

MILLION DOLLAR BABY
Rope Burns

(AKA Million Dollar Baby)

screenplay
by
Paul Haggis

based on the short stories
by
F.X.Toole

Rope Burns

BLACK. The SOUND of a racing heart. Then:

SCRAP V.O.

Only ever met one man I wouldn't
want to fight.

1 INT. L.A. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 1

BIG WILLIE LITTLE sits sweating on his stool in the corner of the ring. He's African-American, a heavyweight, and he's cut bad under the right eye. His CUT MAN jabs coagulant into the wound; looks up to the manager standing over him.

CUT MAN

I can't stop it.

The manager, FRANKIE DUNN, pushes him aside.

FRANKIE

Get outta the building, you useless
tit.

Frankie drops to one knee and we see his face. It's a face that could only have been cast by generations of potato-eaters, the kind of face that survives famines and frustrates invaders. Look deep into his eyes and you can see this man has been knocked to his knees, but he's always come up before the count. Always will. Frankie picks up the kit and goes to work on Big Willie. We're mesmerized by Frankie's hands. It's like watching a top surgeon going for a world speed record.

SCRAP V.O.

When I met him he was already the
best cut man in the business. Started
training and managing in the 60's,
but he never lost his gift.

Frankie cleans and flushes the wound with an adrenaline solution, uses his thumbs to work the blood away from the gash and packs it with a coagulant-rich salve.

BIG WILLIE

You stop it?

Frankie glances at his stop watch: 36 seconds elapsed.

FRANKIE

Can't, Willie.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

The RING DOCTOR wants to see Willy's face.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

He's fine.

RING DOCTOR

He ain't if you don't stop that
bleeding. I'll give you one more
round.

Ring Doctor moves away as the ref whistles the five second
warning.

BIG WILLIE

What do we do? Tell me what to do.

FRANKIE

Just let him hit you.

Frankie climbs out of the ring, leaving Big Willie staring
at him, confused, as the bell rings.

SCRAP V.O.

Sometimes there's just nothing you
can do.

Willie tosses a couple of questioning looks back to Frankie
before he steps into punching range.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Cut's too wide, too close to the
bone, maybe you got a severed vein...

Big Willie, unwilling to follow Frankie's instructions, keeps
protecting his face, his opponent trying to get to the wound.
Frankie YELLS something from the corner. Something we can't
hear over the din.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

...or you just can't get the coagulant
deep enough.

(MORE)

Willie reluctantly drops his guard. His opponent delivers a
neck-snapping blow to his cut eye. SILENCE as the camera
screams into an extreme close up of Willie's wound... and in
that second we "hear" the coagulant being absorbed deep into
the gash, "hear" the blood vessels sealing, then we fly right
back out into the fight and the ROAR of the crowd.

Willy backs off, looks to Frankie, who screams for him to
get in there and start punching.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

1

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

There are all kinds of combinations
you come up against down in the
different layers of meat. And Frankie
knew how to work every one.

Big Willie lands his first solid combination and a cheer
rises up.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Harder thing to stop is looking.

FACES

in the crowd. Most of them ugly. Screaming for blood.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

People love violence. They'll watch
a cock slash a rooster's throat;
they slow down at car wrecks to check
for bodies. They'll stand outside a
bar, watch two friends stab each
other with knives. Same people claim
to love boxing. They got no idea
what it is.

We find...

A GIRL

fair, thin, looks early thirties; call her MAGGIE. She's
standing in the tunnel, a bruise swelling on her cheek, her
hair matted from dried sweat, a worn boxing robe pulled around
her shoulders.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Boxing is about respect.

Her eyes stay fixed on...

FRANKIE

shouting instructions from Willie's corner. Big Willie
clutches his opponent, struggling to understand Frankie.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Gettin' it for yourself...

(MORE)

Frankie motions two low body lefts and an overhand right.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (3)

1

WILLIE

gets it, breaks free and:

MAGGIE

watches as Big Willie delivers two devastating lefts to the body, and an overhand right that sends his opponent sprawling to the canvas.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

And takin' it away from the other
guy.

The crowd roars as the referee counts out the opponent.
Maggie shifts her look to:

FRANKIE

stepping into the ring. Big Willie picks him up and hugs
him.

2 INT. ARENA -- CORRIDOR OUTSIDE DRESSING ROOMS -- NIGHT

2

Maggie, in jeans and an old jacket, waits outside the dressing
room. The door opens and Frankie steps out, calling back
in:

FRANKIE

I'll warm up the car.

And walks off down the corridor. Maggie catches up.

MAGGIE

Mr. Dunn?

FRANKIE

I owe you money?

MAGGIE

No, sir.

FRANKIE

I know your mother?

MAGGIE

Don't rightly know, sir.

FRANKIE

Then what do you want?

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

MAGGIE

I was on the undercard, won my fight,
too.

FRANKIE

Good for you.

MAGGIE

You happen to see it?

FRANKIE

Nope.

MAGGIE

I did pretty good. Thought you might
be interested in trainin' me.

FRANKIE

Don't train girls.

MAGGIE

Maybe you should. People see me
fight say I'm pretty tough.

FRANKIE

Girlie, tough ain't enough.

He punches through the door and walks off. Maggie watches
him until the door closes.

3 EXT. ARENA PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

3

Nearly empty. Big Willie comes out, heads through it, passing
HOGAN, a manager in his fifties, whose on his way back.

HOGAN

(shrugs)
It's a mistake.

Willie gives him a look and keeps walking, finding Frankie
pushing his piece of shit Plymouth Valiant out of the parking
space. Willie drops his bag on the Valiant's hood and pushes
alongside Frankie.

BIG WILLIE

Cars should be able to back up,
Frankie.

FRANKIE

Just push.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

BIG WILLIE
What'd Hogan want?

FRANKIE
He offered us a title fight.

BIG WILLIE
Bout time.

FRANKIE
I turned him down.

Frankie drops into the driver's seat. Willie gets in the other side, looks to Frankie for an explanation.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Two-three more fights, you'll be ready.

BIG WILLIE
Been two-three more fights a long time now, Frankie.

FRANKIE
You get one shot at the title, Willie. Lose, it may never come back around. Two-three more fights, you'll be ready.

BIG WILLIE
(beat, accepts it)
Whatever you say, Frankie.

And they drive off.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie liked to say that boxing is an unnatural act...

4 INT. CITY BUS -- NIGHT

4

Maggie rides along Olympic, the only one on the bus.

SCRAP V.O.
That everything in boxing is backwards.

For a brief second she allows the fear in; fear that she'll break before she gets what she's after.

5 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW - CULVER CITY -- NIGHT 5

With some effort and more than a little pain he drops to one knee beside his single bed, crosses himself.

SCRAP V.O.

Sometimes best way to deliver a punch is to step back.

FRANKIE

Dear Lord, do your best to protect Katy. Annie, too. Other than that, you know what I want, Lord, not gonna repeat myself.

SCRAP V.O.

But step back too far, you ain't fighting at all.

He crosses himself.

6 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 6

Post mass, the last few parishioners exit. Frankie is the last out the door.

FRANKIE

Beautiful sermon, Father, made me weep.

FATHER HORVATH

What's confusing you this week?

FRANKIE

It's the one God, three God thing again.

FATHER HORVATH

Frankie, most people figure out by Kindergarten that it's about faith.

FRANKIE

Is it sorta like Snap, Crackle, Pop, all in one big box?

FATHER HORVATH

You're standing on the steps of my church comparing God to Rice Crispies? The only reason you come to mass every day is to try and wind me up; it's not gonna happen this morning.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

FRANKIE
I really am confused about this.

FATHER HORVATH
No, you aren't.

FRANKIE
I am.

FATHER HORVATH
Then here's your answer: there's one
God! Anything else, cause I'm busy?

FRANKIE
What about the Holy Ghost?

FATHER HORVATH
He's an expression of God's love.

FRANKIE
--And Jesus?

FATHER HORVATH
Son of God, don't play stupid!

FRANKIE
So, that makes him what, a demigod?

FATHER HORVATH
There are no demigods, you fuckin'
pagan! Did you write your daughter?!

FRANKIE
Absolutely.

FATHER HORVATH
Now you're lying to a priest. You
know what? Take a day off, don't
come to mass tomorrow.

The priest disappears into the church. Frankie smiles and
walks off.

7 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- MORNING

7

Four hip looking customers leave their table a complete mess.
Maggie, wearing an ill-fitting uniform, steps in to bus it.

SCRAP V.O.
Some people'd say the most important
thing a fighter can have is heart.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

She scoops up the tip: seventy-five cents.

8 INT. THE HIT PIT -- DAY

8

A basement gym on 5th Street, right in the heart of Skid Row, downtown LA. Everyone sweats, even those who are just hanging out on the short bleachers that circle the two rings.

SCRAP V.O.

Frankie'd say show me a fighter who's
nothing but heart and I'll show you
a man waiting for a beating.

Trainers, swaying like cobras, work their fighters, isolated in the noise and the steam, some whisper, others yell. Boom boxes blare different music from four corners, making it sound like a cell block.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Think I only ever met one fighter
who was all heart.

DANGER BARCH, a scrawny young farmer white boy, throws a flurry of pitty-pat punches into the air, then announces:

DANGER

My name's Dangerous Dillard Fightin'
Flippo Bam-Bam Barch outta Broward
County, Texas--

FREEZE him in mid sentence.

SCRAP V.O.

Danger showed up a coupl'a years
back.

9 EXT. SKID ROW - FLASHBACK -- DAY

9

Danger steps outta the passenger seat of a beat up old Dodge pickup, looks around.

SCRAP V.O.

He'd come visitin' L.A. with Ervel,
his momma's new boyfriend.

The Dodge disappears in a cloud of exhaust.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Apparently Ervel got lost and ended
up back in Texas.

(MORE)

Danger walks off down the sidewalk.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Danger looked for him for about a week. 'Fore he introduced himself.

10 INT. THE HIT PIT -- DAY

10

Danger stands across the counter from EDDIE SCRAP IRON DUPRIS, a long-retired fighter who cleans up around the gym in exchange for living in the back room. In his day, Scrap was a hell of a fighter, and he still keeps himself fit. He lost the sight in one eye years ago.

DANGER

I gots nothin' against niggers.

SCRAP

Glad to hear it.

Scrap gives him a paper cup full of water.

DANGER

Lotsa people where I comes from does, but my mamma taught me not to cause hurt to no man, niggers or not.

SCRAP

You got a good mamma. Anything else I can do for you?

Danger thinks hard.

SCRAP V.O.

It was just one of those questions you ask, but Danger wanted to give it his best answer.

DANGER

I'd likes to become the Welterweight Champion of the world.

11 INT. HIT PIT - BACK TO THE PRESENT - DAY

11

As Danger unfreezes and picks up where he left off.

DANGER

-- and I challenge the Motor City Cobra Thomas Hit Man Hearn to fight me for the WBA Welterweight Championship of the whole world!

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

SHAWRELLE BERRY, a tough young lightweight, wraps his hands as he sits on a nearby bench with some gym rat buddies -- one of them his sparring partner, OMAR.

SHAWRELLE

Flippy, you ain't even ranked. To get ranked, you gotta have at least one fight.

DANGER

I'll fight any man, anytime!

The gym rats laugh.

SHAWRELLE

You're a brave man. Wanna get in the ring, go a few rounds with me?

Scrap passes with a bucket, mop and bottle of Clorox.

SCRAP

Leave him be, Shawrelle. Danger, get back to your training.

DANGER

Will do, Mist Scrap!

Danger goes back to throwing his best pittypat punches into the air. Shawrelle and his buddies laugh and mimic him.

SCRAP V.O.

Shawrelle Berry had a left hook that could move a tank. But he had a heart the size of a split pea.

Frankie steps out of his back office, throwing a look toward Danger as he heads to the front desk.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Frankie bought The Hit Pit from Bobby Malone seventeen years ago. Bobby wanted to move to Florida and Frankie wanted some security. Bobby died while he was packing and Frankie found out most gyms lose money.

Frankie steps behind the counter to check the log.

FRANKIE

(to Scrap)

I thought I told you Danger couldn't work out here anymore.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

SCRAP

The boy's not hurting anybody.

FRANKIE

He's hurting me. He's breaking my heart watching him punch the air like it's gonna punch back.

Frankie notices the Clorox bottle.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

How many times I tell you that bleach is bleach? Why do you have to buy the stuff that costs more?

SCRAP

Cause it smells better.

FRANKIE

It's bleach. It smells like bleach!

Frankie heads back to his office. Big Willie enters, nods to Scrap, who's now behind the counter.

BIG WILLIE

Hey, Scrap.

SCRAP

Hey, Mr. Willie.

Scrap watches Big Willie passing a couple fighters, saying hello, slapping hands. Willie passes a couple slickly dressed managers, cracking jokes to each other. One is SALLY MENDOZA, the other is MICKEY MACK.

BIG WILLIE

Hey, Sally.

SALLY

Hey, Willie. Nice fight, people are talking.

Mickey doesn't look at Willie, Willie doesn't look at Mickey. Scrap files this away.

12 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

12

Frankie sits at his desk reading a small, leather bound book and trying to pronounce the words.

FRANKIE

Tá cúl fionn is dhá shúil ghlasa agat.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

He looks up and Scrap is watching him from the doorway.

SCRAP

What the hell kind of language is that?

FRANKIE

What do you want?

SCRAP

Just thought you'd want to know you got a fighter out there not talking to another manager.

FRANKIE

Not talking to him?

SCRAP

And not just any manager, Mickey Mack.

FRANKIE

So, you came in to tell me Big Willie is not talking to Mickey Mack.

SCRAP

Not a word, neither one of them.

FRANKIE

I'm trying to read here.

SCRAP

If you think that's more important.

Scrap walks behind Frankie's chair, to the window that looks out on the gym.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

So, who's your new girl?

This gets Frankie's attention. He turns and looks out at the gym. Sees:

MAGGIE

pounding the heavy bag.

FRANKIE (O.S.)

Oh, Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

BACK WITH FRANKIE AND SCRAP

SCRAP

I'd hurry; she keep hittin' it like
that she gonna break her wrists.

13 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS

13

Maggie works the heavy bag as Frankie approaches.

FRANKIE

You wasted your money. I don't train
girls.

MAGGIE

Thought you might change your mind.

FRANKIE

Gotta be a dozen trainers around
looking for girls, you'll have no
trouble finding one.

MAGGIE

Don't hardly need a dozen, boss.
You'll do fine.

FRANKIE

I'm not your boss, so don't be calling
me that.

(heading off/calls)

Willie, you ready to work?

BIG WILLIE

Anytime.

MAGGIE

If I stop calling you boss, will you
train me?

FRANKIE

No.

MAGGIE

Then I might just as well keep calling
you it.

Maggie goes back to working the bag.

SCRAP V.O.

She came from South-Western Missouri,
the hills outside the scratch-ass

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Ozark town of Theodosia, set in the cedars and oak trees somewhere between nowhere and good-bye.

14 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT -- DAY

14

As a couple patrons toss condescending looks in her direction.

SCRAP V.O.

She grew up knowing one thing: she was trash, and she weren't never gonna be looked at anyway else.

We find Maggie, in her Salvation Army street clothes, being interviewed by the OWNER, who studies her application.

OWNER

So, you can only do dinners?

MAGGIE

I'm working breakfasts somewhere else, sir. I need the rest of the day to train.

OWNER

You bathe every day?

MAGGIE

I'm sorry?

OWNER

Had another Hillbilly girl working here, all the customers complained of the stink. She never washed.

MAGGIE

I bathe every day, sir.

OWNER

Make sure you do.

He walks back to the kitchen. And she doesn't let on for a second how deeply humiliated she is by this.

SCRAP V.O.

She'd come eighteen hundred miles, but Theodosia was still just over the hill.

15 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

15

Frankie enters, passing Maggie who works the heavy bag.

MAGGIE
Working the bag, boss.

FRANKIE
Not your boss and that bag's working
you.

Maggie watches Frankie enter the office, goes back to hitting the bag, trying to figure out what he meant.

16 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE

16

Frankie finds Scrap drinking a cup of coffee and watching Maggie through the window.

FRANKIE
Give her her money back.

SCRAP
You sure?

FRANKIE
Why? How much she pay?

SCRAP
Six months.

FRANKIE
Jesus Christ.

SCRAP
So, I'll just go give her it back.

FRANKIE
Don't be a smart ass. Woman expects
me to throw away six months dues to
get rid of her, she's out of her
mind. Just don't encourage her.
(notices)
What the hell is Danger looking at?

THEIR POV THROUGH WINDOW

Danger is by the ice chest, holding a bottle of frozen water, looking at the top and the bottom, as if it's one of the seven wonders of the world.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 16

BACK WITH FRANKIE AND SCRAP

SCRAP

Appears to be a bottle of water.

FRANKIE

He paying his dues?

SCRAP

Boy can't afford pants, you want him
to pay dues?

FRANKIE

Get out of my office.

And Scrap exits, smiling.

17 INT. HIT PIT -- SHOWERS -- NIGHT 17

Scrap finishes mopping up and filling the soap dispensers.
He checks it out; all the scrubbing in the world won't get
this place any cleaner. He hits the lights.

18 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT 18

Scrap flicks the breakers and the lights in the gym cut off
one bank at a time. Scrap stops as he hears something, moves
out to the gym, sees:

19 MAGGIE 19

Alone in the gym, drenched in sweat, exhausted and frustrated,
but still working the heavy bag and looking just as awkward.
She stops, breathing heavy.

SCRAP

Can't think of it as a bag.

She looks as he walks forward.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

I'm not a trainer, but I can show
you this, if you want.

MAGGIE

Appreciate any help I can get.

Scrap gives the heavy bag a shove and starts moving around
it, maintaining the same distance as he slides forward and
back, pivots and moves.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

SCRAP

Think of it as a man; movin' back,
to the side, toward you. Watch him,
he'll tell you when to hit.

As it swings toward him:

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Hit now, he just gonna knock you
back...

(demonstrates)

...smother your punches, take your
balance. Don't punch until he starts
away from you.

Now he throws an effective combination, pivots and does it
again, each punch landing solidly. Swings it for her. She
tries it, awkwardly.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Keep moving, rotate. That way your
head's always movin' and you always
have one shoulder back ready to fire
a power shot.

She fires her first effective shot. Smiles.

MAGGIE

Like that?

SCRAP

You get this down then start on the
speed bag.

She looks around.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

You do have a speed bag.

Her look tells him she doesn't.

20 INT. STORAGE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

20

Scrap opens a big locker -- inside are mops, buckets and all
kinds of ancient gym equipment. He pulls a worn and dusty
speed bag off the top shelf.

MAGGIE

I'll just borrow it till I can buy
my own.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

SCRAP
You go home now.

MAGGIE
I walk out with you?

SCRAP
I am home.

She sees a cot, a chair and a Sally-Anne dresser. An ancient hot plate and an even older TV fill out the corner.

MAGGIE
It's nice.

Scrap laughs.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Would it bother you much if I worked a little longer?

SCRAP
Just pull the door closed after you.

21 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT

21

Maggie works the heavy bag, remembering Scrap's lesson, the same punch, same move over and over. As...

SCRAP

watches her from the shadows of Frankie's office.

SCRAP V.O.
If there's magic in boxing, it's the magic of fighting battles beyond endurance. Beyond cracked ribs, ruptured kidneys and detached retinas.

22 EXT. OLYMPIC BLVD. - DAWN

22

A bus passes almost empty.

SCRAP V.O.
It's the magic of risking everything, for a dream that nobody sees but you.

23 INT. RTD BUS -- CONTINUOUS

23

Maggie rides, the lone passenger. Happy.

24 INT. THE HIT PIT -- DAY

24

Frankie works the punch mitts with Big Willy on the far side of the room.

FRANKIE

Jab, jab, double up. Jab. Do it again. One-two hook. Do it again.

Maggie approaches the heavy bag pulling on her gloves, throwing a look to Frankie, who doesn't look back. Maggie goes to work on the bag.

Shawrelle works a nearby heavybag as Omar holds. Shawrelle notices Maggie.

SHAWRELLE

Hey, Flippy.

Danger looks up from trying to jump rope.

SHAWRELLE (CONT'D)

Flippy, come here! I found someone you can beat!

DANGER

I don't fights women.

Shawrelle circles, looking Maggie up and down as she pounds away.

SHAWRELLE

This here a woman? Let me look, you might be right, Danger.

FRANKIE

notices. Doesn't like what he sees, but he's not about to do anything.

FRANKIE

(to Big Willie)
Two jabs, right-hand...

SCRAP

looks up from the comic book he's reading.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

SHAWRELLE

SHAWRELLE

There's her little titties! Barely
even a mouthful.

MAGGIE

(still working)

Saw your last fight, Shawrelle.
Spent so much time face down I thought
the canvas had titties.

Shawrelle's buddies razz him. Danger snickers.

DANGER

Canvas had titties.

SHAWRELLE

(to Omar)

You gonna work or you gonna laugh?

Which makes Omar laugh harder.

DANGER

Look at me! I'm Shawrelle!

And Danger falls flat on the floor, mouthing the mat.
Shawrelle simmers as everyone else busts a gut.

FRANKIE

allows himself a small smile.

FRANKIE

Two jabs, right-hand, hook. Do it
again. Enough.

Big Willie stops, breathing hard. Frankie tosses him a towel,
uses a second to wipe off some of the sweat.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I'll give you a rub down.

BIG WILLIE

Can't, Frankie. My middle one's got
piano lesson. Told Grace I'd drive
her.

FRANKIE

Grace's car not working?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

BIG WILLIE

Hates that car. Wants her old one
back. Dealer won't do it, says he's
already got a buyer.

FRANKIE

Want me to talk to the dealer?

BIG WILLIE

I'd appreciate that.

Big Willie heads out as Frankie takes his equipment back to
his office, passing Scrap.

SCRAP

Man's a rub down whore and today he
don't want one?

FRANKIE

You ever do any work around here?

SCRAP

Not my job I'd worry about, if I was
you.

Frankie drops onto the bench and starts stowing his gear in
the bag. Scrap pretends to just now notice Maggie.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Little girl's starting to come along.

FRANKIE

Yeah. Almost as if somebody been
helping her.

Maggie stops working, pulls out Scrap's old speed bag and
snaps it in place.

SCRAP

Could be just a natural. Ask me,
she's got something.

FRANKIE

She's got my speed bag, that's what
she's got!

Frankie looks accusingly to Scrap.

SCRAP

Now where the hell you think she got
that?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (3)

24

Frankie crosses to Maggie, who is having a hard time hitting the speed bag.

FRANKIE

I'm gonna need that bag back.

MAGGIE

This bag?

FRANKIE

Yeah, it's mine. And people know it's mine, so they're gonna think I'm training you.

MAGGIE

(still punching)
That such a bad thing, boss?

FRANKIE

Yes. Every time you touch it you lose me business.

MAGGIE

(tries to laugh it
off)
I gotta agree, I am embarrassing myself.

She unsnaps the bag, hands it over.

FRANKIE

I just don't lend out my stuff.

MAGGIE

I understand.

FRANKIE

Listen, you seem like a real nice girl, so I'm gonna give you some advice.

MAGGIE

I'd appreciate that.

FRANKIE

You may find a trainer in here or some other gym, cause they're all looking for girls, it's like the new freak show. But if they take you on they're wasting your time. You're too old.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (4)

24

MAGGIE

Don't feel that old, boss.

FRANKIE

Yeah, well neither do I, but you don't see me fighting twenty-one year-olds. It takes four years to train a fighter. How old are you?

MAGGIE

Thirty two. Till my birthday.

FRANKIE

You wouldn't start training to be a ballerina at thirty-two, would you?

MAGGIE

Already been working it three years.

FRANKIE

And you can't even hit a speed bag; you had some real good training.

MAGGIE

Never had any, boss.

FRANKIE

I hate to say it, but it shows. Figure somebody should tell you the truth.

Maggie tries to hide how deeply this hurts her. She fails.

MAGGIE

Yeah. Sorry for using your bag, Mr. Dunn.

FRANKIE

Ah, Jesus, you're not gonna cry, are you?

MAGGIE

No, sir.

FRANKIE

Take the goddamn bag.

MAGGIE

No, you need it.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (5)

24

FRANKIE

I haven't even seen it in twenty years, had three new ones since, take the damn thing.

MAGGIE

I'll just borrow it till I buy my own.

FRANKIE

Just don't lose it.

Frankie walks off, angry with himself. Passing Scrap, who is smiling.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

You give her anything else, you're fired.

Frankie slams his office door closed behind him. Scrap watches Maggie snap the bag back in and start over.

25 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- EVENING

25

Frankie sits in his kitchen, talking on the rotary phone.

FRANKIE

Hogan, your boy is the champ, so we won't split fifties, but if I don't see forty percent--

The doorbell rings.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

You call me when it's sixty forty or don't call back at all.

He hangs up.

THE FRONT DOOR

Frankie opens it, surprised to see Big Willie waiting, dressed in his best suit.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Willie?

BIG WILLIE

Hey, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Something wrong?

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

BIG WILLIE

Sorry to come round to your house like this, I know you don't like people dropping in.

It's true but Frankie hides his discomfort.

*

FRANKIE

You're not people, Willie, you're welcome anytime.

BIG WILLIE

I wanted to thank you for getting Grace's car back.

FRANKIE

I don't know if you should thank me, Willie. Paying an extra thousand for your own car ain't much of a favor.

BIG WILLIE

Grace broke out and cried when she saw it.

(beat)

I also need to talk to you about business.

FRANKIE

I was just on the phone with Hogan. Told him we'd be ready in September. We got everything done but the split.

BIG WILLIE

I gotta leave you, Frankie.

FRANKIE

(blind-sided)

Willie, the title is two fights away.

BIG WILLIE

It's not that. It's just like you said, I got one shot. If I win, I gotta make as much as I can while I can. I need somebody in the action, who can make things happen.

(even harder to say:)

And I gotta make the change before the fight. Only way this guy'd take me is he takes me to the title.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (2)

25

FRANKIE

So, Willie, I got you the title fight,
but this guy's gonna take you there?

BIG WILLIE

Only way he'd do it. I'm sorry,
Frankie. I know how long you been
waiting for a title. I wanted it to
be with me.

Willie exits.

26 EXT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- NIGHT

26

Frankie steps onto his front porch, watches Willie walk to
his car.

FRANKIE

Mickey Mack's a business man, he
can't teach ya nothing.

Willy turns, a deep sadness playing across his face.

BIG WILLIE

You already taught me everything I
need to know.

Willie backs out of the drive as the PHONE RINGS inside.
Frankie makes no move to go in and answer it.

SCRAP V.O.

There's some things people just don't
want to hear.

27 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

27

It's slow time, late morning. Scrap wears the punch mitts
for Danger, who has his hands in the air announcing:

DANGER

--and I challenge the Motor City
Cobra Thomas Hit Man Hearn to fight
me for the WBA Welterweight
Championship of the whole world!

SCRAP V.O.

No one had the heart to tell Danger
that Hearn retired years ago.

SCRAP

Danger, I'm wearin' these mitts for
a reason.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

DANGER

Workin' on my footwork, Mist Scrap.

Frankie enters, passing.

FRANKIE

Danger, throw a punch or get the hell out of my gym.

Frankie disappears into his office, as Danger thinks hard about punching.

SCRAP

You be thinking about that punch. I'll be right back.

MAGGIE

trying to get the swing of the speed bag, watches Scrap head to Frankie's office.

DANGER

Thinking how I'm gonna hit it hard, Mist Scrap!

28 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

28

Frankie opens his little leather bound book and finds where he left off.

FRANKIE

(sounding it out)
Bier mé féin leat, is ná déan do dhe armad.

Scrap watches him from the door.

SCRAP

Heard about Willie. Cold. Dead Cold. Wouldn't be such a shame if you weren't so damn old.

FRANKIE

Least I can see through both eyes.

SCRAP

Didn't do you much good, did they?

FRANKIE

I got the gym. Don't need to be training fighters at my age.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

SCRAP

Willie tell you why?

FRANKIE

Mickey's got the connections.

SCRAP

Ain't about connections. Bout you not believing in him.

FRANKIE

I found him, I stuck with him eight years because I didn't believe in him?

SCRAP

Coulda got him a title fight two years ago. Man knew that. Amazing he stuck around this long.

FRANKIE

Gettin' there and taking the belt home are two different things. I should just toss him in over his head, not protect him?

SCRAP

So, you were protecting him from being champ. Now it's making sense.

FRANKIE

How'd your manager do for you, Scrap? You were a hell of a fighter, better than Willie, he get you a title fight? Or did he bust you out banging your head into other people's fists until you lost your eye?

SCRAP

I had my shot. Went out swinging, no man can say I didn't.

FRANKIE

Yeah, I remember. Excuse me if I didn't want my fighter spending the second half of his life cleaning up other people's spit.

SCRAP

Yeah, you're right. You're the smart one. You the one learning Greek.

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

28

FRANKIE
Gaelic. It's Gaelic.

SCRAP
You just protected yourself right
out of a championship fight. How
you say that in Gaelic?

Frankie goes back to his book.

29 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS

29

Maggie works at the speed bag, watches Scrap come out of the
office and sit, stewing. She knows something just happened.
MONTAGE BEGINS:

30 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT -- MORNING

30

Maggie buses a table. Slips the dirty dishes into the rubber
tray, except for a half-eaten steak sandwich, which she
carefully removes. She looks around, then wraps it in some
scrap tin foil. She looks up to see the cook watching her.

MAGGIE
For my dog.

31 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

31

Maggie takes out her frustrations on the speed bag. The
fighter next to her makes it circle in a perfect eight.
Seeing that makes her hit it harder.

32 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- NIGHT

32

Maggie realizes some teenagers left without paying. Chases
them out to...

33 THE PARKING LOT

33

The kids speed off, laughing at Maggie.

34 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

34

Maggie cuts off the bite marks off the steak, puts it on a
plate. She eats while piling coins into stacks.

35 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

35

The alarm goes off at 3:30 a.m.. She gets out of bed.

- 36 EXT. VENICE BIKE PATH -- NIGHT 36
Stripped down, Maggie runs the path, barely a soul in sight.
- 37 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY 37
Maggie slams away at the heavy bag -- still flat footed, but really moving. Frankie glances at her from behind the counter, goes back to his work.
- 38 INT. VENICE RESTAURANT 38
Maggie finds a two dollar tip on the table soaking in a pool of spilled gravy. She wipes the bills clean, pockets them.
- 39 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY 39
Maggie rolls her tips into wrappers as she eats some scraps.
- 40 INT. SPORTING GOODS STORE -- DAY 40
Maggie puts a new speed bag on the counter and digs out dozens of rolls of quarters, dimes, nickels and some crumpled singles. The cashier gives her a look that could kill.
- 41 INT. FRANKIE'S HOUSE - MONTAGE CONTINUES -- NIGHT 41
Frankie sits on the edge of his sofa, eyes fixed on a tiny TV set. There's a fight on the screen: Willie and the champ; each fighter taking a lot of punishment.
Frankie's face betrays every nuance of the match.
SCRAP V.O.
Boxing is an unnatural act.
The Champ throws a barrage of punches, going for a knockout.
SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
Cause everything in it is backwards.
Frankie's feet shift slightly. We cut to the screen and see that Willie just did the same.
SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
You want to move to the left, you don't step left, you push on the right toe.
(MORE)
The champ keeps coming on strong. Willie's getting battered.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

To move right, you use the left toe.

Frankie pushes right. So does Willy, just before he delivers two devastating lefts to the body and a stunning overhand right - the same move that Frankie called in his last fight.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Instead of running from the pain, like a sane person would do, you step into it.

The champ staggers. Frankie's feet shift forward as Willie steps right in and puts the champ down for the count. The crowd roars. Frankie turns off the set, sits back, allows himself a smile. It fades after a second.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Everything in boxing is backwards.

42 INT. BROADWAY DINER -- NIGHT

42

Frankie drops into a seat at the counter, scans the menu. The counterman places half a cup of coffee before him.

COUNTERMAN

Cheeseburger?

FRANKIE

You still make your lemon pie with that canned filling crap?

COUNTERMAN

Got no idea how they make it.

FRANKIE

Cheeseburger.

The counterman places the order. Frankie fills the other half of his cup with cream.

43 EXT. HIT PIT - ALLEY ENTRANCE -- NIGHT

43

Frankie bangs at the basement door, a takeout container in his other hand. Scrap opens it, looking like he was in bed.

FRANKIE

You want a cheeseburger?

SCRAP

You bought me a cheeseburger?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

SCRAP (CONT'D)

I never seen you buy anybody a
cheeseburger.

FRANKIE

Ordered it, couldn't eat it.

SCRAP

So the planet can go back to spinnin'.

44 INT. HIT PIT - SCRAP'S BACK ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

44

The TV is on. Frankie sits as Scrap opens the burger.

SCRAP

You watch the fight?

FRANKIE

Willie did good.

SCRAP

That's what you got to say?

FRANKIE

He won, he did good.

SCRAP

So, you really been working on
yourself, opening up. That's some
fine work.

FRANKIE

You watch it?

SCRAP

Sure. Got HBO.

FRANKIE

How the hell you afford HBO? How
long I been telling you to save your
money?

SCRAP

Since I fought Louis Typhoon Johnson
at the Stadium Club in Tupelo,
Mississippi.

FRANKIE

...That true?

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

SCRAP

My manager ran off with the purse,
left you and me to hitch home, do
you remember nothin'?

FRANKIE

Remember walkin' half the damn way.
Remember thinkin' I'd be lynched.

SCRAP

Remember you leavin' me with my dick
in my hand behind that gas station.

FRANKIE

I got us a ride! Son of a bitch
drove off before I even closed the
door! Had to jump out and walk two
miles back!

SCRAP

Conscience got the better of you.

Silence. Frankie hears a thumping from out in the gym. He
gives Scrap a look.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

It's her birthday.

45 INT. HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS

45

Frankie walks toward the dimly lit gym. Sees Maggie, sweat
soaked, working the speed bag, making all the same mistakes
and punishing herself for it. Frankie watches, unseen. She
stops, breathing heavy. Frankie steps out into the light.

FRANKIE

You're not breathing right. It's
why you're pantin'.

She hides a flash of pain, something very deep.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

It's your birthday, huh? That makes
you how old?

MAGGIE

I am thirty-three, Mr. Dunn. And
I'm here celebrating the fact that I
spent another year scrapin' dishes
and waitressin', which is what I
been doing since thirteen.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

And according to you, I'll be thirty seven before I can even throw a decent punch - which, after working this speed bag for a month and gettin' nowhere, I now realize may be God's simple truth. Other truth is, my brother's in prison, my sister cheats on welfare by pretendin' one of her babies is still alive, my daddy's dead and my momma weighs three hundred and twelve pounds. And if I was thinking straight I'd go back home, find a used trailer, buy a deep fryer and some Oreos. Problem is this is the only thing I ever felt good doin'. If I'm too old for this, then I got nothing else. That nuff truth to suit you?

She doesn't take her eyes off him, demanding an answer.

FRANKIE

...That your speed bag?

MAGGIE

Put yours behind the counter. Wish I could say I wore it out.

FRANKIE

Okay. I'll show you this, but that's it. Then you get a trainer.

MAGGIE

No, sorry.

FRANKIE

...You're in a position to negotiate?

MAGGIE

Yes sir, because I know if you train me right, I'm gonna be a champ. I seen you looking at me--

FRANKIE

--Outta pity.

MAGGIE

Don't you say that! Don't you say that if it ain't true! I want a trainer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Don't want charity, don't want favors.
If you're not interested, I got more
celebrating to do.

She goes back to punishing the bag. Frankie can't stand to
watch her.

FRANKIE

Stop, stop, stop. What the hell you
doing?

(she stops)

Okay, here it is: if I take you on--

MAGGIE

--You won't never regret it.

FRANKIE

--Just listen. If I take you on--

MAGGIE

--I promise I'll work so hard.

FRANKIE

God, this is already a mistake.

MAGGIE

--I'm listening, boss.

FRANKIE

If I take you on, you do everything
I say.

(as she opens her
mouth)

You don't question me, you don't ask
me why, you don't say nothing 'xcept
"yes, Frankie." I'm gonna try and
forget you're a girl--

MAGGIE

--It's all I ask.

FRANKIE

--so, don't come crying to me if you
get hurt.

MAGGIE

We got a deal.

FRANKIE

No. Understand this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (3)

45

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

I'll teach you to fight, but that's it. After that you find yourself a manager and I say good-bye.

MAGGIE

Don't mean to argue but--

FRANKIE

No arguing. I teach you what you need and it's over. You go off, make a million, I don't care; get your teeth knocked out, I don't care. And I don't want to hear about it either way. Only way I'll do this thing.

She sees he can't go over this line. She shakes his hand.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Now move your feet, stand like a person whose gonna hit something.

MAGGIE

Move em how boss?

He moves them for her.

FRANKIE

Hit the bag.

She nails it once.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Stop!

MAGGIE

What'd I do wrong?

FRANKIE

Two things, first you asked me a question, then you asked another one. Step aside.

(he takes the stance)

It's not about hitting hard, it's about hitting right.

He demonstrates, one step at a time.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Count with me. I drive my left fist straight through on one.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (4)

45

MAGGIE

Can you show me that again?

FRANKIE

Say one.

MAGGIE

One.

FRANKIE

One one, my weight is on my right
foot, see?

SCRAP

watches from the shadows of the back hall.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Then I rock over and put weight on
my left foot and leave it there while
on two I punch the bag--

And we start a montage of Frankie training her.

46 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

46

Maggie sits at her table in front of two small piles of cash.
She finishes writing a letter and stuffs one of the piles of
cash into it, seals it...

FRANKIE (V.O.)

--with the butt of my left fist like
I was stickin' it with an ice pick
from the side.

...and addresses the envelope to "Mrs. Earline Fitzgerald."

47 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

47

Maggie watches Frankie intently.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

While my weight's on my left foot, I
drive through the bag on three.

48 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- NIGHT

48

Maggie takes a big order.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

Now I drop my weight back over to my
right foot again...

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED: 48

CLOSE ON HER FEET

She rocks back on her right while standing there.

49 BACK TO THE GYM - ANOTHER DAY 49

Shawrelle tries to pretend he isn't watching Frankie, isn't trying to pick something up.

FRANKIE

And on *four* I do the ice-pick move
with my right. You do it.

Frankie steps away, Maggie tries her very best, which is pretty god awful. Frankie watches for as long as he can.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Just keep doin' it.

He walks away to let her work. In a series of TIME CUTS we see Maggie getting better as the days pass, until that bag swings sweet and fast in a perfect figure eight.

DANGER mimics.

SCRAP can't take his eyes off her.

SHAWRELLE scoffs, goes back to sparring with Omar.

FRANKIE sneaks a peek up from his book.

MAGGIE finally stops, sweating, hands on her knees and breathing hard. She looks up to see Frankie coming.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Rest when you're dead.

He snatches up the punch mitts and walks off. She straightens up and follows him.

SCRAP V.O.

To make a fighter, you gotta strip
'em down to bare wood.

50 FRANKIE 50

wears the punch mitts, lets her hammer away at them.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: 50

FRANKIE
Jab, jab, double up.
Do it again. Two of
them. One-two. One-
two hook. Two jabs,
right-hand, jab, jab,
double up, jab, hook,
come back with the
right hand. Do it
again. Do it again.

SCRAP V.O.
You can't just tell em
'forget everything you
know', you gotta make em
forget it in their bones;
make em so tired they only
listen to you, only hear
your voice, only do what
you say, and nothing else.
You show em how to stand...

51 FRANKIE - ANOTHER DAY 51

He grabs her calves, pulls them closer together.

SCRAP V.O.
Keep their legs under their
shoulders...

52 FRANKIE -- ANOTHER DAY 52

Does it again.

SCRAP V.O.
Show em how to keep their balance...

53 FRANKIE & MAGGIE -- ANOTHER DAY 53

Frankie works her in the ring. He keeps touching her on the
shoulder, a one fingered jab.

FRANKIE
See how you blink when
I touch you. If I'm
touching you, I'm
turning you. If I'm
turning you, I'm taking
your balance. Do it.
(she tries)
You take my balance,
you take my fight.

SCRAP V.O.
...and take it away from
the other guy.

Sally Mendoza watches Maggie. Frankie notices him watching.

54 IN THE RING - ANOTHER DAY 54

Frankie shows Maggie how to:

SCRAP V.O.
They gotta know how to cut off the
ring.

- 55 ON THE FLOOR 55
 She mimics Frankie's balance work...
 SCRAP V.O.
 How to generate momentum off your
 right toe and
- 56 BACK AT THE PUNCH MITTS 56
 Maggie slams them with much more power and certainty.
 SCRAP V.O.
 how to flex your knee when you fire
 a jab.
 MAGGIE
 Think I'm ready for a fight, boss?
 He ignores her.
- 57 BACK IN THE RING -- ANOTHER DAY 57
 Shows her...
 SCRAP V.O.
 How to fight backing up, so the other
 guy doesn't wanna come after ya.
 And then you gotta show em all again.
- 58 FRANKIE - AT THE HEAVY BAG 58
 Grabs her ankles, pulls them closer together.
 SCRAP V.O.
 Over and over and over.
 Jump cuts as he does this three more times.
 SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
 Till they think they were born that
 way.
- 59 INT. HIT PIT -- ANOTHER DAY 59
 Maggie spars with a muscular Hispanic woman. Scrap takes a
 fifty cent tip from a black fighter for doing some errand.
 SCRAP
 Do appreciate it.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

He looks up at the ring, admiring Maggie. She is all lean muscle now, but her face is beet red. Frankie calls from the bleachers, waves her down.

FRANKIE
You're not breathing.

MAGGIE
(panting)
Hate to disagree with you.

FRANKIE
You're holding your breath when you punch. You get under pressure, you hold your breath. Stop doing that.

Maggie sits beside him on the bleacher.

MAGGIE
Okay. But other than that, I'm doing pretty good, right? I mean, for a girl.

FRANKIE
Wouldn't know, don't train girls.

MAGGIE
You think I might be ready for a fight, boss?

FRANKIE
Find a manager, ask him.

MAGGIE
Like to, but you been keepin' me too busy.
(beat)
You got any family, boss?

Scrap looks over, knows she's on dangerous ground.

FRANKIE
Why?

MAGGIE
You just spending all this time with me. Didn't know if you had any family.

Scrap tries to pretend he's working and not listening.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (2)

59

FRANKIE
No. Got a daughter. Katy.

MAGGIE
That's family.

FRANKIE
We ain't really close.

MAGGIE
How much she weigh?

FRANKIE
What?

MAGGIE
Trouble in my family comes by the
pound.

FRANKIE
She ain't that big. Good athlete.
Don't know if she kept it up.

Frankie disappears into a hole he thought he stepped over.
Maggie senses this, decides to pull him back out.

MAGGIE
So, what do you think? I ready for
a fight?

Frankie looks up. Something's changed in his face, but she
doesn't know what. Frankie looks around, spots Sally Mendoza.

FRANKIE
Sally, come 'ere.

Scrap sees what's happening, tries to cut it off.

SCRAP
Frankie? Got a problem in back.
Can I see you about it?

FRANKIE
(to Maggie)
Sally here's a good manager. Got
two boys Golden Gloves.
(to Sally)
You looking for a girl?

SALLY
Lookin' for a good one.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED: (3)

59

FRANKIE

Then here you go.
(to Maggie)
Good working with ya, girlie.

Maggie tries to keep her face from falling to the floor as she watches Frankie walk.

SALLY

I wasn't lyin', I been watching you work, you gotta a hell of a right.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

Frankie gets over to Scrap.

FRANKIE

What's this big problem?

SCRAP

No problem. No problem at all.

Frankie walks back to his office.

MAGGIE

eyes him all the way, barely listening to Sally.

SALLY

You want to give this a try, see if it's a fit?

Maggie meets Scrap's eyes, he gives her a little smile.

MAGGIE

Yeah, sure.

SALLY

Good, cause I think you're ready for a fight.

With the sound of a bell we're in...

60 INT. CLUB RING -- NIGHT

60

Some club, someplace, who cares. What we care about is Maggie, sitting on her stool, bloodied and beaten and confused. Her eyes dart to Sally, who mops her up.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

60

MAGGIE

What am I doin' wrong, Sally? Every time I get inside she's on me.

SALLY

You're doing great, you're wearing her down, just keep punching.

MAGGIE

I'm not doing great, I'm losin'.

SALLY

You're wearing her down.

Sally climbs out. The bell rings again and Maggie goes after her opponent, and immediately starts taking more punishment.

FRANKIE

stands in the shadows against the back wall, his hand covering most of his face. Scrap joins him.

SCRAP

Nice night, ain't it?

Maggie drops her left and is punished for it. Frankie winces.

FRANKIE

Jesus Christ.

SCRAP

That's Lonnie Washington's girl, she a hell of a fighter. Eleven and O. Lonnie got some good fighters. He got Joey Adagio, lightweight champ.

FRANKIE

Keep your left up!

SCRAP

Wouldn't be my choice for a first fight. But Sally's a good manager, must think she can take her.

Maggie's opponent comes over her left again.

FRANKIE

Jesus H--Keep your left up! Your left!

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (2)

60

SCRAP

Think she can hear you from back here?

FRANKIE

Your left!

Maggie gets inside on sheer guts, goes to town on the girl's torso. The girl pushes her back and comes over Maggie's lazy left, catching her hard.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Jesus!

SCRAP

Course, Maggie loses, it don't mean much to Sally. Might even help him. Lonnie's girl gets another win, maybe Lonnie let Sally's lightweight fight Joey Adagio for the title.

FRANKIE

Sally's trying to set a fight with Adagio?

SCRAP

What do I know? I just comes cause I enjoy the fights.

Maggie drops her left again and pays the price.

FRANKIE

Mother of God--

The bell rings and Frankie springs off the back wall. He's ringside before the fighters even get to their corners, calling up through the ropes.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

C'mere-c'mere!

Maggie goes to him, squatting. Sally is in the ring with the stool in his hand...

SALLY

(to Maggie)

Hey! Get over here!

FRANKIE

You're dropping your left hand!

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (3)

60

SALLY
Frankie, you mind if I talk to my
fuckin' fighter?

FRANKIE
You're doing a hell of a job with
her there, Sally. You give the same
advice to your lightweight?

REF
Dunn, what the hell you doin'?

FRANKIE
Talkin', what are you doin'?

REF
This your fighter?

SALLY
It's my fighter.

MAGGIE
(to Sally)
It ain't fittin' real well, Sally.

SALLY
Fine! You take her! Can't fight
worth a shit anyway.

Sally climbs out of the ring.

REF
Somebody tell me what's going on!

FRANKIE
I was late, Sally was just workin'
till I got here.

REF
You're telling me this is your
fighter??

FRANKIE
Yeah, this is my fighter.

Maggie's eyes almost tear up. The ref walks off with:

REF
Then you got ten seconds!

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (4)

60

MAGGIE

I keep holding my left up, boss,
then I throw a punch and it keeps
droppin'.

FRANKIE

So, leave it down.

MAGGIE

That'd be a lot easier.

FRANKIE

She thinks she knows ya, keeps comin'
over that left, she ain't lookin'
anywhere else. You let it drop and
watch for her cocking that big right
of hers, hear me?

MAGGIE

I hear you, boss.

SCRAP

(snatching it)
Got the stool!

The bell sounds. Maggie stands, Frankie grabs her wrist
pulls her back to the ropes.

FRANKIE

She cocks the right, take a short
step back and fire a good night hook.
You got one in you?

MAGGIE

Got it right here.

REF

Fight or I'm calling it!

FRANKIE

Then go give it to her.

The fighters circle, trading jabs. Scrap steps up to Frankie
carrying the stool.

SCRAP

Want the stool?

FRANKIE

It's the fourth round of a four-
rounder.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (5)

60

Maggie throws a couple jabs. Her opponent watches, waiting for the left to drop. Maggie jabs again.

SCRAP V.O.

The body knows what fighters don't: how to protect itself. A neck can only twist so far. Twist it just a hair more and the body says 'I'll take it from here, cause you obviously don't know what you're doing'

Maggie pulls a jab back, lets her left drop. Watches. Sees that right shoulder cock. As the punch comes Maggie drops back unharmed and unpacks a powerful hook. It snaps her opponent's head hard to the right, making her body go limp...

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

'Lie down now, rest and we'll talk about this when you regain your senses.'

...and she finds comfort on the canvass.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

It's called the knockout mechanism.

SCRAP

(to Frankie)

See the way she do that? Sugar Ray'd do that. Girl's got sugar.

61 INT. CLUB DRESSING ROOM

61

Frankie's pumping water into his dehydrated fighter.

FRANKIE

You forgot the rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE

Keep my left up?

FRANKIE

Protect yourself at all times. It's a rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE

Protect myself at all times.

(beat)

You gave me away. How was that protecting me?

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

FRANKIE

...Wasn't

MAGGIE

...S'Okay.

(beat)

I'm gonna work on my left, boss.

FRANKIE

Drink your water.

MAGGIE

Other than that, how'd I do?

FRANKIE

You did fine.

MAGGIE

...You gonna leave me again?

FRANKIE

Never.

(beat)

That place you work, they have lemon
pie?

MAGGIE

Sure.

FRANKIE

They use that canned filling crap?

MAGGIE

Big can, yea size. Says "Homemade"
on the label.

Frankie offers a crack of a smile.

FRANKIE

Take the weekend off.

MAGGIE

It's only Thursday, boss.

FRANKIE

You arguing with me?

MAGGIE

Know better than to do that, boss.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: (2) 61

SCRAP V.O.
All fighters are pig headed some way
or other.

62 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- EARLY MORNING 62

Father Horvath waits at the door.

SCRAP V.O.
Some part of them always thinks they
know better than you about somethin'.

Frankie is last out.

FRANKIE
Can you spare two minutes for the
Immaculate Conception?

The priest responds by going inside and locking the door.

63 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- EARLY MORNING 63

She's sitting at her table, reading a letter. We scan the
words: ...need more money...

SCRAP V.O.
Truth is, even if they're wrong,
even if that one thing is gonna be
the ruin of them...

Maggie takes the bills out of her tip jar and folds it into
a letter.

64 INT. THE HIT PIT -- CONTINUOUS 64

As Frankie comes down the stairs, passing fighters waiting
for trainers.

SCRAP V.O.
if you can beat that last bit out of
them, then they ain't fighters at
all.

Frankie turns the corner, sees Maggie working the heavy bag,
sweating like she's been at it since dawn.

FRANKIE
Said I see you Monday.

MAGGIE
You sure did, boss.

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

FRANKIE
That was last night.

MAGGIE
You asked me not to argue with you.

Frankie walks away.

65 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

65

Scrap sits, his feet up, watching Maggie work herself down to the bone. Frankie stands propped against the desk, staring alongside him.

FRANKIE
Woman won't do a damn thing I tell her.

SCRAP
You want my advice?

FRANKIE
Why ain't you wearing shoes?

SCRAP
Airing out my feet.

FRANKIE
You got big holes in your socks.

SCRAP
Not that big.

FRANKIE
I thought I gave you money to buy new ones.

SCRAP
These are my sleeping socks. My feet like a little air at night.

FRANKIE
So, why you wearing them in the daytime?

SCRAP
Daytime socks got too many holes.

FRANKIE
If I give you more money, will you buy socks?

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 65

SCRAP

I'd be tempted ta. But it might
makes it way to the track. Couldn't
say for sure.

And they just keep staring at Maggie, she is a marvel.

66 INT. SOME CLUB - SOME PLACE -- NIGHT 66

As Maggie KO's her next opponent.

SCRAP V.O.

Didn't take Maggie long to hit her
stride.

67 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 67

Maggie knocks the next one to the mat. Girl bounces back
up, Maggie puts her down again.

68 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 68

This girl goes down just as fast and hard.

69 INT. CLUB DRESSING ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT 69

Frankie unlaces Maggie's gloves.

MAGGIE

Got the breathing thing down.

FRANKIE

You ain't holding your breath cause
you're not in the ring long enough.
You gotta quit knocking out these
girls in the first round.

MAGGIE

Thought that was the point, boss.

FRANKIE

Point is for you to get good, and to
get good you need fights; and I won't
be able to get you any if you keep
knocking them out in the first round.
Nobody wants to see their fighter
embarrassed.

MAGGIE

Why am I still doing four-rounders,
boss?

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

FRANKIE

Because you ain't got the lungs to go six-rounds yet.

MAGGIE

I do if I keep knocking em out in the first round.

He gives her a look. She gives him an impish smile.

70 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT

70

The bell rings, a tough looking girl comes out of the corner, heading for Maggie.

SCRAP V.O.

Frankie made her fight one more four-rounder, just to let her know who was boss.

Maggie fakes a left hook and the girl steps into Maggie's vicious right haymaker. The girl hits the mat.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Maggie left no doubt about it.

Maggie heads back to her corner with a shrug for Frankie.

MAGGIE

Sorry, boss.

71 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT

71

Maggie faces a muscular Hispanic girl, who is dishing it out as good as she gets.

SCRAP V.O.

Her first six rounder didn't go quite as smooth.

Maggie catches her under the jaw and finishes her off.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Maggie didn't knock her out till the end of the first round.

As the girl is counted out:

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

After that, no manager wanted to put his fighter in with Maggie.

72 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 72

Frankie hands an envelope full of cash to the manager sitting across from him. The manager counts it.

SCRAP V.O.

Frankie had to go into his pocket to get her decent fights, sweetening the purse by paying managers on the side.

Frankie does the same again, this time it's another manager. Then a third.

73 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY 73

Frankie's sitting at the desk, but nobody's sitting across from him.

SCRAP V.O.

That only worked for so long. Then Frankie did something he hated doing. He took a chance.

74 INT. ANOTHER CLUB - ANOTHER NIGHT 74

SLOW MOTION. A deadly looking BLACK GIRL in dreadlocks stares right into Maggie's soul.

SCRAP V.O.

And moved her up in class.

Maggie jabs, snaps her left back. Jab, jab, snaps her left back; not high enough.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

That coulda been a mistake.

Dreadlocks comes over Maggie's left and hits her with a lead weight right. And everything goes QUIET as Maggie's nose BREAKS. Maggie dances back, shakes it off as best she can, but the blood is pouring. And the bell rings.

Maggie drops onto her stool. Frankie is in the ring in a flash, fending off the RING DOCTOR who wants a look.

FRANKIE

Gimme two goddamn seconds!
(MORE)

He moves off as Frankie goes to work on Maggie. The nose is spread across her face; just touching it makes her wince.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

It's broke.

MAGGIE

Dang!

Maggie is at the point of tears, but not from the pain.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Fix it.

FRANKIE

Can't. It's broken, no way to stop the blood.

MAGGIE

You can fix it.

FRANKIE

I can't. I have to call it.

MAGGIE

I seen what you can do! Fix it!

FRANKIE

I can crack it back in place, but I can't stop the bleeding. Ring doctor's gonna call it.

She stops shouting and digs down deep into some pain we can only glimpse.

MAGGIE

Please, Frankie. If you can stop the blood I can beat her.

Everything in Frankie says don't do this. But he shoves a rag into her mouth, takes her nose between his thumb and forefinger and cracks it back into place. Maggie almost bites through that rag before he yanks it back out. Frankie tries not to look into her eyes as he cleans out the blood and packs adrenaline rich salve up her nose.

FRANKIE

Inhale.

MAGGIE

What?

FRANKIE

Inhale!

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: (2)

74

MAGGIE

What?

FRANKIE

Breathe in!

She does. SILENCE as Maggie sucks the adrenaline deep into her nasal cavity. By the time the sounds of the ring SWELL BACK IN she's missed half of what Frankie's saying:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

-- about twenty seconds before that turns into a geyser and you'll be spraying blood all over the front row. Twenty seconds, that's all you got.

The ring doctor is there, does a quick check.

RING DOCTOR

Okay!

Frankie gives Maggie one last deep look and climbs out. The bell RINGS and everything goes SILENT again -- except for the THROBBING in Maggie's ears. She strides out of her corner, fire in her eyes. Her opponent throws everything she's got. Maggie ducks and cripples the girl with two blows to the solar plexus.

The girl pulls her arms down to protect her gut and Maggie hammers her in the temple. She clutches.

Maggie shoves her away and delivers a lightning combination that puts her out. The girl falls in SLOW MOTION, Maggie turns to look for Frankie. She doesn't hear him whisper:

FRANKIE

Mo cuishle.

75 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -- NIGHT

75

Packed. Maggie has her head back, cotton in her nose, an ice-pack on her face. Scrap sits between her and Frankie, who pretends to read his book. Maggie looks to Frankie:

MAGGIE

(unintelligible)
Whatcha readin'?

FRANKIE

(to Scrap)
What the hell she say?

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

75

SCRAP

Wants to know what you're reading.

FRANKIE

Yeats; keep your head back.

SCRAP

Talk a little Yeats to her, show her what a treat that is.

FRANKIE

When the hell they gonna get to her?

MAGGIE

(almost unintelligible)
I'm okay, Frankie.

FRANKIE

What'd you learn tonight?

MAGGIE

(lifts ice pack)
Always protect myself.

FRANKIE

That's the rule. What's the rule?

MAGGIE

Always protect myself.

A nurse steps into the room with a clipboard.

NURSE

Margaret Fitzgerald?

Frankie steers Maggie over to the nurse, who walks her off.

FRANKIE

I'll be right here.

Frankie sits again.

SCRAP

How ya doing?

FRANKIE

I'm not the one hurt.

SCRAP

Broken nose don't hurt that much.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (2) 75

FRANKIE
Why you telling me?

SCRAP
No reason.

SCRAP V.O.
But some wounds are too deep or too
close to the bone.

76 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 76

Frankie comes out. His head's somewhere else.

FATHER HORVATH
(calls after him)
Did you write your daughter?

FRANKIE
Every week.

FATHER HORVATH
I have no idea why you come to church.

And Frankie walks off.

77 INT. FRANKIE'S KITCHEN -- DAY 77

Frankie sits, pen poised over a blank sheet of paper. He
puts it down and rubs his eyes.

SCRAP V.O.
And no matter how hard you work it,
you just can't stop the bleeding.

78 INT. A RING SOMEWHERE -- NIGHT 78

SCRAP V.O.
Maggie's next two fights were easy.

Maggie flattens an opponent...

79 INT. ANOTHER RING -- ANOTHER NIGHT 79

Knocks down a second.

SCRAP V.O.
Maybe too easy.
(MORE)

Maggie turns to Frankie, not as happy as she should be about
the win.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

79

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

After her twelfth straight knock out, Frankie got a couple real good offers. The first was to fight--

80 INT. RING IN A LARGE VENUE - GERMANY -- DAY

80

BILLIE THE BLUE BEAR, a big-busted, masculine looking Russian, pants in her corner between rounds.

SCRAP V.O.

--Billy "the Blue Bear" Astrakhov for the WBA Welterweight Title. Billie was a former prostitute,

Billie comes out of the corner breathing fire.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

--a banger who waded in winging shots from all angles, easily beating girls from Berlin to Australia. Had a reputation for being the dirtiest fighter in the ranks.

Billie jams the palm of her glove into her opponent's nose. The nose breaks instantly and the girl hits the mat.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Didn't seem to matter to her that something like that could kill a person.

The crowd goes nuts.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

And the crowds loved her. Especially in Germany.

81 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

81

Frankie hangs up the phone.

SCRAP V.O.

He turned it down without even telling her.

82 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

82

Frankie's heading out. Scrap hands him the counter phone. Frankie talks, under:

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

SCRAP V.O.

The next was to fight the British champ, a Jamaican girl Billie just beat.

Frankie hangs up.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

He turned that down, too.

83 INT. HOLLYWOOD DINER -- DAY

83

Maggie pours Frankie a half a cup of coffee.

MAGGIE

That's a lotta money, boss.

FRANKIE

You're making money. Why you still working here?

She fills the remaining half with cream.

MAGGIE

It's a title match, right?

FRANKIE

You British? Then you can't take her title away; she got nothing to lose, you got nothing to win.

MAGGIE

Might still be a good fight.

FRANKIE

I just moved you up to welterweight. Not good enough for you to fight contenders, you have to fight some bullshit champ?

MAGGIE

Didn't notice I was fighting contenders.

FRANKIE

I can find you another manager any time you like.

(MORE)

That stings. Frankie knows it was a shitty thing to say. So, he has to make it worse.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Maybe you learn to protect your face,
I wouldn't have to turn down all
that money.

MAGGIE

My face out there so much, it's a
miracle I ain't been knocked out
yet, boss.

She walks off to serve someone else, leaving Frankie to stew.

84 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT

84

Almost all the lights are off. Close on MAGGIE'S HANDS, as she winds adhesive tape around her left wrist, then lifts the roll over her shoulder and sticks the tape to the skin on the back of her neck. She pulls it down over the other side and winds it around her left wrist again, so that her glove is held up in front of her face. She pulls her right glove on with her teeth and steps out of shot. THUD. THUD.

MAGGIE

bangs away at the heavy bag with her right. CUT. She's covered in sweat and still pounding, circling. CUT. Her shirt is drenched, her left is throbbing, her right hurts every time it smacks the bag. She keeps hitting it harder.

SCRAP

watches from the shadows of the back hall.

SCRAP

You can't work here no more tonight.

She stops, shakes off her glove, unwinds the tape and strips it off the back of her neck, taking hair and skin with it. She drops her stuff in her fight bag.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

I got us a reservation.

Maggie looks up at him, not expecting this.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

You may want to shower.

85 INT. BROADWAY DINER -- LATER THAT NIGHT

85

Hair wet, Maggie sits at the counter with Scrap near the back of the restaurant.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

The waiter puts a cupcake down, a candle burning atop. She stares at it, thinking.

SCRAP

Ain't no big secret what you're wishing for, go ahead and blow.

She does, takes a knife, cuts it in two. Scrap bites in.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Thirty-three ain't so old. I was still fighting when I was thirty-nine. Fought twenty-three years.

The door opens, Scrap turns to see Mickey Mack, dressed like he's been out on the town.

MICKEY MACK

How ya doing, Scrap?

SCRAP

Doing good, Mickey.

Mickey takes a seat at the far end of the counter. Scrap looks to Maggie.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

You two ain't talking?

MAGGIE

Don't hardly know him.

SCRAP

Met Frankie just after my thirty-seventh birthday. He was picking up jobs as a cut man. He'd patch me up when I thought it was impossible. Good man to have in your corner.

MAGGIE

Yes, he is.

SCRAP

Stayed with me through my last fight, in San Berdoo. My manager was off gettin' drunk, so it was just Frankie and me, and I was takin' a mean beatin'. Everybody got a particular number of fights in them, but nobody tells you what that number is. Mine was a hundred and nine.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (2)

85

SCRAP (CONT'D)

I just refused to believe it. Fourth round, this cut opens up.

(points to a scar
over his blind eye)

Blood starts pouring into my eye. They shoulda stopped the fight, but I was a black man in San Berdoo, blood was what I was there for. So, round after round I get Frankie to patch me up, and he keeps saying he's gonna throw in the towel; but he ain't my manager, he can't throw in nothin'. Round after round, he's arguing with me and I'm damn near laughin', cause it's tearin' him up more than me.

(beat)

I go fifteen rounds, lose by decision. Lose my eye the next morning.

(beat)

In twenty-three years, he's never said a word about it. Doesn't have to, I see it every time he looks at me. Somehow Frankie thinks he shoulda stopped that fight. Shoulda saved my eye. Lives every day wishing he coulda take back that 109th fight. I wanted to go to 110. Still do.

(beat)

Man loves fighters more than he loves the fight. And we love him back. But...if you wanna get to the title, maybe he ain't the guy to take you there.

Maggie's stunned, never expected to hear this from Scrap. He counts out his coins and places them on the bill.

MAGGIE

You tell Mr. Mack we'd be here tonight?

SCRAP

You finish your cupcake.

And he walks out. She watches him all the way to the door.

SCRAP V.O.

It's the rule. Always protect yourself.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED: (3)

85

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

People never take their own advice.
If she was gonna leave Frankie, better
she did it to him then.

The door closes behind Scrap. Maggie looks to Mickey Mack.
She stands and walks to him.

MAGGIE

Mr. Mickey Mack? I'm Maggie
Fitzgerald.

She holds out her hand, he takes it, swallowing his food.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I hear you're a real good manager,
doing good things for Big Willie.
But I thought you should know that
I ain't ever leaving Mr. Dunn, so
you don't have to make any more
excuses to bump into me. Sorry for
interrupting your dinner.

And she walks out.

SCRAP V.O.

Maggie always did like taking them
out in the first round.

And the door closes and Mickey Mack has to laugh.

86 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- NIGHT

86

Frankie unlocks his door, picks up the mail that's been
dropped through the slot. He leafs through them as he walks
into his kitchen. One of them makes him stop.

87 INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

87

Frankie opens a shoebox. It's full of identical unopened
letters. He places this letter in the box, puts the box on
the high shelf in his closet, alongside several similar boxes,
and closes the closet door.

He sits on his bed and tries to not think. And fails. And
for a first time we glimpse the crack in his soul.

88 EXT. VENICE NEIGHBORHOOD -- EARLY MORNING

88

Frankie sits in his Plymouth outside of Maggie's building,
wearing yesterday's suit. He checks his watch.

89 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

89

Frankie inspects the place. He hates it.

FRANKIE

What the hell you be doing with your money?

MAGGIE

Saving it.

She disappears into the bathroom to fill up the kettle.

FRANKIE

Good girl.

Frankie ambles over to the bureau, where Maggie's checkbook lies beside her tip jar. He fingers it as he talks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

When you save enough, you need to buy yourself a little house. Cash, no mortgage.

He sees the entries -- most made out to Earline Fitzgerald.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Gonna be a while before I can do that.

FRANKIE

May be a stretch at first, but you need a place that's yours. You put it off, buy stuff that don't mean anything, what have you got?

She comes back with the kettle, puts it on the hot plate.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Wait too long, you end up with nothing.

MAGGIE

Okay. Soon as I get the money.

FRANKIE

Made a lot of mistakes in my life. Just trying to keep you from doing the same.

MAGGIE

I know, boss.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

FRANKIE

Well, I'm not gonna live forever.

Hands her the video tape he's been holding.

MAGGIE

What is it?

FRANKIE

Tape of the girl you're fighting in England. You gonna get the title, we better start making some moves.

She leaps into his arms, legs around his waist.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Jesus! Get the hell off me! You know how old I am?

MAGGIE

Thank you, boss. Thank you so much.

FRANKIE

Just put the damn tape in.

MAGGIE

Put it where, boss?

Frankie looks around the room. No TV. Damn.

90 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

90

Frankie and Maggie watch the tape. The Jamaican girl, young, strong and assured, trades blows with a Yugoslav who looks twice her size.

MAGGIE

How old is she?

FRANKIE

Twenty-two.

MAGGIE

Twenty-two? When she get to be champ?

FRANKIE

You'll ask her when she's on the mat. The other girl's a heavyweight. It's an exhibition, charity thing.

And with that, the Jamaican knocks the Yugoslav cold dead out. The tape stops. Maggie doesn't speak for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

MAGGIE

She's a good fighter.

FRANKIE

Yep.

MAGGIE

Think I woulda been that good at her age?

FRANKIE

Think you're that good now.

MAGGIE

Maybe I missed it, Frankie. Maybe you were right. Maybe I am too old.

FRANKIE

You could be.

(standing)

Which woulda been a real waste of my time.

He disappears into the kitchen.

91 INT. AN ANCIENT SPORTING GOODS STORE -- DAY

91

Frankie stands across the counter from a man ten years older than him, a catalogue open between them.

FRANKIE

M O - C U I S H L E. How much that gonna be?

PROPRIETOR

Two hundred and eight bucks.

FRANKIE

You gotta be kidding.

PROPRIETOR

Silk.

Frankie digs into his wallet.

FRANKIE

Fine.

(pays it. A thought)

How much extra for a harp?

PROPRIETOR

Seventy-five dollars.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

Frankie makes the decision, each bill he counts out causing him great pain.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)

You want real gold thread?

Frankie looks up, knowing what's coming. Waits for it.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)

Forty dollars.

Frankie stares right through the back of his head. Then reaches into his wallet.

92 INT. A CAVERNOUS DRESSING ROOM - LONDON -- NIGHT

92

The place is so large that it dwarfs Frankie and Maggie. He tapes her second hand, Maggie tests it. A PAKISTANI man with Cockney accent peeks in through the door:

PAKISTANI

Ten minutes, luv.

MAGGIE

Thank you.

(to Frankie)

Man says he loves me.

FRANKIE

I'm sure he's not the first.

MAGGIE

First since my daddy. I win, you think he'll propose?

FRANKIE

You win, I'll propose.

It was a joke, something said off the cuff, but suddenly Frankie feels embarrassed. Maggie senses it, is charmed. Frankie snatches a box out of the bag on the floor.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Hurry up and put this on.

She looks at him, curious, then tears it open to find a Kelly green silk robe. She turns it over, sees a golden Gaelic harp and the words **Mo Cuishle** emblazoned in Celtic lettering.

MAGGIE

I think they gave you somebody else's.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

FRANKIE

It's yours.

MAGGIE

What's it mean?

FRANKIE

Nothin', it's Gaelic. Go fight.

She decides to leave it at that. She flicks it open and as it unfurls...

93 INT. LONDON ARENA -- NIGHT

93

Frankie walks Maggie toward the ring. A couple of young Irish men on the aisle take notice of her robe. One whispers to the other.

SCRAP V.O.

She wasn't the main attraction.

A red-headed woman notices the robe and says something to the man beside her.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

She was on the undercard of a middleweight title fight.

94 BAM!

94

The tough JAMAICAN punches Maggie like a speeding train. Her fists fly so fast Maggie can barely block the punches.

SCRAP V.O.

But ask someone who was there, they couldn't tell you who else fought that night.

Maggie dances away, overwhelmed, trying to figure out how to fight this girl. Frankie yells from the corner. The Jamaican charges and smothers Maggie in punches. Maggie blocks and dances away; she can't get a punch off. The bell.

MAGGIE

hits the stool.

MAGGIE

Dang, she's tough. I can't get inside. I can't get close enough to hit her.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

FRANKIE

You know why that is?

MAGGIE

What, boss?

FRANKIE

She's a better fighter than you.
 She's younger, she's stronger and
 she's got more experience.

(off Maggie's reaction)

Now what are you gonna do about it?

95 SLAM

95

back into the ring. The Jamaican charges. Maggie sidesteps
 and counterpunches, landing a stunning combination to the
 torso. A lone cheer comes up from the crowd:

IRISH MAN

Mo Cuishle!!

The Jamaican comes back with amazing speed. Maggie blocks
 and counters, rocking her back with an uppercut to the jaw.

SECOND IRISH MAN

Mo Cuishle!!

NOW THREE TOGETHER

Mo Cuishle!!! Mo Cuishle!!

Maggie looks around, confused by the shouting. With her
 guard down, the Jamaican connects. Maggie beats back the
 attack. Several more people take up the chant.

IRISH FANS

Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!!

The bell.

MAGGIE

bangs her butt down onto the seat. Frankie pumps water into
 her. The Irish fans are still CHANTING.

MAGGIE

What the hell did you write on me?

FRANKIE

Worry about the fight.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED:

95

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

She's throwing too many punches, trying to take you out early. For once in your life don't play that game. She's gonna wind down like a toy. You wait for it, then take her down.

MAGGIE

You're not gonna tell me what it means, are you?

FRANKIE

Wish I knew.

Frankie grabs the stool and climbs out. The bell sounds and the Jamaican rushes, throwing punches so fast she looks like she has four arms. Maggie blocks, then counters with a flurry of her own. The Irish crowd goes wild and now almost all of them are chanting:

IRISH FANS

Mo Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!! Mo
Cuishle!! Mo Cuishle!!

The Jamaican staggers, Maggie presses, unleashing a gorgeous combination, ending in a hook that spins the Jamaican on her heels and drops her to the mat. The Irish fans go wild! Maggie dances back to the corner as the ref counts the Jamaican out.

Frankie grins, shakes his head. He calls up to her, but she can't hear him over the yelling and the chanting.

96 INT. CAVERNOUS DRESSING ROOM - LONDON ARENA -- NIGHT

96

The sudden silence is shocking. Frankie pulls off her gloves. The robe's over her shoulders. She keeps her eyes on him.

MAGGIE

I could ask someone, you know.

FRANKIE

Ask. If you find out, you can tell me, too.

He looks down and keeps unwinding. It's a shame, because he misses Maggie's beautiful smile.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT - SAME

Frankie unwinds the dressing and checks her hands, under:

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

SCRAP V.O.

Whatever it meant, the name stuck. Maggie fought in Edinburgh and Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam; it was always Mo Cuishle. Seems there are Irish people everywhere, or people who wanna be. By the time they came back to the States...

97 INT. CASINO ARENA -- NIGHT

97

Maggie fights a tough Puerto Rican girl.

SCRAP V.O.

Maggie was in a whole new league.

FANS

Macushla! Macushla!

She knocks the girl down with a blow to the temple. The girl hits the mat and grabs her head, writhing in pain. Maggie watches her, dumfounded.

IN THE STANDS

The fans keep cheering 'Macushla', unfazed. The Blue Bear and her manager sit ringside.

SCRAP V.O.

After that they got another offer to fight for the title.

98 INT. CASINO BAR -- NIGHT

98

Frankie stands at the bar with The Blue Bear and her manager.

FRANKIE

What's the split?

BILLIE'S MANAGER

Sixty-forty.

FRANKIE

Good, we take sixty, you take forty, seeing that Maggie is the draw.

BILLIE

(laughs)
That little girl?

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

FRANKIE

(to Billie)

You think I'm wrong? Really? You think people are saying: "I can't wait to see that scabby Russian dyke fight 'what's-her-name'?" Lotta people in here. Find one that says that and we'll take the forty. Das Vadanya.

And Frankie walks off.

99 INT. CASINO RESTAURANT -- EVENING

99

Frankie drops into the seat across from Maggie.

FRANKIE

They came up to sixty-forty. They'll come back with fifty.

MAGGIE

How's that girl doing?

FRANKIE

Concussion and busted eardrum.

MAGGIE

She be all right?

FRANKIE

What if she ain't?

MAGGIE

Think I could send her somethin'?

FRANKIE

You could give her the purse, probably wouldn't turn it down.

Maggie gets the point. It's a hard game. Frankie looks at his menu. She does the same.

MAGGIE

Boss? That little house we talked about? I bought it.

FRANKIE

Smart girl.

MAGGIE

Bought it for my momma.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Only about a mile from where she lives now. No mortgage, just like you said.

Frankie goes back to the menu.

FRANKIE

You're a good daughter.

MAGGIE

...Mamma don't know about it yet. I was hoping we could stay an extra day, drive over there. I know Momma wants to meet you.

FRANKIE

We could do that.

And he hides his thoughts in the menu.

100 INT. RENTAL CAR - HIGHWAY 160, MISSOURI -- MORNING

100

Frankie and Maggie drive in silence, passing one tiny depressed town after another until they pull into:

101 EXT. TRAILER PARK

101

They pass a line of rusted trailers; kids and dogs everywhere, families sprawled in lawn chairs and watching televisions. They pull to a stop in front of a rusting mobile home.

102 ANGLE ON FRANKIE'S CAR (TIME CUT)

102

The passenger door opens and a gargantuan leg swings out and hits the ground, followed by a second. The back door opens and an equally large leg finds the earth. We move up to see EARLINE and her daughter MARDELL emerge from Frankie's car. Mardell carries a screaming child. Her four-year old boy scrambles out of the back seat as Maggie rises from the other side of the car, her excitement obvious.

EARLINE

This is the Johnson's old house.

MAGGIE

Not anymore.

103 INT. BRICK BUNGALOW -- MOMENTS LATER

103

Maggie opens the door, bursting with pride. The four-year old runs past, Mardell waddles in after her, the baby still

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

screaming. Earline stops in the doorway, having a hard time understanding what's happening here.

MAGGIE

It's yours Mamma. For you and Mardell and the kids.

Earline enters, taking it all in. Frankie hangs back at what he hopes will be a safe distance.

EARLINE

...Oh, Mary M., you bought this for me?

MAGGIE

All yours, free and clear.

EARLINE

Oh, darlin...

MARDELL

There's no fridge. No stove neither.

MAGGIE

They'll be here fore you move in.

EARLINE

How much money this cost you?

MAGGIE

You never mind that.

EARLINE

You shouldn't have done this.

MAGGIE

You need a decent place.

EARLINE

You shouldn't a done it. She shoulda asked me first.

(off Maggie's look)

Darlin', the government's gonna find out about this house, they're gonna stop my welfare.

MAGGIE

No, they ain't mamma.

EARLINE

Yeah, they are.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED: (2)

103

EARLINE (CONT'D)

You're fine, you're workin', but I
can't live without my welfare.

MAGGIE

Momma, I send you money.

EARLINE

What about my medicine? Medicaid
gonna cut me off. How am I supposed
to get my medicine?

MAGGIE

Mamma, I'll send you more money!

MARDELL

Hope you don't expect J.D. to move
in here with us. He's gettin' out,
you know.

EARLINE

Why didn't you just give me the money,
why did you have to buy a house?

MAGGIE

Didn't have to, Mamma. But it's
yours. You want the money, sell it.

And Maggie walks out.

104 EXT. TRAILER PARK -- EVENING

104

Maggie carries Mardell's boy up and puts him down on the
porch, tussles his hair before turning away.

EARLINE

I know you didn't mean nothin' hurtful
by this. Sometimes you just don't
think things through.

MAGGIE

That's true, Mamma.

EARLINE

I'll try to keep the house, I just
worry about all those expenses.

MAGGIE

I'll send you some more money.

Earline touches the bruise on Maggie's face.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

EARLINE

That man hittin' you?

MAGGIE

It's from the fight. I'm a fighter,
mamma.

EARLINE

(with compassion)

Find a man, Mary M. Live proper.
People hear 'bout what you're doing
and they laugh. Hurts me to tell
you, but they laugh at you.

Off Maggie...

105 EXT. THEODOSIA - SERVICE STATION -- EVENING

105

Frankie fills the tank. He looks up from the pump, sees Maggie sitting in the passenger seat, staring out the window, trying not to feel or think and failing at both. Something makes her look at the old pickup at the other pump.

A scrawny girl, maybe ten, sits in the pick up stroking the old hound dog beside her. Her father returns, handing her a string of red licorice, before leaning across to pull her door shut. The girl smiles at Maggie before they drive off.

Frankie gets back into the rental, sees Maggie smiling.

MAGGIE

You ever own a dog?

FRANKIE

Nope. Close as I ever came was a
middleweight from Barstow.

He starts the car and they pull out.

MAGGIE

My daddy had a German Shepard, Axel.
Axel's hindquarters were so bad he
had to drag himself room to room by
his front legs. Me and Mardell'd
bust up watchin' him scoot cross the
kitchen floor. Daddy was so sick by
then, he couldn't hardly stand
himself, but one morning he got up,
carried Axel to his rig and the two
of them went off into the woods,
singing and howling.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

105 CONTINUED:

105

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Wasn't till he got home alone that night that I saw the shovel in the truck.

(beat)

Sure miss watchin' the two of them together.

They drive past the shacks set in the cedars and oaks.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I got nobody but you, Frankie.

FRANKIE

Yeah, you got me. Till we find you a manager.

And she smiles.

MAGGIE

Can you stop just up here?

106 INT. ROADSIDE DINER -- NIGHT

106

The booths are so worn that one would think General Lee dropped off here for a coffee on the way to Gettysburg. A piece of lemon pie sits in front of Frankie. He puts a forkful in his mouth and his expression tells us everything.

FRANKIE

I could die a happy man right now.

MAGGIE

I used to come here with Daddy.

FRANKIE

Is this place for sale? Cause I have some savings.

Maggie watches him eat, every bite an explosion of pleasure.

107 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- DAY

107

Frankie's on the phone.

FRANKIE

Fine.

(MORE)

He hangs up, looks out at the gym. Sees DANGER hunched over the ice chest, closely inspecting a bottle of frozen water. Scrap appears in the doorway with a bucket and mop.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED:

107

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

What the hell is Danger looking at?

Scrap turns and looks.

SCRAP

Appears to be another bottle of water.

Scrap starts on his way again.

FRANKIE

Hey. Going to Vegas, wanna come?

SCRAP

Seen you suffer over a nickel slot.
My heart can't take that kinda
pounding anymore.

FRANKIE

She got her title fight. Blue Bear.
Million dollars, whacked down the
middle.

SCRAP

That's real good. Real good.

FRANKIE

Could use a good second. Can't find
one; thought I'd ask you.

SCRAP

...Why the hell would I want to do
that?

FRANKIE

Because, you're a half-blind old
fool who never got there yourself
and I thought you'd like to see what
it felt like to be in the ring at a
title match. 'Scuse me for feeling
sorry for ya.

Frankie didn't mean this to hurt.

SCRAP

Naw, you pick up somebody in Vegas.
Somebody with young hands.

FRANKIE

Oh, don't start crying; I already
got one girl.

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (2)

107

SCRAP

I leave this place for one day, you
got any idea what it'll look like
when I get back?

FRANKIE

Lot like it does right now?

SCRAP

Appreciate the offer.

FRANKIE

...Fine.

Frankie heads out.

SCRAP

You tell Maggie not to come back
here without no belt.

Frankie nods, walks out. Scrap watches him go.

SCRAP V.O.

The rule was don't run from the pain,
step into it. But there's another
rule: when something's over it's
over.

Scrap sees Danger next to him, the frozen water in his hand.

DANGER

Mist Scrap? I got a question, but I
feel stupid askin' it.

SCRAP

There's no such thing as a stupid
question, Danger.

Danger looks at the bottle, tries to formulate the thought.

SCRAP V.O.

Course, soon as you make a rule,
someone's there to break it.

DANGER

How'd you get the ice in here through
this little tiny hole? I been
thinkin' on it, can't figure it out.

SCRAP

...Why don't I show you?

(CONTINUED)

107 CONTINUED: (3)

107

DANGER

You can do that? You can show me?

SCRAP

Believe I can.

As they walk into the back...

DANGER

And I was thinkin' I might be ready
for a fight.

SCRAP

You do, do ya?

DANGER

You don't?

SCRAP

Oh, I don't know, you're comin' along.

108 INT. MAGGIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

108

Excited, Maggie finishes packing as Frankie enters.

FRANKIE

Got the tickets, let's go.

MAGGIE

So, we're flying?

FRANKIE

You want to drive?

MAGGIE

...You're asking me?

FRANKIE

I'm asking. You want to fly or drive?

MAGGIE

So, I finally get to decide something?

FRANKIE

That's what I'm saying.

MAGGIE

Fine. Fly there, drive back.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

FRANKIE

That's the stupidest thing I ever heard. How the hell we gonna do that?!

MAGGIE

You said it was up to me.

She heads out with her suitcase. Frankie follows, knowing clearly there's a good reason he doesn't train women.

SCRAP V.O.

There's no real way to know what'd happen if you did one thing and not the other.

109 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT

109

Danger works himself into a sweat.

SCRAP V.O.

Maybe you'd still just end up in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Scrap passes Shawrelle coming out of the dressing room.

SHAWRELLE

Toilet overflowin'.

Scrap tosses him a disgusted look and exits to get his bucket. Shawrelle looks around.

110 IN THE DRESSING ROOM

110

The place is flooded, Scrap steps right into it.

SCRAP

Jesus-H-Mother-of-God.

Scrap jams his hand down the back of the tank, pulls up the lever, stops the flow, and reacts to what we don't see.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Stupid old man, coulda been sittin' in The Mirage having a MaiTai and watchin' naked girls.

(MORE)

ANGLE ON SINK - TIME CUT

Scrap empties a bucket of filthy water.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED:

110

ANGLE IN BOOTH - TIME CUT

Scrap flushes the toilet.

ANGLE ON FLOOR - TIME CUT

He mops up the last of it. Stops as he hears shouting from the gym. He drops the mop and strides toward the door, comes out to see:

DANGER AND SHAWRELLE

in the ring at the far side of the gym, Shawrelle giving Danger a terrible beating.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

HEY!

Scrap springs out of the hall, but his first step is bad -- a patch of unmopped water. Scrap goes sprawling.

Shawrelle doubles up his punches as Scrap scrambles for the ring. Danger's other eye bursts open, but Shawrelle can't knock him down.

Scrap careens off the fighters standing, stunned, around the ring. He lunges through the ropes and slams Shawrelle in the chest, shoving him to the far corner.

Scrap cradles Danger's swollen head in his hands -- his eyes staring back like a dumb animal, so sick he's ready to die, bloody slobber spilling from his mouth.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

It's okay. It's okay.

THE FIGHTERS

Standing around come to life again; some giving Shawrelle ugly stares, others just walking off, one touching Danger's shoulder as Scrap lowers him to the bench.

DANGER

How'd I do, Mist Scrap?

SCRAP

You done great, Danger, you my man,
you a rock.

Shawrelle taunts from the ring.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED: (2)

110

SHAWRELLE

Flippy, you can't be done. You ain't thrown a punch.

Scrap stays focused on Danger.

SCRAP

Anybody can lose one fight. You come back from this, be the next champion of the world.

Danger offers a tiny smile through his bloody teeth.

DANGER

No, I won't, Mist Scrap. I shoulda knowed.

Scrap can't look in his eyes. He reaches for Danger's gloves.

SCRAP

Here, baby, let me help you.

DANGER

I can do her, just untie the knots.

Scrap does and Danger manages to tug them off.

SHAWRELLE

Don't take your gloves off, Danger. You ain't even used em yet.

SCRAP

(to Danger)

I borrow these for a minute?

Scrap pulls on Danger's old gloves and climbs into the ring. Shawrelle laughs at the sight.

SHAWRELLE

Oh, look, I get to fight a retard and an old man.

And that's the last word out of his mouth, as Scrap nails him with a jab that could stun an elephant. But Shawrelle isn't going down that easy. He slams Scrap on the side of his head, same side as his bad eye. Scrap staggers but he doesn't go down. Shawrelle tries the same shot but Scrap slips the punch, rotates into a half crouch and hits Shawrelle with a left hook to the liver.

Shawrelle dances back. Scrap stalks him. Shawrelle throws a powerful combination. Scrap blocks and keeps coming.

(CONTINUED)

110 CONTINUED: (3)

110

Shawrelle charges. Scrap steps aside, hits him with another left hook to the liver, then an uppercut to the jaw that snaps Shawrelle's head and puts the boy down and out.

Scrap stands over Shawrelle, pulls off his gloves.

SCRAP

One hundred and ten.

He rolls him over with his toe, sees Shawrelle swimming toward consciousness. Spits.

SCRAP (CONT'D)

Get a job, punk.

Shawrelle spits out a red tooth. Scrap looks to:

THE BENCH

Danger isn't there.

111 EXT. THE HIT PIT -- NIGHT

111

Scrap steps out onto the sidewalk, looks up and down the empty street. Danger is gone.

112 INT. LAS VEGAS CASINO ARENA -- THE NEXT NIGHT

112

Maggie's coiled in her robe, looking down the mouth of the corridor into the arena, where we hear the announcer and the murmur of the crowd. Frankie stands beside her, along with a SECOND they picked up here in town. From the arena we hear a lone FAN shout out:

FAN

Ma-cush-la!

It's echoed by another.

SECOND FAN

Ma-cush-la!

Maggie looks to Frankie with the question.

FRANKIE

Win this, I'll tell you what it means.

An ASSISTANT DIRECTOR cues them. Showtime.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

By the way, I got you some pipers.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: 112

And they walk down the tunnel to the sound of BAGPIPES...and the pipers lead her in.

113 INT. SCRAP'S ROOM 113

Scrap sits on the edge of his cot watching TV, icing his swollen fist, as they pipe Maggie into the ring.

RING ANNOUNCER

--the WBA Welterweight champion of
the world, Billie The Blue Bear
Astrakhov!

The Bear drops her electric blue robe, pulls off her Russian fur hat, revealing a polished, shaved head. She flexes her massive arms.

SCRAP

Sweet Jesus.

114 AT THE ARENA 114

Maggie, in pale green, looks iridescent under the colored lights. She stands in her corner serious and hard. Frankie steps in close to her face.

FRANKIE

Box her. Stick that jab into her
big tits till they turn blue and
fall off.

Maggie nods. The bell rings, the Bear charges, throwing a right-lead haymaker.

Maggie slips under and, stepping to her left, drills the Bear with a right to the gut, hitting the sweat spot of the solar plexus, and the Bear goes down gasping for air.

The crowd leaps to it's feet, the cheers deafening.

FANS

Ma-cush-la!

But at the count of eight the Bear gets up smiling and comes after Maggie, throwing punch after punch. Maggie bobs and weaves like mercury lapping in a dish.

ANGLE ON FRANKIE AND THE SECOND

SECOND

(in awe of Maggie)
Look at the way she moves.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

FRANKIE

Yeah.

Frankie smiles, proud.

BACK IN THE RING

Maggie hurts the Bear with a combination. The Bear grabs her. The ref separates them. The Bear swings quickly, barely grazing Maggie.

115 IN THE HIT PIT

115

A few fighters gather around a radio, listening to the fight.

116 BACK IN THE ARENA

116

Maggie stings the Bear again. This time the Russian holds on to the BELL.

MAGGIE'S SECOND

grabs for the stool, Frankie snatches it.

FRANKIE

I'll get it-I'll get it.

Frankie hefts the heavy stool through the ropes. He has it in place before Maggie gets to the corner. They water and grease her.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Fight from the outside. You hearin' that?

MAGGIE

Always hear your voice, boss.

IN THE BEAR'S CORNER

Her manager talks to her. The Bear just stares at Maggie.

IN THE STANDS

A group of Irish Fans stand, shouting

IRISH FANS

Mo Cuishle!!

The bell rings and

(CONTINUED)

- 116 CONTINUED: 116
MAGGIE
goes in firing stinging jabs. Touching her, turning her,
taking her balance.
- 117 INT. HIT PIT 117
The fighters shout encouragements.
RADIO COMMENTATOR
The challenger darts in, lands a
combination to the head and body,
another one. And a right hook stuns
the champ.
- 118 IN SCRAP'S ROOM 118
Scrap inches closer to the edge of the cot
ON THE SCREEN
Billie grabs Maggie, trying to turn the match into a brawl.
- 119 IN THE ARENA 119
Billie catches Maggie with an elbow, then tries to jam her
palm into Maggie's nose. Misses. The ref pushes them apart.
Maggie works her from the outside, shooting jabs into Billie's
chest like she's ramming her with the end of a two by four.
The bell sounds. Frankie swings the stool through the ropes.
- 120 IN SCRAP'S ROOM 120
Scrap leans back a bit, realizes he's sweating.
- 121 IN THE ARENA 121
The BELL sounds and Maggie springs out of her corner. The
Bear comes out throwing wild. SLAM. Maggie rocks the Bear
onto her heels and moves in with a one-two hook that puts
Billie on the canvas.
FRANKIE
rises as the ref COUNTS.
FRANKIE
Stay down, you bitch.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

REF

Four, five...

The Bear bounces up and grabs Maggie, tries to throw her to the mat. The ref is right in there --

REF (CONT'D)

Do that again, it'll cost you a point!

Billie ignores him, shoves Maggie again. The ref turns to the scorers table and signals them to...

REF (CONT'D)

Take away a point.

And with his back turned he doesn't see the Bear catch Maggie with an elbow.

FRANKIE

screams and points as..

A GASH

opens up over Maggie's left eye. The bell sounds.

FRANKIE

swings in the stool. MAGGIE drops onto it. Her second opens up his kit. Frankie takes over, going to work on the cut.

FRANKIE

It'll be okay. It'll be okay.

MAGGIE

Got no doubt, boss.

With a FLASH we're back in...

122 THE FIGHT

122

Maggie's eye is almost swollen closed. It doesn't stop her from nailing Billie repeatedly, knocking the Bear back into the ropes. But Billie stays up. Head-butts Maggie.

REF

Two points! You're warned!

Maggie takes the fight to Billie again. Billie head-butts her. The ref pushes her back, holds up five fingers and yells. FRANKIE screams over the din. The BELL sounds and Frankie heaves the stool in before it stops ringing.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

Maggie drops onto it. Frankie ices her eye.

MAGGIE

Eyes are blurring, boss.

Frankie washes her eye.

FRANKIE

How many eyes you need to fight?

MAGGIE

One's enough. Now what I do about the Bear?

FRANKIE

You know how to step outside and go to the liver with a right hook?

MAGGIE

Been doin' that. She's made of steel.

FRANKIE

This time don't go to the liver, go to the cheek of her big dyke ass. Stick your fist into her sciatic like a dagger and keep stickin' it.

MAGGIE

Won't the ref see that?

FRANKIE

Not if you keep the Bear between you and him.

The five second warning. FLASH

MAGGIE

drives her fist into the Bear's right cheek. Billie squawks in pain. The Bear's manager yells. As the ref turns his head Maggie doubles up into the cheek and the Bears leg buckles in pain. FLASH.

123 MAGGIE

123

slams punch after punch into the Bear's gut and head as the crowd SCREAMS. FLASH.

124 MAGGIE

124

jumps the Russian with combinations that has her head wobbling and the crowd on its feet.

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED: 124

She clobbers Billie with a hook to the jaw and the Russian goes down to one knee. The ref counts as...

125 BACK AT THE HIT PIT 125

Scrap holds his breath.

126 BACK IN THE ARENA 126

The Bear rises at nine. Maggie throws another combination, turning the Bear's legs to jelly.

SCRAP V.O.

The ref was about to stop the fight...

Maggie's arm cocks for a slam to the head, an open shot. The BELL rings.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

...when the bell rang.

And we go into excruciating slow motion.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

One more punch woulda put the Bear on the mat. But Maggie caught her punch and pulled it back.

FRANKIE

hefts the stool through the ropes.

MAGGIE

sees Frankie, drops her hands and turns to her right.

THE BEAR

rips a punch into Maggie's blind eye. Caught off balance, Maggie stumbles.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

The late punch scrambled Maggie's inner ear. Her legs buckled. She never been knocked down, and her mind rebelled against the thought.

Maggie tries to plant her foot, fails.

Frankie looks up, sees Maggie falling toward the stool. Grabs for it. Maggie tries to twist around to break her fall. Twists too hard.

(CONTINUED)

- 126 CONTINUED: 126
- Her neck comes down full force on the metal band of the stool. Silence. Just the sound of a neck breaking.
- All we hear now is Maggie's breathing. Frankie screams as Maggie slumps to her side on the mat.
- 127 SCRAP 127
- watches in stunned horror.
- 128 MAGGIE'S POV 128
- She sees Frankie over her, stretching her flat, the ring doctors running toward her. Sees the ref pushing Billie back. Even Billie seems stunned.
- MAGGIE
- exhales. Her eyes blink. But the next breath doesn't come. Her eyes close. BLACK. Silence.
- Then she BREATHES and we HEAR...
- PARAMEDIC (V.O.)
That's right, breathe for me.
- FADE UP to see:
- 129 MAGGIE'S POV 129
- She's being carried on a stretcher as a PARAMEDIC works the ambu-bag covering her face.
- PARAMEDIC
Good girl, breathe!
- Through fluttering eyes she glimpses Frankie above her, then slips back into unconsciousness. BLACK. We hear the sound of a VENTILATOR and FADE UP:
- 130 MAGGIE'S POV - LAS VEGAS GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY 130
- DOCTORS work over her, talking in mumbled voices...BLACK. FADE UP.
- 131 MAGGIE'S POV - FRANKIE 131
- strokes her hair, a two day growth on his face. He says something reassuring, she can't hear it. BLACK. FADE UP.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: 131

MAGGIE'S POV - ANOTHER DOCTOR

shines a light in Maggie's eyes. Asks her something. BLACK.
FADE UP.

132 MAGGIE'S POV - THE ICU CEILING 132

The camera tilts to a mirror in the corner of the room. In it Maggie sees herself, lying motionless on the bed, hooked up to machines, the ventilator breathing for her. And we finally see...

MAGGIE'S FACE

taking this in.

MAGGIE

Oh, God.

She closes her eyes. BLACK.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

How ya doin', darlin'?

133 MAGGIE 133

opens her eyes. Sees Frankie, another three days growth on his face.

MAGGIE

You growin' a beard, boss?

FRANKIE

Thought it might help with the women.

MAGGIE

Can't say it does.

And she closes her eyes again, and Frankie strokes her head.

134 INT. WAITING ROOM -- DAY 134

Frankie waits. Scrap sits beside him, a bag in his hand.

SCRAP

Brought you some clothes. Forgot to give them to you. How's she doing today?

It takes a moment to answer.

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

FRANKIE

She's okay.

SCRAP

Think they'll let me in to see her?

FRANKIE

Yeah. Told them I was her father.
You were her grandfather.

Scrap tries out a smile. Two doctors step out of ICU.

DOCTOR #1

Mr. Dunn?

135 INT. ICU -- MOMENTS LATER

135

Scrap sits with Maggie. She's still doped up.

SCRAP

It hurt much?

MAGGIE

Don't hurt at all.

SCRAP

That's good.

MAGGIE

Where's Frankie?

SCRAP

Talking to the doctors. No doubt
tellin' them how to do their job.

MAGGIE

They're telling him I'm a C1 and C2
complete. Means my spinal cord's so
broke they'll never be able to fix
it. Gonna be frozen like this the
rest of my life.

Scrap doesn't know what to say.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Asked them to tell him. Don't know
how he's gonna take it.

(beat)

You see the fight?

SCRAP

Course I did. You had her cold.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

MAGGIE

I shouldn'ta dropped my hands. I shouldn'ta turned. Always protect yourself, how many times he tell me that?

SCRAP

He does like to repeat himself.

MAGGIE

Will you tell him I'm real sorry?

SCRAP

I'll do no such thing.

She closes her eyes.

136 INT. WAITING ROOM -- A SHORT TIME LATER

136

Scrap comes out to find Frankie leaning against the wall. Scrap stands there a moment.

SCRAP

Damndest thing, huh?

(finally)

So, what's the plan? I know you got one, so you might as well tell me.

Frankie turns and looks him in the eye.

FRANKIE

This is your fault. Her in there like that. You kept after me till I trained her. I knew I shouldn't. Not a girl. Everything told me not to. Everything but you.

Frankie walks back to Maggie's room. Leaving Scrap destroyed.

137 INT. ICU -- CONTINUOUS

137

Frankie pulls up a chair, leans close to Maggie.

FRANKIE

I'm gonna get you outta here. These doctors don't know squat. If they did, they wouldn't be living in a desert. Soon as you can be moved, we're taking you someplace where they actually studied medicine. You just sleep now, okay?

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: 137

She nods, closes her eyes again.

138 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 138

Maggie opens her eyes to find a nurse and a resident inserting a tube in her throat.

SCRAP V.O.

Maggie couldn't eat right, so they fed her through a stomach tube. Then she got pneumonia, her lungs filled with fluid and had to be pumped out.

Maggie closes her eyes. They start the pump.

139 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 139

She opens her eyes to find Frankie giving her a sponge bath.

MAGGIE

They got nurses for that, you know.

FRANKIE

They're amateurs.

SCRAP V.O.

She developed skin ulcers because she couldn't change positions.

140 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD -- ANOTHER DAY 140

Frankie watches from the hall as another nurse and resident roll Maggie on her side.

SCRAP V.O.

There were blood clots in her legs and problems with hemoglobin. To induce a daily bowel movement, she was placed on her side and pressure was applied to her lower abdomen.

We can't see what the resident is doing, but we can assume he's inserting tube in her rectum. Maggie catches Frankie's eye. He gives her a little smile.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

She was humiliated every moment of every day.

She smiles back for him.

141 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- DAY

141

Frankie's on the phone. Hangs up, checks a pad, dials again.

SCRAP V.O.

Frankie must have called every hospital in America, looking for somebody who'd tell him they could fix her. Came close twice; till they checked her over, said there was nothing to be done.

Frankie hangs up. Walks off down the hall,

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Took two months till she was stable enough to move.

142 INT. SPECIAL CARE WARD - LATE AFTERNOON

142

Maggie lies twisted on her side. She opens her eyes, sees Frankie.

FRANKIE

How ya doin', darlin'?

MAGGIE

Well, you know, they got tubes stickin' up me in places I'd rather not think about.

FRANKIE

Found two good rehab clinics. You want to hear about them?

She has something on her mind, but doesn't say it.

MAGGIE

...Sure.

FRANKIE

There's a real good place in Kansas City, only couple hours from your momma's house. Thought you might like that.

MAGGIE

Mamma call yet?

FRANKIE

It's hard to get through here.

(CONTINUED)

- 142 CONTINUED: 142
- MAGGIE
Yeah.
(beat)
Where's the other place?
- FRANKIE
Downtown L.A.
- MAGGIE
I'd rather go with you, boss.
- FRANKIE
Good.
- 143 EXT. DESERT -- EVENING 143
- A bright, white ambulance cuts a path in the asphalt.
- SCRAP V.O.
They made the six-hour trip by
ambulance.
- 144 INT. AMBULANCE -- CONTINUOUS 144
- Maggie motions for Frankie to lean closer, so that the
attending pulmonologist can't hear her. Frankie does.
- MAGGIE
Fly there, drive back.
- And she laughs. And Frankie has to smile.
- 145 EXT. DESERT -- CONTINUOUS 145
- The ambulance disappears into the horizon.
- 146 EXT. EVERGREEN REHABILITATION CENTER -- DAY 146
- A stucco building in downtown L.A. Behind the facade lies a
expanse of landscaped lawn, California sycamores and palms.
- 147 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- DAY 147
- Frankie watches from the nearest chair as the nurses and
resident go through the painstaking procedure of getting
Maggie into her special wheelchair.
- SCRAP V.O.
Evergreen was a nice place. They
took good care of Maggie. She
wouldn't have complained if they
hadn't.
- (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

147

A series of QUICK CUTS: the attendants check the tubes into her bladder, her stomach, and through the front of her neck;

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

It took several hours every day to get her ready for the wheelchair.

They stretch her arms and legs; lift her into the wheelchair; strap her in; switch her respirator to the one built into the wheelchair.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Since she couldn't breathe on her own, her respirators were always on. Oxygen was pumped into her twenty-four hours a day.

She turns her head to see Frankie. He gives her a wink.

148 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- MORNING

148

Maggie's eyes are closed when Frankie enters with a small bunch of daisies. He finds something to put them in, then realizes that she's watching him.

MAGGIE

You ever heard of dysreflexia, boss?

FRANKIE

Can't say I have.

MAGGIE

It's somethin' that happens real quick, like when you get a kink in your pee tube? Gets your heartbeat all to rushin'.

FRANKIE

That happen to you?

MAGGIE

Last night.

FRANKIE

(rising)
I'll talk to the doctors.

MAGGIE

No, sit down.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED:

148

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(this is hard)

Awful as it is when your heart's fixin' to explode, it made me happy, boss. 'Cause I thought I'd be free of this mess. I almost made it, too. Then they brought me back to bein' this same old snowman, same old twisted-up snowman wishin' to God it was July.

FRANKIE

Ah, Jesus, Maggie. I knew I was wrong to train you.

MAGGIE

Don't say that. Don't you ever say that. Workin' with you was the only time since Daddy passed I had respect. You'd take that away from me?

FRANKIE

...No.

MAGGIE

All right then.

(beat)

We almost did her, too, didn't we, boss? Huh? Daddy'd a been proud.

Frankie squeezes her hand. It takes a moment for him to realize that she can't feel it. The phone beside her bed rings. Frankie picks it up.

FRANKIE

Maggie's room... Just a second.

(to Maggie)

It's your brother.

Maggie can't stop her face from brightening. Frankie holds the phone next to her ear.

MAGGIE

(into phone)

J.D?...When'd you get out?... Is Mamma there?... No, tell her--... Really, it's...Okay. Yeah. Bye.

(MORE)

She nods to Frankie. He hangs up.

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED: (2)

148

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

He says Mamma can't stop crying.

(beat)

They're coming to see me.

Maggie smiles so hard she almost cries.

SCRAP V.O.

Knowing something ain't likely to
change doesn't stop a person from
wishing it would.

149 INT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- DAY

149

Frankie sits alone in the church. He's never prayed this
hard in his life.

150 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- DAY

150

Maggie sits in her wheelchair in the visiting room, taking
in the sun. There's even a little color in her gaunt face.
Frankie sits beside her. She's watching the parking lot,
cars coming in and out.

MAGGIE

I tell you about when we all got
Chicken Pox?

FRANKIE

We?

MAGGIE

Me, Mardell and J.D. Daddy was on a
long-haul out to California and Mamma
didn't hold with no doctors. But
we're all makin' a terrible fuss.
So she packs us up and we drive forty-
two miles to the Stop and Go in
Domain, where Mamma buys us super-
size Cherry Slurpees. Tells us
that'll fix us up. It doesn't, of
course. So, we camp in the parking
lot all night, drinking Cherry
Slurpees. And damned, if in the
morning we don't all feel better.

(beat)

Mamma mighta changed after daddy
passed; but something real wrong,
she always knew how to make us feel
better.

(MORE)

She looks back at the parking lot.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You check the hotel?

FRANKIE

Only been a week, hardly had time to
drive here yet.

DISSOLVE TO:

151 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- VISITING ROOM -- ANOTHER DAY 151

Maggie sleeping in her chair, angled to see the parking lot.
Frankie beside her, reading a book.

SCRAP V.O.

She waited by the window every day
for the next two weeks.

152 INT. HIT PIT -- EVENING 152

Frankie is on his phone in the office.

SCRAP V.O.

And Frankie called their hotel every
day. Learned they'd checked in six
days earlier. Kept leaving messages,
which were never returned.Frankie hangs up, looks to the door, sees SCRAP moving past.
Scrap looks at him. Frankie goes back to work.

153 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- VISITING ROOM -- ANOTHER DAY 153

Maggie wakes to find Frankie reading aloud.

FRANKIE

Ach grá fir óig is é bhreogh go fol
las mé.

MAGGIE

Whatcha doin'?

FRANKIE

Teaching you Gaelic.

MAGGIE

While I'm sleeping?

FRANKIE

Heard it works.

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED:

153

MAGGIE
Mo Cuishle in there?

FRANKIE
Ain't seen it yet.

MAGGIE
You don't have to hang around all
day.

FRANKIE
I like it here. If you weren't here
I might just come and sit, read a
book just cause I wanted to.

MAGGIE
Mamma will be here soon, share some
of the burden.

FRANKIE
Ain't no burden. Say this: ach grá
fir óig.

Maggie tries her best.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Jesus that's terrible, try it again.

Maggie does.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Stop-stop, you're killing it. Here's
what you're saying.
(reads)
I will arise and go now, and go to
Innisfree, and a small cabin build
there, of clay and wattles made.
(skips down)
And I shall have some peace there,
for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning
to where the cricket sings.

A beat, then...

MAGGIE
You gonna build a cabin, boss?

FRANKIE
Me?

(CONTINUED)

153 CONTINUED: (2)

153

MAGGIE

You know, when you quit all this.

FRANKIE

Never gonna quit. I'd miss the stink.

MAGGIE

Think that's true? Cause I could see you there, real easy, with your books and lemon pie.

FRANKIE

...You wanna go live in a cabin?

MAGGIE

I could learn how to bake.

FRANKIE

Maybe I'll start looking then.

And they sit there, smiling at their little shared joke.

154 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- DAY

154

Maggie lies on her side, the DOCTOR examines Maggie's leg. It's purple and ulcerated. He drops the sheet back over it.

MAGGIE

Don't smell real pretty, does it, Doc?

DOCTOR #2

We may have to lose it, Maggie.

Maggie nods. She doesn't look to Frankie. Who wouldn't know how to put a good spin on this if he tried forever.

155 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - CORRIDOR -- DAY

155

Frankie dials the pay phone. Hears a door open at the far end of the hall. Sees:

EARLINE, MARDELL AND J.D.

enter.

FRANKIE

Almost smiles. Till he see Mardell and J.D.'s T-shirts. Universal Studios. Disneyland. A man in a suit follows them down the hall. Frankie meets them half way.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

FRANKIE

Frankie Dunn, we met at your house.

EARLINE

Where's my little girl?

FRANKIE

Maybe it'd be a good idea to go back to your hotel and change. She doesn't know you've been here a week visiting Mickey and Daffy.

J.D.

We've got business with my sister. Just tell us where she is.

FRANKIE

Take it you're J.D.
(to man in suit)

Take it you're the business.
(to Earline)

Maybe you missed a few rides, maybe you should go back and I'll tell Maggie you couldn't make it.

EARLINE

I drove all the way here to take care of my child and you're suggesting I'm not a good mother? Mary M can't go nowhere; if we coulda taken her to Disneyland we woulda.

LAWYER

(to passing nurse)
Margaret Fitzgerald?

NURSE

Down here.

Frankie thinks about stopping them. Knows he can't. J.D. bumps Frankie's shoulder in passing.

Frankie waits there as they disappear into her room. He walks to the window, knowing whatever's going on in that room isn't going to be good. He goes to the soda machine, deposits some change. Nothing comes out. He kicks it.

156 CORRIDOR -- MOMENTS LATER

156

Frankie appears with a cup of coffee. The door to Maggie's ward is closed. He walks to where he can see through the floor to ceiling window. Inside:

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED:

156

MAGGIE AND FAMILY

have a good laugh at something.

FRANKIE

paces away. Can't stand to watch them break her heart. But he goes back anyway, in time to see:

EARLINE

showing her a document, confusion on Maggie's face.

FRANKIE

has had enough. He opens the door and steps through. Maggie looks up to him, her face grey.

FRANKIE

How we all doing here?

EARLINE

Sorry, darlin', but we ain't got a lotta time. Mr. Johnson's charging us a lot of money to be here to make sure this is done proper.

FRANKIE

Why don't you leave that and I'll read it to her.

J.D.

You family? You stay out of this.

MAGGIE

Read it to me, Mamma.

EARLINE

It's just something legal, to protect your money.

MAGGIE

Mamma, you don't have to worry, the Boxing Commission's paying for all this. Everything.

EARLINE

But what if they don't, Mary M? Mr. Johnson says they could take my house.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (2)

156

LAWYER

If you assign your assets to your mother, no one will be able to touch them.

J.D.

Not doctors, not funeral expenses, nothin'.

FRANKIE

Fine, so leave it and --

MAGGIE

-- Mr. Dunn, with respect, this isn't your business.

That stops Frankie dead.

FRANKIE

Okay, I'll just wait out in the hall.

He steps out, leaves the door open.

EARLINE

You been a good daughter, Mary M. You sign that paper, it'll take care of your family, the way your daddy woulda wanted you to. How do you make your mark? Can you hold a pen?

MARDELL

She gotta do it with her teeth, mamma. You gotta put it in her mouth.

EARLINE

(holding out pen)
Here you go, darlin'.

MAGGIE

You see the fight, momma?

EARLINE

Honey, you know how I feel about that.

MAGGIE

I did pretty good.

EARLINE

You lost, darlin'. Ain't your fault, way I heard it, but you lost.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (3)

156

EARLINE (CONT'D)

Don't wanna lose the rest of what
you got left.

Earline eases the pen into Maggie's mouth. Maggie bites
down on it. Then lets it fall out.

MAGGIE

What happened to you, Mamma?

EARLINE

What's that supposed to mean?

MAGGIE

Mamma, you take Mardell and J.D. and
get home. Before I tell that lawyer
there that you were so worried about
your welfare you never signed those
house papers like you were supposed
to. So, any time I feel like it, I
can sell it out from under your fat,
lazy hillbilly asses. And if you
ever come back, that's exactly what
I'll do.

157 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - VISITING ROOM

157

The family heads for the hills. Frankie watches them go,
then walks into...

158 MAGGIE'S ROOM

158

Maggie is near tears.

FRANKIE

Thought somebody should count to
ten.

Maggie laughs. Frankie awkwardly hugs her, puts her head on
his shoulder, but she refuses to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:

159 FRANKIE

159

sitting alone in Maggie's ward, her bed gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

160 MAGGIE'S BED

160

is back. Her leg is missing. She opens her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

MAGGIE

They took my leg, boss.

He kisses her head. She closes her eyes again.

FRANKIE

It'll be okay. You hear me?

MAGGIE

Always hear your voice, boss.

161 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- EVENING

161

Frankie opens his door and stops. On the floor lies an envelope, the same size and shape as the others in the shoebox. And he just stands there, staring at it. Broken.

162 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT

162

The place is dead quiet, save the sound of the night nurse passing in the hall. Maggie opens her eyes to see Frankie sitting there, reading some sort of catalogue. He looks up.

FRANKIE

You need anything?

MAGGIE

Need to know what Mo Cuishle means.

FRANKIE

You didn't win, don't have to tell you.

MAGGIE

You're the meanest man I ever met, no wonder nobody loves you. You remind me of my daddy.

FRANKIE

He musta been a good looking man.

Frankie goes back to reading.

MAGGIE

You ain't gonna make me talk more Yeats, are you?

FRANKIE

These are classes at City College.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Thought I'd buy you one of those wheelchairs you can use by blowin' into a straw. Thought you might want to go to school.

MAGGIE

I got a favor to ask you, boss.

FRANKIE

Whatever you want.

MAGGIE

Remember what my daddy did for Axel?

FRANKIE

...Don't even say that.

MAGGIE

I can't be like this, Frankie. Not after what I done. I seen the world. People chanted my name. Well, not my name, some damn name you gave me, but they were chanting for me. I was in magazines. You think I ever dreamed that'd happen?

(beat)

I was born at two pound one and a half ounces. Daddy used to tell me I fought to get into this world and I'd fight my way out. That's all I wanna do, boss. I just don't want to fight you to do it.

(beat)

Only two people in this world I ever wanted to be proud of me. You are one. You proud of me, boss?

FRANKIE

You have to ask?

MAGGIE

I got what I needed, boss. Got it all. Don't let em keep takin' it away from me. Don't let me lie here till I can't hear those people chanting no more.

FRANKIE

...I can't do it. Please, don't ask me.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (2) 162

MAGGIE

I am asking.

FRANKIE

I can't.

She nods and turns her head away.

163 INT. FRANKIE'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT 163

The phone rings, waking Frankie from a dead sleep.

164 INT. FRANKIE'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS 164

He snatches it up.

FRANKIE

Hello?...

165 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT 165

Frankie hustles down the corridor, met by an intern, who talks as he tries to keep up.

SCRAP V.O.

In the middle of the night, Maggie'd found her own solution. She bit off her tongue.

Frankie fires into the room, shoving aside a male nurse to see Maggie, trying to fight away the doctor by banging her head back and forth. Frankie grabs her head, holds it, looks into her wild eyes as the doctor administers another shot.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Nearly bled to death before they stitched her up. She came round and ripped them out before Frankie even got there.

He soothes her and let's the shot take hold. Her eyes half closed and Frankie steps away to let the doctor in to stitch.

CORRIDOR

As Frankie paces, running his hand through his hair.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

They stitched her up again, padded the tongue so she couldn't bite, and gave her a tracheotomy, so she could breathe.

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED: 165

He looks back into the room.

166 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER - MAGGIE'S WARD -- MORNING 166

Maggie slowly comes out of it. Her eyes find Frankie

FRANKIE

What'd you do, darlin'?

He wipes away the tears that flow down her cheeks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

You just gonna keep fighting me,
aren't you?

She blinks once for yes.

167 EXT. STREETS -- NIGHT 167

Frankie walks, stops. Realizes that he is lost.

168 EXT. ST. RAYMOND'S CATHOLIC CHURCH -- MORNING 168

Frankie sits on the steps, Father Horvath beside him.

FATHER HORVATH

You can't do it. You know that.

FRANKIE

I do. But she's thick, Father. You have no idea how hard it was to train her. I had to explain every little thing, things any other fighter would just do without asking, she'd want to know why and how and then she'd do it her way anyway. I got no idea how she ended up fighting for the title--didn't get there by listening to me.

(beat)

Now, all she wants is to die, and all I want to do is keep her with me. And God forgive me, but it feels like I'm committing a sin by doing it. By keeping her alive, I'm killing her. How do you find your way out of that?

FATHER HORVATH

You don't. You step aside, Frankie, you leave it with God.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

FRANKIE

She's not asking for God's help.
She's asking for mine.

FATHER HORVATH

Frankie, I've seen you at mass almost every day for twenty-three years. Only person who goes to church that much is the kind who can't forgive himself for something. Whatever sins you're carrying, they're nothing compared to this. Forget about God or Heaven and Hell. If you do this thing, you'll be lost; somewhere so deep, you'll never find yourself again.

Frankie knows it's true.

169 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- AFTERNOON

169

Frankie sits with Maggie as she sleeps.

NURSE

We're keeping her sedated so she won't try that again.

Frankie nods, watches the nurse leave. Looks at Maggie's eyes fluttering, trying to find him. Lost. He stands, kisses her head.

170 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT

170

Frankie takes his cut bag out of the locked drawer, places it on his desk. Takes several bottles of adrenaline from the drawer, places them in the bag along with a syringe. He looks up and notices Scrap watching from the doorway.

SCRAP

I went in to see Maggie this morning.
You musta been somewhere else.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

Frankie locks his drawer.

SCRAP

You got a fight I don't know about?

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

170

FRANKIE

...It wasn't your fault. I was wrong to say that.

SCRAP

Damn right it wasn't. I found you a fighter, and you made her the best fighter she coulda been.

FRANKIE

I killed her.

SCRAP

(scoffs)

Killed her. That girl walked in here with nothin' but guts, she had no hope of becoming what she needed to be. A year and a half later, she fought for the championship of the world. People die every day, washing dishes and sweeping floors, and their last thought is that they never got their shot. Cause of you, Maggie got hers. You know how many people in this world get that?

(beat)

If Maggie died today, I bet her last thought would be, I did pretty good.

(beat)

I could rest knowing that.

Frankie snaps shut his bag but doesn't lift it. A moment.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

He nods and then leaves.

171 EXT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT

171

Frankie sits in his car for an eternity.

172 INT. EVERGREEN REHAB CENTER -- NIGHT

172

He walks down the corridor. The night nurse is on rounds, the desk lies empty. He steps into...

173 MAGGIE'S ROOM

173

She opens her eyes when she hears him. He smiles, gives her a kiss on the head. He looks her in the eyes, the question hanging there. She blinks once, he nods.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED:

173

He reaches into his bag.

FRANKIE

I'm going to put pressure on your neck, it'll cut off your air and put you to sleep, okay?

She blinks.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Then I'm gonna give you a shot...and you'll just stay sleeping.

She blinks, offers a small smile. He flicks off the alarm on her monitor, then puts his hand on her throat and looks her in the eye. Asks himself again if he can do this. She gives him a smile and blinks once. He leans in close to her ear and whispers.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Mo Cuishle. It means "my darling, my blood."

And she beams. Then blinks and closes her eyes for him. He applies pressure to her neck.

ANGLE ON HIS BAG

he removes a syringe, loads it up with adrenaline. His hand leaves the shot.

SCRAP V.O.

He gave her a single shot where they wouldn't see much of a needle mark. It was enough adrenaline to do the job a few times over. He didn't want her going through this again.

His hand drops the syringe back in his bag.

FRANKIE

feels for her pulse. Gone. Strokes her hair. Kisses her forehead. Takes his bag and walks out.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Then he walked out.

(MORE)

SCRAP

watches from the shadows.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED: (2)

173

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)
His eyes as dry as a burning leaf.

DISSOLVE TO:

174 INT. HIT PIT -- NIGHT

174

Scrap sits on the bench.

SCRAP V.O.
I went back to the gym. Waited,
figuring he'd turn up sooner or later.

DISSOLVE TO:

175 INT. HIT PIT -- DAY

175

Scrap sits on the same bench. He looks up, smiles...

SCRAP V.O.
And that's when a ghost came through
the door.

The person sits. It's Danger.

DANGER
Got to thinking what you said, Mist
Scrap.

SCRAP
What was that, Danger?

DANGER
Anybody can lose one fight.

SCRAP
And that's the truth. Go put on
your gloves, you missed a lot of
training.

DANGER
Sure will, Mist. Scrap.

176 INT. FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

176

Scrap opens the door, looks in. Frankie's desk lies bare,
save a single key lying on the rough leather.

SCRAP V.O.
Frankie never came back at all.

(CONTINUED)

176 CONTINUED:

176

BACK IN THE GYM

Danger throws his pitty-pat punches in the direction of the heavy bag. Scrap passes on his way out.

SCRAP

Danger, you hit something or I'm gonna toss your ass outta here.

Danger is so shocked he actually smacks the bag good and hard. He looks around, stunned and amazed and as pleased as hell. And as he throws his arms up in the air and opens his mouth...

177 INT. FRANKIE'S BUNGALOW -- DAY

177

Scrap opens Frankie's front door, pockets the single key.

SCRAP V.O.

Frankie didn't leave a note.

178 IN THE KITCHEN

178

He checks the fridge. Empty.

SCRAP V.O.

No one knew where he went.

IN THE BEDROOM

He opens the closet. The clothes are gone. All that's left are a few shoe-boxes. Curious, Scrap reaches up for one.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

I hoped he'd gone to find you.

IN THE KITCHEN

sits at the single chair and opens the box, removing the letters one at a time. All are unopened. All addressed to Katy Dunn, an address in Indiana. All are marked "return to sender".

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

Ask you one more time to forgive him.

179 INT. HIT PIT - FRANKIE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

179

Scanning across the pages of a long, hand written letter. We pick out phrases we heard Scrap say... "Set in the cedars and oak trees, somewhere between nowhere and good-bye"...

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED:

179

"Boxing is an unnatural act..." We finally find Scrap's hand, writing the current page.

SCRAP V.O.

But I don't think he had anything left in his heart.

180 EXT. ROADSIDE DINER - MISSOURI -- NIGHT

180

The place looks familiar. It could be that place where Frankie and Maggie stopped. The place with the best lemon pie in the world.

SCRAP V.O.

I just hope he found someplace where he could find a little peace.

With its rough hewn exterior, it looks an awful lot like a cabin. Through the windows we think we catch a glimpse of Frankie behind the counter. But we can't be sure, maybe the owner just looked a little like him.

SCRAP V.O. (CONT'D)

But that's probably wishful thinking. No matter where he is... I thought you should know what kind of man your father really was.

FADE OUT:

the end