brown eye, one fake blue eye. He was on his way to prominence as a pro trainer, but stepped away from the money and success after the death of his son. He now trains kids and amateurs on the west side of Detroit. Like Billy, he's broken and boxing is all he knows.

MIGUEL "MAGIC" CANTO - 28, Latino, fast, strong, fierce. Miguel is a Junior Middleweight contender who is waiting for his shot at Billy's title. His skill and ego rival Billy's.

KASH - 20, black, tall, muscular, street. Now a gangbanger, as a kid he used to train with Tick.

RAMONE - 15, Latino, Flyweight. Hood kid with real pro potential.

HOPPY - 14, black, Lightweight. Hood kid with a dream of turning pro.

The Family

MAUREEN HOPE - 31, white, simple beauty. Billy's wife and rock. Childhood sweetheart, she knows him better than anyone. She's the foundation he's built on, the music that calms the savage beast.

LEILA HOPE - 8, white, adorable. She's daddy's angel girl. Smart, very sensitive, intuitive, an old soul.

The Friends

ANGELA RIVERA - 27, Latina, street-beautiful. Social worker who gives a shit. Trying to fix a foster care system that can't be fixed.

JORDAN MAINS - 50's, white, sturdy. Billy's promoter. He's guided Billy's pro career for nearly ten years. A father figure.

JON JON SMITH - 33, black, thin. Came up with Billy in foster care, his only real friend. Sweet guy, lost soul. On the payroll.

GABE WESSLER - 35, white, muscular. High school buddy, part of his entourage. Considers himself Billy's bodyguard. On the payroll.

MIKEY LANE - 33, mixed-race, obese. High school buddy of Billy, part of his entourage. Always working an angle. On the payroll.

To reference these descriptions, characters above appear in bold in script.

SMASH UP ON:

INT. JOE LOUIS ARENA - DETROIT - NIGHT

We are in the RING, 1st PERSON POV. A gloved FIST comes at us. Connects. Rocks us hard. The hitter, **BILLY "THE GREAT" HOPE**, drenched in sweat, right eye BRUISED. His face fierce, determined. A warrior. Billy presses forward, methodical, unrelenting. He sticks a RIGHT JAB, then another. They're not fast, but they're strong; breaking through the gloves that protect our face. Then a brutal LEFT POWER PUNCH drives through. Our head snaps back. Blood and sweat fly. As we stagger back to the ropes --

A REFEREE steps in and we jump out to a 3rd PERSON POV. See the receiver of the blows, the other fighter, DARIUS JONES, 28, black, solid, strong. Darius' face is punch-puffy. His LEFT CHEEK, swollen and cut, the source of the flowing blood.

Insert: HOPE VS. JONES, JOE LOUIS ARENA, DETROIT.

As the referee checks Darius, we examine the INK that covers Billy's torso. The word HOPE across his chest. On his right shoulder, ornate scroll spells out MAUREEN, on his left shoulder, LEILA. On his back, a CELTIC CROSS, the words FATHER and FIGHTER intersecting inside the artwork. Billy, anxious for action, taunts Jones through his mouthpiece --

BILLY
Let's go, bitch.

The referee cautions Billy as he brings the fighters together. Billy plods forward, taking Darius' left JABS to the face. He gets inside, unleashes a LEFT UPPER CUT to the black man's body. Darius cringes with the impact and wraps his arms around Billy. Billy, in his face --

BILLY
You gonna kiss me or fight me?

DARIUS
Gonna hurt you, white boy.

Billy smiles as the ref breaks it up and the BELL RINGS. He continues his trash talk as he heads to his corner --

BILLY
Next round, gonna drop you to your
knees so you can suck my dick, too.

Billy's trainer, ELI FROST, 50's, white, and his corner man, NICK, 30's, white, pull him onto the stool. Eli, frustrated --

ELI

These things on the end of your hands, they're called gloves. Should try putting 'em in front of your goddamn face once in a while..

BILLY

How's the eye?

DOC FIELD, 50's, white, checks the cut --

DOC

Take many more, it's gonna be flowing.

BILLY

It's just starting to get fun.

ELI

You hear what he just said? Drop him, this round.

BILLY

I'll drop him when I'm fucking ready.

As the bikini-clad CARD GIRL enters the ring with ROUND FIVE, the CAMERA PANS the CROWD. The arena is packed. Front rows filled with CELEBRITIES and the AFFLUENT. Billy's promoter, **JORDAN MAINS**, watches his prize fighter with a smile only money can buy. Next to him, **MAUREEN HOPE**, Billy's wife, simply, yet elegantly dressed, she's not smiling. She watches Billy with concern. A few rows back, we see **MIGUEL "MAGIC" CANTO** and his brother, **HECTOR**. Miguel doesn't watch Billy, he studies him.

CAMERA FLIES back over the masses, to the rear of the arena. Rows of AVERAGE JOES, the true fight fans. Sitting at the end of a distant aisle, is **TITUS "TICK" WILLS**. He watches the ring as if in pain, yet he can't turn away as the BELL RINGS for --

ROUND FIVE. Billy moves into Darius. His style is simple and inelegant. He takes Darius' defending JABS to the face as he works on the man's body and cheek. Darius continues to get rocked, but can take the punishment. Then Billy drives the UPPERCUT through Darius' defense, catching him on the jaw. Darius goes DOWN. Crowd ROARS. Billy raises his arms, engages the masses. The ref goes to Darius as he climbs to his feet. After an EIGHT COUNT, they fight. Billy taunts --

BILLY

You fucking bounce, bitch.

DARIUS

And you bleed. Bitch.

The cut over Billy's eye is beginning to FLOW BLOOD. Billy tastes it running into his mouth. Darius smiles. Billy, pissed, presses forward. Darius unleashes a series of JABS that Billy takes to his face as he moves inside. With sheer brute determination, Billy breaks through his opponent's defense and lands two brutal BODY PUNCHES. Darius recoils in pain as the BELL RINGS. Billy wants more, he goes for Darius. The ref physically separates them. He warns Billy and lets the judges know a punch was thrown after the bell.

Eli and Nick pull Billy to his corner --

ELI

What the hell you doing --

BILLY

Shut up. Fix the fucking eye.

Billy sits as the Doc tends to his eye.

At RINGSIDE, we join sports commentators MAX KELLERMAN, JIM LAMPLEY, and HAROLD LEDERMAN. They fill time between rounds --

LAMPLEY

... and this is classic Billy the Great. Power, power, power. Dominating every round.

KELLERMAN

Jones, just not used to the opposite-side attack of a southpaw.

LEDERMAN

But he can take a punch. And that left jab of his is doing some real damage to Billy's right eye.

LAMPLEY

Not sure what Jones said to him in there, but man, Billy didn't like it. Two of them might as well been out on the street the last minute of that round.

KELLERMAN

Think Billy'd be okay with that. He was raised on these streets. Hometown Detroit boy --

LAMPLEY

Yeah. It really is an amazing story. Grew up in and out of foster care, started boxing at the age of twelve. Amateur prodigy.

KELLERMAN

Discovered by promoter Jordan Mains
in 2003. Been an upward climb ever
since. Seven major title belts,
never been knocked down --

LAMPLEY

A feat only accomplished by a rare
few.

LEDERMAN

But you have to wonder how many more
fights Hope has left in him. Not a
kid anymore. And his style, catching
and hitting -- man, that's a lot of
punches to the head.

The BELL RINGS --

LAMPLEY

Well, he's winning this one.

KELLERMAN

That he is --

LAMPLEY

And we begin round six.

They watch Billy as he circles the ring, engages the crowd.
Mouthpiece in his glove, he points to Darius and shouts --

BILLY

This round you're going down! This
round you're going down!

LEDERMAN

Billy the Great, calling his
knockout.

LAMPLEY

Pointing to the fences like Babe
Ruth. This guy's unbelievable.

ROUND SIX. Billy puts in his mouthpiece, moves to Darius --

BILLY

Gonna knock you out now, Mr. Jones.
Ready? Are you ready?

DARIUS

Fuck you.

Billy attacks, takes a JAB and a RIGHT HOOK as he gets inside,
but Darius is out of steam, his punches do little damage.
Billy drives REPEATED UPPERCUTS into his torso.

One literally lifts the fighter off his feet as he drops back against the ropes. Then as Darius covers his broken midsection, Billy unleashes a LEFT POWER PUNCH that nearly spins the man's head off his neck. Darius' eyes go dull, he's UNCONSCIOUS before his body drops to the canvas like a fallen black oak.

The crowd is ON THEIR FEET. See Tick, still seated, sips his beer, unimpressed, as the referee COUNTS OUT Jones to CHEERS.

A MEDICAL TEAM rushes to Darius. Billy springs onto the ropes, works the crowd. Ring swarms with BOXING OFFICIALS and PHOTOGRAPHERS. Billy surfs the win like a rock star.

Then Billy searches the crowd, spots Maureen. She gives him a half-smile and a nod as she heads away from the mayhem.

Jordan enters the ring, embraces his fighter. Billy poses for photos as Eli places the TITLE BELT over his shoulder.

Lampley, Kellerman and Lederman can't hide their enthusiasm --

LAMPLEY

Billy the Great continues his domination of the Junior Middleweight division. He ups his record to forty-three wins, forty-one by knockout. Say what you want about his lack of grace, cannot deny, Hope can win fights.

KELLERMAN

And his fans love it. Watching Billy box is like going to a Nascar race where you're guaranteed a fiery crash.

LEDERMAN

He's nothing if not entertaining.

Darius is walked to the center by his trainer. Billy joins him. They tap gloves. Polite, but cool. RING ANNOUNCER takes the descending microphone and makes the announcement --

RING ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, with the official time of one minute, eighteen seconds of round six -- Our winner by knockout and still the undisputed WBC, WBA and IBF Junior Middleweight champion of the world, Billy "the Great" Hope.

The crowd ROARS. See Tick already exiting down a tunnel --

INT. JOE LOUIS ARENA - BEER STAND - MINUTES LATER

Tick buying a beer as a FLATSCREEN plays the action inside.

ON THE TV --

Billy talks to Jim Lampley, the champ exudes "fuck you" --

LAMPLEY

Jones' jab was doing damage to your right eye. Drew blood in round five. Were you afraid he could hurt you, is that why you pressed for the knockout in six?

BILLY

I'm never afraid of getting hurt. I knocked him out in six, 'cause that's when I hit him the hardest.

BEER HOSTESS, 50's, black, slides Tick a beer as they show the REPLAY of Billy's KNOCKOUT --

HOSTESS

Damn, that white boy can hit.

TICK

Don't mean he can box.

Tick puts a tip in her cup. To himself as he walks away --

TICK

All his power comes from his mouth.

INT. JOE LOUIS ARENA - GREEN ROOM - LATER

Billy, gloves off, drinks from a bottle of CRISTAL while Doc Field tends to his eye. See a big spread of food, plush couches, and a MUTED large screen TV playing POST FIGHT INTERVIEWS. We meet GABE, JON JON and MIKEY. They all wear the same gold ROLEX. Mikey ferociously digs into the food --

BILLY

Hey Mikey, want Jon Jon to run up and get you a barrel of fucking peanuts, too.

GABE

Fat bastard didn't even go into the arena. Watched the fight from here so he could be near the free food.

MIKEY

Fuck you. Gave my seat to my cousin.

JON JON
No, you sold your seat to your
cousin.

MIKEY
Fuck yeah. Fifteen hundred.

BILLY
I don't pay you enough, now your
scalping fucking comps? Why not
sell T-shirts in the parking lot?

JON JON
He tried. Wouldn't let 'im --

They LAUGH. Jon Jon pulls out his SCORE CARD, joins Billy.

JON JON
Scored the fight pretty much same
as the judges. Had your landing
percentages a little higher.

BILLY
Thanks, Jon.

JON JON
Was a good fight, man.

Billy and Jon Jon share an historic smile as Gabe watches
Kellerman interviewing Miguel Canto at RINGSIDE --

GABE
The Magic douchebag is at it again.

Billy sees Miguel, mood shifts --

BILLY
Turn it up.

Gabe TURNS UP the volume.

ON THE TV --

An animated Miguel drives home his beef --

MIGUEL
... Jones was just like the last six
fights. Easy win. Billy hasn't
fought a real contender in years.

KELLERMAN
And you think you're that contender.

MIGUEL

I'm ready for it. His camp knows it, they keep turning me down.

KELLERMAN

You haven't fought many southpaws, Miguel --

MIGUEL

C'mon, Max, I'm younger, stronger, faster -- the way I move in the ring, doesn't matter what hand he's leading with, Hope won't be able to touch me.

(at the camera)

Gonna have to face the Magic sooner or later, Billy. Get real, man, you're not a champion anymore, you're just a show.

Billy WHIPS the champagne bottle at the TV. SMASHES the screen. Billy's crew says nothing, unsure of how to respond. Maureen enters, sees the mess. Looks at Billy, to the rest --

MAUREEN

Give us a minute.

His entourage and team file out. Billy alone with Maureen.

BILLY

Canto was talking shit again.

MAUREEN

So you destroy a perfectly good TV set? That'll teach him.

Billy's bravado fades. He goes to a vulnerable place --

BILLY

Am I done, Mo? Am I just turning into some kinda fucking circus act?

MAUREEN

You're the champion, Billy. You've earned every one of those belts. Don't let these assholes take that from you.

BILLY

Haters are getting louder with every fight.

MAUREEN

I don't give a shit about the haters out there --

(MORE)

MAUREEN (CONT'D)
 (she points to his head)
 It's the ones in here that scare
 me.

Maureen kisses him. Billy buries his head in her chest. Then --

BILLY
 I wanna swing by the house.

MAUREEN
 She's sleeping, baby.

BILLY
 I know. Just wanna see her.

MAUREEN
 (gets it)
 Yeah. Okay.

Maureen strokes Billy's face, gently caresses his bruised eye.
 Billy takes in his wife. From a deep, honest place --

BILLY
 I love you.

MAUREEN
 You should.
 (off his smile)
 I love you too, baby.

EXT. JOE LOUIS ARENA - ACCESS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Billy, dressed for the town, Maureen, Jordan Mains and his
 girlfriend HELEN, a 20-something trophy, walk through the
 back of the arena to the exit. Gabe, Mikey and Jon Jon bring
 up the rear. As they walk, Helen tries to make small talk --

HELEN
 Jordan said you already set up your
 next fight, that's awesome.

MAUREEN
 What fight?

Maureen in the dark. Billy and Jordan share a look, then --

BILLY
 African guy, Kwame Turay.

MAUREEN
 When?

BILLY
 End of August.

MAUREEN

Jesus, Billy. You'll be training through her entire summer vacation again. You promised we'd get away.

JORDAN

We've been trying to get this fight for awhile, Mo. Turay's the European champion.

They exit to --

EXT. JOE LOUIS ARENA - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Buses, limos, FANS. Billy avoids Mo's wrath, engages fans. Gabe watches over Billy as Mikey and Jon climb in a Mercedes.

As Billy signs autographs, Maureen catches Jordan alone, no love between these two. Conversation is covert and intense --

MAUREEN

You're working him too hard. These are bullshit fights.

JORDAN

It's not bullshit money.

MAUREEN

He's getting hit too much.

JORDAN

You two have a big life. Mortgage, staff, private school. He needs to fight to cover that nugget.

MAUREEN

We don't need all that shit. You're the one fills his head with this living like a king fantasy.

JORDAN

He is a king. And it's up to you and me to keep him on that throne. You handle his heart, I'll handle his fists.

As Jordan crosses to the limo, Tick walks behind the crowd, toward the street. He and Jordan spot each other, LOCK EYES for a moment, then disconnect as Jordan climbs into the limo.

Billy joins Maureen, as they follow Jordan into the stretch --

BILLY

Sorry.

MAUREEN

I know.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - INTERCUT

As the car pulls out of the lot, it passes Tick walking toward a BUS STOP. Tick glances up at the SMOKED WINDOWS, unable to see inside. Jordan stares back at Tick, unseen. Reflects.

INT. DDOT PUBLIC BUS - LATER

Tick sits by himself, mid-bus. Newspapers and trash at his feet, he sips a TALL BOY from a paper bag. He pulls out a worn POCKET BIBLE, begins to read. Jesus and a cheap buzz.

INT. LIMO - MOVING - SAME

Billy and Jordan sit near the front, drinking SINGLE MALT from crystal SNIFFERS. Maureen and Helen in the back. As Helen chatters inanely about PETA, Maureen listens to the men --

BILLY

You catch any of Canto's rant?

JORDAN

Heard about it. He's just showboating.

BILLY

Magic's a better fighter than Jones and Turay. We both know that.

JORDAN

Turay is the smarter fight.

BILLY

You think he can beat me, Jordan?
That why we're avoiding this one?
(off his silence)
Are you afraid of Canto?

JORDAN

Miguel Canto has only seventeen pro fights. He hasn't earned his shot at you. End of story.

Billy and Maureen share a look. Then he downs the scotch.

EXT. HOPE HOME - BLOOMFIELD HILLS - LATER

Limo and Mercedes drive through an affluent Detroit suburb.

They pull up to an ornate GATE which opens to reveal a large MODERN HOME with METICULOUS LANDSCAPING. See a MASERATI, BENTLEY and an AMG MERCEDES in the circular driveway.

The entourage exits the Mercedes. Billy and Maureen climb out of the limo. Jordan concerned.

BILLY
We'll see you there.

JORDAN
Don't blow it off, Billy. Lotta people want to pay their respects.

BILLY
I'll let 'em pay.

Billy shuts the door. Maureen heads inside. Gabe, Mikey, Jon Jon join Billy. Billy sees the GLOCK inside Gabe's jacket --

BILLY
What did I tell you about carrying that around?

GABE
Somebody's gotta watch your back, man. Just protecting you --

BILLY
(re: his house)
From who, my killer nanny?

GABE
Just trying to earn my keep.

BILLY
Look man, I love you guys, but you can't go all Gotti and shit on me, okay? Just be in my corner.

GABE
Yeah, okay. You got it.

The others nod as Billy heads inside --

INT. HOPE HOME - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Billy walks through his home. Like Maureen, it's simple and elegant. See HOUSEKEEPERS and the nanny, GLORIA, 40's, Latina.

BILLY
She upstairs, Gloria?

GLORIA
Yes, Mr. Hope.

INT. HOPE HOME - LEILA'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Billy peeks inside, sees Maureen giggling with LEILA HOPE.
He watches his girls with adoration. Then, Leila spots him --

LEILA
Daddy.

Leila hops out of bed, Billy picks her up in his arms --

BILLY
There's my angel girl.

Leila fixates on Billy's BRUISED AND BANDAGED EYE --

LEILA
What happened to you, Daddy?

BILLY
I was working tonight, sweetheart.
You know that.

LEILA
Why do you always have to get hurt?

BILLY
It's my job. Like other daddies go
to an office, I go to a boxing ring.

Leila still upset, Billy looks to Maureen. Mom distracts --

MAUREEN
You know what, sweetheart? Daddy's
got some time off now --

BILLY
That's right. Me and you, baby.
We got a lotta Spongebob and Legos
to catch up on.

Leila wraps herself around Billy. He takes it in like a drug.

LEILA
Your heart's beating really fast.

BILLY
That's 'cause I love you so much.

LEILA
I love you, too, Daddy.

Neither father nor daughter wants to let go. Then --

MAUREEN

Let's go little miss, back in bed.

Leila hops in bed with BUDDY, a stuffed donkey. Mom kisses --

MAUREEN

Good night, sweetheart. Good night, Buddy.

LEILA

Night, Mommy.

Billy kisses her and Buddy --

BILLY

Good night, angel. Night, Buddy.

LEILA

Night, Daddy.

Billy and Maureen turn out the light and exit to --

INT. HOPE HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

See PHOTOS of Billy, Maureen and Leila on the walls. No other family. As Billy walks away, Maureen sees the impact his daughter has on him. His battered eyes, welled up with love. She stops him, intimate --

MAUREEN

What you feel right now, don't forget it. That's the only thing that matters. You hear me?

(off his nod)

The fight, the fans, the money ...

It's all bullshit.

(she taps his heart)

This is the only thing that's real.

Billy nods, wraps his arm around her. As they exit frame, the camera PUSHES IN on a PHOTO: Billy, Maureen, baby Leila. COLTRANE begins to prelap as the photo --

DISSOLVES INTO:

ANOTHER PHOTO: Tick and a pretty BLACK WOMAN hold a BABY BOY. We pull out to reveal we are in --

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - SAME

The photo is pinned to the back of an old bookshelf.

Tick reaches in frame and drops a cheap watch and some change into a coin tray. Coltrane plays vinyl on an old TURNTABLE.

Tick sips his tall boy as he walks to the doorway, looks out at his world -- a small BOXING GYM. The equipment, like the owner, is used and in need of repair.

Tick moves to a couch, drops down, takes off his shoes, shirt and pants. See a small GOLD CROSS and chain around his neck. He drains the beer, KISSES the cross and sinks deep into the worn couch. His eyes slowly shut. An *Old Milwaukee* knockout.

INT. DETROIT CHOPHOUSE - LATER

A popular night spot. Local POLITICIANS and Detroit LUMINARIES. Billy and Jordan make the rounds shaking hands, posing for photos as Maureen watches. Gabe, Jon Jon and Mikey at a booth in the back.

Billy, exhausted by the dog and pony show, joins Maureen as Jordan spots someone else he wants Billy to meet --

JORDAN

Come on, want you to meet Jimmy Tate. He's councilman --

BILLY

In a minute. We gotta eat something, man.

JORDAN

Yeah, of course. Go. Have fun. It's your night, champ.

As Billy and Maureen walk back to his guys, Miguel Canto enters with his brother, Hector. Miguel, who's a few cocktails deep, spots Billy. Then, loud enough for the room --

MIGUEL

There he is, Billy the Great.

Billy and Maureen share a look, they keep walking.

MIGUEL

What? Not even a hello?

Miguel pursues, now right behind Billy --

MIGUEL

C'mon, man. I just wanna congratulate you on a great fight.

Billy turns, burns a look at the fighter. Miguel extends his hand. After a moment, Billy shakes it. Cold --

BILLY

Thanks.

MIGUEL

(to the room)

When we gonna do this in the ring?

Billy turns and starts to walk away --

MIGUEL

Nothing? Really? Biggest mouth in
Detroit ain't got nothing to say?

The entire restaurant has stopped. Jordan and everyone else, witnessing the public challenge. Maureen goes at Miguel --

MAUREEN

What's the matter, asshole, you run
out of reporters to bitch to, gotta
take your whining public?

MIGUEL

(at Billy)

Wow, maybe I should get in the ring
with her. Bitch got bigger balls
than you --

Billy snaps. He catches Miguel off guard with a LEFT. Miguel is rocked back, but then attacks. The two men get into a BARE KNUCKLE BRAWL in the middle of the restaurant. Jordan simply steps back and WATCHES. Maureen hovers, horrified. Gabe, Jon Jon and Mikey rush to Billy as Hector moves to Miguel. Patrons scurry for safety as the fight intensifies.

Billy, exhausted from the Jones fight, finds Miguel too strong and fast. Faced with the challenge, Billy goes street -- he HEADBUTTS Miguel, SWEEPS his feet, climbs on top of him. As he begins to drive merciless, hard PUNCHES into the man's face, Miguel's brother pulls a 9MM from inside his jacket and backs off Billy --

HECTOR

Get off him!

Before Billy can react, Gabe pulls his Glock --

GABE

Hey, motherfucker --

What happens next, occurs in a MATTER OF SECONDS --

Hector panics, FIRES at Gabe. Misses. Patrons SCREAM, run for the exits. Billy rushes to Maureen as Gabe FIRES THREE SHOTS, CLIPS Hector's shoulder. Gabe and Mikey duck for cover as Jon Jon, worried about Billy, heads to his friend --

JON JON

Billy --

Hector RETURNS FIRE. Billy sees Jon Jon in harms way, instinctually pulls him to the ground as TWO MORE SHOTS buzz past them. Then everything goes SILENT. An audible GASP seizes the room. Billy looks up, sees Miguel and Hector's look of horror. He follows their gaze behind him. Billy sees Maureen, her dress OOZING RED from her chest. She drops to her knees. Billy screams --

BILLY

No. Maureen --

He cradles Maureen as she GASPS for breath, her desperate, shaking hand landing on Billy's heart --

BILLY

No. Baby. No.

Maureen dies in his arms. Billy lets out a gut-wrenching PRIMAL SCREAM as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Warm SPRING morning. Slight breeze blows the budding branch of a tree. In the distance, an endless expanse of GRAVES. The camera PANS DOWN to a simple HEADSTONE: OUR BELOVED SON. LAMONT ALEX WILLS. BORN 4-12-1999. DIED 6-30-2003.

Tick reaches into frame, places FLOWERS in a ground vase. He closes his eyes, says a prayer, pulls out the gold cross and kisses it. As he walks away, we PUSH IN on the FLOWERS and --

DISSOLVE INTO:

FLOWERS. Pull out to reveal HUNDREDS OF FLOWERS and see we are at another --

EXT. CEMETERY - SAME

Maureen's OPEN GRAVE surrounded by the floral tribute. In the distance, a LONG SLOW PROCESSION of FUNERAL VEHICLES --

INT. LIMO - MOVING - DAY

Inside the stretch Limo, Billy, in black, holds Leila's hand.

She watches Billy, as if looking for her emotional cue. Father is numb, so daughter is numb. Jordan and Helen, across from them. A DRIVER navigates the silent, sad ride.

EXT. CEMETERY ROAD - INTERCUT

The vehicles come to a stop. FRIENDS and MOURNERS exit.

Jordan opens the limo door. Billy doesn't move.

JORDAN

C'mon, son.

Billy looks at Leila. Kisses her forehead --

BILLY

You should go with Jordan, angel.

LEILA

Where you going, Daddy?

BILLY

Just need a minute.

Billy shares a look with Jordan. Then --

JORDAN

C'mon, sweetheart.

Jordan and Helen exit with Leila. After a moment, Billy pulls a PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE from his pocket, grabs a bottle of VODKA from the bar, washes down XANAX. From the front seat --

DRIVER

Want me to take you some place, sir?

BILLY

No.

Billy, vodka in hand, exits the Limo --

EXT. CEMETERY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Billy sees the pack of MOURNERS fading in the distance as they head to Maureen's grave. He walks in the opposite direction, down the narrow street. Reaches an INTERSECTION. He looks down one way, sees endless headstones, the other way, endless headstones. All directions lead to dead things.

With no path to a life in sight, Billy does the only thing that makes sense, he DRINKS, as it all --

FADES TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy sits on the floor of his expansive master bedroom, sipping a tumbler of vodka. Disheveled, a month's worth of BEARD and pain on his face. Numb, he stares at the empty king-size bed unable to lay down next to the emptiness.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Billy passed out on the floor. Leila, dressed in a private school uniform, stands above him. She watches him sleep with pity. Then, from the hall, Gloria quietly calls to her --

GLORIA
C'mon Le-le, let your daddy sleep.

Leila grabs a blanket from the bed and covers her father.

INT. HOPE HOME - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Billy, bloated and FATTER, in dirty pajamas, drinks as he watches taped ESPN coverage of his old FIGHTS. He freezes the image when the camera cuts to a shot of MAUREEN in the audience. He stares at the big screen, too etherized to cry.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Billy stands in front of an open medicine cabinet. ROWS of PRESCRIPTION DRUGS. Grabs a bottle of AMBIEN, dumps the last three PILLS into his hand, washes them down with a tumbler of vodka. Closes the door, catches his reflection, he looks bad.

Then a gentle KNOCK on the door --

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - INTERCUT

Leila, in pajamas, with Buddy, on the other side of the door --

LEILA
Daddy, you in there?

BILLY
(startled)
Yeah, baby. What's the matter?

LEILA
I had a bad dream.

Billy too fucked up to help her, staggers to the door --

BILLY
It's okay, angel. Go back to bed.

LEILA
Are you okay, Daddy?

BILLY
Yeah. Just tired, baby. G'head,
I'll be there in a minute.

LEILA
Okay.

Leila, sad, stoic, walks away.

Billy slides down the door, crippled by the self-loathing.

INT. HOPE HOME - LEILA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Billy stands over his daughter who is now sound asleep. He pulls the covers up, tucks her in a bit. Best he can do.

INT. HOPE HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As he heads down the hall, he sees a PHOTO of Maureen, Leila and himself. He takes it off the hook and studies it. He sways, clearly fucked up. Then --

GLORIA
Mr. Hope, you okay?

Gloria appears at the bottom of the stairs, wearing a robe. She's a live-in. Billy lies --

BILLY
Fine. Good night.

Billy hastily rehangs the photo, moves down the hall as Gloria climbs the stairs. She looks in on Leila, then STRAIGHTENS the crooked photo. She shakes her head and BLESSES herself.

INT. HOPE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Billy, in sweats, looking worse, sits across from SIMON STILLMAN, his accountant. Simon has a journal with CHECKS --

SIMON
I've got two months worth of bills here. Need you to sign the checks. Tell me how you want to disburse --

BILLY
Can't you sign 'em?

SIMON
Maureen liked to sign the checks so
she knew what was --

BILLY
Just handle it.

SIMON
Alright.

As Billy walks away --

SIMON
You got a lot of money going out,
Billy. Mortgage, Gabe's legal
fees, all the help, it's adding up.

BILLY
Just pay the fucking bills.

Billy exits. Simon, shakes his head, does what he's told --

INT. HOPE HOME - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Billy, in the same sweats, his beard thicker, his gut BIGGER,
eats ice cream out of a gallon container as he watches RAGING
BULL on a big screen. Mikey enters with a PHARMACY BAG --

MIKEY
Pharmacy said this is the last
refill on the Ambien and Benzos.

BILLY
So call the doc, get it renewed.

Mikey watches Billy as he downs a couple pills --

MIKEY
Not sure that's a good idea, man.

BILLY
I don't pay you for your good
ideas. Just fill it.

MIKEY
Yeah. Okay.
(beat)
Went down to county, saw Gabe.
Says thanks for taking care of his
lawyer. Looks like they may get it
reduced to just a weapons charge.

Billy goes to a dark place --

BILLY
Any word on Jon Jon?

MIKEY
No one's seen him.

Mikey changes the subject --

MIKEY
I talked to Eli, we're all set for
next week.

BILLY
Next week?

MIKEY
Begin training for the Turay fight.

BILLY
What day is it?

MIKEY
The twenty-seventh.

Off Billy's confusion --

MIKEY
Of June.

Billy nods, out of synch with the world --

INT. HOPE HOME - TROPHY ROOM - NIGHT

A room full of victories. PHOTOS, TITLE BELTS, AMATEUR TROPHIES. Shrine to Billy the Great. Billy, very high, takes in his life. MUSIC plays loud as he strikes a boxing stance and begins SHADOW BOXING -- instinctual punches, muscle memory. His imaginary fight grows in intensity. Then Billy catches a glimpse of his foe hanging on the wall. Throws a jab, SHATTERS a PHOTO OF HIMSELF. Then another. Stalks the room, throwing punches and SMASHING his boxing photos. Fists BLEEDING. He's lost in the fight. We hear a BELL RING and --

DISSOLVE INTO:

A FIGHT. Miguel "Magic" Canto is picking apart a BLACK FIGHTER. Pull out to reveal we are watching a TV inside --

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - DETROIT - SAME

Tick sits in the half-filled bar of mostly black patrons.

A FLATSCREEN plays the fight. Tick sips FOUR ROSES as he watches Miguel's superior skills.

OLLIE, the bartender, 60's, black, watches Tick absorb the action in the ring --

OLLIE
You miss it, don't you?
(off his stare)
The pro game.

TICK
Nothing to miss.
(re: fight)
This ain't boxing, it's blood-money
theatre.

Tick pays his tab, sways a bit as he stands. Few sheets deep.

TICK
Have a good night, Ollie.

OLLIE
You too, Tick. Get home safe.

Ollie watches him walk out, compassion in his glance.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

Billy lets cold water run over his knuckles. Blood streams down the drain. After a moment, he glances over at the OTHER SINK -- Maureen's. He moves to her side, looks at the simple things that defined her daily life. Picks up her toothbrush, face cream, etc. Leaving his BLOODY FINGERPRINTS on every item he touches. Still unable to cry, Billy tortures himself with the memories, then looks into her MIRROR. Stares at himself, the self-hate is palpable. Exhausted, he rests his head against the glass, whispers his pained apology --

BILLY
I'm sorry. I'm sorry...

Billy raps his forehead against the mirror with each hushed contrition. Gently at first, then growing in intensity, until he is SMASHING his head into the glass. His brow BLEEDING, he doesn't stop until the glass CRACKS. Billy stares at his bloody reflection in the broken mirror. Everything shattered.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Billy is awoken with the sting of BACTINE. Leila, next to him on the floor where he sleeps, cleans out the cut on his head.

BILLY
What're you doing, sweetheart?

LEILA
You have to clean it so it doesn't
get infected.

Billy sits up, watches her as she rips open a band-aid.

BILLY
Bumped my head in the shower.

Leila sneaks a look at his CUT-UP KNUCKLES, knows he's lying --

LEILA
You have to be careful, Daddy.

Leila, the compassionate child, now the adult. She places
the band-aid on Billy's head.

BILLY
Thank you.

Father and daughter stare at each other. Both hurting. Both
lacking the vocabulary to discuss it. All Billy can offer --

BILLY
Daddy's not doing so good.

LEILA
You'll get better.

BILLY
Yeah.
(beat)
How you doing, baby?

Leila, her emotions controlled --

LEILA
I miss Mommy.

BILLY
Me too.

LEILA
Is that why you sleep on the floor?

BILLY
Yeah. I guess the bed just feels a
little too big.

LEILA
Should get a smaller one, like me.

BILLY
 Maybe I'll do that.
 (beat)
 You better get ready for school,
 sweetheart.

LEILA
 It's summer vacation, Daddy.

BILLY
 Right. Where's Gloria?

LEILA
 I don't think she works on Sunday.

BILLY
 Oh. What should we do?

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

Warm SUMMER afternoon. As the sun sets, Billy and Leila walk to Maureen's grave. Leila with flowers. As they get nearer, Billy stops.

LEILA
 What's the matter?

BILLY
 You go 'head, honey.

Leila studies her father's anxiety --

LEILA
 Don't you wanna talk to mommy?
 (off his silent pain)
 It's okay. I'll tell her you said,
 "hi".

BILLY
 Yeah. Thank you.

Leila heads toward the grave. Billy drops on the ground, leans against an old headstone. Too exhausted to cry.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MORNING

Tick, in sweats, hits the HEAVY BAG with ferocity as morning sun pours through the dirty windows. See FIGHT POSTERS and PHOTOS of AMATEUR FIGHTERS on the walls.

SIGNS make it clear this is a gang-free zone: NO COLORS, NO GANG INK. WARRIORS NOT GANGSTERS. PUG LIFE. The fight space is oddly peaceful when it's empty. Tick's favorite time.

INT. FROST TRAINING GYM - DAY

In a slick, high-tech facility, Billy halfheartedly hits the pads with Nick. Mikey and a few FIGHTERS populate the private gym as Eli covertly talks to Jordan.

ELI

He's not here. This is a mistake.

JORDAN

He'll focus. He'll drop the weight. He always starts slow.

ELI

It's not his physical condition I'm worried about. He's still all fucked up about Maureen. I'm telling you, it's too soon.

JORDAN

I know my fighter. Getting in the ring is the only thing gonna get him passed it. Make sure he's ready.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NYC - NIGHT

Billy, not ready, fat, sluggish, squares off against KWAME TURAY, 29, black, thick, European Super Middleweight champion. Billy takes shots to the head, his counter-punches lack snap.

Insert: HOPE VS. TURAY, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NYC.

At RINGSIDE, Lampley and Kellerman weigh in --

LAMPLEY

Never seen Billy this out of shape. It's only round two and he already looks tired. Turay's dominating.

KELLERMAN

Super Middleweight may have been too much of a jump for Hope.

LAMPLEY

Problem is, that's not fourteen pounds of muscle Billy packed on --

Turay lands a brutal LEFT JAB, RIGHT CROSS, LEFT HOOK combination, it rocks Billy back against the ropes.

LAMPLEY

That three punch combination is
Turay's bread and butter and it's
doing serious damage to Hope.

KELLERMAN

Billy's not gonna be able to absorb
punches like that all night.

The BELL RINGS. Billy sits in his corner. Eli, in his face --

ELI

Billy, look at me. Look at me.

(off his dull gaze)

What are we doing here?

(Eli whispers in his ear)

You need to show me something son,
or I'm gonna end this.

Billy doesn't respond. He stands, takes in the crowd. Then --
SIGHT and SOUND SLOWS DOWN as we become BILLY'S POV --

Front rows filled with CELEBRITIES, POLITICOS and Jordan Mains.
Miguel Canto, behind Jordan, chatting him up. Fighter and
promoter, chummy. Miguel catches Billy's gaze, shoots him a
grin. Billy takes in Magic, the hungry crowd, the judgemental
commentators, his nervous corner. The deafening sound garbles
to a DULL ROAR, shattered by the RING of the BELL.

Billy moves to the center of the ring, sees Turay coming at
him, then Billy DROPS HIS HANDS. Turay's JAB comes right at
us, the blunt CONTACT snaps us back to a --

3rd PERSON POV. Billy has STOPPED FIGHTING. Hands at his
side, he takes punches to his face and torso. Taunts Turay --

BILLY

C'mon. That all you got, bitch.

Turay, not sure what Billy is doing, continues to rock Billy
with COMBINATIONS. Opens a CUT above his eye.

Eli screams from the corner --

ELI

Get your fucking hands up. Billy!

Billy, determined to take the blows, keeps moving into Turay --

BILLY

Hit me. C'mon, hit me!

Turay looks at referee CARUSO, as if to say, what the fuck?
The ref steps in, grabs Billy's hands --

CARUSO
What the hell you doing? Fight.

Lampley and Kellerman weigh in --

LAMPLEY
Never seen anything like this.
Hope's just letting himself get
pummelled. Caruso warning him.

They resume, Billy drops his hands, takes HARD PUNCHES.

KELLERMAN
If this is some kinda showboating
tactic, Eli Frost doesn't like it.
He's screaming at Hope to defend.

We move TIGHT on Billy's face, watching him ABSORB each blow
with satisfaction. As if he wants to be beaten, punished.

LAMPLEY
This isn't showboating. Billy's
not right. Clearly he wasn't ready
for this fight.

BILLY
What's the matter, bitch? Can't
knock me down?

Turay accepts the challenge, landing a RIGHT UPPERCUT to
Billy's chin that nearly lifts him off his feet. For the
first time in his career, Billy Hope HITS THE CANVAS --

LAMPLEY
Hope is down! He is down! Billy
the Great, knocked down for the
first time in his career!

As the EIGHT COUNT is given, Billy staggers back to his feet.
Blood POURING from his face. Caruso CALLS it. Billy snaps --

BILLY
I ain't done yet. C'mon, hit me.

As Caruso steps in to stop Billy, the champ brutally HEADBUTTS
the ref. Caruso's nose SHATTERS as he topples to the canvas.

Billy rushes Turay, hands down. Turay unleashes a COMBINATION
that drops Billy. Both corners are through the ropes.
SECURITY rushes the ring. It's bloody mayhem, as we --

SMASH TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. WILLS GYM - MORNING

Bustling with KIDS and AMATEURS. Neighborhood vibe. No gang ink or thugs. Tick, in the ring, works the pads with RAMONE, a Flyweight.

TICK

One, two. One, two, three. One,
two, three, four --

An ELECTRONIC BUZZER sounds. Thirty seconds --

TICK

Speed! Speed! Speed!

Ramone hits the pads nonstop. This kid is lightning fast, you can barely see his hands. The BUZZER sounds again.

TICK

That's it. Not bad. Hit the rope.

HOPPY hands Tick coffee and a NEWSPAPER as he exits the ring --

TICK

Thanks. You too, Hop. Rope.

HOPPY

Already did that shit --

Tick SLAPS Hoppy in the back of the head --

TICK

Fifty.

The teen engages the swearing punishment, fifty PUSHUPS.

Tick sips coffee, reads the headline: BILLY THE GREAT LOSES TITLE AND LICENSE. Tick shakes his head as he enters --

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tick reads a bit more, drops the paper on his desk. After a moment, he goes to the bookcase and slides out an obscured PHOTO. It's a twenty year-old Tick in a fighting pose, behind him, a hand on his shoulder, a young Jordan Mains.

INT. MAINS EVENTS INC. - JORDAN'S OFFICE - SAME

Inside his well-appointed office, Jordan Mains sits across from Miguel Canto. Jordan looks at the same HEADLINE --

JORDAN

It's very sad, Miguel.

MIGUEL

I know.

(sincere)

Shit, man, if I could take back everything that happened that night, I would. Billy's wife, my brother locked up in I-Max. It's fucked.

JORDAN

Yeah, it is. But we can't change it. Which is why you're here. Life's a fight, you get knocked down, you get back up. If you don't, it moves on without you.

MIGUEL

Absolutely.

INT. HOPE HOME - MEDIA ROOM - MORNING

Billy passed out on the couch. Face on the mend. TV is on, ESPN. Leila, dressed for school, wakes him up --

LEILA

Daddy. Daddy.

BILLY

Yeah. Yeah. What's the matter?

LEILA

I need a ride to school.

BILLY

What? Okay. Where's... Gloria.

LEILA

I don't know.

BILLY

Can't one of the girls take you?

LEILA

There's no one here, Daddy.

Billy reaches for a bottle of water, his hands SHAKE. Leila notices --

BILLY

Go eat some breakfast, baby. I'll take care of it.

Leila, doubtful, nods and exits. Billy swigs the water, tries to focus. Staggered as he stands, no shape to drive. He thinks, then grabs his CELL and dials --

INT. DELIVERY TRUCK - MOVING - INTERCUT

Mikey drives. Pulls out his cell, sees THE CHAMP on the ID. Thinks, then pushes the call.

Billy ends the call, lost. Running out of ideas.

EXT. HOPE HOME - DAY

Billy kisses Leila as she climbs in a TAXI. As he heads back inside, sees the Maserati and Bentley are gone. Lawn and gardens haven't been cared for in weeks. Place looks ghetto.

INT. MAINS EVENTS INC. - JORDAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Billy, somewhat pulled together, sits across from Jordan.

JORDAN

Simon had to start cutting back.

BILLY

My fucking nanny?

JORDAN

She quit, Billy. It was too much for her.

BILLY

And the cars?

JORDAN

It was either those payments or Leila's school.

Billy processes that truth. Then --

BILLY

Think maybe someone should've told me about all this?

JORDAN

We did. And unfortunately, now everyone knows.

Jordan pulls out TABLOIDS from a drawer, shows him headlines. THE GREAT DOPE LOSES KID. LOST HOPE. A CHAMPION FALLS.

JORDAN

Let me be clear, son. It'll be six months before your suspension is up for review. That means zero income. We're being sued by the Garden for throwing the Turay fight.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)

You've been fined three million for the assault on Caruso, and now he's suing you for lost wages and emotional trauma. Your savings is gone and now they wanna put liens on your assets.

The bad news cuts through Billy's fog. Soberly --

BILLY

What do I do?

JORDAN

Simon is gonna have to sell the house to cover the debt. I'll try to get you some guest appearances or maybe some kinda book deal, something to keep you afloat. This suspension is a wake up call. Time to get your life back in order.

BILLY

Yeah, and how's that work?

JORDAN

I can't answer that.

(beat)

Is there someone Leila can stay with?

BILLY

What're you talking about?

JORDAN

You have no help and you're in no shape to take care of her.

BILLY

My kid's not going anywhere.

JORDAN

I'm trying to help you --

BILLY

(snaps)

No, your kicking me to the fucking curb 'cause your cash cow dried up.

(grows in intensity)

You think you'd have this office or that fucking mansion if it wasn't for me?

JORDAN

I earn my money --

BILLY

You earn shit. Leech motherfucker --

Billy FLIPS Jordan's desk and exits. Jordan more disgusted than pissed.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Billy, asleep on the floor, is awakened by Leila --

LEILA

Daddy.

BILLY

Yeah --

Billy notices the DHS CASE WORKER and two BLOOMFIELD HILLS PD UNIFORM OFFICERS (UNIS) standing in his bedroom doorway --

LEILA

These people need to talk to you.

Billy tries to stand, LOSES his balance, panicked --

BILLY

What's going on? Are you okay?

DHS WORKER

That's what we're here to find out, Mr. Hope.

BILLY

Who the fuck are you?

DHS WORKER

Department of Human Services.
Child welfare.

(off his confusion)

Why don't you get dressed and come downstairs so we can talk.

BILLY

Talk about what?

DHS WORKER

The care of your daughter.

BILLY

My daughter's fine.

DHS WORKER

Leila hasn't been to school in over two weeks. They called us, very concerned for her well-being.

LEILA

Someone had to take care of my dad.

Billy stares at his daughter, stunned.

DHS WORKER

That's not your job, sweetheart.

BILLY

I'll handle this.

DHS WORKER

We'll help you do that.

BILLY

Get the fuck out of my house.

BHPD UNI

You need to cooperate, sir. They just wanna help.

BILLY

Fuck you. I know what they want.

The case worker begins to lead Leila out of the room --

DHS WORKER

Let's give your Daddy a minute.

BILLY

Get your fucking hands off my kid.

Unis intercept Billy as he goes for Leila. He drops one with a LEFT, then PD pounds Billy to the floor. Leila, in shock, goes NUMB. She drops Buddy as the DHS worker pulls her away --

BILLY

No --

Leila stares at her father, lost --

LEILA

Daddy --

BILLY

Leila!

As Leila disappears from view, Hope's bottom shows itself. Billy hits it hard as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. OAKLAND COUNTY JAIL - INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Billy, in county orange, sleeps erratically in a hospital bed. Another seven beds filled with INMATES of varying sickness and debilitation. Suddenly, Billy's body SPASMS and he JOLTS awake. Sits up in bed, slop-sweaty, as a DOCTOR walks past, barely gives him a casual glance of concern. Detox sucks.

INT. UNITED FAMILY FOSTER CARE CENTER - GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In a large, simple room, Leila climbs into one of the EIGHT BEDS. She keeps to herself as seven other GIRLS of varying ages do the same. Her new home. Foster care sucks.

INT. OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

Inside a small court room, Billy in an uncomfortable suit, sits next to his lawyer, LEONARD KORMAN, 50's, white. Billy looks like shit. On the bench, JUDGE IRENE KAYLE, 40's, fit, tough. A BAILIFF observes as she reviews Billy's case FILE --

JUDGE KAYLE

Let me start by saying, I'm aware of the tragedy your family suffered recently, you have my condolences.

(off his nod)

In light of those circumstances, and the fact that you have no prior offenses, the district attorney is not pursuing assault charges on --

BILLY

What about Leila?

JUDGE KAYLE

Please don't interrupt me, Mr. Hope. Your daughter is at the United Family Center.

BILLY

I know where she is. When can I get her out?

JUDGE KAYLE

That's what we're here to determine.

(re: file)

Did you and your wife set up any kind of guardianship?

LEONARD

No, they didn't your honor.

JUDGE KAYLE
Any relatives?

BILLY
My wife and I both came up through
the system. We don't have family.

JUDGE KAYLE
I see. So these circumstances must
be very painful for you.

BILLY
I want my kid back. I'm her father.

JUDGE KAYLE
Unfortunately, that's not enough.
Being a parent means providing
stability, consistency, a safe --

BILLY
I can give her that.

JUDGE KAYLE
How? You've just come out of detox.
You have no home, no source of
income, your assets all have liens --

BILLY
I'll figure it out.

JUDGE KAYLE
You've had your chance to figure it
out, Mr. Hope, now it's our turn.
Leila will remain in the care of
the state. If you follow the case
plan, fulfill our requirements,
you'll be reunited with --

BILLY
What the hell does that mean --

LEONARD
Billy --

Korman silences his client, shares an apologetic look with
the judge as she continues --

JUDGE KAYLE
It may not seem like it now, but we
want nothing more than to put your
family back together. Our next
review will be in sixty days.

BILLY
I need my kid.

JUDGE KAYLE
 This isn't about what you need.
 (at Leonard)
 We're done here.

Billy stands, snaps at the judge --

BILLY
 This is bullshit. You even have
 any fucking kids? Got any idea
 what you're doing --

JUDGE KAYLE
 I have three kids. And I know
 exactly what I'm doing.
 (at the bailiff)
 Get him out of here.

Leonard and the bailiff escort a furious Billy out --

EXT. OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE - LATER

Cold, gray autumn day. Billy sits on the steps. Jordan
 finishes talking to Leonard, then sits down next to Billy.

JORDAN
 Heard it was rough.

BILLY
 I need to fight. I know I gotta
 wait out this suspension, but I
 gotta get ready. Get back in shape.

JORDAN
 Look Billy, I love you like a son,
 you know that. I've always been
 honest with you -- it may be time
 to walk away, while you still can.

BILLY
 What the fuck you talking about? I
 still got three or four good years.
 I'll be on top again.

JORDAN
 You can't keep taking punches to
 the head. The way you fight, it's
 gonna do permanent damage.

BILLY
 Didn't mind me getting hurt when I
 was making you a fucking fortune.
 (beat)
 I'll change up my style.

JORDAN
I don't think any other trainer
will take you on.

BILLY
I don't want another trainer. I
want Eli.

JORDAN
Eli's working with another fighter.

BILLY
Who?
(off his silence)
Who's he training, Jordan?

JORDAN
Miguel Canto.

BILLY
You took on Magic?

JORDAN
It's just business, Billy.

Billy is more heartbroken than angry. Jordan JOTS DOWN
something on one of his business cards --

JORDAN
This guy might be able to help you.
He stuffs a wad of CASH and the card in Billy's pocket.

JORDAN
Take care of yourself, son.

Jordan walks away. Billy pulls out the money, dwells on the
painful irony. His life reduced to the shit in his pockets.

INT. HOPE HOME - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

As the sun comes up, Billy walks through his house. SHERIFFS
and COUNTY WORKERS pack valuables in SEIZURE boxes.

INT. HOPE HOME - TROPHY ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Billy stands in the doorway as a COUNTY WORKER packs his
title belts and memorabilia into more boxes. The worker
shares a sad nod with the fighter.

INT. HOPE HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

A Sheriff watches as Billy packs a small rolling suitcase.

INT. HOPE HOME - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

The same county worker is now putting the PHOTOS from the wall into boxes. As Billy passes, the worker takes the PHOTO of Billy with Maureen and Leila off the wall, hands it to him.

BILLY

Thanks.

EXT. HOPE HOME - MINUTES LATER

Billy walks past his AMG Mercedes with a SEIZURE STICKER on the windshield. As he heads toward the open gate, a beat up HONDA CIVIC pulls up to the curb. Jon Jon gets out of the car. He and Billy take each other in, then Billy joins him --

BILLY

Nice ride.

JON JON

Thanks. Only a hundred fifty-seven thousand miles.

Silence. We see the familiar ROLEX on his wrist. Then --

BILLY

Where you been?

JON JON

Went back to my mom's.

BILLY

What's that like?

JON JON

You know... fucking pathetic.

BILLY

Can't be any worse off than me.

JON JON

Yeah. Heard this was going down.

Billy nods, then Jon Jon cracks, broken apology --

JON JON

I'm sorry, Billy. I wanted to tell you that... I shouldn't have split. I didn't know how... I just --

BILLY

It's okay.

JON JON

I feel like what happened to Mo --

BILLY

It's not your fault, Jon. You tried to help me that night. You were the only one who gave a shit.

JON JON

I'm sorry. For everything. It's so fucked up, man.

BILLY

I know.

(beat)

I tried to call Mikey.

JON JON

He took a gig with his uncle, driving a restaurant supply truck.

BILLY

He's driving a truck full of food? That can't be a good idea.

JON JON

No.

BILLY

Heard Gabe pleaded out.

JON JON

Got three years. May actually come out a real gangster.

BILLY

Doubt that. Got a feeling he's already wearing a dress.

The two men smile. Then --

JON JON

I'm here if you need me, Billy.

BILLY

Ain't got no payroll, brother.

JON JON

I don't wanna get paid, man. I never wanted to get paid. You're my friend.

(MORE)

JON JON (CONT'D)

(beat)

Anything you need, let me know.

BILLY

I could use a lift.

JON JON

Sure. You need a place to stay. I could ask my mom.

BILLY

Ester still looking good?

JON JON

She's packed on sixty pounds and lost three toes to the diabetes -- other than that, yeah, she's a total fucking cougar.

BILLY

Just a ride, be great.

The men share an historic smile as they climb in the Honda.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - DAY

Billy and Jon Jon drive through SOUTHWEST DETROIT. Hard, urban turf. Billy checking street addresses as they do --

JON JON

Shit, we're in the fucking dead zone here, man --

Billy looks at the card Jordan gave him --

BILLY

Up here.

They pull up to a rundown building, faded paint on the front reads: WILLS GYM.

JON JON

Is this place even open? Looks condemned.

BILLY

Wait here.

JON JON

Hurry up, man. Got about ten minutes before I'm up on blocks --

Billy hops out of the car --

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

Billy enters. YOUNG BOXERS train. Tick in the ring with Ramone. As Billy walks toward the ring, Hoppy spots him --

HOPPY
Shit, man. You Billy fuckin' Hope.

BILLY
Looking for Tick.

HOPPY
(re: ring)
He working with Ramone.

Now the fighters all notice. Activity stops as Billy reaches the ring. Tick stares at Billy, trying to clock the reality.

BILLY
You Tick Wills?

TICK
Yeah.

BILLY
Can we talk?

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Billy takes in the humble space, Tick on the edge of his desk --

TICK
What brings Billy Hope to the hood?

BILLY
I'm looking for a trainer.

Tick BLURTS out a stunned laugh. Then --

TICK
You serious?

BILLY
Yeah.

TICK
I ain't a professional trainer,
brother.

BILLY
That's okay. Currently, I ain't a
professional fighter.
(off his look)
(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

I need someone to get me ready to fight again. Jordan Mains said you might be able to help me.

TICK

He did, huh?

(off Billy's silence)

And why would I take on the headache of the great white hope?

Billy reacts to the attack. Stands --

BILLY

Yeah, why would you do that, clearly you got so much more going on here.

As he exits --

TICK

That skin's as thin as it is pale.

Billy stops. Desperate, he tries the truth --

BILLY

I fucked up. State took my little girl. I gotta start earning to get her back. Fighting's all I know. No other trainer will touch me.

Tick takes in Billy's vulnerability. After a moment --

TICK

Sorry about your kid.

(beat)

If I give you a shot. It's my rules. My conditions. Got three.

BILLY

Okay.

TICK

One, you don't swear or take the Lord's name in vain under my roof.

(off his nod)

Two, you don't throw a punch in or outta the ring until I tell you to.

BILLY

What d'ya mean?

TICK

I know you can hit. Problem is, that's all you know how to do. Defense, strategy, staying cool under fire. Boxing's a chess game.

(MORE)

TICK (CONT'D)

That's what I can teach you.
 (taps his head)
 This is more important --
 (re: fists)
 -- than these.

BILLY

Yeah, okay. And three?

TICK

My night man just had a stroke.
 Need someone to clean this place
 up. It'll cover the cost of my
 training.

BILLY

(incredulous)
 Are you kidding me? I'm not gonna
 clean your fucking toilets.

TICK

Just broke two out of three.

Billy PUNCHES the wall --

BILLY

Now we're three for three.

Billy exits. Tick watches him cross the gym, to himself --

TICK

Nice knowing you, Billy the Great.

EXT. UNITED FAMILY FOSTER CARE CENTER - LATER

Billy grabs his suitcase, climbs out of Jon Jon's car --

BILLY

Thanks, Jon Jon.

JON JON

Want me to wait?

BILLY

That's alright, man.

Jon Jon takes off the ROLEX --

JON JON

Here.

BILLY

I can't take that, man. I gave it
 to you. It was a gift.

JON JON
And I'm re-gifting it. Please.

Billy realizes Jon Jon *needs* to give it back. Takes it --

BILLY
Thanks.

JON JON
Call me you need anything.

BILLY
Yeah.

The men shake hands. Jon Jon drives away as Billy heads toward the large five-story, institutional looking structure.

INT. UFFCC - FAMILY ROOM - LATER

Billy sits in a bright yellow room. **ANGELA RIVERA** enters --

ANGELA
Mr. Hope, I'm Angela Rivera, I'm a social worker here at UFC.

BILLY
Hi. Where's Leila?

ANGELA
She'll be down in a minute. I just wanted to review some things before you see her.

BILLY
She doing okay?

ANGELA
Yeah. She's a good kid. I like her a lot.
(off his concern)
The first month of visits I'll need to supervise them. Then after that, as long as you stay on the grounds, you can see her alone.

BILLY
Can we get out of here?

ANGELA
After your eval, judge'll determine if you can have her off-site.

Billy goes to a sad, distracted place --

BILLY
Can't believe this shit.

ANGELA
I know how difficult this is --

BILLY
(snaps)
Do you really?

ANGELA
Yeah, I do. I had my kid taken six
years ago. Mommy was a junkie. I
cleaned up, got him back.

Beat. Billy processes her truth. Curious --

BILLY
How long you clean?

ANGELA
Five years, seven months. You?

BILLY
Nineteen days.

ANGELA
Cool. So you're pretty much still
outta your fucking mind.

Billy manages a smile --

BILLY
Pretty much.

ANGELA
I'll get your kid.

Angela exits. Billy sees a JUNKIE MOTHER talking to her young CHILDREN. Another CASE WORKER watches. Mom is fucked up. Her kids are emotionally checked out. It impacts Billy.

Leila enters, runs to her dad. Billy holds her like he'll never let go. Angela at a desk, watches as they connect. Dad and daughter keeping emotions in check to protect the other.

BILLY
You doing alright, angel girl?

LEILA
I guess so.

BILLY
They treating you okay?

LEILA
The kids are kinda weird. I like
Angela, she's really nice.

BILLY
How's the new school?

LEILA
Pretty lame. I already know
everything they're teaching.

BILLY
That's 'cause you're smarter than
the rest of the world. You get
that from your mom.

LEILA
Yeah.

They both go to a sad place. Struggle with the silence. Then --

LEILA
Food's pretty bad.

BILLY
I'm sorry.

LEILA
It's okay, Angela makes me PB&J --

BILLY
No baby, I'm sorry for everything.
I'm sorry I was a bad father.
Sorry I didn't take care of you
when mommy went away.

LEILA
It's okay, Daddy. I know.
(beat)
Angela says soon as you're doing
okay again, we'll move back home.

BILLY
Yeah. But it won't be the same
house, Leila. I had to sell it.

LEILA
I just wanna be with you.
(off his pain)
I'm sorry you're so sad.

BILLY
Aren't you sad, baby?

Leila deflects the feelings, puts the focus back on him --

LEILA
Where are you gonna live?

BILLY
Close by. Gonna come visit you
every day. You'll see, you'll be
sick of me.

LEILA
Okay.

BILLY
(remembers)
Got something for you.

He opens his suitcase and pulls out BUDDY.

BILLY
He missed you.

Leila nods, takes Buddy, containing her feelings. Then,
silence. Billy at a loss, looks at Angela. She joins them --

ANGELA
They're serving lunch, Leila. You
better go grab a seat.

LEILA
Okay.

Leila hugs her daddy, the adult --

LEILA
It's gonna be alright, Daddy.

Leila heads out. Billy, overwhelmed, drops his head in his
hands. Angela places a reassuring hand on his shoulder --

ANGELA
She's a strong little girl.

BILLY
She's eight. She's not supposed to
be strong.

Billy, broken, walks away --

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - LATER

Billy places the ROLEX on Tick's desk, surprises him --

BILLY
This should cover the first few
months of training.
(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
 (off his look)
 I'll clean your gym, but you gotta
 pay me. Gotta start showing proof
 of income for the courts.

Tick ponders the offer. Billy takes in his conflicted vibe --

BILLY
 What is it, man? Is it the white
 hope thing? Is that the hate?

Tick looks at him, then from an historical place --

TICK
 The hate is from watching greed and
 arrogance ruin the sport I love.

Billy takes in his deep resentment. Gets it --

BILLY
 Yeah.
 (beat)
 I just wanna chance, man. Try to
 do it different this time.

Billy's humility ekes out. In that moment, Tick sees Hope --

TICK
 Minimum wage, no benefits, no free
 toilet paper.

BILLY
 Okay.

Billy extends his hand. Tick studies him, then shakes.

BILLY
 You know where I can rent a room
 around here?

TICK
 Pretty white boy like you, best
 head east.

BILLY
 You've seen me fight -- I ain't
 that pretty.

Billy and Tick share half a smile.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A simple, furnished studio apartment. It's not a shithole,
 but it's a close neighbor.

Billy unpacks his bag into an old dresser. Sees that the last tenant hung a CRUCIFIX above it. He takes it off the nail and hangs the PHOTO of his family.

He sits on the old sofa, stares at his photo, the cross still in his hand. Looks around the room -- no TV, no phone, no computer, no distractions -- just Billy. After a long moment, he's crawling out of his skin. Confronts the crucifix --

BILLY

Now what?

Jesus doesn't answer.

EXT. STREETS - SOUTHWEST DETROIT - MORNING

Cold winter morning. Early. Billy, in sweats, hat, gloves, iPod, runs through the city. We hear the SONG playing in his ears as we BEGIN MUSIC MONTAGE --

Detroit is down. Recession has crushed it. Streets are dirty, foreboding and unforgiving. DRIVERS cut Billy off, HONK and FLIP HIM OFF as he tries to find a safe path.

EXT. PUBLIC SCHOOL - SAME

Leila, dressed in a coat and hat, exits a SCHOOL BUS. She stops and looks at the huge barbed-wire enclosed school yard, HUNDREDS OF KIDS. ALICE, a very large ten year-old, exits the bus behind her, rips the wool BEANIE off her head --

BIG GIRL

That's mine.

Leila just lets her take it. Cold and emotionless, she heads into the mass of strangers.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Billy, nearing the end of his run. Tired. Sweating. He heads toward four black MALES outside a small GROCERY MARKET down the street from the gym. A BLACK LUXURY SUV parked in front. They all sport GANGSTER DISCIPLES ink, Star of David with pitchforks. The one in charge, KASH, spots Billy approach. His Lieutenant, UMP, 18, follows his gaze. Kash, 9MM peeking out from his waistband, peels away and eyes Billy like a soldier. Ump joins him, the clown --

UMP

Run Forest, run!

Other bangers LAUGH as Billy heads towards Wills Gym.

Kash clocks the fighter, recognition flashes across his face.
We END MUSIC MONTAGE, as the lens studies the young thug and --

DISSOLVES INTO:

A PHOTO of a fourteen-year-old Kash, striking a boxing pose.
We pull out to reveal --

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MINUTES LATER

The photo hangs on the wall with the other amateur fighters.
Kash was one of Tick's fighters.

Billy enters, exhausted from the run. He joins Tick as he
trains Ramone, Hoppy and two other young black BOXERS.

TICK
How many miles?

BILLY
Not sure. Three or four.

TICK
That ain't roadwork, that's a
yuppie jog. Tomorrow you do ten.

BILLY
You serious? That's fucking crazy.

TICK
Not as crazy as that gut of yours.
Give me fifty pushups for swearing.

Billy burns a look at Tick. The gym watches. Tension. Then
Billy hits the floor, pays the fine.

Ramone, cocky, snarks at Hoppy --

RAMONE
I give Hope a week.

HOPPY
Nah, man. Tick gonna recycle that
white boy. Make him fucking champ
again.

Unseen by the boys, Tick overhears them --

TICK
Hoppy, fifty.

HOPPY
Shit --

TICK
A hundred.

Hoppy hits the floor, pays the fine. Ramone watches Billy, not thrilled he'll be consuming his trainer's time --

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - LATER

Inside the ring, Tick slides gloves on Billy's hands --

BILLY
No wraps?

TICK
Don't need 'em, you ain't gonna be hitting anything.
(beat)
Gonna introduce you to an element of boxing you've never met -- it's called defense.

BILLY
I got defense.

TICK
Yeah, your head.

As he puts head gear on Billy --

TICK
Ramone, get in here.

Ramone climbs in the ring.

TICK
Ramone here has the fastest hands this side of 8 mile.

RAMONE
(concerned)
Want me to spar?

TICK
Don't worry. He ain't gonna hit back.

Tick hits an electronic BUZZER. Billy and Ramone move to the center of the ring. Ramone throws JABS, HOOKS, UPPERCUTS as Billy tries to protect. He can barely see Ramone's hands. The Flyweight humiliates Billy. His punches don't do damage, they score points. Ramone enjoys schooling the champ as the rest of the gym watches. They all laugh at the white man's lack of speed. Billy's anger grows --

BILLY
C'mon, man. It's like sparring
with a fucking gnat.

RAMONE
A gnat like a boss, motherfucker.

BUZZER. Ramone celebrates with his buddies. Billy and Tick --

TICK
By the time I'm done with you,
you'll be able to defend against
that kind of speed.
(beat)
Give me fifty for the swearing.
(at Ramone)
You too.

Billy, shakes his head, drops to the canvas. Ramone does
push-ups as fast as he hits. As Billy pushes up slowly --

RAMONE
C'mon, old man. Keep up.

INT. UFFCC - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Billy and Leila play Gin, Angela watches from the desk --

BILLY
Angela says your still keeping to
yourself. No other kids you like?

LEILA
Some of them are okay I guess.

BILLY
You should try to make some
friends, baby.

LEILA
Mommy was my best friend. I talk
to her a lot.

BILLY
That's good.

Billy goes to a sad place, Leila takes it in --

LEILA
You making any friends?

BILLY
Place where I'm working. I'm
trying...

Leila lays down her hand --

LEILA

Gin.

BILLY

Oh, I see how it is. Distract me with the small talk, then pounce.

LEILA

Don't be a sore loser, Daddy.

Billy manages to get a smile from his daughter as he shuffles. Angela watches father and daughter bond.

INT. WILLIS GYM - TRAINING AREA - NIGHT

As Billy sweeps up, he sees Tick's office door open, enters --

INT. WILLIS GYM - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Empties a garbage can into his bin. As he puts it back, spots the PHOTOS on the bookshelf. Looks at the one of Tick and his family. Then Billy picks up Tick's boxing photo with Jordan --

BILLY

Holy shit.

A moment later, Tick enters, clearly he's been drinking --

TICK

What're you doing?

BILLY

I was cleaning up, saw the --

TICK

So you just start looking through my shit.

BILLY

No. Sorry...

TICK

Get the fuck out.

Billy exits. Tick SLAMS the door, drops on the sofa. Lost in his cups. Then he hits the floor. Push-ups for swearing.

INT. GRAND RIVER DINER - LATER

Billy enters the hood eatery. Few LOCALS dine on cheap food.

He sits at the nearly-empty counter as Hoppy exits the kitchen with a bus tub. Hop clears dirty dishes, then spots Billy --

HOPPY
Hey, what's up Billy Hope?

BILLY
Not much. Food any good here?

HOPPY
The rats seem to like it.

The LATINA WAITRESS approaches --

WAITRESS
What can I get you?

BILLY
Just coffee.

As she turns to get his coffee --

HOPPY
Smart.

BILLY
Been watching you train, Hop.
Timing's real good. Punch hard.
Gonna be a good fighter.

HOPPY
Really? Thanks, man.

BILLY
(off his surprise)
Doesn't Tick tell you that?

HOPPY
Not really his style.

Hoppy perches himself on a stool --

BILLY
How long you been working with him?

HOPPY
Since I was ten. Gonna get me a
fight career like Billy the Great.
Get my ass d'fuck outta shit town.

BILLY
Good luck with that.

HOPPY
Ain't about luck.

BILLY

No, it's not.

(beat)

Saw a picture of Tick and his family. They still around?

HOPPY

No. Kid died, man. Like real young. Think the wife just split.

BILLY

He fought pro?

HOPPY

Lightweight. Had a winning record till he lost the eye. That's when he started pro training.

BILLY

Why'd he stop?

HOPPY

I don't know.

The waitress, impatient --

WAITRESS

Hey, these tables ain't gonna bus themselves.

HOPPY

What, you expecting a fucking midnight rush?

Hoppy picks up the bus tub.

BILLY

How late you here?

HOPPY

Till three.

BILLY

What about schoolwork?

HOPPY

Fuck school, man. Gonna be a fighter.

BILLY

You fuck school and the only thing you're gonna be is a busboy.

HOPPY

You dropped out.

BILLY
Yeah, look at me now.

Hoppy takes in the ex-champ, has to ask --

HOPPY
What the fuck happened to you? You
had it all, man.

Billy thinks about that question. Then, matter-of-factly --

BILLY
I only had two things. Now I have
one.

Billy finishes the coffee, throws down some cash --

BILLY
See ya tomorrow.

Hoppy nods. Billy exits --

EXT. GRAND RIVER DINER - CONTINUOUS

As Billy steps out the door, Kash, Ump and two more GANGSTER
DISCIPLES intercept --

KASH
Damn, it is him, ain't it?

UMP
Fuck, yeah.

KASH
You Billy Hope?

Billy nods.

UMP
Actually, it's Billy dope, now.

KASH
Shit, yeah. You a broke-ass junkie
motherfucker now, ain't you?

BILLY
That's right.

KASH
You really trainin' at Wills?
(off his nod)
D'fuck you doing at that dump?

BILLY

Still figuring that out.

Billy tries to walk past them, but Ump steps in front of him, strikes a boxing pose --

UMP

C'mon, champ, show a nigga some moves.

BILLY

Just wanna go home, man.

KASH

(re: Ump)

He just a fan.

(beat)

Or maybe you just like that bible-humpin' motherfucker runs your gym. Don't think we all worthy of your valuable fucking time.

Billy refuses to engage. As he steps past Ump, the banger SLAPS him with a jab --

KASH

Oh, damn... stings him with a jab.

Bangers REACT. Billy spots Hoppy through the window, heading to the door, catches his eye, shakes him off. Hoppy obeys.

KASH

C'mon, here we go... round one...

Ump swings, Billy ducks. Ump jabs, Billy bobs. Kash watches, impressed. Already Billy's defensive skills are better.

UMP

C'mon, bitch, why you ain't playing?

KASH

Yeah, Mr. Dope, not like we the niggas killed your wife --

Billy locks eyes with Kash, all he wants to do is fuck this guy up. Kash waits for his reaction. Billy remembers Tick's rule. Then he quickly PUSHES past the bangers. The others LAUGH as they enter the diner. Kash watches Billy walk away.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The place is looking a bit more lived in. Billy reclines on the worn PULL OUT, finishes up reading a PARENTING BOOK.

Turns out the light. Shuts his eyes. Sounds of the city fill the room as the noise of his life fills his head. Billy's fists unconsciously CLENCH as he tries to silence the world.

INT. WILLIS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

Billy, WEIGHTS on his ankles, jumps rope, listening to his iPod. Hear the SONG, as we BEGIN MUSIC MONTAGE --

Tick circles Billy, clapping out a rhythm as the champ moves with weighted ankles doing rigorous FOOTWORK exercises. Ramone watches from the heavy bag as Tick trains his new fighter. Billy eyes the dejected Ramone, sees his envy.

Jon Jon holds Billy's ankles as he does SIT-UPS. With each rock back, Tick SLAPS his stomach with a WOODEN PADDLE.

Tick swings a BROOM HANDLE as Billy tries to BOB and WEAVE under the blow. Most shots clip him in the head gear.

EXT. WILLIS GYM - DAY

Jon Jon, Hoppy, Ramone whip SNOWBALLS at Billy as Tick works on his reaction time. Ramone throwing the hardest.

EXT. UFFCC - YARD - DAY

Billy, Angela, few KIDS build a SNOWMAN. Leila just watches from a bench. Billy shares a look with Angela, concerned.

EXT. STREETS - MORNING

Billy, looking LEANER, runs at a good clip. The city is still oppressive but there's a lightness in his stride.

INT. COUNSELING ROOM - DAY

ANGER MANAGEMENT posters on the wall. Billy sits in a circle with ANGRY MEN. Billy looks at the clock, shakes his head at the inanity. The COUNSELOR notices his disconnect.

INT. WILLIS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

Billy and Tick wrapped up in a huddle inside the ring. Ramone watches Tick's connection with the champ.

Billy and Ramone SPAR. Ramone still faster than Billy can handle, but he defends much better. Ramone doesn't like that Billy is getting faster. The Flyweight gets more aggressive.

As they box, we see a WELL-DRESSED MAN enter in the background. He takes in the gym, pays special attention to the action in the ring. Billy spots him, it pulls his focus.

Ramone takes advantage of Billy's distraction, pops him in the face with a hard JAB. BLOOD flows from Billy's nose.

Tick tends to the bloody nose as Billy and Ramone burn looks.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - NIGHT

Billy cleans, listening to his iPod, he looks content as he mops the old concrete floor. Tick exits his office, doesn't even acknowledge Billy as he shuffles to the door. Saddened by the man's distance, Billy removes the buds and watches his friend head out for his nightly drunk as we END MUSIC MONTAGE.

INT. CHURCH - BASEMENT - NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS MEETING - NIGHT

Billy enters the meeting as the SPEAKER IDENTIFIES. He spots Angela a few rows away. Shares a nod as he sits.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Billy walks with Angela. It's not a romantic connection, it's a human connection.

ANGELA

You ever try to find your parents?

BILLY

For what? Thirty fucking years of hugs and kisses? Couldn't imagine giving up your kid.

ANGELA

Shit happens.

BILLY

Yeah. Guess it does.

(beat)

Really appreciate you keeping an eye on Leila.

ANGELA

She's had a tough year. Our therapist says she hasn't really mourned her mom's death.

BILLY

Yeah, I know. She was too busy picking up my pieces.

ANGELA
 (off his self-loathing)
 How's your stuff going?

BILLY
 Doing the parenting classes, they're
 okay. But the counseling, man... it
 all feels like such bullshit.
 (beat)
 I go back to the judge next week.
 Not sure what to expect.

ANGELA
 They'll look at your progress.
 Should give you unmonitored
 visitation.

BILLY
 That mean I don't see you anymore?

Billy's flirty inquiry almost makes her blush. Then --

FRANKIE
 Mom!

FRANKIE, a ten-year-old boy, runs to Angela, hugs her.

ANGELA
 Hey, baby.

Behind him is Angela's sister, TASHA, 20's --

ANGELA
 This is my friend, Billy.
 (re: her family)
 My son, Frankie. My sister, Tasha.

BILLY
 Hello.

FRANKIE
 Hi.

TASHA
 Heard a lot about you, Billy.

Now Billy is the one hiding his blush --

ANGELA
 Thanks for walking me home.

BILLY
 No problem.
 (to the others)
 Nice meeting you.

ANGELA
Good night.

BILLY
Night.

Billy watches the family head into their building.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Billy spots Kash, Ump and two DISCIPLES outside the GROCERY MARKET up ahead. Crosses the street to avoid them. Passes --

EXT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Through the front window, Billy spots Tick at the bar. He stops, debates the idea in his head, then enters --

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Billy pulls up a stool next to Tick. Tick barely looks up. He's had a few Four Roses, but he's not drunk.

Billy orders a drink from Ollie --

BILLY
Coke.

TICK
Diet Coke.

Billy nods. Ollie smiles, pours the drink as Billy engages --

BILLY
Nice place.

TICK
It was.

Ollie slides over Billy's drink --

BILLY
Thanks.

OLLIE
You're Billy Hope.
(off his nod)
The hell you doing here?

TICK
Yeah, what the hell you doing here?

BILLY
Came to see a friend.

OLLIE
Pop's on the house.

TICK
Good, 'cause he ain't got no money.

Ollie smiles and joins other customers. Tick and Billy alone. Silence. Then --

TICK
Drinking's a solitary sport.

BILLY
Guess you've won a few title belts.

TICK
Sobriety jokes from the pill-
popping champ.
(off Billy's smirk)
What do you want?

BILLY
Just avoiding going home to three-
hundred square feet of nothing.

TICK
You get used to it.

Long silence, then --

BILLY
How come you never told me you
fought for Jordan?

TICK
Ancient history.

BILLY
Is that when you lost the eye?

TICK
July, '93. Rematch with Roger
Quigley.

BILLY
So, I gotta ask -- why a blue one?

TICK
An evil blue-eyed devil took it
from me. This way I never let the
world forget it.

BILLY

Right.

(beat)

Why'd you stop training pro?

TICK

None of your business. Bonding's over.

Tick drinks. Billy finishes his Diet Coke.

BILLY

See ya in the morning.

Billy starts to exit, stops --

BILLY

You do know that blue-eyed devil
shit is fucking crazy, right?

He manages to get a smile from Tick.

INT. GROCERY MARKET - LATER

Billy shops for essentials. Clueless. He checks labels. A black T-GIRL strolls past him, she's sexy in a Dennis Rodman kinda way. She sees his dilemma choosing MOISTURIZERS --

T-GIRL

Need help, honey?

BILLY

Uh... looking for some moisturizer
for my kid. You know if she can
use this on her face?

She grabs a different bottle --

T-GIRL

This got aloe, not as many perfumes.
Keeps my babies from cracking.
(off his curious look)
I'm the complete single parent,
sweetheart.

BILLY

Thanks.

Billy smiles as she struts away on her four-inch heels.

EXT. GROCERY MARKET - LATER

Billy exits the market with a bag of basics.

As he walks, he spots Tick down the street being harassed by Kash and GD bangers --

BILLY

Hey!

Billy puts down the bag and bolts across the street. Kash watches as Ump and another BANGER shove an impaired Tick --

BILLY

Leave 'im the fuck alone.

UMP

Champ come to save the motherfuckin' day.

KASH

Relax, man. We just talking 'bout getting my gym membership renewed.

Billy grabs Tick, who's more pissed than scared --

BILLY

Let's get out of here --

TICK

I'm fine.

Kash steps in front of Billy --

KASH

He fine, man. You should go home.

Billy doesn't move. Then Kash gives him a VIOLENT SHOVE. The champ strikes a fight stance. Kash pulls his 9MM, simply --

.....KASH.....

What d'fuck you gonna do, white boy?
(in Billy's face)
You in my ring, motherfucker. I'm
the one decides you live or die.

Tick sees Billy in danger, goes for Kash --

TICK

You little punkass --

Before Tick can connect, Kash PISTOL WHIPS him across the face, knocks him to the curb. Brutal, historical blow. Billy snaps, catches Kash off guard with a LEFT, KNOCKS HIM DOWN.

Then we hear the WHOOP of a SIREN as a PATROL CAR screeches up. Kash stumbles to his feet, locks eyes with Billy. Beef to be continued. Then Kash and the GD's split before --

Two DETROIT PD UNIS join Billy as he tries to help Tick to his feet. Tick refuses the help, more embarrassed than hurt.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MORNING

Billy enters, sweating from his run, joins Tick, his face BRUISED, as he works the heavy bag with Ramone.

TICK
You're training yourself.

BILLY
What're you talking about?

TICK
Broke the rule. Threw a punch.

BILLY
Are you kidding me?

TICK
You're not learning, so I'm not teaching.

BILLY
I saved your fucking ass last night.

TICK
And now you owe me fifty pushups.

Billy stares at his trainer, stunned. Then --

BILLY
Here's a rule for you. To give life lessons, you gotta have a life. Whatever it is you tell yourself you're doing here, it's bullshit.
(off his look)
You're just a pissed-off drunk, hiding in a shit hole.

As Billy exits, Ramone stares at Tick, not sure what to do. Tick, stung, hides the impact, snaps at Ramone --

TICK
C'mon. You training or thinking?

INT. OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE - COURT ROOM - DAY

Billy in the same suit, no lawyer, sits in front of Judge Kayle. A few PEOPLE sit in back awaiting their case. Tick slips in and takes a seat as Kayle reviews Billy's file --

JUDGE KAYLE

Congratulations on the two months of sobriety.

(off Billy's nod)

You've been attending all your counseling sessions and classes. Consistently visiting your daughter. That's good.

(beat, re: file)

What's not good is your counselors say you barely participate. They feel you're not taking it seriously.

BILLY

I'm trying --

JUDGE KAYLE

(abruptly cuts him off)

You'll have your chance to speak.

(beat)

Two nights ago you were involved in an altercation with gang members.

BILLY

No. A friend of mine was --

JUDGE KAYLE

What did I just say?

(off Billy's silent fume)

Seems to me you're not understanding the severity of your anger issues. Considering your line of work, this causes me great concern for the welfare of your child.

(off Billy's stare)

I'm refusing unmonitored visits.

We'll reevaluate in ninety days.

(beat)

Now, Mr. Hope, you have anything you would like to say?

Billy stares at the Judge, what he would like is to rip her fucking heart out. Then something happens, Billy takes a deep breath, and calmly, albeit a bit mechanical, replies --

BILLY

I'll try harder.

Judge Kayle is somewhat surprised by his control. Get the sense that she's also testing Billy. Then, sincerely --

JUDGE KAYLE

I hope so.

As the Bailiff brings up the next case, Billy spots Tick exit.

EXT. OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Tick is sitting on the steps, Billy joins him --

BILLY

What're you doing here?

TICK

Had to take care of some parking tickets.

BILLY

You don't own a car.

Tick doesn't respond. After a moment --

BILLY

What I said the other day. Sorry --

TICK

Heard what I was supposed to hear.

Billy nods. Enough said. Then --

TICK

That judge, nasty piece of work.

BILLY

She's just protecting my kid.

Tick takes in Billy, then stands --

TICK

Tomorrow morning, bring your wraps.
Time to start hitting back.

Billy nods. Almost grins as Tick walks away --

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MORNING

Tick, in Lombardi mode, WRAPS Billy's hands as he lectures --

TICK

Right now, you got two weapons.

(re: right jab, big left)

Shotgun. Grenade.

(beat)

All power, no precision. You win battles that way, but not the war.

Gonna give you a bigger arsenal.

Tick moves to the HEAVY BAG, demonstrates --

TICK
 (light quick right jabs)
 Pistol.
 (light quick left cross)
 Sniper rifle.
 (light quick uppercuts)
 Bayonet.
 (quick four-punch flurry)
 Machine gun.

Billy nods. Tick slides on the gloves --

TICK
 Gonna teach you how to do something
 you've never done before. Go the
 distance, win on points.

We BEGIN MUSIC MONTAGE as Billy hits the PADS. Tick coaches --

TICK
 Tap. Tap. No power. Easy pops.
 Smooth, effortless.

Billy lightens his punch --

TICK
 That's it. Point. Point. There
 we go. No strain, no fatigue.
 Speed. Pop. Pop. Pop.

Billy SHADOWBOXES with fifteen pound DUMBBELLS in his hand.

TICK
 Turn 'em. Turn 'em. Speed, speed.

Billy hits the DOUBLE END BAG. Timing, not great. Misses more
 than he connects. Frustrated, throws a hard hook, misses --

TICK
 Don't overshoot the hook. Snap the
 elbow, bring it right back. Focus.

Billy hits the SPEED BAG. Focused. Methodical.

TICK
 Pick it up. Let's go. Speed.
 Speed. Speed.

As Billy quickens the pace, he loses the rhythm. Frustrated,
 he SLAMS the bag. Tick stops him --

TICK
 Anger drains you. We're going the
 distance. Calm, cool, patient.

Billy nods, then resumes, as we END MUSIC MONTAGE --

INT. UFFCC - CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Christmas party. KIDS, FAMILIES. Billy and Leila finish up dessert as Angela, Frankie and other kids decorate the tree.

BILLY

You don't wanna help 'em decorate?

Leila shrugs. Then --

LEILA

When am I getting out of here, Dad?

BILLY

Not sure, sweetheart.

(off her silence)

Guess that makes you sad, huh?

LEILA

You shouldn't be alone.

BILLY

What about you? Don't you get lonely?

LEILA

We're supposed to be together.

Leila clears Billy's dirty plate and cup, heads to the garbage can. Angela joins a concerned Billy --

ANGELA

You okay?

BILLY

Whenever I ask how she feels, she makes it about me. Try to tell her it's okay to be sad --

ANGELA

Do you show her?

(off his look)

Maybe if she saw you having some bigger feelings, she might feel safe having her own.

BILLY

(snaps, defensive)

Not gonna lose my shit in front of my kid. She sees me fall apart, she'll take it on, worry even more.

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)
 (off her silence)
 Sorry. The first holiday...

Billy can't even bring himself to say "without Maureen".
 Forces a pained smile as he climbs to his feet --

BILLY
 Merry fucking Christmas.

Frankie runs to his mom. Angela hugs him as she watches
 Billy walk over to Leila --

EXT. WILLS GYM - DAY

Billy approaches the gym as he finishes his run. Sees Tick,
 Hoppy, few other FIGHTERS looking at fresh GRAFFITI on the
 front of the building. Reads: HOPE IS DEAD. Gangster
 Disciple TAG next to it. Billy reaches the front.

TICK
 Someone left you a message.

BILLY
 Looks like I'm getting real popular
 with the locals.

Tick spots Ramone approaching, smiles as the kids greet him.

BILLY
 What're you smiling about? I'm
 getting death threats, here.

TICK
 C'mon.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MINUTES LATER

Billy and Tick prepare as Hoppy helps Ramone put on his gear.
 Ramone watches as the trainer and champ chat in private --

TICK
 You're no longer Billy the Great,
 you're Billy the wait.
 (off his look)
 Start slow, no punches. Study your
 opponent. Conserve energy. Figure
 out his strengths, his weaknesses,
 choose the best weapon.
 (re: head, not his fists)
 This. Before this. Understand?

Billy nods. We see the same WELL-DRESSED MAN enter in the
 background as Tick hits the electronic BUZZER.

Billy and Ramone spar. Billy doesn't throw a punch, but is now blocking a majority of Ramone's fast hands. He studies Ramone. The Flyweight still jealous of Billy, gets in a COMBINATION that stuns the champ --

RAMONE

Still not fast enough, old man.

BUZZER SOUNDS. Billy joins Tick --

BILLY

Kid drops the left when he throws the big right.

TICK

Counter with the hook. Don't need power, just snap it. Then press inside, bayonets to the belly.

Billy nods as the BUZZER SOUNDS. Sparring resumes. Ramone sneaks in a few JABS, then comes at Billy with the right hand. Billy weaves away from the punch and SNAPS a quick RIGHT HOOK that catches Ramone's open face. The punch spins the Flyweight's head. He retreats, barks at Tick --

RAMONE

What the fuck?

TICK

Oh, yeah. Forgot to tell you. He's hitting back now.

BILLY

Let's go, flyboy.

Billy and Ramone resume. Billy incorporates some of his new arsenal. Quick RIGHT JABS, precise LEFTS. Then he lands a quick UPPER CUT to Ramone's midsection that knocks the wind out of the fighter. BUZZER SOUNDS. Billy embraces Ramone --

BILLY

You okay?

Ramone nods, moves away. More embarrassed than hurt. Billy goes back to Tick, looks at Ramone --

BILLY

That kid's gonna be a champ.

TICK

I know. He's a great fighter. Soon as he loses some of that attitude, he'll be ready.

BILLY

He needs to hear it now.

(Billy, the father)

There's nobody telling this kid
he's great. You're gonna lose him.

Tick looks at Ramone. Gets it. Heads over to the boy. We can't hear the conversation, but Ramone begins to light up. As Tick coaches and encourages Ramone, Hoppy shares a look with Billy. Knows Billy is responsible for the advice.

The BUZZER goes off. Billy and Ramone move to the center, tap gloves. Ramone almost smiles as they resume sparring.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - LATER

As Billy and Tick exit the ring, Billy notices the well-dressed man watching --

BILLY

Who is this guy? Been in before.

TICK

Probably just a local shark
checking out the fighters.

The man takes out his cellphone and exits --

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Billy, mopping up, spots Tick heading out for his daily drunk --

BILLY

Good night.

TICK

Night.

As Tick reaches the door, he stops. Watches Billy, then --

TICK

Got the fight at Nightingale's.

BILLY

That an invitation?

TICK

Not really.

BILLY

I'll see you there.

Tick nods, then exits. Billy smiles.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - LATER

Bar, almost-filled, TV plays a title fight. MIGUEL CANTO and ARMAN VILLANUEVA, 30's Latino. Billy enters, joins Tick --

TICK

Round two, almost over. Canto knocked Villanueva down twice in the first round. Toying with 'im.

Billy sits, watches intently as we PUSH IN on the TV --

Canto moves around the ring like Ali. Slick, effortless, balletic. Then he attacks, brutal quick hands. A devastating FLURRY of punches sends Villanueva to the canvas. As he tries to climb to his feet, he falls back down. It's over. The bar REACTS as Miguel celebrates, PUMPS his fists --

TICK

Magic Miguel can fight.

They watch Miguel celebrate, the TITLE BELT over his shoulder, he beats his chest and strikes a pose --

BILLY

Cocky motherfucker.

TICK

Yeah, imagine that.

They see Jordan Mains join Miguel in the ring. Billy goes to a dark place. Tick realizes it's all too close for him --

TICK

C'mon, let's get out of here.

INT. GRAND RIVER DINER - LATER

Billy has coffee and pie. Tick drinks a beer. Hoppy hovers in the background. Mid-conversation --

BILLY

... my toughest was Golden Gloves -- Mexican kid, Alberto Salazar. Had a right hand, felt like it was wrapped in copper. Humiliated me all eight rounds. My first loss. Two weeks later he got busted for dealing blow. Never happier to see a guy go away. How 'bout you?

TICK

That's easy. First time I fought Quigley.

(MORE)

TICK (CONT'D)

Was like the guy was sitting on my shoulder while I was training. Knew every punch I was gonna throw, saw every hole. TKO in the sixth.

(beat)

It was the night I met Janey. She was the X-ray technician.

BILLY

And the rematch?

TICK

A nothing fight. Few years later. I was middle of the card, Quigley was on his way out. Drugs and booze. I was crushing him. Then I don't know what happened, got complacent, didn't think he had anything left. Out of nowhere, landed a right hand. I went down. Eye went dark. Blunt trauma. Back then, nothing they could do.

BILLY

Jesus Christ. That's fucked.

(the swearing)

Sorry.

TICK

It's okay. It was fucked.

(beat)

Man, she hated the game.

(off his lock)

Janey.

BILLY

Even when you turned to training?

TICK

Yeah. Hated all of it.

BILLY

And you couldn't walk away from it.

Tick nods, avoids the feelings --

TICK

What about your wife?

BILLY

She knew it was my life. She made herself love it.

TICK

Sounds like a good girl.

BILLY

Yeah.

(beat)

How'd your son die?

TICK

Bad heart.

BILLY

Sorry.

Tick nods. Then, uncomfortable with the intimacy --

TICK

I should get going.

BILLY

Yeah.

Tick puts cash on the table, then before he walks away --

TICK

The fake eye -- my HMO screwed up, ordered the wrong color. Too big a hassle to change it.

BILLY

Think I like the crazy, blue-eyed devil story better.

(off Tick's smile)

You ever get bored going to the Nightingale, I'm around.

Tick gets it. Nods. Exits. Billy finishes his pie --

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

His shitty apartment is actually looking like a home. Recent PHOTOS of Leila, lots of used books and flea market purchases.

Billy lays on the pullout, a look of contentment on his face, then to whatever is listening, a simple, quiet --

BILLY

Thank you.

Billy shuts his eyes. His fists UNCLENCH.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - MORNING

Billy enters, drenched in sweat from his run. Sees the well-dressed man exit Tick's office. Tick waves him over.

INT. WILLS GYM - BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Billy and Tick --

BILLY

Who is he?

TICK

Must be working with Keith Bowman.
Olympic contender.

BILLY

Middleweight?

TICK

Yeah. Training out of Kronk with
Emanuel Steward. They do a fund-
raiser every year, make money for
their kids program. They want you
to fight Bowman.

BILLY

How?

TICK

Charity. Fighters sign insurance
waivers, eight rounds. Think
you'll bring in the crowd.

BILLY

Should we do it?

TICK

Up to you.

BILLY

I'm not in this alone. I'll do
whatever you say.

Billy and Tick take each other in. Trust growing. Then --

TICK

One condition. You go all eight.

BILLY

Okay.

INT. UFFCC - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Billy helps Leila with her homework. Angela nearby. Then --

LEILA

Some of the kids are saying you're
gonna be boxing again.

BILLY
Yeah. For charity. To help kids.

LEILA
Why do you have to fight?

BILLY
It's my job, sweetheart.

LEILA
I wanna go.

BILLY
You can't go, Leila. Maybe when
you're older --

LEILA
What if you get hurt?

BILLY
I'm not going to --

LEILA
I wanna be there, make sure.

Billy shares a look with Angela, who has overheard, then --

BILLY
I'll tell you what. Fight's a few
blocks from here, at that big hotel.
I'll come by soon as it's over, so
you can see I'm okay. Deal?

Leila gives a half-convinced nod.

EXT. HILTON GARDEN INN - DETROIT - NIGHT

Outside the large urban hotel, the MARQUIS READS: KRONK GYM
CHARITY BOXING EVENT. HOPE VS. BOWMAN.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - DETROIT - NIGHT

BANQUET TABLES surround A BOXING RING in the center of the
ballroom. Rows of SPECTATOR SEATS set up beyond the tables.

KRONK GYM FOUNDATION BANNERS flag the walls.

The place is buzzing with Detroit POLITICOS, AFFLUENT
CITIZENS and LOCAL TEENS. At a front table, we spot Jordan
Mains sitting with Miguel Canto.

In the back seats, Angela and her sister sit with FIGHT FANS.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Billy, in simple black trunks, stares ahead as Tick finishes lacing up his gloves. Tick notices his distraction --

TICK
Where are you?

BILLY
I'm here.
(off his doubt)
Worried about my kid.

Tick slices through his self-absorbtion like a knife --

TICK
Listen to me. When you climb in that ring, there is no kid, no dead wife, no judge, no nothing. I don't care how good a shape your body's in --
(taps his head)
If this isn't operating at a hundred percent, you already lost. Understand me?

BILLY
Yeah. I'm ready.

Billy hops up, shakes out his arms.

TICK
Mind if I say a prayer?

BILLY
Say a bunch.

Tick grasps the small cross around his neck, shuts his eyes --

TICK
Lord Jesus, we ask for your care and guidance tonight. We are grateful for all your gifts and pray that you show us how to best use these talents you've given us. Please inspire your soldier, Billy. Guide his spirit, calm his mind and stir his heart. You let him be the best fighter he can be.

Billy, awed by Tick's poetic devotion.

TICK
Anything you wanna add?

BILLY
 (at Tick, not God)
 Just... thank you.

TICK
 Amen.

BILLY
 Amen.

Jon Jon, Ramone and Hoppy enter wearing corner men garb.

JON JON
 It's packed, man. SRO.

Billy and Tick share a look --

TICK
 Let's go kick some Olympian ass.

INT. UFFCC - GIRL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Leila, with Buddy, is dressed and reading in her bed, when she's confronted by big Alice, wearing the beanie she stole, and two equally large FRIENDS. They're into the intimidation --

ALICE
 Know what's gonna happen tonight?
 (off Leila's fear)
 Your dad's gonna get his white ass
 beat to a pulp.

FRIEND
 That's right. That black boy's
 gonna fuck him up so bad. Y'ain't
 gonna be able to recognize him.

All of Leila's fears ignited, she stands --

LEILA
 That's not true.

ALICE
 Calling me a liar?

Alice rips Buddy from her side.

LEILA
 Gimme that.

ALICE
 Or what? What're you gonna do?
 Get your daddy to beat me up?

FRIEND

That ain't gonna happen. 'Cause
after tonight he gonna be like
fucking brain dead and shit.

ALICE

Yeah, and they ain't ever gonna put
you back with no retard daddy.

Leila snaps, PUNCHES Alice in the nose. The big girl drops
Buddy, staggers back onto another bed. In their shock, Leila
rips the beanie off Alice's head, picks up Buddy and runs out.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - DETROIT - NIGHT

Jon Jon was right, the place is packed. All eyes are on the
ring as an ANNOUNCER is into the introduction --

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, now for our
main attraction of the evening. An
eight round charity bout featuring
two hometown favorites. Fighting
out of the blue corner, wearing blue
and white, weighing in at one
hundred fifty-eight pounds, a four-
time Middleweight Olympic medal
winner, with an amateur record of
eighteen wins, fifteen by knockout,
with one loss. A product of Emanuel
Stewart's famous Kronk Gym, Keith
"Buzzsaw" Bowman.

The crowd ERUPTS as KEITH BOWMAN, 20, black, ripped, enters.
With him, his TRAINER, EMANUEL STEWART and two CORNER MEN.

ANNOUNCER

And fighting out of the red corner,
wearing black and white, weighing
in at one hundred fifty-three
pounds, with a professional record
of forty-three wins, forty-one by
knockout, with three losses, the
former WBC, WBA and IBF Junior
Middleweight champion of the world,
Billy Hope.

The crowd gives Billy a MODEST RECEPTION as he enters with no
fanfare and a PLAIN WHITE ROBE. Some fans BOO and CATCALL as
he climbs through the ropes into the ring. Billy takes in
the lack of love. It throws him. Then, Tick in his ear --

TICK

Focus.

INT. UFFCC - CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Leila runs into the empty cafeteria, big girls in hot pursuit. Sees a kitchen door open as a WORKER carries out cases of SUPPLIES. She runs into --

INT. UFFCC - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Leila sees the back door AJAR. Alice on her heels --

ALICE
You're dead, little bitch.

Leila bolts out the back door, SLAMMING it locked behind her.

EXT. UFFCC - BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

She hears Alice POUNDING on the door as she runs past a delivery truck and sees the MAIN BOULEVARD up ahead. She looks around, now all alone. She pulls on her beanie, hugs Buddy and heads into the city.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - SAME

Billy employs his new style. He moves deftly around the ring, defending, throwing quick punches, studying his foe. Bowman is the aggressor, scoring with his hard LEFT JAB.

EXT. STREETS - DOWNTOWN DETROIT - NIGHT

Leila, coatless on the cold night, pulls her sweater tight as she navigates through the urban warzone. Moving quickly.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - LATER

Billy, between rounds, sits with Tick. Strategizes --

BILLY
He's really fast. Can't get away from the jab.

TICK
You're doing good. He's starting to protect high. Midsection's vulnerable.

BILLY
And he's lifting up when he throws the big punches. Way off balance.

TICK

Coming into four of eight. I give him the first three. Time to get aggressive. Let's work the body, look for those holes up top. Remember, points, not blood.

Billy nods as Jon Jon slips in his mouthpiece.

EXT. STREETS - LATER

Leila sees the hotel in the distance. Crosses a side street without looking. Suddenly a TAXI SCREECHES to a halt inches from Leila. Spooked, the little girl RUNS to the Hilton.

As Leila heads down the block, we see the black SUV cruise past. Kash and his crew inside.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - SAME

Billy, now the aggressor, throws quick JABS, COMBINATIONS and BODY PUNCHES. He's a different boxer. Leaner, faster, cooler. Bowman scrambles to defend, BODY SHOTS taking a toll. He clips Billy with a DOUBLE JAB then follows with a big RIGHT HAND. The swing lifts him off his stance as Billy bobs under the punch and counters with a fast RIGHT HOOK. The well-placed punch sends the off-balance fighter toppling to the canvas. The crowd CHEERS. Billy, winning them over.

Angela watches excitedly, as the ref counts EIGHT. Then her CELL BUZZES. She checks ID, covertly takes the call --

ANGELA

Yeah? When?

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - LOBBY - SAME

Leila is pleading with an EVENT WORKER --

LEILA

I have to go in there and see my daddy.

EVENT WORKER

I'm sorry, but I can't let you in, honey. Is your mommy here?

That just incites more of Leila's anxiety. She BOLTS past the worker and runs straight into an exiting Angela.

ANGELA

Leila, what are you doing?

LEILA

I have to see my daddy.

The worker and now a SECURITY GUARD join them, Angela calms --

ANGELA

It's okay. She's with me.

Angela pulls Leila to the side --

ANGELA

Are you okay?

LEILA

I have to make sure he doesn't get hurt.

ANGELA

He's fine, sweetheart.

LEILA

I have to see him!

ANGELA

You can't, Leila. Your father promised he'd come see you after the fight. He's not gonna get hurt. I promise.

(off her doubt)

I promise.

Leila has no choice as Angela leads her out --

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - MAIN BALLROOM - LATER

Billy and Bowman in center ring with the Announcer.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, after eight full rounds of boxing, we go to the scorecards, where we have a split decision. Elliot Freeman scores it, 77-74, Hope. Johnny Tyne scores it 76-75, Bowman. And Frederick Weiss scores it 78-61, for this year's winner of the Kronk Charity bout, Billy Hope.

The crowd CHEERS. Billy takes the victory with humility. Embraces Bowman --

BILLY

You're a great fighter, brother.

Bowman nods. Then Billy embraces Tick and Jon Jon --

TICK

That's what we call boxing.

Ramone grins at Billy --

RAMONE

You becoming a gnat, Billy Hope.

BILLY

Gnat like a boss, motherfucker.

Billy embraces Ramone and Hoppy.

INT. HILTON GARDEN INN - DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Billy, showered, finishes dressing, as he spots Jon Jon packing up all the boxing equipment --

BILLY

You don't have to do that.

JON JON

It's cool.

Billy smiles as his friend continues --

BILLY

Thanks.

JON JON

All good. I'm proud of you, man.

Both men, uncomfortable with the affection are saved by a KNOCK. Billy opens the door and lets in Jordan Mains --

BILLY

Hey.

JORDAN

Billy. Got a minute?

Billy and Jon Jon share a look --

JON JON

I'll wait for you at the car.

JORDAN

Nice to see you, Jon Jon.

JON JON

(no love)

Don't start lying already.

Jordan shakes his head as Jon Jon exits. Billy and Jordan.

JORDAN
Fantastic fight tonight.

BILLY
Thanks. Saw you and your fighter
in the audience.

JORDAN
That's what I want to talk to you
about.

(off Billy's look)
How'd you like a shot at that
fighter? And his WBC title.

BILLY
What're you talking about?

JORDAN
I'm talking about a comeback fight
for Billy the Great.

BILLY
You fucking with me?

JORDAN
I can get Texas to review early.
Get your creds back.

BILLY
They'll do that?

JORDAN
It's fucking Texas, they'll let
anyone fight.
(off his distraction)
You look better than you ever have.
Fast, lean, focused. I wanna sign
you to a five fight deal. Put you
back on top.

BILLY
What about your superstar?

JORDAN
May the best man win.
(off his hesitation)
It gets you financially stable,
puts your family back together.
You deserve it, son. This is your
shot.

BILLY
I'll only do it with Tick.

JORDAN
I'd love to have him aboard.

Billy overwhelmed, lets it sink in. Then --

BILLY
If we do this, I can't be part of
the show. No 24/7, no camera crews,
no hype. Gotta let me train.

JORDAN
Absolutely.

Jordan extends his hand. Billy knows he's making a deal with
the devil, but he shakes as Tick enters. Tick and Jordan
share a polite exchange --

JORDAN
Tick. You did a great job with
Billy. Congratulations.

TICK
Thanks.

JORDAN
I'll be in touch.

Mains heads out. Tick, suspicious --

TICK
What was that about?

BILLY
Wants me to fight Canto. Texas.
WBC title fight. I said yes.

TICK
(stunned)
You know what they'll do with that?

BILLY
Yeah. They'll turn Mo's death into
marketing hype. Make it some kinda
fucked up, grudge match.

TICK
Then why do it?

BILLY
'Cause I'll do anything that gets
me closer to my kid.

Tick sits, ponders that. Then --

BILLY
Told him I wouldn't do it without
you.

TICK
Sorry, man. My training stops at
the money line.

BILLY
Why?

TICK
Doesn't matter.

BILLY
What the fuck you afraid of?

TICK
Ain't about being afraid.

BILLY
What happened to "Oh, Lord, please
show me how to use my talent."

TICK
I'm serving something greater.

BILLY
Fuck you are. You're serving cheap
whiskey till you pass out.
(off his unmoved stare)
I fucking need you.

Tick says nothing. Billy, frustrated, SLAMS the door as he
exits. Off Tick, wounds open --

EXT. HILTON GARDEN INN - BACK LOT - MINUTES LATER

As Billy walks toward Jon Jon's Honda, Angela rushes over --

ANGELA
Billy --

BILLY
What's the matter?

ANGELA
Leila. Something happened at the
center. She ran off. Came here.

BILLY
Jesus Christ --

ANGELA

She's okay. I took her back. But she's freaked out. Terrified you were gonna get hurt.

BILLY

Shit. C'mon.

They all hop in the Honda. Jon Jon peels out. The Honda drives away. A beat later, the black SUV FOLLOWS.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

On a quiet side street, the Honda parks down the block from the center. As Billy, Angela, Jon Jon exit, the SUV swerves, cuts them off. Kash, Ump, two GD jump out. Billy reacts --

BILLY

Shit. Run.

Angela and Jon Jon try to get away, but are grabbed up by the crew. Then Kash points his 9MM at Billy's head --

KASH

You gonna sucker punch me now, motherfucker?

Billy freezes as the barrel rests on his temple.

KASH

Yeah. Didn't think so.

Kash PISTOL WHIPS Billy. Angela tries to help Billy --

ANGELA

No --

The banger restrains her. Angela, the street chick --

ANGELA

Let go of me, fucking asshole.

Ump SLAPS her. Billy snaps. He pushes past Kash and rushes Ump. Before he makes contact, bangers descend on Billy. Jon Jon jumps in the mix. The smaller man is quickly crushed.

As Billy is being subdued, he sees Angela unrestrained --

BILLY

Get the fuck outta here!

Angela takes her cue. Bolts. Ump starts to go after her --

KASH
Fuck her.

Billy sees Jon Jon, face bloody --

BILLY
Let him go. You got me.

JON JON
I ain't going nowhere.

Ump drives a fist into Jon Jon's gut, drops him to his knees.
Billy snaps at Ump --

BILLY
I'm gonna fuck you up.

With that, Kash uses his 9MM like brass knuckles and SMASHES
Billy in the mouth. Blood flies. Then the gangsters KICK
THE SHIT out of Billy as Kash watches. Almost too himself --

KASH
That one-eyed bitch didn't teach
you how to win this fight, did he?

EXT. SIDE STREET - LATER

SIRENS WAIL as Angela runs back with several large UFFCC
WORKERS, they find Jon Jon helping Billy hobble toward them.
Billy's face is a BLOODY MESS. DETROIT PD screeches up.

ANGELA
Oh, my god. Get him inside.

They help Billy toward the center --

INT. UFFCC - FAMILY ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Angela, Jon Jon, the workers and two UNIS sit Billy down --

UNI
Paramedics are on the way.

ANGELA
Get me some ice packs.

The workers obey as Angela tends to Billy. The cops press --

UNI
Did you see who did this?

Before Angela can answer --

BILLY
No.

Angela shares a look with Billy. Then sees his eyes divert, his face fills with pained horror. Angela turns to see Leila standing in the doorway, staring at her bloody father.

ANGELA
Oh, shit.

BILLY
Angel girl --

Leila cold, almost void of emotion --

LEILA
You lied to me. You said you
wouldn't get hurt --

BILLY
No, baby --

LEILA
You can't do this... you can't
fight anymore.

BILLY
Leila, please listen --

LEILA
Promise me, Daddy. Please...
Promise...

Billy dumbfounded, doesn't know how to respond. Leila takes his hesitation as refusal, runs away. Billy tries to go after her, but COLLAPSES in Angela's arms as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. UFFCC - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Days later. Billy's face bruised and bandaged, a cracked tooth, waits in the same chair. Angela enters, defeated --

ANGELA
She doesn't wanna see you.

BILLY
Did you tell her --

ANGELA
I tried. She won't talk to me
either. I'm sorry.

Billy stands, broken. As he walks away --

ANGELA
Will I see you later on?

Billy hears the question, but ignores it. Exits.

INT. GROCERY MARKET - DAY

Billy puts two bottles of CHEAP VODKA on the counter. As the CLERK rings it up, the T-girl puts her basket down. Sees Billy's fucked up face and the booze --

T-GIRL
Rough week, sweetheart?
(off his nod)
I been there.

Billy pays. Then, from a gentle, sincere place --

T-GIRL
How's your little girl?

Something about her simple inquiry cuts deep. For the first time -- in a bodega, with a tranny -- we see TEARS run down the warrior's face. Billy, unaware he's crying, feels the foreign liquid on his cheek. Overwhelmed, he grabs the booze, exits.

EXT. BILLY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ROOF - NIGHT

Billy swigs the vodka as he looks out at the dirty D. It's beautiful from eight stories up. He sways drunkenly as he walks to the bird shit-covered edge, contemplating a free fall solution. Then, COOING catches his attention, sees a PIGEON'S NEST tucked into the bricks below. Billy watches as the bird nestles her EGGS. Mesmerizes him. As his stare intensifies, he loses focus and then his balance. He TEETERS and almost falls off the edge, finally stumbling back onto the roof. He steadies himself, catches his breath, suddenly sober with fear.

INT. UFFCC - GIRL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Leila's eyes pop open and she LURCHES UP in bed, as if waking from a FALLING NIGHTMARE.

After a moment, she steadies herself, and lies back down, anxiously clutching Buddy.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

Angela walks through the gym. Tick working Ramone and Hoppy. Hoppy spots her, nods to Tick. Tick approaches her --

TICK
Can I help you?

ANGELA
I'm looking for Billy Hope.

TICK
He's not here.

ANGELA
I work at the United Family Center. Billy's daughter's with us. He hasn't been around lately. We're a little concerned.

Tick takes in her *big* concern. Then --

TICK
If he shows up, I'll let him know you came by.

ANGELA
Okay. Thanks.

Angela, unsettled, exits. Ramone and Hoppy are on Tick --

RAMONE
Gotta do something, man. Been like over a week.

TICK
Billy Hope's a grown man, he can take care of himself.

HOPPY
Dude, if it was you MIA, Billy'd be digging through fucking dumpsters looking for you.

RAMONE
That motherfucker's the only friend you got.

Before Tick can say it --

RAMONE

And fuck you and your pushups.

Ramone and Hoppy walk away. Tick says nothing, the comment landed.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Place is a mess. Dishes, laundry. On the counter, next to the crucifix, we see an open container of PAINKILLERS. Billy, on the sofa, swigs from the vodka bottle. Numb. Wasted.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Tick finishes his drink as he watches a promo on ESPN for the CANTO-HOPE FIGHT. It's a slick, hyperbolic exploitation that suggests Canto was responsible for Billy's tragic downfall. Everything Billy feared and knew would happen.

As Ollie goes to refill the drink, Tick stops him --

TICK

I'm good. Thanks.

Tick throws down some cash --

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATER

Tick KNOCKS, no one answers.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT

As the KNOCKING continues, the CAMERA FINDS Billy passed out on the floor in front of the couch. Dead?

INT. UFFCC - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Leila walks to the bedroom as Alice approaches from the other direction. As she passes, Leila burns a look -- no fear in her eyes. Something about it disturbs the big girl. Alice says nothing, keeps walking.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - LATER

See Ramone and Hoppy PICKING the lock as Tick keeps watch. The door opens. They enter --

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

They find Billy on the floor --

HOPPY

Shit.

They lean him up, try to revive him --

HOPPY

Billy. Billy --

TICK

He's breathing.

Ramone finds the MEDS --

RAMONE

Fucking Oxy, man.

TICK

C'mon. Get him in the shower.

Tick follows as the boys carry Billy to the bathroom. He spots the CRUCIFIX near the Oxy. To Jesus, as he passes --

TICK

Little help.

INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Billy, in clean boxers and T-shirt, slowly, painfully wakes up on the couch. As he sits, he spots Tick in the kitchen --

BILLY

What the fuck you doing here?

TICK

Good morning.

Tick hands him a cup of coffee. Billy hesitates, then takes it. Tick sits next to him. Silence eats away at Billy --

BILLY

Just say it.

TICK

Not exactly qualified to give a sobriety pep talk.

Billy gets it. Then, Tick tells his truth --

TICK

After my kid got sick, we were buried. I was making okay money training, but the medical bills were insane. Had a fighter, southpaw, Nicky Waynes. He was going up against one of Jordan's new guys, Tray Conway. He needed the win to get a title shot and Jordan was terrified of a lefty. Offered me thirty grand to mis-train Nicky.

BILLY

Get him ready for the wrong fight.

TICK

Conway broke Nicky's jaw. Docs told him he couldn't fight anymore. All this kid ever wanted to do was box.

(beat)

Two weeks later, Nicky drove his mother's car ninety miles an hour into a concrete freeway barrier.

BILLY

That's not on you.

TICK

The day of Nicky's funeral, my son, Lamont died.

(beat)

Maybe none of it was my fault, but Jesus got my attention.

BILLY

That's when you dropped out.

TICK

Took the money from Jordan's bribe, opened the gym. Pathetic attempt to reverse the bad karma, I guess.

BILLY

I'm sorry.

The men sip their coffee. After a long moment --

BILLY

Now what?

TICK

We get you ready to fight.

Billy takes in Tick. Then gives a grateful nod --

BILLY

Okay.

Enough said. The men sip their coffee --

INT. OAKLAND COUNTY COURTHOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Billy, dressed, cleaned-up, paces outside a doorway. He spots Judge Kayle exit an elevator, approaches --

BILLY

Judge, can I talk to you a minute?

She takes in his damaged face --

JUDGE KAYLE

What happened to you?

BILLY

I got jumped.

Shakes her head with disapproval as she moves down the hall --

JUDGE KAYLE

We talk on scheduled dates, Mr. Hope.

BILLY

I need your advice.

JUDGE KAYLE

Talk to your lawyer.

BILLY

He's not a mother.

She stops, takes in his desperation --

BILLY

Please.

JUDGE KAYLE

What is it?

BILLY

(re: face)

My daughter thinks I got this from boxing. She doesn't want me to fight anymore, but it's the only way I know how to support her. Not sure how to handle that.

JUDGE KAYLE

Talk to your daughter about it.

BILLY
She won't talk to me.

JUDGE KAYLE
Then find someone she will talk to
and work it out. You're the adult.

Billy nods. Then, before she turns away --

BILLY
I slipped. Used again.
(off her look)
You were right. I'm not ready to
be a father.

She studies his vulnerability, then almost kindly --

JUDGE KAYLE
It doesn't happen overnight.

They share an adult nod, then she powers down the hall.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Angela walks with Leila. The little girl carries flowers.
Then, Angela hangs back as Leila moves to Maureen's grave.

As Leila puts flowers in the ground vase, we see the new
GRAVE STONE. It reads: MAUREEN MARY HOPE. BORN: OCTOBER 2,
1980. DIED: APRIL 11, 2011. A LOVING WIFE AND MOTHER.

Jon Jon's Honda pulls up in the distance. Billy and Jon Jon
exit. Billy joins Angela. Kisses him sweetly on the cheek --

ANGELA
Missed you.

BILLY
Me too.

They watch Leila as she sits on a STONE BENCH near her mom.

ANGELA
Some of the kids saw the commercial
for the fight. They've been
teasing her about it.

BILLY
Shit.

Angela studies his self-loathing, then --

ANGELA
Go talk to your family.

Billy heads to the grave. Leila spots her dad, says nothing.

BILLY
Mind if I sit?

Gives him a shrug. Billy sits next to her. Silence. Then --

BILLY
I have to tell your mom some things. Hoping you'd help me.

LEILA
Just talk to her. She can hear you.

Billy nods. He stands over the grave. Struggles. Then --

BILLY
I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get here, baby. Guess a part of me felt like, maybe if I didn't see it, it didn't really happen.

Leila watches her father's vulnerability --

BILLY
I miss you so much. Sadness I feel... scares me. Get afraid to feel anything.
(beat)

Messed up real bad with our little girl. I fell apart when you left. Couldn't deal. They took her from me. They had to. Now I'm doing everything I can to put our family back together. And I will --

Billy looks at Leila, she looks away. He turns back to Mo --

BILLY
But this thing happened a couple weeks ago -- I got attacked by some gang bangers. Hurt me pretty bad. Leila thought it happened in a fight, so she wants me to stop boxing. I don't blame her, she just wants me to be okay. But I have this big fight coming up and the money will help me get back on my feet. Let me show the court that Leila and me should be together. I don't know what to do.
(beat)
I wish you were here to tell me. I love you, Mo. I'll always love you.

Billy, nearly in tears, holds it together, turns to Leila, she's still staring at the ground. Keeping her feelings suppressed. Billy just kisses the top of her head --

BILLY

Thanks.

Billy joins Angela and Jon Jon, barely holding it together.

BILLY

I tried. Thank you.

(at Jon Jon)

Let's go, man.

Angela watches Billy walk away, takes in Leila at the grave --

EXT. CEMETERY - NARROW ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

As Billy and Jon get to the car --

BILLY

Give me a minute.

Jon Jon nods. Waits as Billy gets in the front seat.

INT. HONDA CIVIC - CONTINUOUS

Billy takes deep breaths, trying to stay contained. He can't. This time the tears turn into full blown guttural SOBS. Billy finally grieves his dead wife.

After a long moment, there's a TAPPING on his window. He looks up, sees Leila looking at him. Angela a few steps behind. The little girl studies her father's pain through the dirty window. Then Billy opens the car door, Leila slides into his arms. As he wraps her up, she breaks. For the first time, she too, feels her mother's death and CRIES.

BILLY

It's okay, angel. It's okay...

Billy holds her, shares a grateful nod with Angela. Father and daughter rock their pain as we --

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE UP ON:

EXT. UFFCC - LATER

Billy walks Leila into the center. Angela and Jon Jon behind.

BILLY
You gonna be okay?

Leila nods. Then --

LEILA
I'll make you a deal.

BILLY
What's that?

LEILA
You do this fight to help us get
back together, then no more.
(off his look)
No more getting hurt, Daddy.

BILLY
We'll talk about it later --

LEILA
No. Promise me. This is the last
one.

Billy sees the pain in her eyes. Melts --

BILLY
Yeah, okay sweetheart. I promise.

Father and daughter embrace. As Billy walks away --

LEILA
Few of the kids are saying the guy
you're fighting had something to do
with mommy dying. That true?

Billy looks at Leila, tells her the truth --

BILLY
In a way, yeah.

Without hesitation and with a hint of Billy's rage --

LEILA
Then you better beat him.

BILLY
Yes, ma'am.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

We BEGIN MUSIC MONTAGE as Billy, with weighted hands, hits the
HEAVY BAG. Tick drives --

TICK
Faster. Speed. Speed. C'mon. I
can still see 'em. Make 'em blur.

Billy hits the DOUBLE END BAG, his timing and speed greatly improved. Tick watches, happy with the results.

See Ramone and Hoppy guarding the door, keeping out curious REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS. It's a quiet, focused gym.

INT. FROST TRAINING GYM - DAY

Eli works with Miguel in the ring. The fighter stops, poses for a photo op. A CAMERA CREW, PHOTOGRAPHERS, REPORTERS, SPECTATORS watch as Jordan works the room. It's a scene.

INT. WILLS GYM - TRAINING AREA - DAY

Billy and Leila jump rope as Angela watches. Leila speeds up, suddenly they are in a contest. Billy misses, lets her win. Leila LAUGHS as Billy drops, feigning exhaustion.

Leila and Angela watch as Billy hits the SPEED BAG. Tick studies him as he unleashes his new speed. His hands, a BLUR. CHEERS from the whole gym when Billy finishes. He shares a look with his daughter who gives him a big smile.

EXT. WILLS GYM - NIGHT

Jon Jon's Honda idling out front as Billy and Tick exit. REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS pounce, Tick intervenes --

REPORTER
Billy. Billy. Is this really a
grudge match? Do you blame Miguel
for your wife's death?

TICK
It's just another fight. Sorry,
boys. Limo's waiting --

Billy and Tick climb in the Honda, speed off --

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - NIGHT

Billy, Tick and Jon Jon at the half-empty bar, drinking WATER. They watch Canto's last fight on Ollie's DVR. Tick rewinds, points out holes in Miguel's technique --

TICK

See that -- he takes that little
stutter step before he throws that
big right. It's a tell --

INT. KRONK GYM - DETROIT - DAY

Billy SPARS with Keith Bowman. Tick and Emanuel Stewart
watch. Tick reminds Billy --

TICK

Take your time. Pace. You're not
the bull, you're the matador.

Stewart, impressed --

EMANUEL

You've done some serious
rearranging of this boy's game.
He's a different fighter.

TICK

He's a different boy.

Tick watches proudly --

INT. UPGRADE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Jordan, Miguel, Eli and Miguel's ENTOURAGE dine at the
expensive eatery. Magic, the center of attention.

INT. GRAND RIVER DINER - NIGHT

Billy, Tick, Leila, Angela, Jon Jon, Ramone, Hoppy, Tasha and
Frankie eat a meal. Makeshift family. Leila, Frankie LAUGH
as Ramone and Hoppy CLOWN. Kids, the center of attention.
Billy watches his daughter's joy, shares a smile with Angela.

EXT. STREETS - DOWNTOWN DETROIT - MORNING

Billy runs through his town. Traffic seems a little
friendlier as he navigates the urban rush hour. Then, as the
fighter turns a corner, a POLICE CRUISER pulls up behind him,
FLASHES its lights.

Billy stops as two UNIS exit and we END MUSIC MONTAGE --

INT. DETROIT PD STATION HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

Two DETECTIVES walk with Billy --

DETECTIVE 1

Picked up two suspects in another gang-related incident, fit the description one of the workers at the foster care center gave us -- could be the guys who attacked you.

BILLY

Okay.

They reach a LARGE WINDOW. Through it, we see a LINE-UP ROOM. The other detective speaks into an INTERCOM --

DETECTIVE 2

Bring 'em in.

(at Billy)

They can't see you, so just take your time. Let me know if any of them look familiar.

A UNI escorts six BLACK SUSPECTS into the small room. Two of them are Kash and Ump. Billy stares. The other detective instructs through the intercom --

DETECTIVE 2

Number one, two steps forward.

Suspect steps forward. Cop looks at Billy for a response --

BILLY

I can't really tell from out here.
Can I go inside?

DETECTIVE 1

They'll see you.

BILLY

I don't give a shit.

The detective looks at his partner, who gives a shrug --

DETECTIVE 1

Alright.

INT. DETROIT PD STATION HOUSE - LINE-UP ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Billy and Detective 1 step in the room. Billy eyes the suspects. Kash and Ump try to hide their uneasiness.

BILLY

(to the detective)

Can you have number three and five step forward?

DETECTIVE 1
Three and five, take two steps
forward.

Kash and Ump obey. Billy eyes them up and down. The men
avoid eye contact. Then, loud enough for the room to hear --

BILLY
It's not them.

DETECTIVE 1
You sure --

BILLY
Yeah. None of these guys did it.

DETECTIVE 1
Get 'em out of here.

Off Billy, as Kash and Ump are led out of the room --

EXT. DETROIT PD STATION HOUSE/EXT. SIDE STREET - LATER

Kash and Ump walk away from the station house. Billy steps
out from behind a van. The men take in the fighter, unsure
of what he's going to do. Then, Billy to Kash --

BILLY
We're even.

Billy and Kash take each other in as the banger processes the
deal. Ump, twitchy, makes a decision, he goes for Billy. A
lighting JAB drops the banger to the pavement. His nose
shattered, BLOOD everywhere. Unconscious.

BILLY
Okay. Now, we're even.

As Billy walks away, Kash hides his compliance with bravado --

KASH
Better hit the fucking Mexican that
hard. Dropping a shitload a cash
on you, white boy.

Billy just keeps walking. Then as he looks down at the BLOOD
on his fist, we --

SMASH TO:

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - NIGHT

The huge football facility converted for the fight.

LIL WAYNE performs for a packed house. Music pumps crazy loud as LASER LIGHTS electrify the arena. It's a fucking show.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM - GREEN ROOM - SAME

Silence. Billy, meditative, in black trunks, sits on a prep table as Tick finishes his FIGHT WRAPS. It's an art. Then, a BOXING OFFICIAL checks the wraps --

OFFICIAL

Okay. Good luck to you, gentlemen.

They nod their thanks. The official exits. The two men, alone in the large room. As Tick preps the gloves --

TICK

What's the most important thing to remember out there?

BILLY

Pace?

TICK

Gratitude.

Billy nods. Silence. Then, as Tick slides on his glove --

BILLY

No prayer?

TICK

Gonna have to say your own tonight.

Jon Jon, dressed for the corner, sticks his head in --

JON JON

Ten minute warning.

Billy and Tick share a smile --

TICK

You ready?

BILLY

No.

TICK

Me either.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM - HALLWAY - TEN MINUTES LATER

Billy and Tick walk side by side, Jon Jon, a FIGHT DOC and a PRO CORNER MAN behind. Billy's robe simply says: HOPE.

They hear music vibrating beyond a LARGE YELLOW DOOR. Billy shuts his eyes and takes a breath as a GUARD opens the door --

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - CONTINUOUS

They enter the arena. Crowd CHEERS. Music PUMPS as the JUMBOTRON plays HIGHLIGHTS of Billy's fights. Billy watches the video as he walks to the ring. Leans into Tick --

BILLY
(re: himself)
Who's that fat bastard?

TICK
No idea.

Suddenly he sees Mikey standing at the end of an aisle. Billy and Jon Jon share a look.

JON JON
My moms wouldn't fit in the seat.

Billy bumps fist-glove with Mikey as he passes --

MIKEY
Fuck 'im up, brother.

Billy nods and moves down to the ring.

At RINGSIDE, sports commentators, MAX KELLERMAN, JIM LAMPLEY and HAROLD LEDERMAN, watch Billy climb in the ring --

KELLERMAN
Looks like Billy's dropped "the Great" from his title.

LEDERMAN
Along with twenty pounds. This is the leanest we've ever seen him.

LAMPLEY
Hope's camp's been very quiet. No press, no cameras. Wills wanted Billy completely focused.

Billy bends on a knee, says a quick prayer --

KELLERMAN
Look at that, I don't think I've ever seen Hope say a prayer before.

LEDERMAN
He's gonna need all the help he can get to beat Canto.

The MUSIC CHANGES --

LAMPLEY

And here he comes, the Junior
Middleweight champion of the world,
Miguel "Magic" Canto.

The crowd ROARS as Miguel Canto's HIGHLIGHTS play on the Jumbotron. Miguel, Eli, Nick and Doc Field enter the arena.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - SAME

Angela, Ramone, Hoppy, Ollie and others watch on PPV. Angela stares at the screen intently, surrounded by the men.

INT. PRISON CELL - SAME

Gabe and two INMATES listen to the fight on a radio. We hear the music and the roar of the crowd as they chant, "Magic".

INT. UFFCC - GIRL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Leila in bed, reading a book. A few other girls get ready for sleep. Leila glances at the clock, aware of the hour --

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - MINUTES LATER

The fighters stand in their corners with their trainers.

Insert: CANTO VS. HOPE, COWBOYS STADIUM, DALLAS.

Famed fight announcer, MICHAEL BUFFER takes center ring --

MICHAEL BUFFER

And now for the thousands in attendance and the millions around the world who wish they could be here. Ladies and gentlemen, let's get ready to rumble... Fighting out of the blue corner, standing with head trainer, Titus "Tick" Wills, wearing black with blue, officially weighing one hundred fifty pounds. His professional record, forty-three victories, including forty-one knockouts, with three defeats, from Detroit, Michigan, the former Junior Middleweight champion of the world, Billy Hope.

The crowd CHEERS. Billy barely raises his hand. He stares down at the canvas, blocking out the show, staying focused.

MICHAEL BUFFER

Fighting out of the red corner, standing with head trainer, Eli Frost, wearing white with gold, officially weighing one hundred fifty four pounds. His professional record, undefeated with twenty-one victories, twelve by knockout, from East Los Angeles, California, the reigning Junior Middleweight champion of the world, Miguel "Magic" Canto.

The crowd ROARS. Miguel works them, the showman.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - MOMENTS LATER

The REFEREE brings the fighters together --

REFEREE

You got your instructions in the dressing room. Protect yourself at all times. Obey my breaks. Tap gloves, let's have a clean one.

Billy and Miguel TAP gloves. Neither man showing emotion. They walk back to their corners. Tick slides in a mouthpiece --

TICK

Gonna be a long night. Start the dance slow.

Billy nods as the BELL RINGS.

ROUND ONE. Miguel comes out aggressive. He moves around the ring with grace and agility, scoring with quick JABS and COMBINATIONS. Billy does his best to keep clear of his punches. He fends and observes. Then Miguel rushes Billy, catches him off balance, connects with a hard LEFT HOOK to Billy's EYE. He staggers back, grabs the ropes. The REFEREE steps in, separates, checks on Billy. They resume. Miguel remains the aggressor. It's clearly his fight. BELL RINGS.

In the corner, the doc checks Billy's eye --

BILLY

Is it cut?

FIGHT DOC

No, but it's raw.

As they repair, Billy and Tick recap --

BILLY

He's a fast motherfucker.

TICK

You're doing great. He's missing more than he's connecting. Keep out of reach. Let him be the speeding train.

Miguel and Eli in the opposite corner --

ELI

Slow it down. He's making you chase him --

MIGUEL

I know what I'm doing.

Miguel SPITS. Eli looks over at Billy, concerned. A CARD GIRL crosses with a ROUND TWO card. The BELL RINGS.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - SAME

Angela watches the FLATSCREEN. She squirms and winces as Billy continues to take Miguel's aggressive attack. Ollie sees her struggle, pats her hand. She realizes all the guys are watching her, watch Billy. She smiles, resumes --

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - LATER

A CARD GIRL struts with a ROUND FOUR card. BELL RINGS.

Miguel still comes at Billy, but his punches have less snap. Billy, the eye looking bad, continues to fight his fight as --

The talking heads, comment --

LAMPLEY

This is not the fight anyone would have predicted. A defensive, strategic Billy Hope and a hard swinging Magic Canto.

Then, Billy scores with a DOUBLE JAB. Miguel stung, counters, takes a STUTTER STEP as he swings a big right. Billy sees his tell, ducks under the punch, drives an UPPERCUT to Canto's belly. The Champ staggers back --

KELLERMAN

Oh, that one took the wind out of Canto. Man, he just looks stunned.

LEDERMAN

Magic was expecting Billy the Great,
instead he got Billy the fighter.

Canto covers his pain/shame, bangs his stomach, taunts --

MIGUEL

G'head. C'mon. Can't hurt me,
bitch. C'mon --

LAMPLEY

Canto baiting Hope --

Tick shouts from the corner --

TICK

Stay in your fight.

Billy does. He continues to score with JABS and quick HOOKS.
Points. Points. Points. BELL RINGS.

LEDERMAN

Magic Canto had been dominating
this fight, but that round
definitely belongs to Billy Hope.

LAMPLEY

I agree. Hope, who's never gone
more than six rounds, is clearly
here to go the distance.

Miguel in his corner with Eli --

ELI

You ain't wearing him out. Can't
keep up this pace. You gotta --

MIGUEL

I know what I gotta do.

Miguel, pissed, shuts out his team.

Billy in his corner. The doc works the eye. Tick motivates --

TICK

We found the hole.
(off his nod)
Rip it open. Bayonets. His hands
are getting heavy on the hook, too.
(in his face)
Stay in your fight, hear me? We're
only half way there. Gotta win
rounds, not try to kill him.

Billy nods as we BEGIN FIGHT MONTAGE.

Hope changes the tide of the fight. Works Miguel's midsection and scores points with quick, accurate punches. Full arsenal. We see CARD GIRLS walk through with ROUNDS SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE. Billy, now the one in control of the fight. Canto, exhausted, hurt and on the run. The BELL RINGS as we END FIGHT MONTAGE --

LAMPLEY

This has become an amazing battle.
As we come into the last two
rounds, this fight is very close.

KELLERMAN

I have it at five rounds a piece.
Billy Hope may very well be on his
way to regaining the Junior
Middleweight crown.

Billy and Tick in the corner. Billy, his eye looking WORSE, drenched in sweat and exhausted --

BILLY

Fucking tired, man.

TICK

He's more tired than you are.
(in his face)
We got two more rounds. Keep doing
what you're doing and this is
yours. Hear me?
(off his nod)
Stay in your fight.

Miguel and Eli. Eli says nothing as he and Doc Field repair the fighter. Then, Miguel, exhausted, frustrated --

MIGUEL

What d'fuck do I do?

ELI

Get him inside, only way you're
gonna be able to open up that eye.

MIGUEL

I'm trying.

Eli takes in his desperation, struggles with a thought. Then --

ELI

Piss him off.

They share a conspiratorial look. Miguel nods. BELL RINGS.

ROUND ELEVEN. Billy and Miguel move in. Billy staying on the outside, continuing to fight his fight. Miguel taunts --

MIGUEL
C'mon, Billy boy. Afraid of me?

Billy keeps to his fight. Canto BUMRUSHES him, they exchange SLOPPY PUNCHES and wrap each other up. Canto in Billy's ear --

MIGUEL
Gonna fuck you up worse than your old lady.

The referee separates as Billy lets the taunt wash over him. Miguel sees the fire is lit. Moves closer, GRINS --

MIGUEL
Bang bang. Bitch is dead.

Billy snaps. Rushes Miguel, gets inside, unleashes a big LEFT HAND that slips through the champ's defense and lands on his cheek. Then Billy throws a JAB that misses and swings another LEFT. Canto weaves under the punch and counters with a hard RIGHT that rips into Billy's eye. Stuns Billy as BLOOD flows. Then Canto attacks, a brutal COMBINATION sends Billy to the CANVAS. The ref on Billy as he quickly climbs to his feet. Blood POURS from his eye. Billy, more pissed than hurt.

REFEREE
Look at me --

BILLY
I'm okay. C'mon, I'm fine.

As the ref counts EIGHT, Billy instinctually searches the crowd for Maureen. Not there. Fight resumes. Miguel rushes Billy as he tries to keep his distance, protecting the eye. In so doing, Canto takes advantage of his open midsection.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - SAME

Angela can't watch as Billy takes a beating.

ANGELA
Jesus Christ, Billy.

RAMONE
It's okay. He ain't done yet.

Angela wants to believe them. BELL RINGS.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - RING - MOMENTS LATER

Billy in the corner. The doc works feverishly on the eye. Billy pissed at himself --

BILLY
Sorry. I'm sorry, man...

TICK
It's okay. It's okay. Look at me.
(off his focus)
Last round. Just winning it ain't
gonna be enough.

BILLY
He was talking about Maureen --

TICK
Hear what I said? Can't just score
points. You need a knockout.
(off his nod)
That eye ain't gonna make it
through the whole round. I need
Billy the Great. Shotgun and
grenades. You blow this
motherfucker up. Hear me?

Mouthpiece in. Doc nods. Billy stands. Tick in Billy's ear --

TICK
This piece of shit helped kill the
mother of your child.

Billy's eyes go dark. The BELL RINGS.

ROUND TWELVE. Fighters come out of their corners. As Miguel
rushes, so does Billy. Two freight trains. They explode in
the middle. Billy takes two JABS to the head as he unleashes
a hard RIGHT JAB and a BIG LEFT. The jab misses, but the
left connects. Canto staggers back against the ropes, Billy
presses. Two more hard LEFTS send the champ to the canvas.
The crowd EXPLODES. Blood already pouring from Billy's eye.

As the ref gives an EIGHT COUNT, Billy and Miguel stare each
other down; seconds pass like hours. They resume. Both with
a full head of steam. Canto going for the eye, Billy going
for the knockout. Old school Billy the Great. He gets
inside, takes punches to his eye but lands another BIG LEFT.
The champ staggers back, but does NOT go down.

Then the ref checks Billy's eye. Blood POURING. He pleads --

BILLY
Don't stop it, man. Not now --

The ref nods, they resume. Miguel attacks. Lands two more
JABS to Billy's eye. The blood flooding his vision. The
champ takes advantage, unleashes a brutal series of
COMBINATIONS. Billy against the ropes. The ref separates --

REFEREE

Can you see me? Hope --

He looks at Billy's corner. Billy desperate --

BILLY

No. I can see. I'm okay. Please.

REFEREE

Protect it or it's over.

Billy sucks in as much air as his lungs will hold as the ref resumes the fight. Canto, exhausted, makes one more rush at Billy. This time, Billy keeps his distance, avoids the jabs. As he bobs under a big right, he FAKES a left hand, sending Miguel's gloves up high. Then Billy, with his new SPEED, drills a BLUR of BAYONETS into Canto's midsection. The champ staggers back, his knees begin to WOBBLE. He grabs the ropes and tries to regain control, but his body won't obey. Billy, blood pouring from his eye, watches as Magic's knees BUCKLE and he drops to the CANVAS. The ref begins to COUNT. Miguel desperately tries to stand, but his legs refuse. He stares at Billy, powerless, as the ref counts TEN.

INT. NIGHTINGALE LOUNGE - SAME

Bar EXPLODES in celebration. Angela hugs Ramone and Hoppy.

INT. PRISON CELL - SAME

Gabe and his cell mates CHEER.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - SAME

Mikey, on his feet with the entire crowd. Deafening ROAR.

Billy, SOBBING, is held up by Tick and Jon Jon. The blood still pouring out of his eye. No one cares. Billy sees Eli and crew pull Magic to his feet, joins the ex-champ --

BILLY

Good fight, man.

Magic, broken, emotional --

MIGUEL

Sorry...

Billy nods, it's done. He walks back to his corner as Jordan climbs in the ring and embraces his fighter and trainer.

The commentators are equally as charged --

LAMPLEY

This has been an unbelievable fight. Two champions battling it out to the bitter end. Billy Hope a changed fighter, a changed man, regains his Junior Middleweight championship.

INT. UFFCC - GIRL'S BEDROOM - SAME

Angela enters, sees Leila asleep. Sweet, peaceful sleep.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM - GREEN ROOM - LATER

Billy, gloves off, sits on a prep table, the doctor works on his eye. Tick, Jon Jon watch. Jordan Mains enters. We spot the SEA OF PEOPLE outside the door who want a piece of Billy.

JORDAN

How's the eye, Doc?

FIGHT DOC

Doesn't look like any bone or retina damage. I'd get an MRI to be safe.

JORDAN

Good --

Jordan puts a sturdy hand on Billy's shoulder, fatherly --

JORDAN

I'm proud of you, son.

BILLY

Thanks.

JORDAN

Got some good news. Wynn's people just called me from Vegas. They got you cleared to fight in Nevada. Bellagio already made an offer.

BILLY

You're kidding me --

Billy doesn't hear the PHONE RING as he gets swept up by the rush of success. Tick answers Billy's cell as Jordan hypes --

JORDAN

No. And the rest will follow. Everyone loves a comeback. Trust me, the world's gonna be watching as Billy the Great rises from the ashes.

(MORE)

JORDAN (CONT'D)
 Shit, the tuition you couldn't
 afford -- you're gonna be able to
 buy that private school.

Billy's head swims. Jordan puts his arm around Billy.
 Before they can walk away, Tick hands Billy the cell phone --

TICK
 Someone wants to say hello.

Billy takes the phone --

INT. UFFCC - GIRL'S BEDROOM - INTERCUT

Angela sits on the bed with Leila. The other girls in the
 room all awake and excited. She hands Leila her cell --

LEILA
 Hi, Daddy.

Billy stops.

BILLY
 Hey, angel girl.

LEILA
 Are you okay?

BILLY
 Yeah, sweetie. I'm fine.

LEILA
 Really?

BILLY
 Yes. Doc just checked me out.

LEILA
 Promise?

BILLY
 Promise.
 (beat)
 I won, baby.

LEILA
 I knew you would.

Billy shares a look with Tick. His energy shifts, Billy,
 reminded of the man he has become.

LEILA
 When you coming home?

BILLY

I fly out tomorrow morning. I'll
come see you soon as I land.

LEILA

Okay.

BILLY

I love you, angel.

LEILA

Love you, Daddy.

Billy hands the phone back to Tick, shares a nod. Then
Jordan continues. Wraps his arm around Billy --

JORDAN

Press is gonna ask you about a
rematch, about who's next. Just
stay with the humble act. Say
we're taking it one fight at a
time. I'll schedule a press --

Billy interrupts, looks at the others --

BILLY

Hey, give us a minute.

Tick and the others slip into another room. Billy and Jordan.

JORDAN

Everything okay? Is it Tick? If
you're not happy I can get Eli back --

BILLY

I'm not gonna need Eli. Or Tick.

JORDAN

What're you talking about?

BILLY

Not gonna be any more fights. This
is it for me.

JORDAN

We've just begun the redemption
lap, son.

BILLY

My kid doesn't want me to fight
anymore, Jordan. I promised her.

JORDAN

You signed a contract. You owe me
four more fights.

BILLY

I know.

Jordan realizes he's serious. Turns hard --

JORDAN

You think this comeback was your idea? I put you with Tick 'cause I knew he'd turn you around. I kept tabs on you, set up that fight with Bowman. I choreographed this win, same way I have everything else in your life. I run you, son.

Billy takes the cruelty with dignity. Then --

BILLY

I'm sorry.

JORDAN

You'll be more than sorry. I'll sue your ass, you hear me? The money you made tonight, it'll be gone. And you and your half-blind trainer will be back in the fucking hood, teaching fat kids how to skip rope. You're done, when I say you're done. I'm setting up Vegas.

Jordan exits. We spot the WELL-DRESSED MAN waiting for his boss. The promoter PROMOTES as the door shuts. Billy, alone.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM - SERVICE HALLWAY - LATER

Billy, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, walks down the long hallway. He passes a JANITOR, white, 40's, mopping up the floor. The man offers Billy a nod and a contented smile.

INT. COWBOYS STADIUM FIGHT ARENA - MOMENTS LATER

Audience gone, work lights on, Billy walks toward the ring as WORKERS begin to clean up. The champ climbs through the ropes, looks out at the arena. Earlier it was filled with cheering fans, now it's an ocean of emptiness and scattered trash. The weight of that not lost on Billy.

After a long moment, Tick climbs through the ropes, the TITLE BELT under his arm. Joins his fighter --

TICK

Wondering where you went.

BILLY
 Snuck through the service hallway.
 Guess I look like a janitor.

TICK
 Well, here ya go, Mr. Janitor.
 This belongs to you.

Tick hands Billy the belt. The champion studies it, loses himself. Tick already knows the answer to this question --

TICK
 How'd it go with Jordan?

BILLY
 Not so good. I don't give him the
 four fights, he'll sue me for breach.

TICK
 Sorry.
 (beat)
 What do you wanna do?

Billy, okay with the unknown, smiles, hands Tick the belt --

BILLY
 Go home.

TICK
 Yeah, good idea. Too many white
 boys with guns in this state.

The CAMERA RISES UP over the ring as they climb through the ropes and head down the long aisle. Billy puts his arm around his friend, the banter continues as the FRAME WIDENS --

BILLY
 Shit goes south, Mr. Janitor might
 need a raise.

TICK
 That ain't gonna happen.

BILLY
 Then maybe I get that Rolex back.

TICK
 Yeah, and maybe I grow a new eye...

The CONVERSATION FADES as fighter and trainer get further away from the ring. Before they disappear from frame we --

SMASH TO BLACK.

THE END