

WARRIOR

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EXT. PITTSBURGH, PA - TWILIGHT

A beautiful blue-collar city approaching nightfall. Bridges. Rivers. Churches. The working class poetry of the 'Burgh.

EXT. ST. MARY'S CHURCH - SAME

PADDY CONLON (60) exits the doors of a run-down church holding a 12-STEP BOOK. He is followed by a cluster of other PEOPLE in the program and says his goodbyes.

EXT./INT. RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD/'75 OLDS - LATER

Paddy grips the steering wheel with labor-calloused hands and drives over the P.J. McArdle Bridge and up a winding hill. He listens to "MOBY DICK" on tape as the last piece of daylight bleeds away. With rosary beads swaying from his rear view, Paddy turns and eases the Olds past row houses in a blue-collar neighborhood high above the city.

EXT. HOUSE - SAME

TOMMY CONLON (28), hard miles on a handsome face, sits on the stoop of an old row house in a wool watch cap and winter coat. A duffel bag is at his feet, a bottle of whiskey in a brown bag in his hands. He reaches into his coat pocket, pops a handful of prescription PILLS, and stares off into the approaching night.

EXT. PADDY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Paddy pulls up to the curb in front of the house, clicks off the tape, kills the engine, and climbs out of the car. As he approaches the stairs, Paddy sees Tommy. Can't believe his eyes.

PADDY

Tommy?

Tommy gives a drunken, crooked smile.

PADDY (CONT'D)

What're you doing here?

TOMMY

I was just passing through. Figured why not have a belt with the old man.

Father and son look at each other. It's obvious it's been a long, long time. Tommy takes a bemused look down at the car.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
She looks good.

PADDY
(patting car hood)
Yeah, she's hanging in there.

TOMMY
Well, you always did take good care of her. Paddy Conlon. Man of priorities.

Paddy grins uncomfortably. Lets the remark go and climbs the stairs as Tommy reaches into his duffel bag and produces a fresh BOTTLE of Jameson. He offers it to Paddy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Got a little something for ya. Mom always said never go anywhere empty handed.

PADDY
She did. But that's not for me anymore, Tommy.

TOMMY
What? You change brands?

Paddy shakes his head. Tommy looks at him. Paddy Conlon not drinking? What gives?

PADDY
C'mon, let's go inside.

Paddy pats his son on the back and heads for the door as a confused Tommy follows.

TITLE CARD: WARRIOR

INT. PADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paddy and Tommy walk through the front door. The house is clean, yet all the furnishings are from the late 1970s. Tommy stands in the den and looks around, breathing the old place in, as Paddy makes his way into the kitchen.

TOMMY
I like what you've done with the place.

PADDY (O.S.)
 Appreciate that.

The sound of glasses CLINKING in the kitchen as Tommy takes off his watch cap and begins to look around his old home. He glances down at a BIBLE on a table beside a weathered Barca lounge chair.

TOMMY
 There's not much of a woman's touch
 around here.

PADDY (O.S.)
 No more women for me, Tommy.

TOMMY
 Yeah? Must be hard to find a girl
 who can take a punch nowadays.

Tommy takes another swig from his bottle and looks at a series of old PHOTOGRAPHS lining the walls as Paddy walks into the room carrying a coffee pot and saucers on an old wicker tray. Tommy looks at him, incredulous.

PADDY
 Here you go.

TOMMY
 Coffee? You haven't seen a guy in
 14 years and you're not gonna have
 a drink with him?

PADDY
 I told you, I'm off it. I'm coming
 up on a thousand days.

TOMMY
 C'mon, just one drink.

PADDY
 No.

Tommy shrugs. Takes another pull from his bottle and turns back to the photos. He takes them in.

FRAMED PHOTO OF: 12-YEAR-OLD TOMMY, IN A WRESTLING UNIFORM AND HOLDING A HUGE TROPHY, STANDING NEXT TO A YOUNGER PADDY, WHO WEARS A TOWEL OVER HIS SHOULDER, CIRCA 1992.

FRAMED PHOTO OF: YOUNG PADDY AND A LOVELY, THIN WOMAN DANCING AWKWARDLY AT A WEDDING RECEPTION, CIRCA 1974.

FRAMED PHOTO OF: THE SAME WOMAN, SHIELDING HER EYES FROM THE SUN, STANDING NEXT TO TWO YOUNG BOYS, AGED 4 AND 6, AT THE KENNYWOOD AMUSEMENT PARK, CIRCA 1984.

FRAMED PHOTO OF: 8-YEAR-OLD TOMMY, A YOUNGER PADDY, AND A 10-YEAR-OLD BOY STANDING IN FRONT OF A BLAST FURNACE WEARING HARD HATS CIRCA 1988.

Tommy's eyes are drawn to another picture, likely taken at a mall photography studio, of a MAN AND WOMAN (late 20s) POSING WITH A YOUNG GIRL (2). The man looks like the second boy in the other photos. His brother BRENDAN.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 (off picture)
 He's a school teacher down in Philly.

Tommy's face registers surprise.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 Remember Tess? They've got two beautiful little girls.

Tommy turns back to the photos and looks at another one of the woman. Obviously his MOTHER. He puts it down, glances at the bible, then stares hard at Paddy.

TOMMY
 So you found God, huh? That's awesome. Mom kept calling for him, but he wasn't around. I guess Jesus was down at the mill forgiving all the drunks. Who knew?

Paddy sips his coffee. Says nothing. Tommy keeps pressing.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 So, you gonna ask about her, or you just gonna sit there all sober?

PADDY
 I know.

TOMMY
 Oh, you know? What do you know? Do you know it wasn't enough just to drive west to get away from you? When we hit the water we drove north, too.

PADDY
 When I got sober I hired a man to find you.

TOMMY

(taking a swig)
Is that one of the 12 steps? Or
does a guy like you get 24?

PADDY

Just the 12.

TOMMY

Did your guy tell you what you
needed to know?

PADDY

Just that your mother died in
Tacoma. And you were in the
Marines. That was all. That was
enough.

TOMMY

That's too bad. You could've gotten
some good details.

Tommy plops himself into a recliner. Glances at the coffee table, where a stack of classic books on tape sits. CRIME AND PUNISHMENT. THE SUN ALSO RISES. THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO. MOBY DICK.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You could've heard about her
coughing up blood in a shit box
with no heat. Having me rub her
down with holy water, because she
didn't have no insurance. All the
while waiting for your pal Jesus to
save her. Did your man tell you
that?

PADDY

I'm sorry, Tommy.

TOMMY

It's good to know you're sorry,
Pop. Goes a long way.

Paddy chokes up. Tommy looks at him. Closes his eyes.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I think I liked you better when you
were a drunk.

An overwhelmed Paddy sips his coffee and looks at Tommy, who is fading. The pills are kicking in. He tries to open his eyes, but it's no use, and after a few moments he's out.

Paddy glances down, where some pills have fallen out of Tommy's pocket and scattered on the rug. He watches his son. Relieved and heartbroken at the same time.

EXT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOME, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

A chaotic birthday party in the back yard of a middle-class home in the suburbs of Philly. A CLUSTER OF 5-YEAR OLDS run about, some whacking at a pinata hanging from a tree, some whizzing down a large blow-up slide, some getting their faces painted by a make-up artist dressed like a GYPSY.

TESS CONLON (29) bounces around the yard, multi-tasking like a champion and filming the proceedings with a VIDEO CAMERA. She trains the camera on BRENDAN CONLON (30), who sits in a lawn chair in a scarf, hat, and women's make-up.

THROUGH VIDEO CAMERA LENS: TWO GIRLS, EMILY (5), WHO WEARS A BIRTHDAY GIRL CROWN, AND ROSIE (3), MIMIC THE MAKE-UP WOMAN AND APPLY MASCARA AND BLUSH TO BRENDAN.

TESS

What's going on here?

BRENDAN

Well, I'm not sure, but I think
Daddy is now a princess.

Tess laughs. Brendan looks at her with a "Help me out here" expression.

TESS

Em, you want to open your presents?

The make-over ends abruptly at the mention of "presents." Emily, little sister in tow, runs over to a table filled with gifts as PARENTS and CHILDREN gather around.

Brendan gets out of the lawn chair and follows Tess over to the gift table. Amidst all the presents is one BOX, covered in pink wrapping paper, that is far larger than the rest.

TESS (CONT'D)

(off pink box)

This an awfully big box.

BRENDAN

It's her birthday.

Tess turns the video camera toward Brendan again. He couldn't look more ridiculous. And he obviously didn't clear the gift with his wife. He grins at her as she lowers the camera.

TESS

(teasing)

I know, but that's why you call it a *budget*. You set it, and you don't *budge*.

Brendan smiles in his make-up. Kisses his wife.

EXT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

The remnants of the birthday party lay strewn across the lawn. Tess, in a cocktail waitress outfit, says goodbye to her MOM and the kids, who play on the swing set.

She walks toward the garage and enters to find Brendan pressing free weights on an old bench.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Brendan continues to lift as Tess rushes in and tosses a bag of garbage in the bin. A deep CUT, hidden earlier by the make-up, is visible on his cheek.

TESS

Hey babe, I'm late. Mom's saying goodbye to the girls. She's gotta get on the road. They've been fed. They just need a bath.

BRENDAN

I'm on it.

TESS

Can you get them down at a reasonable time tonight? They're exhausted.

Brendan kisses Tess. Looks at her outfit.

BRENDAN

Where's the rest of that skirt?

TESS

Babe.

BRENDAN

Listen, if any guys give you a hassle in that joint tonight you give me a call, okay?

TESS

(off his cut)

Yeah. Just like you gave me a call when those Temple frat boys decided to smash up your face.

BRENDAN

I told you, most nights I sit on the stool and grade papers, but every now and then I need some action.

TESS

Alright, well wait up for me tonight. I'll see what I can do about that.

Tess smiles flirtatiously and heads for the car.

BRENDAN

Promises, promises.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - DAY

A big, old-school warehouse, where a handful of GUYS whale away at MMA punching dummies and roll around on sweat-saturated mats. Sun slants through a dirty, industrial skylight. A no frills kind of gym.

Behind the front counter, FENROY (20s) rolls hand wraps and watches ESPN's "MMA LIVE" on a laptop.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: ESPN ANCHOR JON ANIK INTERVIEWS PROMOTER J.J. RILEY, AND PUNKASS AND SKYSKRAPE FROM TAPOUT.

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN)

And we return here on MMA Live, Jon Anik alongside billionaire fight promoter J.J. Riley. The Tapout crew is also here. Punk and Skrape are in the building. Now J.J., what led to this project that is redefining Mixed Martial Arts here in the States?

J.J. RILEY (ON SCREEN)

Well, Mixed Martial Arts is a sport that I've always been incredibly passionate about. As for where the idea for Sparta came from, I've always kind of dug the Grand Prix format, so I tracked these guys down to help me out.

PUNKASS (ON SCREEN)

When J.J. came to us he said he wanted to create the Super Bowl of Mixed Martial Arts.

SKRAPE (ON SCREEN)

And he decided to put up the five million dollar purse, too.

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN)

Well, there you have it. It shall be done. Hedge fund king J.J. Riley, going from the lion's den of Wall Street to the cage, promoting the biggest winner-take-all tournament in MMA history. Sparta.

As Fenroy watches them talk about the upcoming Sparta tournament, Tommy walks into the gym, surveys the room with curiosity, and approaches the front desk.

TOMMY

Fitzy still own this?

FENROY

Don't know no Fitzy. Colt Boyd owns this gym.

Fenroy goes back to his computer. Tommy stands there. Notices a Sparta POSTER on the wall reading: "THE WAR ON THE SHORE. ATLANTIC CITY, JULY 2-3. BIGGEST WINNER TAKE ALL IN MMA HISTORY!"

FENROY (CONT'D)

Can I help you with something?

TOMMY

How's it work here?

FENROY

Thirty five a month with locker. We're open at 7, lights out at 11. You wanna join?

TOMMY

Sure.

Fenroy grabs a pencil and an index card and puts them on the counter in front of Tommy.

FENROY

Put your name and contact info on the card.

INT. CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Brendan stands in a classroom, surrounded by high school STUDENTS wearing safety goggles and raising cain. A block of wood sits wedged in a vice, and a student, TITO, stands over it with a Louisville slugger in his hands as his classmates CHEER him on.

BRENDAN

Whoa whoa whoa! There's a lesson in this too, OK? Listen up. So we have a body at rest, and you have the bat which needs--

TITO

Acceleration.

BRENDAN

Acceleration, right. If you have enough acceleration, you have might have a chance to break the body at rest. OK. Go ahead.

Brendan, sleeves rolled up and a bemused look on his face, watches as Tito brings the bat down on the wood. As it CRACKS in half, the other students cheer wildly. Tito smiles and leans the bat against a blackboard with "NEWTON'S 2nd LAW OF MOTION" printed on it.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

There we go. Alright Tito, well done. Remind not to mess with you. Sit down everybody. Dial it down.

As Tito high-fives his way back through the group, things settle down and the kids take their seats.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

So, have we got it?

A room full of affirmatives, with the cocky voice of NASH, a skinny white kid in a Flyers jersey, standing out.

NASH

Force equals mass times acceleration. We got it.

BRENDAN

Alright. The third law--

A black student, STEPHON, looks up from his desk.

STEPHON
How many laws this dude got?

BRENDAN
(laughing)
The dude? The *dude* has three.
Newton the dude says that for every
action, there's an equal and
opposite reaction.

Brendan looks toward the classroom door, where two red-and-white clad CHEERLEADERS are peering in, then walks over to KC, a blonde cheerleader seated in his class. She is working a Blackberry and doesn't notice him approaching.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
For example, if KC does not stop
the *action* of sending texts in
class...

Brendan stands directly in front of her desk. She quickly shoves the Blackberry under a stack of books.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
...and tell her posse outside to
beat it...

He turns and shoos away the two cheerleaders peering in the window.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
...then my *reaction* might be to
send her down to Principal Zito's
office. Thus setting our world back
in proper balance.

KC
Mr. C, I put it away.

The class busts on KC as Brendan walks back to his desk and sits on top of it. It's clear from the vibe in the room that he's a very popular teacher. Then the BELL rings.

BRENDAN
Alright, before you go, I have your
tests from last week.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - DAY

Fenroy sits at the front desk and looks at his computer. Watches "MMA LIVE" and another feature on the big upcoming Sparta tournament.

Tommy, wearing a wife beater and old gray sweats, works a bag and eyeballs an ENTOURAGE that surrounds a ring. Inside, a heavily-muscled FIGHTER with a mohawk, MAD DOG GRIMES (30s), is putting a beating on his SPARRING PARTNER. The obsequious nature of the entourage makes it clear that Mad Dog is somebody important.

In the ring, the sparring partner takes a vicious spinning back fist to the chin, goes down in a heap, and doesn't get up. COLT BOYD (40s), clearly in charge, throws up his hands as Mad Dog laughs.

MAD DOG

Where do you find these girls?

Colt climbs into the ring and looks at the fallen fighter. Glances at Mad Dog.

COLT BOYD

We got a tournament coming up. You gonna kill every guy in the 'Burgh?

(to Fenroy)

Fenroy. Get me some ice. And call that Puerto Rican kid, the one that fights outa the Bottoms. If he's here in 20 minutes, he gets 200 bucks.

TOMMY

Yo, I'll fight him.

Colt turns around and looks at Tommy. As does Mad Dog, who smiles down at him from inside the ring.

COLT BOYD

Do me a favor guy, go back to your bag. We don't need anybody else getting hurt. G'head. Take a walk.

Tommy walks back to his bag. Mad Dog smiles. Looks at Tommy's outfit.

MAD DOG

Yo Rock, what happened? You leave Mick and Paulie at home today?

Tommy stops. Walks back to the ring as Fenroy approaches.

FENROY

(to Colt)

His phone's disconnected.

COLT BOYD

Then go through the list. Get me
Joe Bones.

TOMMY

(to Colt)

All I'm saying is if you need
somebody to help you, I'm happy to
keep your boy warm for you.

Colt looks at Mad Dog. What do you think? The Mohawked
fighter looks at Tommy. Shrugs. It's his funeral.

COLT BOYD

You ever fought before?

TOMMY

Yeah.

Colt studies Tommy. Sees he's serious. Gives in.

COLT BOYD

(to Fenroy)

This guy sign a waiver?

FENROY

All good.

COLT BOYD

What's your name?

TOMMY

Tommy.

COLT BOYD

You get tuned up in here, it's on
you, Tommy.

TOMMY

Sure, no problem.

COLT BOYD

Come on in.

Colt Boyd waves Tommy into the ring. Mad Dog's entourage
starts whispering amongst themselves. Snickering at what lays
in wait for Tommy as the fallen sparring partner is helped
out of the ring.

A TRAINER tapes Tommy's hands and gives him some MMA gloves.
He slips them on, then at the sound of a BUZZER he starts
moving toward Mad Dog, who smirks at Tommy's aggression and
then starts circling him. Tommy nails him with a front kick
to the chest. Grimes staggers back and shakes it off.

MAD DOG

Gonna be a hero? Alright.

He crouches down, gets serious. He throws a right. Blocked. A leg kick. Blocked. Tommy snaps his head with a jab. Then he does it again. And again. Then he DECKS HIM with a hard right, sending Mad Dog to the canvas to the shock of his entourage and Colt Boyd.

Fenroy looks up from his post and walks over to the ring. Within moments everyone in the gym stops what they're doing and watches as Tommy grabs the back of Mad Dog's head, hauls it down, and launches knee after knee into his face.

Tommy starts throwing Mad Dog around like a rag doll, striking him with vicious punches and kicks, as Fenroy pulls out his CELL PHONE and starts filming the action. As Colt Boyd screams at Mad Dog to cover up, Tommy shoves him against the ropes and blasts away.

Tommy continues to pound. It's a full-fledged beating going on in there. Finally, he crushes Mad Dog with a vicious left hook and sends him sprawling through the ropes, UNCONSCIOUS.

SILENCE in the gym. What the hell just happened here? The entourage rushes to Mad Dog's aid, but he's out cold. Colt Boyd looks on in disbelief as Tommy walks across the ring and approaches him.

TOMMY

You owe me two hundred bucks.

INT. FIRST UNION BANK - DAY

Brendan sits in a chair across from loan officer DAN TAYLOR (40s). They're mid-meeting and going over documents.

DAN TAYLOR

This is the new appraisal figure, and this is how it effects the monthly. As you can see, that puts you upside down on your mortgage. That's the problem. It's the country that did the assessment, not the bank. So, the numbers are what they are, Mr. Conlon.

BRENDAN

Brendan.

DAN TAYLOR

The numbers are what they are,
Brendan. I mean, you're a Math
teacher, you can appreciate that.

BRENDAN

I teach Physics.

DAN TAYLOR

Physics. OK. But the bank has got
to go by the new appraisal figures.
According to these figures, you're
upside down on your mortgage--

BRENDAN

You said that three times already.
I get that. But I'm asking you if
there's something else you can do.
Not the bank, *you*. Can you shift
things around, restructure--

DAN TAYLOR

Well, you've already refinanced
twice.

BRENDAN

Because you advised us to do that.

DAN TAYLOR

I presented you with that option.
It was your choice.

(beat)

I'm also showing you netted a
substantial payout with the refi.

BRENDAN

We had that conversation. I was
paying medical bills. Is that in
your file?

Taylor looks at Brendan. Takes him a second to remember.

DAN TAYLOR

Oh, right. Sorry. Your
daughter's...kidney?

BRENDAN

Heart.

DAN TAYLOR

Heart, right.
(off stack of files on desk)
Lot of stories.

Brendan glares at him.

BRENDAN

So my option is I've got no options? You're not even gonna try to help me?

DAN TAYLOR

I am trying, Brendan. Look, I can get you 90 days to get even--

BRENDAN

90 days is not enough. My wife and I have three jobs between us and that doesn't cut it. So, what do you suggest?

DAN TAYLOR

Let me ask you a question: have you considered bankruptcy? It's a viable option. There's no shame in it these days.

BRENDAN

That's not how I do things.

DAN TAYLOR

Well, then you're looking at foreclosure.

Brendan gets up and storms out of the office.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

Utter domination by Tommy Conlon, the undefeated freshman from Pittsburgh...

INT. PADDY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paddy sits in front of the TV and watches an old VIDEO TAPE of a wrestling tournament. The bottom of the screen reads: 1994 PA STATE WRESTLING FINALS. CONLON VS. SPEERY.

ON TV SCREEN: 14-YEAR-OLD TOMMY DOMINATES AN OPPONENT.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)

...the prodigy has yet to yield a single point in the entire tournament. It's just unprecedented.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
Tommy trained by his father since
the age of five.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
You're talking about Paddy Conlon.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
The *controversial* Paddy Conlon.

ON TV SCREEN: A YOUNGER PADDY SHOUTS INSTRUCTIONS AS TOMMY
CRUSHES HIS OPPONENT.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Say what you will about the methods
of the former Marine, but he's led
his son to six straight junior
Olympic titles, and now just
moments away from a high school
state championship. And there it
is! Wow!

ON TV SCREEN: TOMMY PINS HIS OPPONENT AND LEAPS OFF THE MAT
IN JUBILATION.

ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)
There's just no limit to what the
future holds for this kid!

As Paddy watches, the DOORBELL RINGS. He makes his way to the
door as the tape continues to play.

ANNOUNCER #1 (V.O.)
Tommy told me that he's chasing the
record of Theogenes, apparently a
mythical Greek fighter said to be
unbeaten in over 1400 bouts...

Paddy opens the door to find Colt Boyd standing on the stoop.

COLT BOYD
How you doin,' sir? I'm looking for
Tommy Riordan.

Paddy registers the name "Riordan."

PADDY
Who?

COLT BOYD
Tommy Riordan? My name's Colt Boyd.

PADDY
What business you got with Tommy?

COLT BOYD

None yet. That's why I'm here. I manage fighters.

Colt looks at Paddy. Jams his hands in his pockets. He's obviously waiting for an invite inside. It doesn't come.

COLT BOYD (CONT'D)

Tommy's been working out at my gym. He put a beating on the number one middleweight contender in the world today. I want to know more about the guy. Maybe help him out. I have a lot of contacts, Mr. Riordan.

PADDY

Conlon. Name's *Conlon*. And anything you want to know about Tommy, you gotta ask him yourself.

COLT BOYD

I'm just looking for some general information here.

PADDY

Like I said, anything you want to know about Tommy, you gotta ask him yourself.

COLT BOYD

Look, I don't mean to interrupt your night. He put this address down when he signed up at the gym.

PADDY

He doesn't live here.

Paddy closes the door on a frustrated Colt.

INT. BRENDAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Brendan drives down the road on the outskirts of town and talks on his cell.

BRENDAN (INTO PHONE)

Listen kiddo, I need you put Mommy back on, OK? I love you.

(beat)

Hey. I'm just pulling in. Huh? Oh, they've got this open mic night thing. Should be a quiet one. Sleep well. You too. Bye.

EXT. THE TENDER TRAP - NIGHT

Brendan pulls into the parking lot of the local strip club. A white TENT is set up outside, and the parking lot is overflowing with cars. Something big going on.

INT. TENDER TRAP TENT - SAME

Aluminum bleachers are set up around a ring, where TWO AMATEUR FIGHTERS go at it under a bank of sodium lights. Hundreds of rowdy LOCALS swill beer and BOO lustily when the action slows.

INT. TENDER TRAP RING - LATER

MIKE MOORE (20s), a FIGHTER sporting sleeves of demonic ink, paces in his corner as a cluster of BIKERS cheer him on from ringside. An ANNOUNCER walks to the center of the ring with a cordless microphone.

ANNOUNCER

It's time for our next contest!
Introducing first, fighting out of
the red corner, from Ripley, West
Virginia, please welcome Mike "The
Mutilator" Moore!

Some hollers from the crowd.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And in the blue corner. He fights
out of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Please welcome "Irish" Brendan
Conlon!

A

Lo and behold, there's a shirtless Brendan standing in the corner of the ring wearing a pair of shorts. On his right shoulder, an elaborate TATTOO of the CONLON FAMILY CREST.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This bout is scheduled for three
five-minute rounds, and when the
action begins your referee is Mr.
Rick Fike.

The REFEREE enters the ring and stands between Brendan and Mike Moore.

REFEREE

Fighters to the center! I want you to obey my commands at all times. If you have no questions, touch gloves, back up, and wait for my signal. Come out fighting!

Brendan reaches out to touch gloves with Mike Moore, but his opponent snubs him and storms back to his corner. He means business. Brendan, looking less sure of himself, retreats to his corner.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Fighters, are you ready? Let's go!

The bikers raise hell as the BELL sounds. Moore comes out bombing. Brendan dodges a couple of wild haymakers, then gets caught in the side of the head with a right hand. He stumbles back into the ropes and Moore presses into him, swatting at him with his huge hands.

Brendan absorbs the blows, ducks down, grabs Moore by the legs, lifts him, and dumps him on the mat with a resounding THUD. Obviously bull strong and with tremendous punching skills, Brendan sits on his opponent's chest and starts raining down shots, banging and banging, pulverizing his face and body.

It's a full on ass-whooping going on in there until finally, mercifully, the referee stops the butchery amidst a mixture of CHEERS from the crowd and BOOS from the bikers.

A winded Brendan walks to his corner, touches the side of his head, wipes a small amount of blood on his shorts, and climbs out of the ring, where a PROMOTER approaches.

PROMOTER

Nice fight. Two more wins and you take home the bacon.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The bedroom door opens and Brendan creeps through the room and into the bathroom.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOME - BATHROOM - SAME

It's dark, except for the moonlight glowing through the window. An exhausted Brendan takes off his shirt and begins washing his badly SWOLLEN FACE. Then the door opens, and Tess shuffles in.

TESS
 (sleepy)
 Hey babe. How was work?

Brendan doesn't answer. Tess slowly wakes up. As she does, she gets a look at his face.

TESS (CONT'D)
 Oh my God. What happened? You said
 it was going to be a slow night.

Tess studies his face. Brendan looks at her. Reaches into his pocket and hands her \$500 in cash.

BRENDAN
 I'm not bouncing at a club.

TESS
 What do you mean you're not
 bouncing?

She looks at him. Looks at the money. Puts it together.

TESS (CONT'D)
 You've been lying to me?

BRENDAN
 I went in to apply. They were only
 paying nine bucks an hour. Then I
 saw a sign for this other thing.

Tess can't believe what she's hearing.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
 They're putting us out of the house
 in three months, we're running out
 of options--

TESS
 (furious)
 Then they'll put us out of the
 house in three months. I'd rather
 go back to the old apartment than
 see you in the back of an ambulance
 again.

(beat)
 I thought we agreed that we weren't
 going to raise our children in
 a family where their father gets
 beat up for a living.

BRENDAN

We're not giving up the house. This
is our home. We're not going
backwards

Tess reaches up and touches his battered face. Calms herself
down. Embraces her husband.

TESS

We'll figure it out. But this is
what we're not going back to.

EXT. TRACKSIDE DINER - MORNING

A steady rain tumbles down over an old-school diner in the
shadow of the railroad tracks.

INT. DINER - SAME

Paddy sits in a booth and takes a sip of coffee. Judging by
the spent sugar packets and the half-eaten club sandwich,
he's been there a while.

The front door swings open and Tommy enters wearing his watch
cap and sweats. He makes his way over to the booth and plops
himself down. It's clear something's on his mind but he
doesn't say anything. Finally, Paddy engages him.

PADDY

You wanted to talk?

TOMMY

Yeah.

(beat)

I'm gonna start fighting.

PADDY

That right?

TOMMY

Don't play babe in the woods with
me. I know that guy from the gym
came to see you.

PADDY

Colt Boyd? I didn't tell him
anything, Tommy.

TOMMY

We wouldn't be sitting here now if
you did.

Tommy grabs a fry off Paddy's plate.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Alright. Look. There's this tournament. A big tournament. Top sixteen middleweights in the world. Single elimination. Winner take all for a lot of money. I'm gonna do that. But if I'm doin' it, then I'm gonna need a trainer. Now *that* much you were good at.

(off Paddy grinning)

No, no, no. This doesn't mean anything.

Paddy tries to tether it down, but he's happy. Tommy looks at him sternly.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I'm serious. We train. That's it. I don't wanna hear a word about anything *but* training, you understand? You wanna tell your war stories, you can take 'em down to the VFW. You can take 'em to a meeting, or church, or wherever the hell it is you go nowadays.

PADDY

What about Colt Boyd?

TOMMY

What about him? I told him I don't train with people I don't know.

PADDY

Ah, the devil you know.

TOMMY

Excuse me?

PADDY

The devil you know is better than the devil you don't.

Tommy looks at him. Grins for the first time.

PADDY (CONT'D)

Chasing Theogenes. It'll be kinda like old times.

TOMMY

(angry)

I just told you, this doesn't mean anything. You get that through your skull right now or I'm walking.

Paddy calmly sips his coffee, then leans in on Tommy with a stern look. The old lion's got a few teeth left.

PADDY

Alright. Alright. But you get something through *your* skull, too. You called *me*. So don't go threatening to walk every five minutes. And since this is about training, you dump whatever it is you need to dump as far as those pills are concerned. I don't want to see 'em.

Tommy gives him a hard look, but the old man doesn't shy away.

PADDY (CONT'D)

In fact, hand 'em over right now.

(beat)

I know they're on you, Tommy. You sounded like a goddamn maraca coming through the door.

Tommy considers, then reaches into his pocket and slides two bottles across the table.

PADDY (CONT'D)

That's not gonna do.

(shaking bottles)

When you came through that door it was chhh-chhh-chhh.

(holding up 3 fingers)

Three.

Tommy looks at him. Fishes another bottle out of his pocket and flips it on the table.

PADDY (CONT'D)

(off French fries)

And another thing, you don't eat crap like this. This is for losers and old men.

(beat)

And we're gonna have to bunk up. If we're gonna do this right, you gotta stay at the house.

(MORE)

PADDY (CONT'D)
 I watch your diet, we follow the
 old regimen. You copy?

The two men stare at each other. Tommy looks furious, but he doesn't get up. A silent, tenuous agreement is reached.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 Copy.

INT. CENTRAL HIGH HALLWAY - MORNING

Brendan, his face BRUISED badly from the night before, walks down the hallway toward his classroom. STUDENTS watch him as he passes and whisper.

INT. CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - SAME

The class is filled with the kind of BUZZING that can only rise off a major rumor. Tito, Nash, KC, and Stephon discuss.

TITO
 My brother said he was at the strip
 club and saw Mr. C fighting MMA---

NASH
 What's MMA?

STEPHON
 Mixed Martial Arts. Like, different
 styles of fighting.

KC
 Your brother's a liar.

Brendan enters the room. The kids look at him. Holy shit. It's true.

BRENDAN
 Take your seats.

Brendan puts his bag down on his desk and faces the class. He is not amused by the murmuring in there.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
 Now, please.

The kids pipe down. Then Tito speaks up.

TITO

Yo, Mr. C. My brother was at the titty bar last night and said you was choking brothers out. What's up? Is it true?

STEPHON

Yeah, Mr. C. I mean, did you really work on some fools or something?

KC

You have to tell us.

Before Brendan can answer, he sees PRINCIPAL JOE ZITO (50s) gesturing to him through the window of the classroom. Zito taps his watch and points. Come see me after class.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S OFFICE - LATER

Zito, puffy faced, hair getting thinner by the hour, hangs up his phone as Brendan pokes his head in. Zito waves him in. Eyeballs the marks on his face.

BRENDAN

C'mon, it's not as bad as it looks.

JOE ZITO

Are you being literal or figurative? Because literally it looks bad. And figuratively it looks even worse. The superintendent's coming by in a few minutes. So gimme a little help here, Brendan. Can you explain to me what the hell you were doing?

BRENDAN

I need the money, Joe.

JOE ZITO

Yeah, but we can't have this. This isn't moonlighting at Applebee's for Christ's sake.

Zito stands up and runs his hands across his head.

JOE ZITO (CONT'D)

Shit, Brendan. Leaving everything else aside, which we can't, are you out of your mind? You're gonna get yourself killed. I mean, you're a goddamn *teacher*.

(MORE)

JOE ZITO (CONT'D)
You've got no business in the ring
with those animals.

BRENDAN
Actually, I used to be one of those
animals.

Zito looks at Brendan. Puzzled.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
I fought for a living.
(beat)
Guess I forgot to put that down on
my application.

JOE ZITO
Yeah, I guess you did.

Zito sits back down.

BRENDAN
Look, I'm sorry, Joe. It's just--

JOE ZITO
Listen, the school district's not
going to tolerate school teachers
cockfighting in strip clubs.

BRENDAN
It was the parking lot of a strip
club.

JOE ZITO
Wherever it was, you can't be doing
it, alright? I mean this is a
serious--shit, he's here.

Zito sees the SUPERINTENDENT enter the foyer outside his
office. He's looking none too pleased.

JOE ZITO (CONT'D)
This is a serious problem.
(beat)
Guy hasn't been inside a school
since 9-11.

BRENDAN
What are we gonna do?

JOE ZITO
You say yes, sir. And you say no,
sir. And you say it'll never happen
again, sir. And then we just pray
to God he's in a good mood.

Brendan and Joe stand up. Zito can't tether down a slight grin.

JOE ZITO (CONT'D)

UFC?

Brendan nods. Joe shakes his head. Impressed.

JOE ZITO (CONT'D)

Sonofabitch.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOME - KID'S PLAYROOM - NIGHT

Brendan sits in a miniature playroom off the kid's bedroom, putting glue on the leg of a TOY PIANO. Tess enters the bedroom, where the girls sleep, and leans into the playroom. They speak in whispers.

TESS

What are you doing?

BRENDAN

(off piano)

The girls have an important piano recital in the morning. Got an equipment malfunction.

(beat)

How'd it go?

TESS

They're gonna review your case at the end of the semester, but until then you're suspended without pay. Joe gave me the number of his attorney.

BRENDAN

How the hell are we gonna pay for an attorney?

Tess crouches down and enters the tiny room. She sits on the floor.

TESS

He talked to me for free. As a favor to Joe.

BRENDAN

That was nice.

TESS

He said there's no precedent for this. You'll be back by next semester.

BRENDAN

Next *semester*?

Tess sighs. They sit in silence. There are no easy solutions. Finally, Brendan speaks up.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Look, Tess. They have these smoker fights all over. There's one in Lancaster next week. There's two in Dover the week after. Wilmington. Camden. Baltimore. It could keep us afloat.

TESS

You're gonna put yourself through this over and over, for five hundred bucks a pop?

BRENDAN

Some of them pay a little more than that.

(beat)

I would have had to bounce for a month to make what I made in two hours last night.

Brendan looks at his wife.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

And these guys, they're not real fighters. They're just guys who have seen too much UFC on TV. If you have a better solution, I'm all ears.

Tess sits quietly. Knows they have limited options.

TESS

What are we gonna tell the girls?

BRENDAN

It'll be fine. I'll just leave the house as usual, except now I'll be going to the gym.

They look at each other. No choice. This is the plan.

INT. TOMMY'S ROOM - PRE-DAWN

Paddy climbs the stairs with a POSTER BOARD tucked under his arm and a cup of coffee in his hands. He enters Tommy's room, which is also a monument to the past. Old wrestling TROPHIES, Steelers' posters, and an EMPTY SECOND BED that obviously once belonged to Brendan.

PADDY

(singing)

Oh the duck says *quack* and the cow
says *moo*, and the old red rooster
says *cock-a-doodle-doo*. *Cock-a-*
doodle-doo.

Paddy places the cup of coffee on the night stand as Tommy stirs, then sits on the empty bed and unrolls the poster. It's yellowed with age and covered with a boy's handwriting.

ON BOARD: THEOGENES 1415 WINS. NO LOSSES. TOMMY CONLON 315 WINS. NO LOSSES. ALSO, A 1994 NEWSPAPER CLIPPING READING "PRODIGY WINS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP," AND ABOVE IT, GOALS: 1998, COLLEGE, PENN STATE. 2000, SUMMER OLYMPICS, GOLD MEDAL.

PADDY (CONT'D)

Look what I found in that disaster
of a basement. Whattya say we sit
down and update this sometime? You
can fill me in on how close you got
to that record.

Tommy says nothing. Not a nostalgic bone in his body. The dreams on that poster are long gone.

PADDY (CONT'D)

Did you continue wrestling after
you left with your mother?

(beat)

C'mon, Tommy. Tell me something.

TOMMY

Yeah, I'll tell ya something. You
can take that thing back to where
you found it. And you can leave the
coffee in the pot. I can pour that
myself. I can wake myself up, too.

Paddy's stung but covers it amiably.

PADDY

OK. Hurt my knees coming up and
down those stairs anyway.

(beat)

(MORE)

PADDY (CONT'D)
Coffee pot's on til 0-500, then I
dump it.

EXT. AL ADAD AIR BASE, RAMADI, IRAQ - DAY

Marine base camp in the middle of the Iraqi desert. Blackhawk
HELICOPTERS floating in the sky. MARINES rushing about.

INT. MARINES COMMUNICATIONS TENT, RAMADI, IRAQ - SAME

MARINES of various rank huddle around a computer screen,
fired up about something they're watching.

MARINE #1
Damn dude, that's *brutal*.

LANCE CORPORAL MARK BRADFORD (20s) walks up to see what the
commotion is all about.

BRADFORD
What's that?

MARINE #2
"Mad Dog" Grimes gettin' tuned up
by some dude in a gym in
Pittsburgh.

BRADFORD
Who's "Mad Dog" Grimes?

MARINE #2
Shit, Bradford. The stuff you don't
know amazes me.
(off computer)
Oh my god, did you see that?

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: YOU TUBE VIDEO OF THE CELL PHONE FOOTAGE
FENROY TOOK OF TOMMY BEATING UP ON MAD DOG GRIMES. THE
MOHAWKED FIGHTER IS CRUSHED BY THE LEFT HOOK AND FALLS
BETWEEN THE ROPES.

Bradford stares at the screen, his eyes widening as the
Marines raise hell about the footage.

BRADFORD
Wait, rewind that.

One of the Marines rewinds the video. Bradford looks at the
image in disbelief, then races out of the tent.

EXT. BRAVO COMPANY COMPOUND - CONTINUOUS

Bradford hustles outside into the searing sunlight.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Bradford enters a barracks, where Private "AV" SIMERS (20s) plays cards with other MARINES.

BRADFORD
AV, I need to see the tape!

AV
What tape?

BRADFORD
The tape.

AV drops his cards, rushes to his bunk, pulls out a steel container loaded with VIDEOTAPES and sifts through it. They are labeled by day and month. AV finds what he's looking for, loads it into the camera, and hits PLAY.

ON VIDEO SCREEN: A CHAOTIC FIRE FIGHT IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT. MUZZLE FLASHES. TRACER LIGHTS. MAYHEM. THE CAMERA FOCUSES ON A FLIPPED TANK, HALF OF IT SUBMERGED IN WATER. A MARINE, HEAD SHAVED BUT ALMOST CERTAINLY TOMMY, SUDDENLY APPEARS AND CLIMBS ON TOP OF THE TANK, REACHING FOR THE HATCH.

BRADFORD
Freeze.

AV holds the "Pause" button down as Bradford looks at the screen in disbelief. It's definitely Tommy.

BRADFORD (CONT'D)
That's him. That's *him*.

INT. CAMPANA FIGHTING SYSTEM - DAY

In a top MMA gym, FRANK CAMPANA (40s) works in a ring with Brazilian superstar MARCO SANTOS (20s) and other FIGHTERS. The sound of CLASSICAL MUSIC fills the air.

FRANK
Let the music sink in to you. This is Beethoven. Breathe. Breathe.

As Frank teaches, Brendan walks in the door. The great trainer notices him and walks over.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Do I know you? I think I know you.

They embrace warmly.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Long time, brother.

BRENDAN

Liking the place, Frank.

FRANK

Thank you, brother.

(off Brazilian fighter)

You see this beast? Marco Santos?

I'm training him for Sparta.

BRENDAN

Amazing, man.

FRANK

Come on back.

The two head for the offices at the back of the gym.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They walk into an office filled with PHOTOS of Frank in his fighting days. He was obviously somebody. The walls are also adorned with SPARTA posters. Frank reaches into a mini-fridge, pulling out a couple bottles of Vitamin water. He hands one to Brendan and motions for him to sit down.

FRANK

You look good, brother. How're the girls?

BRENDAN

Good. Good. I had another little one. Rosie.

FRANK

I know. Johnny C. told me she was in the hospital for a bit. I was gonna call, but then time went by. I don't know. I'm a piece of shit. I should have called.

BRENDAN

It's alright.

FRANK

No, Brendan. I'm sorry.

BRENDAN

It's all good. She's good now.

Frank looks at his old friend. Smiles warmly.

FRANK

It's great to see you, man. So everything's going good?

BRENDAN

Yeah. Well, I've got a little problem. The guys at the bank want to take my house away. That's kind of why I came to see you, actually.

Frank considers what he's hearing.

FRANK

I've got most of my dough tied up in this joint, but how much do you need?

BRENDAN

I didn't come here for a loan, Frank.

(beat)

I was hoping you'd train me.

FRANK

Train you for what?

BRENDAN

I want to get back in the cage.

Frank starts smiling. Leans back in his seat. Then he sees Brendan is not smiling with him.

FRANK

You're serious?

BRENDAN

I just won an event the other night.

FRANK

Ah, you won an event.

(off bruised face)

That's what this is. Let me guess, it was in a parking lot. DJ from the local radio station. Couple of ring card girls you wouldn't bang on a dare. Am I right?

Brendan smiles.

BRENDAN

Ish.

FRANK

Ish. Brendan. I love you. I do. But why would I train you? When you were in shape and on the right side of 30 you were barely a .500 fighter. You never listened to me. You never listened to anyone. These guys are animals. I mean, you're a teacher, right? What're you gonna do? You're gonna come down here for a couple days a week after detention? You're gonna skip out of the girl's volleyball game early?

BRENDAN

I've got loads of time. Time's not an issue. The parking lot thing kinda got me suspended. I need to keep working the smokers.

FRANK

Tess know about this?
(off Brendan's nod)
Yeah? 'Cause the last time you fought, I got read the riot act sitting in a hospital waiting room. You remember that?

BRENDAN

No. I was unconscious.

The two friends share a laugh.

FRANK

She's not gonna come down here with the two puppies, screaming at Frank?

BRENDAN

It's not gonna happen. Come on. Whattya say, Frank?

FRANK

What do I say? What am I gonna say to you? No? I mean, all my time is wrapped up with Marco. You come down, I'll throw you in the rotation, you spar with these guys, no problem. But I can't promise you much more than that, Brendan.

BRENDAN
That's all I need.

Brendan stands up. Shakes Frank's hand.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
I appreciate it.

FRANK
Let me know when you're coming
down.

BRENDAN
(walking away)
Well, I'm just gonna go get my
stuff from the car.

FRANK
Now?

Brendan puts his dukes up and smiles as Frank shakes his
head.

EXT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - NIGHT

Brendan pulls into the driveway of his modest home, gets out
of his Camry, and looks to the street, where Paddy stands
outside his Olds, leaning on the passenger door.

Brendan carries a gym bag and wears work out clothes. He's
clearly not happy to see Paddy, who stands there,
uncomfortable and heavy hearted in the light of the street
lamp.

PADDY
Hey, Brendan. It's me, Pop.

BRENDAN
What're you doing here?

PADDY
I have some news for you.

BRENDAN
Something wrong with your hands?

Paddy shakes his head, unsure what he means.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
If there's nothing wrong with your
hands then there's no reason for
you not to phone. That's the deal.

PADDY
Yeah, I forgot--

BRENDAN
Phone or mail, Pop. Non negotiable.

Paddy holds his hands out, palms down.

PADDY
Hey Brendan, have you ever seen my
hands so steady? Have you?

BRENDAN
I'm going inside.

PADDY
I've got a thousand days. A
thousand days sober today.

BRENDAN
Well, that's great, Pop. But it
doesn't change anything.

PADDY
What do you mean it doesn't change
anything? Have a heart, Brendan.

Paddy's words set Brendan off. A side of him we haven't seen before emerges. He approaches his father fiercely.

BRENDAN
You listen to me. You take your
have-a-heart bullshit and you run
it down the road. Run it out on
someone who doesn't know you like I
do.

PADDY
C'mon, Brendan. I thought maybe we
could break bread. Open some lines
of communication.

BRENDAN
You got two lines of communication,
the telephone and the post office.
Just because you decide it's a
special day, it doesn't make it one
for me. I got a wife and kids
inside and they're waiting for me,
so I don't have time for whatever
this is.

PADDY

I know you got a wife and kids in there. I got a grand-daughter I haven't seen in three years and another I haven't even ever met.

BRENDAN

Why is that, Pop? Why is that? Do you remember having anything to do with that?

Paddy nods. Casts his eyes down in shame.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

That shit you pulled. Never again. And all the shit I saw growing up? That doesn't happen here.

Brendan looks at the reformed Paddy, a measure of sympathy on his face. Then he heads for the house.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Take care of yourself.

As he's halfway through the yard, Paddy calls out.

PADDY

Tommy's back.

Brendan stops in his tracks. He turns and looks at his Dad.

PADDY (CONT'D)

He's in the 'Burgh.

BRENDAN

Tommy's in Pittsburgh?

PADDY

He came to see me.

BRENDAN

He came to see *you*?

PADDY

He's over at the house. We're doing a little training at Fitzzy's. Remember Fitzzy's? It ain't Fitzzy's anymore.

Brendan walks closer. Incredulous.

BRENDAN

You and Tommy are training together?

Paddy nods.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
Tommy Conlon.

PADDY
Riordan. He's using your mother's
maiden name now.

BRENDAN
I know what her name is.

PADDY
I thought you'd want to know he's
back. That's why I drove all the
way over here.

BRENDAN
I thought you came to break bread
over a thousand days?

PADDY
That too.

Brendan looks at him. Considers.

BRENDAN
Did he say if he wants to see me?

PADDY
He doesn't say much. He's just not
that happy kid he was.

BRENDAN
Wow, look at you. Mister inside
man.

Paddy frowns.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
You and Tommy training together
like nothing ever happened. This is
unbelievable. Now I know what
you're really doing here.

PADDY
What's that?

BRENDAN
You came to gloat.

PADDY
I did not come to gloat. I came to
get my son back.

BRENDAN

Well, there you go. You got your son back.

PADDY

I'm talking about you, Bren--

BRENDAN

You got your son back.

Brendan starts to walk away, then turns around again.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

You know, part of the reason I stuck around was 'cause I thought I'd finally get you all to myself. But you didn't have any interest in training me. Tommy was the one.

PADDY

Ah, Brendan. I was a drunk. I mean, you know. I'm sorry.

BRENDAN

Forget it. You were always a front runner. You never had any interest in underdogs. But I was your son.

PADDY

You *are* my son.

BRENDAN

Am I?

PADDY

Yeah, you are. I'm just asking you to find just a little space in your heart to forgive me.

BRENDAN

Yeah. Alright. I forgive you. But I do *not* trust you. Tell Tommy this is where I am if he wants to see me.

PADDY

Alright. But they're not different things. You've gotta trust to forgive--

BRENDAN

Goodnight, Pop.

Paddy looks toward the house, where Emily, Rosie, and Tess stand at the door. Paddy waves.

PADDY

My God, is that Emily? Boy, she's grown, Brendan. Is that Rosie?

Brendan keeps walking. Opens his door to step inside.

ROSIE

Daddy, who is that?

BRENDAN

Just some nice old man.

Brendan closes the door, leaving the heartbroken Paddy alone in the yard.

EXT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - DAY

Tommy, his hoodie drenched, jogs up the sidewalk and enters the gym.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Fenroy watches "MMA LIVE" on his computer as Tommy walks in the door and heads into the gym.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: JON ANIK AT THE MMA LIVE DESK. A PHOTO OF KOBA, A BAD, BALD RUSSIAN FIGHTER, IS ALSO ON THE SCREEN.

JON ANIK

Huge news breaking here at ESPN. Koba is coming to America and will fight at Sparta. Universally considered to be the greatest pound for pound fighter that ever lived, the mighty, mythical Russian has never fought on U.S. soil in his legendary career...

Mad Dog Grimes trains furiously under the watchful eye of Colt Boyd. When Colt sees Tommy approaching, he turns his attention away from Mad Dog.

COLT BOYD

Tommy? Got some news for ya. I got you into Sparta. Took some doing, but I made it happen..

(off no reaction from Tommy)

Thank you and 10 percent is customary.

Tommy heads up the stairs toward the locker room without acknowledging Colt, though he does allow a small smile to crease his lips.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tommy pulls a crumpled PIECE OF PAPER out of a beat-up wallet and begins dumping change into an old pay phone on the wall.

INT. PILAR FERNANDEZ'S HOUSE, EL PASO, TEXAS - SAME

More of a shack than a house. PILAR FERNANDEZ (20s), a pretty but tired Mexican girl, watches a grainy TV with a six-year-old BOY and a four-year-old GIRL as the phone RINGS. The table it sits on has a FRAMED PICTURE of Tommy and another MARINE on it, their arms around each other in the Iraqi desert.

INTERCUT TOMMY AND PILAR

PILAR

Bueno?

TOMMY

Pilar. It's Tommy.

PILAR

Tommy! *Dios mio!* I can't believe it! How are you?

TOMMY

Good good. How you doin'?

PILAR

OK. You know me, Tommy.

(beat)

I was getting really worried about you.

TOMMY

How're things? Kids are good?

PILAR

They're good. Maria's getting so big. She looks more like Manny every day.

TOMMY

How's little man?

PILAR

He's good. He's a good kid, Tommy.
Takes care of his sister. He's a
great kid. Everyone's good.

TOMMY

You know, Pilar, I haven't
forgotten for one minute what I
promised you. What I promised
Manny. I've got an opportunity
coming up to help you guys out. To
take care of you guys.

PILAR

Whatever you can do, Tommy. I know
Manny would really appreciate it.
You worry too much. It's OK. We're
hanging in there.

BEGIN TRAINING MONTAGE BEGINS

EXT. P.J. MCARDLE BRIDGE, PITTSBURGH - PRE-DAWN

Tommy, hoodie up, runs in the darkness as Paddy's Olds trails
behind him, the SOUND of "Moby Dick" playing in the car.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Frank watches as a team of FIGHTERS races up a steep hill.
Marco is ahead of the pack, Brendan in the middle.

EXT. 33RD STREET RAIL YARD - MORNING

Tommy runs hard through an industrial area along the
Allegheny River. The sky, the steel, the bridges,
everything's hard and gray.

INT. MARINES COMMUNICATIONS TENT, FALLUJAH, IRAQ - DAY

Bradford and other Marines watch "MMA LIVE" on a laptop.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: J.J. RILEY BEING INTERVIEWED BY JON ANIK
VIA SATELLITE FROM TOKYO.

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN)

With eight weeks left til Sparta,
J.J. Riley and the TapOut crew take
time out of their international
press tour to join us.

(MORE)

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
J.J., we've never seen this kind of
Grand Prix tournament in the
country before. Tell us, why the
unique format?

J.J. RILEY (ON SCREEN)
Well, Jon, you know as well as
anyone that in Mixed Martial Arts,
anyone can beat anyone on a given
night...

EXT. PARKING LOT, SCRANTON PA - NIGHT

Brendan takes steady blows from an OPPONENT in another
smoker, then turns the tables, slams his man down, and chokes
him out. His skills are improving.

J.J. RILEY (V.O.)
...but with this type of format,
it's gonna be tough to deny who the
champion is.

EXT. 33RD STREET TIRE YARD - MORNING

In an expansive and grim scrap yard along the river bank,
Tommy somehow manages to lift and flip old long-haul rig
tires. They're roughly the size of hot tubs. His strength is
astonishing.

J.J. RILEY (V.O.)
You've got four fights in two
nights, sixteen fighters down to
one. Winners gonna be the last man
standing.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Everyone charging up the hill with Frank pushing them. Marco
leads the charge again, but Brendan is gaining and a close
second.

EXT. P.J. MCARDLE BRIDGE - MORNING

Tommy runs across the bridge as Paddy follows behind in the
Olds, right at his heels. The pace is relentless.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOUSE - DAY

Tess and the girls run up the stairs as ESPN plays on the TV in the den.

ON TV SCREEN: JON ANIK AND FIGHTER/ANALYST RASHAD EVANS DISCUSS KOBA.

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN)

Only five weeks left 'til Sparta and the hype continues for the War on the Shore. Fourth of July weekend in Atlantic City and you know what that means: the great Koba, bringing his act stateside. Let me ask you about the other guys. What are they thinking entering a winner take all tournament against a guy that seemingly can't be beat?

RASHOD EVANS (ON SCREEN)

They're thinking five million dollars, and five million dollars is a lot of money, but they've gotta remember one thing: they're going against Koba. Mission impossible. Game over. Go home.

Tess comes back down the stairs and looks at the screen, concern on her face.

ON TV SCREEN: THE MIGHTY KOBA TATTOOS AN OPPONENT WITH A VICIOUS STRIKE TO THE HEAD. THE FIGHTER FALLS FLAT ON HIS BACK AND IS FINISHED OFF IN NO TIME. BRUTAL. "FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE" APPEARS ON SCREEN.

INT. CAMPANA FIGHTING SYSTEM - MORNING

Frank lets himself into the gym at the crack of dawn. Finds Brendan already there, training alone with ferocity and listening to classical music.

EXT. 33RD STREET TIRE YARD - DAY

Tommy pounds on tires with a sledge hammer as Paddy exhorts him on. It's a brutal regimen.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Fenroy watches "MMA LIVE" on his computer.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: JON ANIK INTERVIEWS MAD DOG GRIMES.

JON ANIK (ON SCREEN)

The 'Pittsburgh Beatdown' has become one of the most watched videos on YouTube this year. Now joining us via satellite is the victim of the infamous incident, Mad Dog Grimes. Mad Dog, what is your response to all the hoopla surrounding the video and Tommy Riordan?

MAD DOG (ON SCREEN)

This guy's a nobody. It was just a sparring session. It is what it is, and he's gonna pay for it next month in Atlantic City.

EXT. PARKING LOT, YOUNGSTOWN OHIO - NIGHT

Brendan works over another FIGHTER in a smoker. He looks fantastic and submits the guy with slick Jiu Jitsu.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Up the hill they race, Brendan now leading the way and Marco struggling to catch up with him.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - DAY

Tommy and Mad Dog work out, each jumping rope at blinding speed. They eyeball each other, the hate increasing.

JON ANIK (V.O.)

With Sparta now only two short weeks away, J.J. Riley and the TapOut crew returned to the U.S. after a world tour that saw them visit ten fighters in ten different countries.

INT. CAMPANA FIGHTING SYSTEM - DAY

As Marco and Brendan train, J.J. Riley, SkySkrape, and Punkass walk into the gym and warmly greet Frank. All obviously old friends.

JON ANIK (V.O.)

They stopped in Philadelphia today
to check in on renowned trainer
Frank Campana and top contender
Marco Santos.

EXT. P.J. MCARDLE BRIDGE, PITTSBURGH - MORNING

Tommy keeps running, Paddy in the Olds right behind him.

FRANK (V.O.)

You've gotta relax and stay calm in
there. The cage is your home. You
set the pace.

INT. CAMPANA FIGHTING SYSTEM - DAY

Brendan and Marco grapple. They're evenly matched. Frank
looks on, impressed by Brendan.

FRANK (V.O.)

You set the rhythm. Feel the
Beethoven. Be smarter than him.
More patient. Wait for him to make
a mistake. And when he does, that's
your moment.

Brendan turns Marco and gets him in a knee bar. Marco has
nowhere to go and is forced to TAP. Frank jumps in the ring,
all smiles, and slaps Brendan on the chest.

FRANK

No he did not tap you! Physics
teacher! That's the best in the
world there, son.

EXT. 33RD STREET TIRE YARD - DAY

Tommy keeps pushing the giant tires until he finally reaches
the end of the yard. He's ready.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Frank, Brendan, and group of other FIGHTERS stand at the
bottom of the hill and tend to Marco Santos, who has just
badly INJURED HIS KNEE.

END OF TRAINING MONTAGE

EXT. ST. IGNATIUS HOSPITAL - NIGHT

An AMBULANCE pulls in front of the ER.

INT. UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - LATER

A sorely dejected Frank walks through an underground parking garage with Brendan.

BRENDAN

You gonna be OK? Wanna grab a bite?

FRANK

Nah. I'm gonna head home. I gotta call the boys and break the news. I'll call you tomorrow.

Frank heads off through the lot. Brendan reaches his car, stops, considers. Calls out to Frank while jogging toward him.

BRENDAN

Coach! Hey, I know this isn't a great time. And it's too bad about Marco. But what about me?

Brendan looks hopefully at Frank, who shakes his head as he begins to open the door of his '70 Ford Bronco.

FRANK

You talking about Sparta? Brendan, please. You got a better chance of starting a boy band. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

BRENDAN

It's a grand prix tournament. Which means anything can happen. You know that as well as I do.

Frank looks at him. Sees how serious Brendan is.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

They'll have to kill me to get me out of that cage.

FRANK

That's what I'm afraid of.

BRENDAN

Frank, I need this. You're real tight with those guys. You call them, they'll listen to you.

FRANK

You realize what you're asking me to do here, Brendan? We go down to AC and you get tapped out in five seconds, how does that benefit either one of us?

BRENDAN

That's not gonna happen.

FRANK

Not gonna happen. Wish I had a nickel for every time I heard that.

BRENDAN

(smiling)

It's not gonna happen.

Frank breaks. Smiles. How can he say no?

FRANK

I'll make a call.

Brendan grins and walks back toward his car.

BRENDAN

I love my coach!

EXT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - MORNING

Brendan pulls a garbage bin down to the curb as Tess walks out of the house talking on a cordless PHONE.

TESS (INTO PHONE)

Yeah, the girls are good. They're good. Yeah, you should. You've been spending so much time with Brendan these days it's like you're part of the family or something. Yeah, he's right here.

(handing phone to Brendan)

It's your boyfriend.

BRENDAN (INTO PHONE)

Hey Frank.

(beat)

That's unbelievable. I can't thank you enough. I don't know what to say. Alright, listen, I've gotta call you back. Alright, bye.

Brendan hangs up the phone. Looks at Tess.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)
I'm in. I'm going.

A look of serious concern crosses Tess's face. She puts her hands on her hips.

TESS
Really? So that's your decision?
You decided? 'Cause I really
enjoyed that conversation we just
had about making that decision
together.

Brendan doesn't say anything. Knows she's right. And that he's about to get laid into.

TESS (CONT'D)
You told me you were gonna fight
guys that watched too much UFC. I
saw that Koba dude on TV, and he's
the guy they're watching.

BRENDAN
It's a lot of money, Tess.

TESS
I don't give a shit about the
money, Brendan. I told you that.
We're gonna end up cashing in your
life insurance policy before we
pick up that prize money.

BRENDAN
You don't think I can do it.

TESS
I think you can get killed.

BRENDAN
I'm not gonna get killed.

TESS
Fine, you're not going to get
killed. But can you promise me
you're not going to get hurt?
You're not gonna end up in the
hospital? You're not gonna end up
paralyzed? We'll have no prize
money. No house. Payments for
hospital bills--

BRENDAN

Tess, I can promise you this: if I don't try, they're gonna take the house. How's that for a promise?

No response from Tess, who has tears in her eyes.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

So, I'm gonna go, OK? But I'd really love it if you'd be with me on this.

Tess looks at her husband. Wants to support him, but can't.

TESS

I'm not gonna watch you fight again. I'm not.

(beat)

I'm gonna get the girls breakfast.

Tess starts walking back toward the house. She marches up the lawn without turning back, leaving Brendan, alone, in front of his house. He looks at the toys strewn across the yard. Surveys the neighborhood. He's going to Sparta.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Fourth of July weekend doesn't officially start until tomorrow...

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - DAY

Sunlight pours down on the crowded beaches, hotels, and boardwalks of AC. Thousands of PEOPLE jam the outside of the majestic Boardwalk Hall. It seems as if everyone on earth is in town.

CALLEN (V.O.)

...but fight fans are already descending on Atlantic City for the Super Bowl of Mixed Martial Arts, Sparta.

BILLBOARDS heralding the arrival of the SPARTA tournament are everywhere. Ceremonial Fourth of July banners hang, cars jam Ocean Avenue, early FIREWORKS pop. The buzz is electric. The greatest show on earth has hit the shore.

EXT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

LIMOUSINES pull up in front of the Boardwalk Hall rotunda as "Mad Dog" Grimes, Orlando "Midnight" Le, Karl "The Dane" Kruller, and other fighters make their way down a long red carpet swarming with FANS.

In the middle of it all is J.J. Riley, greeting press and guests and running the show as the Tapout crew, Colt Boyd, and others mill about and talk shop. Announcers BRYAN CALLEN (40s) and SAM SHERIDAN (30s) corral J.J. for an interview.

CALLEN

J.J., you've made a fortune with your hedge funds, yet you turned your back on Wall Street and dedicated your life to making Sparta happen. Tell us, why is this tournament so important to you?

J.J. RILEY

Growing up, we all wanted to know who the toughest kid in the neighborhood was, right? I wanna know who the toughest man on the planet is. That's why I put this together, that's what all these people are here to see, and come Saturday night, that's what we're gonna find out.

SHERIDAN

Thank you, J.J. And here's something fans never thought they'd see: Koba is here! The legend arriving to fight on U.S. soil for the very first time...

The great and mighty KOBA emerges from a white stretch limo, trailed by his ENTOURAGE of tough-looking RUSSIANS. FLASHBULBS pop. REPORTERS swarm. It looks like a movie premiere out there and Koba's the star.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL LOBBY - SAME

As WORKERS set up for the press conference and camera crews stake out their territory, Tommy and Paddy hug the corner of the room and wait. Not in their element at all. Moments later, Brendan comes walking through the doors.

As he moves through the crowded room, Brendan and Tommy make eye contact.

They haven't seen each other in 14 years, and judging by the looks on their faces they certainly didn't expect to see each other today. Paddy is just as shocked.

Brendan begins to inch toward Tommy, but is intercepted by Frank, who was caught up in the media storm outside.

FRANK

Hey. Where'd you go? You can't
leave me like that. They wanna talk
to you, not me.

Brendan looks past Frank. Tommy has risen and headed toward the exit, trailed by Paddy, who calls after him.

EXT. RESORTS HOTEL AND CASINO - TWILIGHT

The sun descends over the boardwalks and hotels of Atlantic City, and sinks into the sea.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME

Paddy sits on a couch thumbing through a Sparta program and looks proudly at a PICTURE of Brendan. He listen to "Moby Dick" on his headphones as a TV plays in the foreground.

ON TV SCREEN: LOCAL NEW JERSEY NEWS ANCHOR MICHELLE MOONEY SPEAKS OVER IMAGES OF THE RED CARPET EVENT AND PRESS CONFERENCE.

MICHELLE MOONEY (ON SCREEN)

...the only fighter missing from
the event was dark horse entry
Tommy Riordan.

ON TV SCREEN: A PICTURE OF TOMMY APPEARS ON THE SCREEN NEXT TO A PICTURE OF LANCE CORPORAL MARK BRADFORD.

Paddy notices the picture of Tommy. Puts down the program and takes his headphones off.

MICHELLE MOONEY (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)

Recent revelations that Riordan
was not only a United States Marine
but a hero in the Iraq War, has
cast an even brighter spotlight on
a fighter who seems to have come
out of nowhere.

(MORE)

MICHELLE MOONEY (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
Lance Corporal Mark Bradford's web testimony to Riordan, who saved his life earlier this year in Iraq, is spreading like wildfire throughout the media.

Paddy stares at the screen intently.

PADDY
Tommy!

ON TV SCREEN: MARK BRADFORD PEERS INTO A HAND-HELD CAMERA IN IRAQ AND SPEAKS. HE FIGHT BACK TEARS.

BRADFORD (ON SCREEN)
...the bridge just crumbled. The Amtrack was upside down. Water was coming in from everywhere. The water pressure was too much. We couldn't get the back hatch open.

ON TV SCREEN: BRADFORD HAS TO COMPOSE HIMSELF.

BRADFORD (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
We were all drowning, man. It was a death trap.

Tommy walks into the room from the door of an adjoining suite and stares at the TV.

BRADFORD (ON SCREEN) (CONT'D)
I couldn't have had more than another minute. Suddenly the back ramp gets ripped off, and there he was. Before I could get out and thank him, he was gone. He just vanished like a ghost.

Paddy is dumbfounded and looks at Tommy, who glances at him and back at the TV before heading toward the door.

TOMMY
I'm takin' a walk.

ON TV SCREEN: THE CAMERA PUSHES IN ON BRADFORD'S FACE. HE SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO TOMMY.

BRADFORD (ON SCREEN)
You saved my life, brother. Anybody seeing this at Sparta, anybody out in Pittsburgh, reach out to Tommy Riordan. Tell him Mark said thank you.

ON SCREEN: BACK TO THE NEWS STUDIO, AND THE PHOTO OF TOMMY.

MICHELLE MOONEY (ON SCREEN)

Footage taken from a helmet camera
on the ground captured the heroic
incident...

ON SCREEN: THE GRAINY FOOTAGE SEEN EARLIER IN THE MARINE
BARRACKS OF TOMMY AND THE SUBMERGED TANK.

Then the phone RINGS. Paddy grabs it.

PADDY (INTO PHONE)

Hello?
(beat)
Brendan.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Brendan walks on the beach as the waves of the Atlantic Ocean
lap at the shoreline. Boats bob on the water. Stray bottle
rockets trace through the night sky.

In the distance, the NEON LIGHTS of an amusement park flash
and zip. Behind Brendan, the big casinos loom, advertisements
for Sparta filling their BILLBOARDS.

Brendan continues walking, then spots Tommy coming toward
him. The brothers make eye contact. Stop. Then approach each
other warily.

BRENDAN

Been looking all over for you.
How's it going?

TOMMY

It's going.

BRENDAN

I was thinking maybe we could grab
a coffee.

TOMMY

I don't drink coffee. Whattya want?

BRENDAN

You don't want to go sit down
somewhere?

TOMMY

I'm good right here.

Brendan looks at Tommy. Sees how rigid he is. A long silence. Finally Brendan cuts right to it.

BRENDAN

Shit, Tommy. How was I supposed to know I was never gonna see you guys again?

TOMMY

You were briefed. You had the information. You chose the old man and the girl.

BRENDAN

She wasn't some *girl*. I married her. She's my wife.

Brendan reaches into his pocket and removes a recent Christmas PHOTO of Tess, Emily, and Rosie from his wallet.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(handing Tommy the picture)

That's Tess. And that's Emily and Rosie. They're your nieces, Tommy.

Tommy glances at the photo impassively and hands it back.

TOMMY

Don't know 'em.

BRENDAN

I know you don't know them. Of course you don't know them.

TOMMY

Why am I looking at pictures of people I don't know?

BRENDAN

Because that's my family.

TOMMY

And who are you exactly?

BRENDAN

I'm your brother, man.

TOMMY

You were in the Corps?

BRENDAN

What?

TOMMY

I said I didn't know you were in the Corps.

BRENDAN

I wasn't in the Corps.

TOMMY

Then you ain't no brother to me. My brother was in the Corps.

With that, Tommy walks briskly away from Brendan and up the beach. His brother runs after him.

BRENDAN

Jesus, Tommy. I was a 16 year old kid. What the hell did I know?

TOMMY

I don't know what you know. Why don't you go ask your girlfriend about it?

BRENDAN

She's my *wife*, Tommy. So that's it? I stay with Tess and I never get to see you guys again? Not a single phone call? Nothing?

No response from Tommy. He's a wall.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

God, man, I don't understand this. You won't forgive me, but you'll forgive Pop?

TOMMY

Shit. He's just some old vet I train with. He means nothing to me. From what I hear he means nothing to you, either, so you got balls talking about forgiveness.

BRENDAN

That's got nothing to do with forgiveness. I've got a family to protect. Everything I do is for them.

Tommy smirks. Walks away again.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

But I forgave Pop. Just like I forgave you and Mom.

TOMMY
(turning around)
You forgave us?

BRENDAN
Yeah.

TOMMY
I'm not surprised you made the
tournament, Brendan. You got some
stones.

BRENDAN
I fell in love, Tommy. What the
hell was I supposed to do?

TOMMY
You were supposed to stick to the
plan. You were supposed to come
with us. Mom needed you. I needed
you. You were my big brother and
you bailed on me.

The words hit Brendan hard.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
Hey, I'm glad you stayed and
everything worked out for you,
Brendan. See, you leave, you get
the opposite. You leave, you get to
bury people.

BRENDAN
You're not the only one who
suffered, Tommy. I didn't even know
she was sick. I never even got the
chance to say goodbye to my own
mother. You had no right to keep
that from me! That was not your
decision to make!

TOMMY
You know what? You walk around with
your pictures in your wallet and
you're all, I forgive you, I
forgive Pop. I forgive everyone.
But you know what? You're full of
shit.

Tommy and Brendan are right in each other's faces. Standing
on the knife's edge of violence. They hold the stare down for
a few long seconds, like two fighters about to go to war.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Are we done, Brendan? Are we finished?

Tommy and Brendan look at each other with burning intensity. Too much baggage and both too much and nothing left to say. Finally, Tommy turns and walks on down the beach.

EXT. CENTRAL HIGH, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Sunny day. And a nearly abandoned school parking lot.

INT. OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Nash, Tito, and KC wait outside the Principal's office. It's quiet and aside from one SECRETARY, there's no one around. After a moment, Stephon comes walking in, and they all stand up and head into the Principal's office.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The kids walk in. Zito looks up and shakes his head.

JOE ZITO

You realize you're supposed to seek my wise counsel when school's actually in session, right?

All four of them laugh nervously. Working their way up to something.

STEPHON

We want to use the auditorium this weekend to watch Mr. C in Sparta.

TITO

What do you say?

JOE ZITO

Let me get this straight. You want to use the auditorium to watch a suspended teacher engage in the activity he was suspended for? Am I hearing this correctly?

(beat)

I gotta talk to your parents. You guys might need to be in summer school after all.

NASH

But everyone wants to see it.

KC

The gym's the only place that's big enough.

JOE ZITO

It's never gonna happen.

STEPHON

What if we get a petition?

TITO

Yeah. We'll get the whole school to sign it.

NASH

The power of democracy!

JOE ZITO

Look, I appreciate that you guys love your teacher. I really do. But there is nothing I can do for you.

Zito turns and heads back to his desk. The kids, dejected, leave the office and walk off down the hallway.

EXT. BOARDWALK HALL - NIGHT

The Goodyear BLIMP, "SPARTA IS HERE" blinking on it, floats over Atlantic City. FIREWORKS explode majestically above Boardwalk Hall and fall into the sea, where hundreds of boats bob, televisions tuned to Sparta visible from many of them.

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE cram the beach and boardwalk, crane their necks toward the sky, and watch the stunning pyrotechnics. In the streets, limos line up on Ocean Avenue. Even from a distance, the excitement and energy are palpable.

CALLEN (V.O.)

The roof is about to blow clean off Boardwalk Hall Arena! It might be Fourth of July weekend, but this is Christmas Eve for fight fans! This is Atlantic City! This is the War on the Shore! And this is what everyone has been waiting for!

Enormous electronic BILLBOARDS flash outside of the giant seaside casinos. On one, Koba hangs off the side of a ferris wheel and swats at smaller fighters buzzing around him in a replication of the iconic "King Kong" movie scene.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Sixteen of the baddest men on the planet duking it out over a 24-hour period for the largest purse in Mixed Martial Arts history. In the town everyone knows from the game of Monopoly, we've got ourselves a winner-take-all affair. Buckle your seatbelts, roll the dice, and take riiiiide on the Reading. Sparta. Is. Here!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Play by play announcer Sam Sheridan and color analyst Bryan Callen stand cageside. The arena is packed to capacity and buzzing with anticipation.

CALLEN

Welcome, I'm Bryan Callen along with best-selling fight author Sam Sheridan. Sam, when J.J. Riley conceived Sparta he wanted to create, quite simply, the biggest Mixed Martial Arts spectacle in history.

SHERIDAN

Five million dollars, Bryan. Five million dollars. J.J. Riley put his money where his mouth is and put up the biggest purse this sport has ever seen.

CALLEN

It's unprecedented, Sam. As is the hoopla surrounding Tommy Riordan, the war hero who has become an overnight sensation...

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Tommy lays on the ground near the showers, collecting his thoughts. As Paddy watches a TV monitor showing Callen and Sheridan, an OFFICIAL pokes his head into the locker room.

OFFICIAL

Five minutes, Paddy.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - LATER

Fenroy and a group of FIGHTERS gather around a TV in the gym. A very fired up group.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

It looks as though the moment of truth has arrived, because here comes Tommy Riordan.

ON TV SCREEN: A FURIOUS TOMMY MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH THE CRUSH OF INSANE SPECTATORS, PADDY DUCKING ALONG AT HIS SIDE. LIGHTS RICOCHET CHAOTICALLY AROUND THE ARENA.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

As Tommy makes his way toward the cage and the strobe lights sweep over nearly 15,000 SCREAMING FANS, not one of them sitting.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Tommy Riordan's captured the media's attention, but the question still remains: who is this guy? And more importantly, can he compete in this talent pool? Can he win?

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

I wish I knew, Bryan. I wish I knew who he was, and I've gotta say the fact that I don't know is strange. In an internet age where there are no secrets, this guy is a complete mystery. I can't find out anything about him. Tommy Riordan is officially Google proof.

Tommy continues to storm toward the cage with a furious and focused look on his face. He seems to want nothing to do with Paddy. Training is over. It's time to fight.

CALLEN (V.O.)

You gotta love this guy, Sam. No walk out music, no sponsors, no interviews. He skipped out on the press conference. Wouldn't have his picture take for the program. He's breaking every rule!

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

The only reason that Tommy is even in this tournament is because of a video showing him beating up Mad Dog Grimes in the gym.

CALLEN (V.O.)

But the reason a lot of his fans are in the stands is because of another video, which is even more stunning than the Mad Dog Grimes video. Let me describe it for you folks for the few who haven't seen it, and I don't know anyone who hasn't, but Tommy Riordan ripped the door off a tank in the heat of battle, saving lives in the process, and then walked away without claiming a medal. He ripped the door off a tank!

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Tommy Riordan is a genuine war hero, I'm not taking anything away from the guy. He's a very, very tough guy, Bryan, but the tank don't hit back. We've seen YouTube sensations fail on the big stage before.

Tommy stands outside the cage and has Vaseline applied to his face. He looks like he's ready to murder someone.

CALLEN

Sam. He ripped the door off a tank!

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank holds mitts for Brendan as a TV plays.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Tommy Riordan definitely has his hands full in his first opponent, Francisco Barbosa. Barbosa is nothing to scoff at.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Yeah, he's the real deal. Very tough guy. Very high caliber fighter. Tommy Riordan came out of nowhere, and I imagine he's going to disappear just as quickly.

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Great story, but I think your boy
is about to be exposed as a YouTube
sensation.

ON TV SCREEN: REFEREE JOSH ROSENTHAL (30s) GIVES INSTRUCTIONS
TO TOMMY AND HIS OPPONENT, FRANCISCO BARBOSA (20s). THE
MUSCULAR BRAZILIAN DOESN'T HAVE A TRACE OF FEAR ON HIS FACE.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Tommy and Barbosa face to face as JOSH ROSENTHAL instructs.

JOSH ROSENTHAL
Gentlemen, you've been given your
instructions. I expect a clean
fight. Obey my commands at all
times. Defend yourselves at all
times. Touch gloves, go back, let's
do this.

In the crowd, two sections of MARINES in full dress uniforms
wave flags and raise about as much hell as humanly possible
for Tommy, who returns to his corner. Paddy attempts to give
him some advice, but Tommy is not listening.

CALLEN (V.O.)
We're about to get the big answer
to the big question: is Tommy
Riordan for real? And here we go!

The bell rings. DING! And Tommy comes out fast and hard.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Barbosa's gonna be looking for a
take down.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Definitely gonna be looking for a
take down.

There will not be a take down. Tommy ducks a blow, then
levels Barbosa with a massive and brutal LEFT HOOK. The
Brazilian's head snaps sideways, his MOUTHPIECE goes flying,
and he does a face plant on to the canvas. It's over.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Barbosa is down! Barbosa has been
knocked out! Tommy Riordan is most
definitely for real!

As the crowd erupts and Josh Rosenthal waves to Barbosa's
corner to get a medic in there, Tommy marches out of the cage
without waiting for an official announcement.

CALLEN (V.O.)

And now he's walking out of the cage! He's leaving the cage! There goes another rule out the window!

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

Fenroy and the boys fired up. They can't believe the ferocious knockout they've just witnessed.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Francisco Barbosa is out cold, and he is out of this tournament, Bryan.

INT. BRENDAN'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

The official pokes his head into the locker room where Frank and a nervous Brendan sit alone.

OFFICIAL

Show time.

On the TV monitor, Tommy's annihilating knockout of Francisco Barbosa plays. Then, in the distance, the strains of CLASSICAL MUSIC can be heard. Brendan looks at Frank, who smiles and puts his hands on Brendan's shoulders.

FRANK

You can do this.

He grabs the nervous Brendan's head between his hands.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I want to hear you say it.

BRENDAN

I can do this.

FRANK

Then let's go do this.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

BUZZING in the crowd. Another fight close at hand.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

J.J. Riley had less than 48 hours to fill Marco Santos' spot, and he basically had to rely on the word of Frank Campana.

CALLEN (V.O.)

And he chose Brendan Conlon, which quite frankly is something I just don't understand.

Brendan and Frank walk down the tunnel toward the arena, where Paddy is waiting, his All Access pass around his neck. Brendan notices the old man as he approaches.

PADDY

Go get 'em, son.

Brendan barely acknowledges Paddy and keeps walking. Frank looks at Brendan with a "Who the hell is that?" expression. As they approach the dark lights of the arena, Beethoven continues to BOOM out over the loud speakers.

CALLEN (V.O.)

I can understand coming out to no music, by why in the world would you choose classical music for your entrance?

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

This is Beethoven, Bryan. This is Ode to Joy.

CALLEN (V.O.)

My apologies, Mr. Renaissance man.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

You want to talk about renaissance men, you gotta talk about Frank Campana. Very unorthodox trainer, and one of the best in the game. He's well known for using classical music to train his fighters to remain calm, to remain patient, and to remain composed under pressure.

Brendan and Frank make their way through the crowd and toward cageside, where Bryan Callen reaches beneath his seat.

CALLEN

Classical music is about as fitting to this setting as Brendan Conlon is to this tournament. In fact, let me show you something.

Callen holds up a plastic bag with water and a GOLDFISH inside.

CALLEN (CONT'D)

This is Brendan Conlon. He's a feeder fish, and he's about to get dropped into a shark tank.

Brendan gets greased up, then climbs into the cage.

SHERIDAN

C'mon, give the guy a break. At least we've seen him fight before. He was in the UFC. We remember him.

CALLEN

I remember him, too. I remember him being very unmemorable.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

A nervous Tess sits at the table, failing to concentrate on folding laundry. The TV in front of her is off, but she glances at it anyway. In front of her sits a CELL PHONE. She glances at it repeatedly.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Brendan stands in the corner as his opponent, ORLANDO "MIDNIGHT" LE climbs in, shoulders bulging and abs shredded.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Midnight Le getting ready to climb into the cage and go to work.

CALLEN (V.O.)

When the brackets were announced, Midnight thought he'd be going up against Marco Santos. He's gotta be thrilled to be seeing Brendan Conlon standing across from him.

Brendan stands in the corner and looks at the massive Midnight Le. Frank smiles at him.

FRANK

You asked for it.

Brendan grins and looks out at the rabid crowd.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Brendan retired from fighting some years ago, he's actually a high school Physics teacher now, and Midnight had some fun with that at the press conference.

CALLEN (V.O.)

He said he was gonna give the teacher a serious lesson, and that getting killed was no way to spend a summer vacation.

Josh Rosenthal waves the two fighters into the center of the cage for instructions.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Alright, gentleman, you've been given your instructions, I expect a clean fight. Obey my commands at all times. Defend yourselves at all times. Touch gloves, go back, let's do this.

The fighters head to their corners and wait for the bell.

FRANK

Have some fun, baby.

At the sound of the bell, "Midnight" Le comes out hard and strong. He repeatedly KICKS Brendan in the leg and batters him with STRIKES. His power is overwhelming Brendan.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Paddy stares at the TV monitor.

ON TV SCREEN: MIDNIGHT PICKS UP BRENDAN AND BODY SLAMS HIM.

Tommy lays on the rubdown table, his eyes closed. No interest in Brendan's fight.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Joe Zito sits on a couch in his suburban home and watches Brendan on TV. He's a nervous wreck.

ZITO

Move! You gotta move!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - LATER

Frank exhorts Brendan from cageside, telling him to relax, but it's no use. It's an unholy beating going in the cage.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Zito drinks a glass of Scotch.

ON TV SCREEN: MIDNIGHT POUNDING ON BRENDAN.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Midnight is all over Brendan.

CALLEN (V.O.)
This can't last much longer. This
won't last much longer. The teacher
just has no answers.

Zito leans forward. He looks as if he's going to have a heart attack.

ZITO
C'mon, Brendan, get outta there!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Midnight Le takes Brendan to the ground. Brendan tries to escape, but turns his back, allowing Midnight to sink in a rear naked CHOKE. He puts the strangle hold on Brendan and squeezes his neck with his enormous biceps.

FRANK
Get out of there! Get out of there!

Brendan tries to pry Midnight's hands off him. No use.

CALLEN (V.O.)
And now he's got the hooks in. 20
seconds left.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
The end is near. Can he make it to
the end of the round is the
question.

Midnight squeezes for all it's worth as Frank screams at Brendan, imploring him not to tap.

CALLEN (V.O.)

10 seconds left, and Brendan's face is turning purple. Conlon's whole world is about to go from day to night.

Brendan is on the verge of going unconscious, but he refuses to tap out. Then the HORN blows ending the round. The crowd can't believe Brendan hung in there, and neither can Midnight Le, who slams the canvas in frustration.

As Midnight walks back toward his angry TRAINER, who expected him to finish Brendan early, the teacher heads toward a smiling Frank.

FRANK

Beautiful! Beautiful! He doesn't know what hit him!

Brendan grins at Frank's positive spin on things, then looks across the cage at Midnight Le, who glares at Brendan.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

The frazzled Zito continues to root for Brendan.

ON TV SCREEN: MORE OF THE SAME. MIDNIGHT ALL OVER BRENDAN.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

An excited Paddy watches Brendan on the monitor.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Midnight continues pounding on Brendan, but Brendan starts giving back, working a few leg kicks of his own. He seems to be gaining confidence. From cageside, Frank HOLLERS words of encouragement as the battle continues.

Back and forth they go. Midnight rocks Brendan with a right hand. Brendan recovers and fires back. Then Midnight shoots in for a take down, but Brendan dodges him, reverses position, and suddenly takes a shocked Midnight down to the ground. The crowd is on its collective feet.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

He's got a Kimura locked in.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Are you kidding me?

Brendan locks up Midnight's shoulder. Applies pressure. The bigger fighter struggles to get free, but he seems to be trapped. From cageside, Frank screams, instructing Brendan on how to finish the move.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Midnight is in big trouble!

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
I don't think he's got anywhere to go!

CALLEN (V.O.)
This isn't happening! This can't happen!

Midnight TAPS and the crowd EXPLODES. Shock and mayhem throughout the arena.

SHERIDAN
It just did, Bryan.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Brendan Conlon tapped Midnight! I can't believe it!

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Principal Zito leaps off his couch, SCREAMING in celebration. ZITO'S WIFE (40s), drying dishes, pokes her head in the room as the Principal pumps his fist over and over.

ZITO
He tapped him out! He tapped him out! He did it! He did it! He did it!

ON TV SCREEN: BRENDAN AND FRANK EMBRACING. CHAOS IN THE RING AND MIDNIGHT ON THE GROUND IN UTTER DISBELIEF.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
This is what makes Mixed Martial Arts so great. There's so many ways to lose. One tiny miscalculation at any time and that's it.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Frank Campana embracing his man, Brendan Conlon. I don't think either one of them can believe what just happened.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Frank and Brendan embrace. The arena is BUZZING. Midnight gets off the canvas, and Brendan approaches him and bows. The dejected Midnight bows in return.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Great show of sportsmanship from
the teacher.

CALLEN (V.O.)
That's a hallmark of Frank
Campana's philosophy right there.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Midnight Le is *shocked*. He thought
he had a free pass into the second
round, but instead he's going home.
He dominated the fight the entire
way, but fell prey to a very
technical finish.

CALLEN
Very technical finish, but come on,
that's a fluke.

A jubilant Brendan raises his arms in victory. The crowd responds to the gutsy underdog.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
You call it a fluke. I call it a
guy maintaining composure and
waiting for his opportunity.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Conlon beats Midnight!

As the celebration continues, Callen looks at Sheridan and shakes his head. Was he ever wrong.

SHERIDAN
I hope you got a receipt for your
goldfish.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tess sits on the couch, TV still off. Her phone BEEPS. She grabs it quickly. A text reads: "I WON!!!!!!!!!!!"

TESS
Yes!

She starts dancing around the room, kissing her phone.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Tommy and Paddy sit and watch the monitor.

ON TV SCREEN: THE CROWD IN A FRENZY AS KOBA CLIMBS INTO THE CAGE.

CALLEN (V.O.)

We're down to eight fighters, soon to be seven as Koba prepares to go to work for the second time tonight.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

At the sound of the BELL, Koba sprints across the ring and delivers a flying kick to the chest of his already retreating OPPONENT. He picks him up with incredible strength, then SLAMS him into the ground and pounds his brains in. The whole thing is over in under 10 seconds.

CALLEN (V.O.)

That was quick.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Wow. Once again, Koba does not break a sweat.

CALLEN (V.O.)

I'm afraid he might have broken something else, Sam.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

It's certainly possible, Bryan. Koba moving on to tomorrow night.

INT. BRENDAN'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Brendan and Frank stare at a monitor. They look worried.

ON TV SCREEN: KOBA'S OPPONENT GETTING ATTENDED TO AFTER THE BEATING BY THE MIGHTY RUSSIAN.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Tommy and Paddy sit on stools opposite each other, Paddy taping him up. Tommy keeps a lazy eye on a monitor, where Mad Dog Grimes is fighting.

ON TV SCREEN: MAD DOG GRIMES, HIS MOHAWK DYED PLATINUM, KNOCKS OUT HIS OPPONENT IN BRUTAL FASHION.

CALLEN (V.O.)
 Mad Dog fighting like a man
 possessed. Like a man with
 something to prove.

ON TV SCREEN: MAD DOG MAKES A THROAT SLIT GESTURE DIRECTLY
 INTO THE CAMERA.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
 Mad Dog said he had a message for
 Tommy Riordan and there it is right
 there.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA TUNNEL - LATER

Brendan and Frank stand in the tunnel as the house lights go
 down in the arena.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
 Here comes the underdog, Brendan
 Conlon.

CALLEN (V.O.)
 The teacher miraculously passed his
 first test, but now he's gotta face
 The Dane.

Paddy stands amidst the crowd in the tunnel and gives Brendan
 a thumbs-up.

PADDY
 You can do it, Brendan.

Brendan glares at him and marches toward the cage.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Tess, now watching the fights on TV, stands in front of the
 screen and bites her nails. She looks like she's about to
 throw up.

ON TV SCREEN: BRENDAN TAKES A BEATING FROM KARL "THE DANE"
 KRULLER (30s), WHO POUNDS ON HIM WITHOUT MERCY.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
 Halfway through round three now and
 the beating continues.

CALLEN (V.O.)
 I honestly don't know how Brendan
 Conlon is still standing, Sam.
 (MORE)

CALLEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He has been absolutely battered in
both his fights tonight.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

KARL "THE DANE" KRULLER presses Brendan against the fence and
knees him repeatedly in the midsection.

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Tess can barely watch the beating.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Frank shouts instructions as Brendan and The Dane tangle
against the fence.

FRANK
Take him down!

Brendan grabs Kruller and FLIPS him to the canvas. Then he
spins for an ARM BAR, a move similar to one seen earlier in
the smoker fights.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Zito, now joined by his wife. Both on the edge of the couch
and sucked into the action.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Brendan twists Kruller's arm. He's got him in a terrible
position, much like Midnight. The Dane SQUIRMS. Looks for an
escape. It's not there. With Brendan applying tremendous
pressure to his arm, he TAPS.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA TUNNEL - SAME

Paddy watches from the tunnel as the crowd goes insane.

PADDY
That's it, Brendan!

INT. BRENDAN AND TESS'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Tess does a wild JIG in front of the TV.

ON TV SCREEN: BRENDAN CELEBRATING IN THE CAGE WITH FRANK.

INT. PRINCIPAL ZITO'S LIVING ROOM - SAME

Zito and his wife, arm in arm in celebration.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Do it one time, it's a fluke, do it
twice, that's something else!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Frank and a victorious Brendan embrace.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Pull the bandwagon over, I think
I'm hopping on! I think I'm a
believer!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA TUNNEL - LATER

Paddy's waiting in the tunnel for Brendan, who comes through
full of adrenaline.

PADDY
Way to go, Brendan!

BRENDAN
I'd doing this!

PADDY
OK, son.

BRENDAN
I'm doing it!

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - LATER

Fenroy and the gang around the big screen again.

ON TV SCREEN: TOMMY WADING FURIOUSLY THROUGH THE CROWD, WHERE
A "TOMMY" CHANT HAS BEGUN.

CALLEN (V.O.)
The crowd catching fire for war
hero Tommy Riordan.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

He doesn't seem to want anything to do with all this adulation, Bryan. He's just here to fight.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy climbs into the cage. A Mexican fighter, DIEGO SANTANA (20s), is waiting for him. Josh Rosenthal points at both men.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Gentlemen, you ready? You ready?
Let's go to war!

The bell RINGS and Tommy goes right after Santana and starts administering a beating. He bullies him into the cage and starts raining BLOWS all over him.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Here he comes again like a buzzsaw.
Tommy is all over Diego Santana!

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

The crowd raising cain for Tommy.

ON SCREEN: HURRICANE TOMMY POUNDS AWAY, THEN SLAMS SANTANA TO THE GROUND AND BEATS HIM TO A PULP.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Josh Rosenthal pulls Tommy off the brutalized Diego Santana before he kills him. Once again, Tommy marches straight out of the cage.

CALLEN (V.O.)

There he goes again! Storming right out of the cage!

Tommy marches past Paddy again, then off through the crowd.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Tommy Riordan marching through the crowd, and straight into the final four!

The arena is on its collective feet CHANTING "Tommy! Tommy! Tommy!" As Paddy looks on and Tommy disappears into the darkness of the tunnel, the sound of cheering fades.

EXT. BOARDWALK - DAWN

Dawn breaks over Atlantic City.

INT. CASINO FLOOR - SAME

A CLEANING WOMAN vacuums as an elevator door DINGS and opens. Out comes Paddy. The casino is nearly empty, the only sounds coming from the tinny RINGING of a handful of slot machines.

From a distance, Paddy spots Tommy sitting at the far end of a bank of Triple 7 American Glory slot machines, mechanically feeding the slot from a tray full of silver and pulling the lever with a thousand-yard stare. Paddy approaches Tommy, who doesn't acknowledge him.

PADDY
Can't sleep, huh?

Tommy feeds the machine and pulls. Says nothing. Paddy sits down in front of a slot machine next to Tommy.

PADDY (CONT'D)
I know that other thing's bothering the hell out of you, but I'm proud of you. What you did for that kid in the tank? That was really something.

TOMMY
How about deserting my unit? Is that really something, too? Yeah. I was on my way outta country when I came across those guys. What was I supposed to do, let 'em drown?

PADDY
No.
(beat)
What'd you do?

TOMMY
What'd I do? I took off.

Paddy starts putting things together.

PADDY
That's why you go by Riordan.
That's why the press can't find your service records.

Tommy doesn't respond.

PADDY (CONT'D)

What the hell happened over there,
Tommy?

TOMMY

That is none of your business.

PADDY

Come on, kiddo. I've been there.
I've done it. I've seen it. You can
trust me. I'll understand.

TOMMY

Spare me the compassionate father
routine, Pop. The suit don't fit.

PADDY

I'm really trying here, Tommy.

TOMMY

You're trying? Now? Where were you
when it mattered? I needed this guy
back when I was a kid. I don't need
you now. It's too late now.
Everything's already happened. You
and Brendan don't seem to
understand that. Let me explain
something to you: the only thing I
have in common with Brendan Conlon
is that we have absolutely no use
for you.

Paddy's shaken. He can't fathom the anger in Tommy, yet he
knows he's responsible. It's written all over him. Tears well
up in his eyes. They seem to make Tommy madder.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Look at you. Yeah, I was right. I
think I liked you better when you
were a drunk. At least you had some
balls then. Not like now. Tip
toeing around like some beggar with
your cup out. Take it somewhere
else, old man.

Tommy reaches down and picks up a plastic CUP made for
holding coins and dips it into his tray, filling it with
QUARTERS.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

In fact, you know what? Here's a
cup. Why don't you take this and go
buy some more of your shitty tapes?

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Go back to the room and listen to some more fish stories no one gives a shit about. Go on, get outta here.

(beat)

Get the fuck outta here!

Tommy whips the bucket toward his father, splashing COINS into his face. A stunned Paddy, tears streaming down his face, walks off. A handful of late-night GAMBLERS look at Tommy, who stares angrily ahead and bounces a quarter off his slot machine as his destroyed father limps away.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - DAY

Fourth of July weekend in full swing down the Shore.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SAME

Paddy staggers about in pajama bottoms and a stained V-neck, clutching his Walkman and a bottle of WHISKEY. "Moby Dick" plays from ear phones that are half on his head and half off. LIQUOR BOTTLES are strewn everywhere. He has obviously fallen off the wagon. Hard.

PADDY

God pity 'em! All shall perish except me! You bastards! Stop the ship, you bastards!

He staggers around the room, giving a fragmented soliloquy to no audience.

PADDY (CONT'D)

Ishmael! God pity 'em! Stop the ship! Please stop the ship! Somebody help 'em!

Suddenly the adjoining door swings open. Tommy, hair disheveled, looks in and sees Paddy's state. The old man thrusts his hand up in the air and screams at Tommy.

PADDY (CONT'D)

Ahab! You Godless sonofabitch!

Paddy staggers over and gets in Tommy's face, his own face blotched and contorted. The old Paddy Conlon revealed. The monster from the past.

PADDY (CONT'D)

You stop the ship, you Godless sonofabitch!

There's no anger in Tommy. He simply walks toward the old man and tries to pry the bottle out of his hand. As he struggles to take it, the Walkman falls to the ground. Faint dialogue is heard coming from the earphones.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 Captain. Oh captain. Stop the ship.
 For the love of God. We're lost.

The old man is running out of steam. He begins WEEPING.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 Please stop the ship.

Paddy wobbles, tears streaming down his face. Tommy looks at him. The first time we've seen anything resembling compassion on that relentless face of his. He HUGS his father and prries the whiskey bottle from his hand

PADDY (CONT'D)
 We're lost. We're all lost, Tommy.
 We'll never make it back.

Tommy pulls his father back on to the bed. Puts his arms around his chest and tries to quiet the old man. It's a tender moment, and it seems as if Tommy is only able to relate to the brutal, former version of the father he knew.

PADDY (CONT'D)
 (mumbling)
 I always loved you. You know that,
 don't you Tommy? I always loved
 you. You and your brother. My two
 boys.

Tommy continues to hold his father as sunlight streams into the room. The end of a very long night.

EXT. BOARDWALK HALL - NIGHT

A bigger, even more bombastic FIREWORKS display than before explodes over Atlantic City. If it's possible, the CROWDS on the beach and boardwalk have swelled. It seems as if the entire east coast has descended on AC.

Outside Boardwalk Hall, the giant electronic BILLBOARD has a new motif. Koba still swings mightily from the side of a ferris wheel, but now Tommy, in a camouflage superhero outfit, flies right toward him. On a collision course.

Mad Dog Grimes holds on to Tommy's cape, trying to slow him down, and below the three of them, in miniature, is Brendan holding a sling shot.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

The crowd at a fever pitch. Two sections full of MARINES in dress uniforms cheer insanely. So does an entire section of GIRLS wearing camouflage tank tops and holding up signs reading "TOMMY GIRLS." Everyone in the arena chants "Tommy! Tommy! Tommy!" A cult hero has been born.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Tommy Riordan, coming down the
tunnel without his trainer.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

Colt's is packed. FIGHTERS. PEOPLE off the street. VETS in fatigues. A bigger crowd than before.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Once again, no walk out music.

CALLEN (V.O.)
I wouldn't say no walk out music,
Sam. Listen to this.

ON TV SCREEN: TOMMY MARCHING TOWARD THE CAGE AND BEING SERENADED BY THE MARINES.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

The Marines are on their feet, singing "HALLS OF MONTEZUMA" at the top of their lungs.

MARINES
(singing)
*From the halls of Montezuma to the
shores of Tripoli, we will fight
our country's battles in the air,
on land, and sea...*

At cageside, Sheridan leans over to Callen, raising his voice to be heard above the Marines.

SHERIDAN
It sounds like VJ Day in Times
Square, Bryan. I've never seen
anything like it!

Tommy climbs up the stairs and into the cage. He turns and nods at the Marines.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Tommy acknowledging his comrades
for the first time, and climbing
into the cage.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - LATER

The crowd at the gym both CHEERS and JEERS at the TV.

ON TV SCREEN: MAD DOG GRIMES, SUPREMELY CONFIDENT, CLIMBS
INTO THE CAGE AND GETS IN TOMMY'S FACE. HE HAS DYED HIS
MOHAWK CAMOUFLAGE COLORS TO MOCK TOMMY.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Mad Dog Grimes has been looking for
revenge ever since the day Tommy
Riordan walked into his gym in
Pittsburgh and turned his life
upside down.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
It's been a very long, very
miserable few months for Mad Dog to
say the least.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Mad Dog and Tommy in a STARE DOWN as Josh Rosenthal attempts
to give them instructions. Unless Mad Dog's mother is in the
building, every single person in the Boardwalk Hall is
rooting for Tommy.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Mad Dog mocking Tommy with a
camouflage motif for his mohawk
tonight and the Marines are really
letting Mad Dog have it.

The Marines hoot and holler at Mad Dog as Josh Rosenthal goes
over his instructions with the two fighters.

JOSH ROSENTHAL
Alright gentlemen, you've been
given your instructions. I expect a
clean fight. Obey my commands at
all times. Defend yourselves at all
times. Touch gloves, go back, let's
do this.

In the center of the cage, Mad Dog is practically spitting in
Tommy's face. Tommy's eyelids droop. He could not be less
intimidated.

MAD DOG

It's not gonna happen again.

Callen and Sheridan look on as the two fighters retreat to their corners. The anticipation in the arena is incredible.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Mad Dog predicted an early knockout. Said he was gonna knock Tommy out with one punch.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Let's see what Tommy has to say about that.

Josh Rosenthal looks at Tommy and Mad Dog.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Gentlemen, you ready? You ready?
Let's go to war!

CALLEN (V.O.)

And they are off!

Tommy goes after Mad Dog like it's the last night on earth. What Tommy did to him at Colt's Gym was an exercise in restraint compared to what's happening in that cage.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Tommy tackles him and he's on top!
He's raining blows!

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Someone has to stop this.

Mad Dog is on his back and being pounded on. Tommy's rage is shocking, even by his own brutal standards. From cageside, Colt Boyd SCREAMS at Josh Rosenthal.

COLT BOYD

Stop it! Stop the fight!

It's such a savage beating, so malicious, that Rosenthal has to climb on Tommy's back to get him off of Mad Dog. If his mother is indeed in the crowd, she couldn't recognize him now. Beaten to an absolute pulp.

CALLEN (V.O.)

That's the fastest knockout I think I've ever seen.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Mad Dog Grimes has been poleaxed.
He is not moving.

Tommy marches out of the cage and past Colt Boyd, Punkass, and SkySkrape, who can't believe what they just witnessed. Neither can anyone else at Boardwalk Hall. In the cage, a MEDIC tends to Mad Dog.

CALLEN (V.O.)

I'll tell you what: you do that to someone on the street and they'd lock you up and throw away the key! Break out the yellow tape, Sam. Tommy's walking away from the cage like he's leaving a crime scene.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN, PHILADELPHIA - LATER

"ODE TO JOY" is heard coming from distant speakers as ROWS OF CARS line up at the entrance and pull into the lot.

Pull back to reveal an enormous, old drive-in movie theater packed with a RAUCOUS CROWD. On the gigantic MOVIE SCREEN, Brendan makes his way through the arena and into the cage. As he does, CHEERS erupt in the parking lot. Stephon, Nash, KC, Tito, and some of the other students from Brendan's class root him on. They came up with a pretty good Plan B.

As the kids get fired up for the fight, they're joined by a familiar face that emerges from the crowd. Joe Zito. Tito shakes his hand. Smacks Stephon. Look who's here.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Brendan climbs into the cage to a major OVATION from the crowd. They're completely on his side now.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Brendan Conlon came into this tournament as a 1000 to 1 underdog, and now here he is in the final four. The crowd's showing their appreciation. They're giving him quite the reception.

CALLEN (V.O.)

He's getting a huge reception. I mean, this guy shocked everybody last night.

Brendan stands in the corner. Frank leans over the railing of the cage and smiles at him.

FRANK

You've got a visitor. Second row,
10 o'clock.

Buzzing in the arena. The lights about to go down for the entrance of Koba. Before they do, Brendan looks up to see a familiar face at cageside. Tess. He can't believe his eyes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You alright with that?

Brendan looks at his wife. She smiles broadly. Mouths the words "I love you." Brendan grins. Kisses his glove and presses it against the cage. As he does, the lights go out inside the arena and ominous RUSSIAN MUSIC BLARES.

CALLEN (V.O.)

And here comes the great Russian
Koba.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Koba is so intimidating. His
reputation is larger than life.

The crowd strains to get a look at the legend as he makes his way toward the cage. Brendan watches. So does Frank. Tess takes a quick glance at Koba, then looks away. She can't bear it.

FRANK

I want you to look right at him
when he comes in here. Don't take
your eyes off him.

Brendan nods, then looks at Tess. Drawing strength. Frank leans over the railing and taps fists with his fighter.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you brother. This is
your cage.

Finally, the creepy music subsides, and the great Russian climbs into the cage. He's massive, and the crowd stares at him like an exotic animal.

Josh Rosenthal calls Brendan and Koba to the center of the cage. The Russian looks at Brendan with the cold, dispassionate eyes of a killer. Brendan does his best to hold his gaze.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Alright, gentlemen, you've been
given your instructions. I expect a
clean fight.

(MORE)

JOSH ROSENTHAL (CONT'D)

Obey my commands at all times.
Defend yourselves at all times.
Touch gloves, go back, let's do
this.

Brendan retreats to his corner. Takes a deep breath.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Should I be nervous for Brendan?
'Cause I am. I want to stop the
fight before it even begins.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Gentlemen, you ready? You ready?
Let's go to war!

Koba comes straight at Brendan. His speed and strength are
astonishing.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Now the question is, how long can
Brendan Conlon stay alive?

Franks screams at Brendan to keep his distance. Tess watches
through her fingers. And Koba keeps coming, snapping
Brendan's head back with a jab and bludgeoning him with an
uppercut to the chin. The Russian is doing whatever he wants
to Brendan. He slices him up with strikes. Bruises his legs
with kicks. Works him against the fence. Power slams him.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Koba just pounding on Brendan
Conlon! He's pounding on him like a
side of beef!

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

Thousands of people staring at the drive-in screen and you
can hear a pin drop. They're aghast. Zito can hardly look. KC
buries her head in Nash's chest.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: THE SLAUGHTER CONTINUES. HOW BRENDAN IS
TAKING IT IS ANYONE'S GUESS.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Koba gets Brendan in a BEAR HUG, lifts him off the ground,
carries him into the center of the ring like a sack of
laundry, and body SLAMS him on his back.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Koba's got him in the air. Oh no!

As Frank screams for Brendan to remain calm, a mortified Tess watches. Mercifully, the HORN sounds, and Brendan survives the round. He barely makes it back to his corner.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Frank Campana has to think
seriously about stopping this.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Seriously, Sam. How much abuse can
one man take?

The minutes passes in no time. It's time to go again.

JOSH ROSENTHAL
Let's go to war!

Koba comes right after Brendan, and it's soon more of the same. Power slams. Brutal strikes. Brendan's face is carved up and battered. He tries to go for a take down, but Koba snuffs it, then lifts Brendan off the mat again and carries him through the air. Frank screams, but there's nothing he can do. Brendan is brutally SLAMMED into the ground.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Uh oh, Brendan's going for ride!

CALLEN (V.O.)
That one shook the entire building!

As Brendan writhes on the ground, Koba grabs him and slings him against the fence like it's nothing. Brendan flies through the air and RATTLES against the cage. Then Koba climbs on top of him and starts whaling away. Tess can't even watch it. Once again, just as Rosenthal is about to stop the fight, the HORN sounds.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)
Everyone has gotta be concerned
about Brendan Conlon's bravery
getting him into trouble here.

CALLEN (V.O.)
His bravery can get him killed,
Sam. He's got nothing more to
prove. He's already lasted two
rounds against Koba, which is more
than anyone else can say. You
wonder what's keeping this guy up.

Brendan drags himself off the ground and limps to his stool. Frank enters the cage. His usual positive attitude is gone. He comes at Brendan with aggression instead.

FRANK

Sit down. Breathe.

(grabbing Brendan's face)

Look at me! Look at me! Why are we here, Brendan? Why are we here? Are we here to win this fight? You tell me, 'cause if we're not, I'll throw in the towel right now. We'll get Tess and we will go home. You don't knock him out, you lose the fight. Understand me? You don't knock him out, you don't have a home.

Josh Rosenthal claps his hands. Frank takes his cue to leave, but not before giving Brendan one last look. It's now or never. Brendan looks across the cage at Koba. Steels himself.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Let's go to war!

Brendan comes out and meets Koba in the center of the cage, but the Russian resumes his supremacy.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Conlon somehow answering the bell for round three, but Koba's all over him again.

Koba roughs the battered Brendan up some more, but then Brendan starts responding. Throws a couple effective leg kicks. A decent punch or two.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Brendan's giving back, Bryan. There are signs of life in Brendan Conlon. He's starting to mix it up!

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - MOMENTS LATER

The parking lot is quiet and tense. Zito and the kids stare at the movie screen.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: Koba presses Brendan up against the cage and tries to choke him out.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

The Russian SQUEEZES away.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Koba's got him caught in an iron vice, squeezing for all it's worth and trying to choke the teacher out.

Frank screams at Brendan to stay calm. To wait for his moment. Koba continues to squeeze. Brendan's face turns more and more red. Finally, he grabs Koba's shorts, musters up all the strength he has left, and TOSSES the Russian on his back, freeing himself from the choke in the process.

CALLEN (V.O.)

He just launched Koba! Can you believe this? Conlon just shook off a guillotine!

Brendan jumps on Koba and attempts his own choke.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Conlon's staying after him! He's squeezing him! The tables have turned, and the boy scout is squeezing the bear!

Koba shakes off Brendan's submission attempt and stands. Brendan stands with him and they exchange a vicious round of blows. Brendan's giving as good as he's getting.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Conlon standing and trading with the Russian! I've never seen this!

CALLEN (V.O.)

This is a fight! We've got ourselves a fight!

Brendan snaps Koba's head back with a left, but the Russian responds with a combination. Brendan stumbles backwards, and Koba grabs him and tries to take him down. Brendan throws a left ELBOW that connects with Koba's temple. The Russian is momentarily STUNNED, long enough for Brendan to take him to the ground and wrap his arms around Koba's KNEE.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Conlon going for a knee bar! He's got it very deep!

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

He's deep on that knee bar!

Brendan wrenches his body for all it's worth. Frank pounds on the apron of the cage.

FRANK
Crank it! Crank it!

The Russian tries to squirm away, but he can't. His face is contorted in PAIN. The cageside OFFICIAL indicates there's only 10 seconds left in the fight.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Brendan Conlon wrenching that knee for all it's worth! He's putting everything he has in it, and Koba is screaming in pain!

Four. Three. Koba struggles. Grimaces in agony. Brendan keeps wrenching his knee. Two. He can't take it. One. He TAPS!

CALLEN (V.O.)
He did it! Brendan Conlon has tapped Koba! I can't believe it! He can't believe it! Frank Campana can't believe it! This whole place can't believe it!

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

The drive-in crowd goes absolutely BERSERK. Tito leaps into Nash's arms. Stephon hugs KC. Zito pumps his fist in the air.

CALLEN (V.O.)
That's gotta be the biggest upset in MMA history! Brendan Conlon has *tapped* the great Koba!

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Tess stands on her seat, shrieking. Brendan climbs on top of the railing and lifts his arms in the air, a look of shock on his face. The arena goes bananas.

CALLEN (V.O.)
Brendan Conlon, the Physics teacher! Brendan Conlon, the civilian! He's done the impossible! He's pulled off a miracle! This place is going crazy 'cause we've just seen a miracle!

Pure bedlam in Boardwalk Hall. Frank going wild. Tess. The Tapout crew. J.J. Riley. Just an extraordinary scene. Finally, the noise fades away.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
This is CNN breaking news...

INT. BOARDWALK HALL PRESS AREA - LATER

J.J. Riley, the Tapout crew, and a few OFFICIALS stand over a computer screen on press row. They wear headphones and shocked expressions.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: CNN ANCHORMAN DON LEMON DELIVERS A REPORT AS "BREAKING NEWS" FLASHES ON SCREEN ALONGSIDE A PICTURE OF TOMMY.

DON LEMON (ON SCREEN)
A surprising turn in the story of Iraq War hero Tommy Riordan. CNN has learned that Riordan's true identity is that of Marine Staff Sergeant Thomas Conlon, who went AWOL from his unit earlier this year following the friendly fire death of his brother-in-arms, Sergeant Manny Fernandez. Fernandez' wife, Pilar Fernandez, spoke with me in an exclusive interview moments ago.

Riley and the others look at one another. They can't believe what they're hearing.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: A TEARY-EYED PILAR INSIDE HER HOME IN EL PASO. BEHIND HER, THE PHOTO OF TOMMY AND MANNY IN IRAQ.

PILAR (ON SCREEN)
Bombs started dropping. They were coming from U.S. planes. Tommy and Manny were waving their flags to let them know they were Americans, but they didn't stop. Everyone died. Everyone except Tommy.
(beat)
You know, my Manny used to say Tommy was the brother he never had.

INT. HALLWAY, BOARDWALK HALL - SAME

Two MARINE MPS stand guard outside Tommy's locker room.

DON LEMON (V.O.)
 Conlon, who is fighting in the
 Mixed Martial Arts mega tournament
 Sparta, is expected to be taken
 into custody by military police
 following tonight's winner take all
 finale in Atlantic City.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Tommy sits in his locker room. Another MP stands behind him.

DON LEMON (V.O.)
 If victorious, he has pledged his
 five million dollar purse to the
 widow of his fallen comrade.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL PRESS AREA - MOMENTS LATER

J.J. Riley sidles up between Callen and Sheridan and WHISPERS
 in their ears. They're stunned by the news as well.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

Tito and the kids sit on the hoods of cars eating hot dogs
 and waiting for the final fight. Joe Zito looks up at the
 movie screen, where Bryan Callen makes an announcement.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: A SURPRISED CALLEN.

CALLEN (ON SCREEN)
 We've just got some incredible news
 that I'm having trouble putting
 into context, but here it is: the
 two men fighting for the
 championship tonight, for the five
 million dollar prize, for the
 middle weight championship of the
 world, are brothers.

Stunned expressions from Zito, KC, Nash, Stephon, Tito, and
 everyone at the Drive-In. The wild night has taken an
 unexpected turn.

INT. BRENDAN'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Brendan, Frank, and Tess sit in the locker room. On the
 monitor, Callen and Sheridan continue to discuss the
 situation. Brendan has ice packs on his shoulders and knees
 and his face is a mess after three brutal wars in 24 hours.

TESS
(to Brendan)
What are you gonna do?

BRENDAN
I'm gonna fight him.

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Tommy sits by himself in his locker room, the weight of the world pulling his shoulders down. His black hoodie is over his head. He couldn't be more alone.

EXT. RESORTS HOTEL AND CASINO - SAME

A sobered up Paddy runs out of the hotel and climbs into a waiting taxi.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Brendan and Frank make the long walk down the tunnel and into the arena. Unlike previous trips, there is no joy on their faces. It's a grim march to the cage.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

People stand on cars. Chairs. Each other's shoulders.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: THE BATTERED BRENDAN CONTINUES HIS WALK, WADING THROUGH A CROWD THAT IS AS PUMPED AS HE IS SOMBER.

Tito, KC, Nash, Stephon, and the other students start chanting "Mis-ter C! Mis-ter C! Mis-ter C!"

INT. TOMMY'S LOCKER ROOM - SAME

Tommy rises and walks toward the door.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - CONTINUOUS

He marches out the door and into the bowels of the arena, moving past MPS as he goes. His march is as grim as Brendan's.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Brendan and Frank embrace.

FRANK

One more time.

Brendan climbs into the cage as the house LIGHTS DIM. The crowd is going bonkers. And they EXPLODE when Tommy appears at the end of the tunnel with his hoodie up and begins his march toward the cage.

The Marines shower him with cheers and "Hoo-ahs." The girls scream. The rest of the audience stamps their feet and chants his name. But he acknowledges no one, and the hard look on his face never wavers.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Fenroy and the crew on the edge of their seats, all staring at the big screen.

ON TV SCREEN: TOMMY GETTING GREASED UP AND CLIMBING INTO THE CAGE.

INT. TAXI - SAME

A nervous Paddy sits in the back of the cab as the DRIVER navigates through holiday traffic.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

And here it is. The two brothers face to face in the middle of the ring, staring each other down. Tommy with his usual controlled fire, Brendan intense, searching his brother's eyes for some flicker of recognition.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Gentlemen, this is the final. Five rounds. I expect a clean fight. Obey my commands at all times. Defend yourselves at all times. Touch gloves, go back, let's do this.

As Rosenthal finishes his instructions, Brendan peers into Tommy's empty corner.

BRENDAN

Where's Pop?

Tommy turns without answering. All business. Brendan returns to his corner. Looks at Tess. So much emotion on her face.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Gentlemen, are you ready? Are you ready? Let's go to war!

Tommy comes right after his brother. Just like with his previous three opponents. A natural wrecking machine. Frank screams at Brendan to stay calm, but Tommy is all over him, POUNDING on him with savage intensity. As bad as the other fights were for Brendan, this one is worse.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

The crowd is tense and subdued. It's not going well.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: TOMMY KEEPS TATTOOING BRENDAN WITH HEAD SHOTS. BEATS HIS BROTHER WITH MALICE. IT'S HARD TO WATCH.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

Fenroy and company thoroughly enjoying themselves.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

Tommy continues to batter Brendan, then he swoops in, picks him up, and SLAMS his big brother into the ground. Then he does it again. And again. And again.

Brendan, the wind knocked out of him, is on his back, trying to protect himself from Tommy, who mounts him and starts blasting away with a BLUR of lefts and rights. The only thing that saves Brendan is the HORN. Which Tommy ignores, blasting his brother with a brutal CHEAP SHOT to the jaw well after the round had ended.

TESS

What was that!

FRANK

C'mon, Josh!

Brendan lays on the ground as Josh Rosenthal pulls Tommy off him and admonishes him for the cheap shot. Tommy stares at Brendan. You want more?

Frank runs into the cage with the stool and Brendan limps over to him and sits down. Brendan stares at Tommy, who paces in his corner like a caged animal.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Sit down. Look at me. Look at me, Brendan! Let it go! Breathe.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Beethoven. He's coming hard, just like we planned. I want you to angle out, hit, and move.

BRENDAN

Angle out, hit, and move.

FRANK

Good. Breathe. Relax. He's not your brother, right? He's just a guy who's in the way.

Josh Rosenthal claps his hands. It's time. Frank glares at him as he picks up the stool.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I'm taking a little more time for the cheap shot! Do your job, Josh!

Tess sits uncomfortably in her chair. Her husband's face is a mess. In front of her, Callen and Sheridan commiserate. J.J., the Tapout crew, and Colt Boyd look on. The electricity in the crowd is greater than ever. They want a champion.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - MOMENTS LATER

Very quiet at the Drive-In. It's tough for everyone to watch what's happening to Brendan.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: ROUND TWO. A REPEAT OF ROUND ONE. TOMMY JUST WHALING ON BRENDAN AND BRENDAN TRYING TO HANG ON FOR DEAR LIFE.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA - SAME

The Marines in the crowd are all on their feet, screaming for Tommy to end it. The chant starts up again. 15,000 strong. "Tommy! Tommy! Tommy!" Frank tries to instruct Brendan, but he can't hear him, and he's too overwhelmed.

Tommy presses Brendan against the cage and does the same thing Koba did. He lifts him off the ground, carries him on a dead run, and body SLAMS him so hard the cage shakes. Then Tommy mounts him and starts pounding away again.

The HORN sounds ending the round, but this time it's Brendan who pops up and pushes Tommy. Tommy shoves him back. Rosenthal has to separate them as the crowd roars its approval.

CALLEN (V.O.)

Here we go, Mom! Time to lock up
your china, the boys are at it
again!

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - LATER

Fenroy and company watching the big screen.

ON TV SCREEN: ROUND THREE. MORE TOMMY DOMINATION, BUT BRENDAN
IS SOMEHOW TAKING IT.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Again, Tommy is on top of Brendan, trying to ground and pound
him into submission. Frank, leaning on the apron nearby,
screams at Brendan.

FRANK

Switch! Switch!

Tommy tries to pound Brendan out, but Brendan latches on to
Tommy's arm, wraps his legs around him, and REVERSES
position, just as he did with Midnight, the Dane, and Koba.
Tommy is in deep trouble. Brendan pushes him face down on the
canvas and cranks his shoulder. There's no escape.

SHERIDAN (V.O.)

Oh my God, that's a *deep omoplata*!

CALLEN (V.O.)

He's doing it again! Conlon's doing
it again! This is going to be over!

Brendan applies intense pressure. Tommy's shoulder is
contorted, WRENCHED backwards, and his face is a mask of
pain. Tommy's in agony, but he won't give in.

BRENDAN

Tap, Tommy!

Tommy SHRIEKS like an animal, but still won't quit. In fact,
he elbows Brendan in the face in defiance. Brendan in turn
cranks the shoulder even more. It's at the breaking point.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Tap!

The shoulder twists. Twists. And then, audible only to Tommy
and Brendan, CRACK. Dislocated. Then the HORN ending the
round.

Brendan, worried he hurt his brother, leans over to see if Tommy's alright, but Tommy, like a wounded animal, leaps up and grabs Brendan around the throat with his one good arm. He shoves him all the way across the cage and into the fence, and it takes Rosenthal and Frank to separate them.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

The crowd fired up by Brendan's comeback, and mesmerized by what's taking place in the cage between the brothers. It's complete and utter chaos in there.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: TOMMY PACES IN HIS CORNER, HIS SHOULDER WRECKED. JOSH ROSENTHAL TRIES TO SEE IF HE'S ALRIGHT BUT TOMMY TURNS AWAY. HE'S NOT QUITTING AND NO ONE'S GOING TO TELL HIM HE HAS TO.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

Sheer amazement that Tommy didn't submit.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Tommy, flap down, tears of pain pouring down his face, stands defiantly in his corner. In the other corner, Frank attends Brendan. In the crowd, Tess covers her mouth. She can't believe what Tommy allowed to happen to him.

Frank puts the stool down and gives Brendan some water. Brendan's face is wracked with guilt and concern over his brother.

BRENDAN
I popped his shoulder.

FRANK
Relax, breathe.

BRENDAN
I heard it tear.

FRANK
You popped his shoulder? Good. I want you to pop his other shoulder.

This is not what Brendan wants to hear. He looks over to Josh Rosenthal.

BRENDAN
Josh!

Frank snaps. Grabs Brendan by the face.

FRANK

Hey! Hey! No Josh! Look at me! You got two rounds left! You need both rounds! Go in there, kick him in the head, take him down, and finish him!

Rosenthal claps his hands. Frank exits the cage. The wounded Tommy stands in his corner, his ruined left arm hanging low. Brendan makes eye contact with him.

BRENDAN

Tommy! What are you doing?

TOMMY

Shut up! C'mon.

BRENDAN

What are you that crazy?

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Let's go to war!

The BELL sounds. Round Four begins. Tommy throws useless right jabs. He's one handed and has no chance. Brendan stays away from him, not wanting to hurt his brother.

BRENDAN

What are you doing? It's over!

Frank screams at Brendan from cageside to take the wounded Tommy out, but Brendan is reluctant.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

It's over, Tommy. C'mon. We don't have to do this.

Tommy and Brendan circle each other. Tommy throwing rights and wincing in agony at any movement. Brendan stares at him. Everything about him says "Quit, Tommy." But Tommy won't.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA TUNNEL - SAME

Paddy runs up the tunnel, his All Access pass around his neck, and enters the arena. Sees Brendan and Tommy in the cage. Quickly figures out what the situation is.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

Zito and the kids staring at the screen, imploring Brendan to take the helpless Tommy out and win the championship.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL CAGE - SAME

Brendan continues to circle and not engage. Frank is livid. He knows he'll lose the fight on the judges' scorecards if he doesn't do something.

FRANK

Finish him! You finish him!

Tommy keeps throwing defiant right jabs at Brendan. Finally, with no choice, Brendan fires back. He batters the defenseless Tommy up against the cage and POUNDS away at him, blasting his left shoulder with punches that make Tommy wince in pain. It's anyone's guess how he can take it.

Brendan presses his brother up against the cage. Begging him to quit. But Tommy merely responds by elbowing Brendan in the face again. This sets the older brother off, and he resumes pounding on Tommy until the HORN sounds and Rosenthal pulls Brendan away.

JOSH ROSENTHAL

Break! Break!

Brendan heads back to his stool as Tommy leans against the cage in agony. The Marines scream for him, but his eyes are glazed over. It's unthinkable that he hasn't broken yet.

From near cageside, Paddy looks to the corner and makes eye contact with Brendan. They exchange a small look of understanding. A NOD. They both know what needs to be done.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

The crowd wants a victory. Tito and the boys start the "Mister C!" chant again.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: FRANK ADMONISHES BRENDAN IN HIS CORNER. IT'S OBVIOUS WHAT HE'S TELLING HIM, BUT BRENDAN'S EYES ARE FAR AWAY. HE'S NOT LISTENING TO A WORD.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL CAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Tommy and Brendan stand for Round Five. Tommy's face is battered after Round Four and Brendan's face is ruined.

In the crowd, the "Tommy" CHANT begins in earnest. In fact, it may be louder than ever. Having done the impossible and carried on with one arm, Tommy is more superhuman and heroic than ever before. But his face tells another story. Soaked in pain and anguish. All his stoic walls crumbling down.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

All eyes riveted to the screen, where the brothers circle each other as in the fourth round.

ON SCREEN: MORE PAINFUL STABBING JABS FROM TOMMY. BRENDAN GIVES HIM ONE LAST, LONG LOOK, BUT TOMMY RESPONDS BY KICKING HIM IN THE LEG. FINALLY, LEFT NO CHOICE, BRENDAN SWOOPS.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Brendan SLAMS Tommy to the ground. His face is contorted in merciless pain. Brendan slips his forearm under Tommy's neck and squeezes. Tommy struggles, but he's got one arm and there's NO ESCAPE. His face getting red from lack of oxygen.

As an anguished Tess and a shaken Paddy look on, Brendan CHOKES his brother. As he does, he pleads with him.

BRENDAN

I'm sorry, Tommy! I'm sorry!

Tommy continues to struggle.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Tap, Tommy! Tap!

Tears pour down Tommy's face. Brendan is crushing his wind pipe. Tommy's eyes bulge.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I love you, Tommy! I love you!

Tommy, about to pass out, no more air to breathe, slowly opens his left hand, looks at Brendan, and TAPS his shoulder on the Conlon family crest. Finally submitting.

EXT. STARLIGHT DRIVE-IN - SAME

While most of the crowd erupts in celebration and the kids leap into each other's arms, Joe Zito stares at the screen.

ON MOVIE SCREEN: AS PEOPLE ENTER THE RING, BRENDAN AND TOMMY STAY ON THE GROUND, BRENDAN CRADLING HIS BROTHER IN HIS ARMS.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Frank makes eye contact with the jubilant Tess. Indicates she should meet them in the locker room. Meanwhile, people pour into the cage. Frank pushes them aside, keeping them away from Brendan and Tommy, who remain on the ground, exhausted. Tommy to begins to WEEP.

INT. COLT'S PITTSBURGH FIGHT CLUB - SAME

Silence at Colt's. Everyone spent from what they've seen.

ON TV SCREEN: CHAOS IN THE RING. BRENDAN HOLDS TOMMY IN HIS ARMS AND PUSHES AWAY A DOCTOR.

INT. BOARDWALK HALL ARENA CAGE - SAME

Tommy buries his head in Brendan's chest. A torrent of sobbing gushes from him, years of pain pouring out in heavy bursts. From the crowd, Paddy stares into the cage and watches as Brendan comforts his little brother, then helps him to his feet.

Callen, Sheridan, and J.J. Riley make their way inside for the post-fight interview, cameras trailing behind them. With Frank continuing to run interference, Brendan pushes through the crush of people, arm around Tommy, and exits the cage.

The crowd parts for Tommy and Brendan. Paddy watches them, a tear in his eye. He's overwhelmed by the sight of his two boys together again.

As the noise from the arena fades, the brothers walk through the wild crowd and continue on through the tunnel, arm in arm...

THE END