

IRON MIKE

Written by

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Over a dark screen: A BELL RINGS. The start of another round of boxing.

Audience excitement grows to a fevered pitch. But the sounds of excitement are revealed to be:

1

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

1

An audience in a legitimate theatre. Typical. Ancient. Mostly white. But they are laughing and applauding as onstage-

MIKE TYSON, 40's, eager to please, energetic in a custom tuxedo, sweating like a whore in church, performs his one-man show in front of a giant screen of rotating photos.

MIKE

(With his trademark lisp)

This is interesting... When I was in prison I was on the phone talking to my car dealer- like you do- and he's discussin' how he's gonna get him some horses. And I say, 'Horses?? You can get HORSES?' Cause I didn't know. I'm from Brooklyn. And he says, 'Yeah man, I can get you anything. Cougars. Lions. Tigers. Can you imagine driving your Ferrari in the carpool lane with a tiger beside you? Who's gonna pull you over, man?' I'm not gonna lie, that sounded good to me.

The crowd laughs and Mike turns around to the giant screen.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's a picture of me in my underpants holding a grown tiger on a chain. That's real crazy, right?

He looks out into the audience but because of the bright lights all he can see is darkness.

Then CLOSE ON MIKE. He dabs the sweat from his forehead and face tattoo. He laughs a little too hard.

MIKE (CONT'D)

That's when you know you're not in Brownsville anymore... That's when I was, you know... insane.

The audience stops laughing, watching Mike. Cause there's something about the way he says 'insane' that's chilling.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 (Then, smiling)
 Now you're all thinking about my
 tattoo, aren't you? You're
 wondering, is it bad ass or is it
 insanity? I know you were, sir.

An old white man laughs, nodding, caught.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 Listen. I told my tattoo artist I
 wanted a tattoo on my face cause I
 hated my face. I hated Mike Tyson.
 My idea was to put little tiny
 hearts all over my face. Little
 tiny hearts! To deface my face.
 Fuckin' crazy man. He suggested
 this, used by Maori warriors to
 intimidate their opponents.

Mike grimaces threateningly like a Maori. Then bobs and
 weaves, shadow boxing from one side of the stage to the
 other. He's here to show everyone a good time.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 But hey, like, of course I'm crazy.
 By the time I'm 13, I'm arrested 38
 times. 19, I'm world champion! I
 couldn't handle that. You couldn't
 handle that. That's a sucker punch
 right there.

The photos on the giant screen change faster and faster. It's
 getting more intense.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 IRS says I made 114 million dollars
 in 95 to 97 alone. I spent all of
 it. All of it on goodies. I had so
 much money I couldn't keep track of
 it! I had a house in Vegas next to
 Wayne Newton. I had Versace toilet
 paper holders. I had a moat put in.
 For a long time I thought, it's all
 just a show, man. Think about it.
 Boxing is showbiz!

The audience listens intently, losing themselves in the
 fantasy.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 Sometimes I forget I'm that guy.
 That I trained that hard and became
 a fighter and stuff.
 (MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

That's pretty much like a blur. I was just a young kid. And women, man! Sometimes, I was juggling 20 women at a time!

Mike looks at the rapidly changing pictures of his big life then back at the crowd.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I look at myself now- I took all those trips to the psych ward and stuff. I say to myself, what was that all about? What was wrong with me back then? I was really disturbed back then. Sometimes I forget who I am. And then I come up here in front of you and I'm what you come to look at. Who am I?

Mike starts moving forward, closer and closer to the crowd.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I'm the most brutal, the most vicious, ruthless champion that's ever been. I'm Mike Tyson. There's no one like me. There's no one that can match me. My style's impetuous. My defense is impregnable. And I'm just ferocious. You can't touch me. I want your heart. I want to eat your children. Praise be to Allah!

The crowd leans back in their seats. He's in their face.

Then back to Mike. He surveys the crowd breathlessly. Deciding which persona to be. Finally:

MIKE (CONT'D)

Is *that* who I am?... Yes... No....
I'm scratching the surface, man.
I'm Iron Mike.

SMASH CUT:

2

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT - 1974

2

7 year old Mike cries to his 9 year old sister, Denise.

DENISE

You're a worthless, weak, crybaby, piece of shit. You're always gonna be that fat fuck everybody fucks with.

MIKE

Why?

DENISE

Unless you fight back.

MIKE

I don't wanna fight.

DENISE

You're afraid to fight. That's different. You fight or you die. So what are you gonna do about it?

MIKE

Run.

DENISE

Shit. Mike. Where? Where you gonna run to? There ain't nowhere to run.

3

EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY - 1974

3

Mike, 7, runs through the rough hood but a couple of TWELVE YEAR OLD BOYS shove Mike against a wall. They aim their all too real GUNS at him as they search his pockets.

Boy 1

This all you got is a quarter?

MIKE

I'm sorry.

BOY 2

Cheep ass pussy mother fucker.

MIKE

That's all I got.

BOY 1

Shoot him in the dick.

The gun goes down his pants. Mike hollers. The CLICK of a gun is heard. The gun isn't loaded.

BAM. Boy 1 punches Mike in the face.

BOY 2

Fucking fairy boy.

4

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT - 1974

4

LORNA MAE, 30s, Mike's mother, SPITS OUT A GOLD TOOTH, having just been punched by her boyfriend EDDIE, short.

Eddie sits down on the couch beside Mike, 7, who is totally unfazed by the violence, watching wrestling on TV.

Lorna Mae stares daggers at Eddie. She heads to the kitchen.

LORNA MAE

I'm just saying, wrestling's a fake, you fuck. Everyone knows that. Mike, Rodney, Denise. Under the quilt. Now. Time for bed.

Denise and Rodney, 12, reluctantly head under the quilt but Mike is transfixed by the wrestling.

LORNA MAE (V.O.)

That was my gold tooth, asshole.

EDDIE

Thursday night wrestling's *my* time. I'm not telling you again.

LORNA MAE (V.O.)

My new gold tooth... You want soup, Eddie?

EDDIE

Yeah, baby, yeah. Thank you. This is gonna surprise you, Mike. Watch this. Pay attention. When he-

BAM! Lorna Mae wallops Eddie in the head with a full pot of boiling soup, scalding his face and body. Eddie SCREAMS.

Mike, 7, turns and calmly speaks to the camera from the couch as Eddie screams through the room in agony.

MIKE

They'd fight about anything. And they both carried weapons. They'd drink, fight, slice, drink, have make up sex then fight again. I think they loved each other probably when they weren't stabbing each other.

5

EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY - 1974

5

Mike, 7, races from bullies who corner him at a dead end.

MIKE (V.O.)

I was scared to be in my house. I
was scared to go outside.

He's trapped. He covers himself protectively. Just before
they punch him:

6 INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT - 1987 6

Mike at 21, in his prime, knocks out his opponent with rapid
precision.

MIKE (V.O.)

I never got over the humiliation.
That's what it is. Being bullied.
Never.

7 INT. THEATRE - DAY - PRESENT DAY 7

MIKE

Being helpless. You never forget
that feeling. I still feel like a
coward to this very day because of
it.

8 EXT. BROWNSVILLE ROOFTOP - DAY - 1974 8

Mike, 7, walks along the ledge of a rooftop.

MIKE (V.O.)

I stopped going to school cause of
the bullying. I was in second grade
and that was the end of my
education. I'd show up at school
with my sister then leave. I'd show
up again for lunch and leave.

He spits off the roof and looks over the ledge. It's a long
way down.

MIKE (V.O.)

The only kids you meet when you're
not in school are other kids who
aren't in school.

He's tackled to the ground by 3 TEENAGE KIDS. They go through
his pockets roughly.

TOUGH KID 1

You got any money?

MIKE

No.

TOUGH KID 1

Any money we find we keep.

TOUGH KID 2

Man, he's trying to steal our birds.

MIKE

You got birds?

TOUGH KID 2

(Imitating Mike's lisp)

Yeth! We got loth of birdth. Thit.

The kids laugh then leave him alone when they find no money. Mike follows them shyly to a coop filled with pigeons. They open the coop and the birds FLY.

Mike watches them soar then land on another roof.

MIKE

Why do they stay here? They could go anywhere.

TOUGH KID 2

Man, we're out of bird seed. When was the last time they ate?

TOUGH KID 1

Hey, Shorty. Go down to the pet store. Get us some bird seed.

They turn to Mike. Mike smiles and tears off, happy to be included. He talks right to the camera as he runs.

MIKE

Flying pigeons was a big sport in Brooklyn. Everyone lets their pigeons fly at the same time, see-

In the sky, a large group of pigeons FLY AS ONE IN FORMATION.

MIKE (V.O.)

And the name of the game is to get the other guys' birds. So I learned how to handle 'em, understand 'em. I loved them.

He opens the door to the rooftop stairs. Just before he disappears, right to camera:

MIKE
And if it weren't for those dirty
fuckin' birds-

9 INT. THEATRE - PRESENT DAY 9

CLOSE ON MIKE onstage.

MIKE
I never woulda fought.

10 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 10

Blinding sunlight. A group of kids are stealing Mike's birds.
A wiry kid, GARY FLOWERS, holds one out, taunting Mike, 9.

MIKE
C'mon man. Give me my bird back.

GARY FLOWERS
What bird?

MIKE
Please, man.

GARY FLOWERS
What are you gonna do about it?

Mike is silent. A crowd gathers, starts to heckle.

GARY FLOWERS (CONT'D)
What the fuck are you gonna do
about it?

He strokes the bird very gently. Mike is frozen.

MIKE
Nothin'. I promise.

GARY FLOWERS
Nothin'. Why should I give him to
you? He's mine now.

He kisses the bird. Holds it close to his mouth.

GARY FLOWERS (CONT'D)
Maybe I'll eat this fucking bird. I
bet he taste like chicken.

MIKE
C'mon. What do you want-?

GARY FLOWERS

I'm not gonna eat a dirty fuckin'
pigeon, Mike.

MIKE

Anything. I'll get it for you.

GARY FLOWERS

What the fuck. Here.

He holds the bird out to Mike.

As Mike reaches for it, Gary slowly twists the birds' head off and throws it at Mike. He smears it's blood all over Mike's face and shirt.

Everything goes silent.

Mike can see the group around him screaming and Gary Flowers taunting him but all he hears is his heart beating faster and faster and faster.

When his bird's headless, lifeless body hits the ground - all sound returns. BAM!

Mike goes crazy. He swings wildly until he finally lands a fist to the face.

Gary Flowers goes down from the first punch that connects. The onlookers, not believing what they just saw, whoop and holler and cheer.

11 INT. ATLANTIC CITY BOXING ARENA - NIGHT JUNE 27, 1988 11

Mike, 21, menacing, surrounded by a police guard, makes his way down the aisle through A TREMENDOUS CROWD.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Everything Tyson does is
intimidating. He doesn't wear a
robe. He's worked up a full sweat.
He's got a scornful look on his
face like he's saying 'Let's get
this going. Let's get it over
with.'

People are on their feet cheering as far as the eye can see.

12 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 12

Mike skips around Gary's dazed body as his neighbors cheer.

13 INT. ATLANTIC CITY BOXING ARENA - NIGHT 1988 13

Mike enters the ring through the ropes. Inside the ring, Michael Spinks paces like a rat trapped in a cage.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The heavy weight champion of the world comes into the ring. This is why we're all here.

Mike stares down Spinks. He is 100% unquestionable going to kill him. Spinks sweats profusely. Mike never takes his eyes off him.

14 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 14

People on the street APPLAUD as Mike jumps over Gary Flowers body. He is full of joy.

15 INT. ATLANTIC CITY BOXING AREANA - NIGHT 1988 15

Mike charges Spinks who does all he can to protect himself but you can't fight a hurricane.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
It's Tyson all the way here in round one. Vicious shots to the body! ...Down he goes!

Spinks falls to his knees, dazed, till the count of 8 and the fight begins again.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
That was a *body shot* that brought him down! Here comes Spinks again-

Mike connects with Spinks' head and-

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Downs he goes! I don't think he'll get up from this! Mike Spinks is laying flat on his back.

As the ref counts him out, Spinks tries to get up and falls through the ropes.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
It's all over! Mike Tyson has won it! A dramatic first round knockout! And now the question is, who in the world has any chance against this man?

16 INT. THEATRE DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT 16

Mike sits at his dressing room table staring into the mirror, reflecting on the childhood moment that brought him to this place. He stares at his reflection. HIS FACE IS UNREADABLE.

17 EXT. BROWNSVILLE ROOFTOP - DAY 1974 17

Mike, 7, feeds pigeons in the coop. BARKIM, an older teenager, smells something bad. He slowly turns to Mike.

BARKIM

Jesus, Shorty, what's wrong with you? You're a stinky motherfucker. Don't you know how to wash yourself?

Mike just stares at him, humiliated.

BARKIM (CONT'D)

This won't do, man. You can't be walking around like no bum. If you dress good, people treat you with respect. Don't you know that?

MIKE

Barkim, I don't have any money.

BARKIM

You wanna make money?

MIKE

Yeah.

BARKIM

Yeah?

MIKE

Yeah.

Barkim considers.

BARKIM

Alright. C'mon.

He heads off. Mike quickly follows.

BARKIM (CONT'D)

What the fuck you doing looking like that? We're money makers!

MIKE

Yeah.

18 EXT. HOUSE - DAY 18

Barkim lifts Mike through a small window that Barkim is too large fit through.

19 INT. HOUSE - DAY (CONT.) 19

Mike FALLS to the ground then RACES blindly through the house.

He turns a corner and RUNS RIGHT INTO A KID HIS AGE.

Mike SCREAMS. But it is just his reflection in a full length mirror.

He runs to the front door and opens it. Barkim BURSTS inside in a flash.

20 INT. HOUSE - DAY (SECONDS LATER) 20

Barkim and Mike go through drawers, grabbing whatever they find. There's a joyfulness, a rush to it. They quickly collect jewelry, guns.

They laugh and cry when they find a huge wad of money, hitting the jackpot.

MIKE (V.O.)

We were just poor black kids nobody cared about. So we didn't care about nobody either.

Mike runs to the front door.

BARKIM

Wait, wait, wait!

He pulls the stereo out of the wall taking some of the wall with it and nods to Mike. They race out.

START OF CRIME MONTAGE:

21 CUS D'AMOTO'S BACK YARD - DAY 1983 21

17 year old Mike is being interviewed for television.

MIKE

You can never understand the action and excitement of it. To be able to outsmart somebody. Even when they know you're a crook.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

They know to watch you and you still outsmart them. It's a rush being in somebody's house and there's luxury there. And it's yours.

22 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 1975

22

Mike, 7, slickly dressed in a shearling coat, Jordache jeans and Adidas, meets up with 12 AND 13 YEAR OLDS IN TRENCH COATS, dressed in Sergio Valente and Pierre Cardin.

MIKE (V.O.)

Now I'm a money maker. Barkim introduced me to these guys. They were babies, maybe 12 years old but they dressed like grown men. They're in public school but they got watches, rings, necklaces.

They walk the streets in a pack like they own it.

23 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

23

From the packed balcony we see Mike on stage, photographs of the street kids behind him.

MIKE

That was the beginning of me feeling like I belonged. They called themselves the Rutland Road Crew. They're pickpockets, chain snatchers, robbers. My teachers. It was exciting. We were all equal as long as we put in our share... I was 8.

24 INT. SUBWAY - DAY

24

Mike and the Rutland Road Crew, dressed in Catholic school white shirt, backpacks, glasses, ride the subway. As the train pulls up to a stop, they OPEN THE WINDOWS of the subway car and get out onto the platform.

MIKE (V.O.)

We only went to school for lunch. It didn't even have to be our school. Then we'd just get on the train and start robbing.

Inside the subway car passengers take their seats.

MIKE (V.O.)
I'd steal anything from anyone. I
didn't have boundaries.

As the subway starts to depart, Mike and the crew reach through the OPEN WINDOWS grabbing chains, purses, etc. There's nothing riders can do as the train departs.

25 EXT. MIDDLE CLASS HOUSE - DAY 25

Mike and the gang put on ski masks from their backpack and ring the bell.

MIKE (V.O.)
I was just a monster as a kid.
Cause the toughest survive. The
meanest.

An ELDERLY MAN answers the door. They all BARGE in, knocking him over, pinning him down. Mike goes through his pockets.

MIKE (V.O.)
You had to be ferocious, blood
thirsty. You had to be the man.

26 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - NIGHT 26

Mike, 10, and his friends run from the police. Mike talks right to the camera.

MIKE
Everyone I knew was in the life.

Mike turns the corner just as one of his friends is SHOT. Blood SPLATTERS as he goes down.

27 INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY 27

Mike, 10, and his friends pay for clothes with WADS of money. He talks to the camera.

MIKE
If you didn't hurt nobody, nobody
would have talked to you. And if
you didn't hurt nobody, they
would've hurt you.

28 INT. DRUG DEN - DAY 28

The second the drug den's door opens, Mike, 10, and his crew raise their GUNS, overtaking the drug dealers inside, grabbing drugs and money.

MIKE (V.O.)

It was the worst our people could give this world. That's where I come from.

END OF CRIME MONTAGE.

29 INT. STAGE - NIGHT. 29

Mike speaks ironically under the spotlight.

MIKE

I was so *awesome*. All these sleazy, smiley, scumbags knew my name! Everyone I knew was on the take. Those were the people I surrounded myself with. It was a pattern I went back to my whole life. I felt comfortable there.

30 INT. PARTY - NIGHT - 1986 30

Frizzy haired, loud talking, criminally self-serving DON KING approaches Mike with a huge smile.

DON KING

Mike Tyson! My brother! My brother! Let me introduce myself *please*. I'm Don King!

Don King holds out his hand and Mike CLOCKS HIM a hard right to the jaw, sending him FLYING across the room.

MIKE

(To the camera, shrugging)
If only.

31 INT. BROWSVILLE TENEMENT - MIKE'S ROOM - NIGHT 31

Lorna Mae bursts in on Mike, 10, who sits up in bed.

LORNA MAE

What did you do? I know you did something, boy.

MIKE

I didn't do nothing.

LORNA MAE

Nettie and Sal from upstairs are over here drinking and their place gets robbed. They got their money, the babies' food, everything.

NETTIE and SAL stare from the doorway, accusingly.

MIKE

Mom, it's not me. Look around. I don't have-

LORNA MAE

Don't look me in the eye and lie to me, motherfucker.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I was in my room right here. I didn't go anywhere.

LORNA MAE (CONT'D)

I know it was you. Walking around in your nice clothes. I don't know where the fuck you come from, you thief. I never stole anything in my life.

MIKE

You'd rather beg.

LORNA MAE

Than be a fuckin' low life thief, you piece of shit!

She starts beating on Mike, hard.

MIKE

I get my money cause guys bring their guys to fight me and they bet on me. Anyway you take the hundred dollars I give you fast enough and never pay me back.

LORNA MAE

I never have to pay you back, you cheep ass motherfucker. I gave you life! What for? You're gonna spend that life in jail.

MIKE

I don't care.

LORNA MAE

Cause you're stupid. What kind of bird don't fly? Jailbird! Jailbird!

MIKE

I ain't never even been arrested.

LORNA MAE

What 10 year old says that?! That ain't nothin' to brag about! It's coming, Mike. It's coming.

MIKE

You don't know shit!

32 INT. STAGE - NIGHT 32

MIKE

First time I got arrested...
Yeah... 10.

33 INT. MIKE'S ROOM/FIRE ESCAPE - NIGHT 33

FLASHBACK.

Mike sneaks a peek at NETTIE and SAL drinking with his MOTHER then quickly dashes up the fire escape, opens their window and goes inside.

MIKE (V.O.)

I knew my mother didn't have hope
for me early on.

Mike races out onto the fire escape with a suitcase of Nettie and Sal's stuff spilling out and races up to the roof.

34 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT 34

MIKE

I used to talk to myself. Out loud.
I was just a weird little kid.
Maybe 4 or 5. But my mother- she
took me to some doctor.

35 INT. CHILD SPECIALIST OFFICE - DAY 35

Lorna Mae and Mike, 5, sit in front of a MIDDLE-AGE WHITE MAN who exhales cigarette smoke as he talks.

SPECIALIST

He's retarded. Your son. So. You'll
need to be prepared for that.

Lorna Mae studies her son. Mike waits for her to stand up for him. She just stares, coldly.

MIKE (V.O.)

He stole my mother's hope for me right then and there. And he stole any love or security I might of had.

Mike, all eyes, watches his mother carefully.

36 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY

36

Mike, 11, and a BIGGER OLDER KID are fighting in the center of a circle of onlookers. Money is changing hands.

MIKE (V.O.)

I never saw my mother happy with me. I never really got to know her. I started to get a reputation on the streets that I would fight anyone - grown men, anybody. I didn't think I'd live to see 16 anyway so why not go out hard?

It's a dirty street fight but Mike wins and collects money.

37 INT. STAGE - NIGHT

37

Onstage Mike really tries to connect with the audience, to make them understand.

MIKE

But I was so ashamed, man. I didn't go to school so I couldn't read. I couldn't write. I hated Mike Tyson. I was a piece of shit. I didn't wanna be Mike Tyson. When you hate yourself like that you can't love nobody.

38 INT. TV STUDIO - DAY - 1990'S

38

Mike, 20s, sits defiantly with an overly friendly African American TV HOST.

TV HOST

Is it nerve racking for you to do a live interview like this or is it more nerve racking for you to box?

MIKE

It's more nerve racking for me to talk to a rat piece of shit like you.

TV HOST

Oh come on.

MIKE

No, because you're a piece of shit.

TV HOST

We're on live TV here.

MIKE

What do I care? You're a piece of shit.

TV HOST

All right, we're gonna wrap up this interview. Thank you for coming in.

MIKE

Fuck you.

39 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT 39
Mike makes a "What are you gonna do?" face.

40 INT. SUBWAY - DAY 40
Mike, 11, sits on the train watching a MOM with her 2 children behaving affectionately as they ride. He stares at them coldly as he speaks.

MIKE

Why should I have compassion? I didn't have a future. I was more interested in getting revenge on those bullies from my past.

41 EXT. BROWNSVILLE STREET - DAY 41
Mike stops short on the street when he sees ONE OF THE BULLIES who beat him up earlier coming out of a store.
Mike freezes. His old fear momentarily overtakes him. Then slowly his fear turns to rage.

MIKE'S FRIEND

What's the matter, Mike? What'd you stop for?

Mike is frozen. As the bully unknowingly walks past, Mike hauls off and CLOCKS HIM.

Then Mike jumps on the guy pummels the guy viscously.

BULLY

What the fuck? Get off of me! I don't even know you, man!

He tries to kick Mike off him but Mike doubles down, just seeing red.

Mike's friend looks in both direction to see if anyone's watching. No one cares. He shrugs then joins in, kicking him.

QUICK SHOTS:

42 A QUICK SERIES OF MIKE IN 20 MUG SHOTS. 42

Mike aging from 10 years old to 12 years old in a rapid succession of 20 mug shots.

MIKE (V.O.)

Until I was 11, when I first started getting arrested, they always just called my mom and let me go.

43 INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY 43

Lorna Mae comes into the precinct yelling and immediately starts beating 10 year old Mike. He curls up in the corner shielding himself.

MIKE (V.O.)

My mom didn't have a phone so they always had to come pick her up in a police car to get me.

44 INT. POLICE PRECINCT - NIGHT 44

Lorna Mae comes in yelling and immediately starts flailing on 11 year old Mike in the corner.

MIKE (V.O.)

Man, she would get me in the corner and beat the shit out of me!

45 INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY 45

Lorna Mae comes in yelling and immediately starts walloping on 11 year old Mike in the corner of the room.

MIKE (V.O.)

Once she came in and beat me so bad
the police didn't even write me up.

46 INT. THEATRE WINGS - NIGHT 46

In the wings a STAGE MANAGER follows along on script as on stage Mike talks to the audience.

MIKE

To this day I glance at the corners
of any room I'm in and I have to
look away... It reminds me of my
mother smacking me shitless.

47 INT. POLICE TRANSPORT VAN - MORNING 47

Mike rides in silence with older boys going to Spofford Juvenile Detention Center.

JUVENILE PRISONER 1

You ever been to Spoffard before?

Mike stares him down then finally shakes his head.

JUVENILE PRISONER 1 (CONT'D)

Man, place is messed up.

JUVENILE PRISONER 2

My cousin said some guys held him
down and shaved him his first night
there, you hear me? I never asked
if he meant his face. I still don't
wanna know. There's some weird shit
goes down there.

JUVENILE PRISONER 1

It's a freak show, man. And young
one's like you- well, freaks really
like 'em ripe.

JUVENILE PRISONER 2

Yes they do.

The guys laugh. Mike just stares them down.

48 INT. SPOFFORD JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER - MORNING 48

Mike, in issued clothes, walks in a line of inmates through the cellblock to the cafeteria. DEAFENING NOISE. Arguing. Screaming. Buzzers ringing. Metal slamming. Even the laughter is frantic.

Ahead of him, Mike can hear inmates react to the new batch of prisoners entering the cafeteria for the first time. Hazing, swearing, barking. Every step closer young Mike is more and more terrified. Taunts grow louder and louder. He steels himself as he enters.

49 INT. SPOFFORD CAFETERIA - MORNING (CONT.) 49

The second Mike enters:

CURTIS
Mike!!

BARKIM
Yo, Mike!

MIKE
What up?

BARKIM
What up! Chill brother. All your boys are here.

Mike looks around at guys he hasn't seen in years.

MIKE
It's like a fucking' class reunion.

BARKIM
Yeah. 'Cept we never been to class.

A table full of Mike's boys nod. Mike wipes his brow.

50 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT 50

Mike wipes his brow and laughs. He likes this part.

MIKE
After that first time, I was going in and out of Spofford like it was nothing. Spofford became like a fucking time-share for me.

QUICK SHOTS:

51 A QUICK SERIES OF MIKE IN 18 MUG SHOTS. 51

Mike aging from 12 years old to 13 years old in a rapid succession of 18 mug shots.

MIKE (V.O.)

They put me in group homes. Special ed. Some facility on Staten Island. They exhausted all the places they could send me in the city so I got sent to the Tyron juvenile facility in upstate New York. I don't think my mother even said goodbye at that point.

We freeze on Mike's last mug shot at age almost 13.

52 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT 52

MIKE

At Tyron I was just angry all the time. I'd be confrontational and let everyone know I was from Brooklyn! Heeeeeey.

The audience 'Heeeeeey' him right back.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Heeeeeey!

53 INT. TYRON REFORMATORY - QUAD - NIGHT 53

A group of BEAT UP BOYS, broken noses, cracked teeth, bruised ribs, get Mike's attention.

BROKEN NOSE

I'm telling you. We almost got him.

CRACKED TEETH

I almost got him.

BRUISED RIBS

Shit, he didn't even know you were there.

MIKE

Yo man, what happened to you?

BRUISED RIBS

Mr. Stewart.

MIKE
He a guard?

CRACKED TEETH
Guidance counselor.

MIKE
That's messed up.

CRACKED TEETH
No, man. Mr. Stewart. Irish Bobby
Stewart. He was like a boxing
champ. An amateur champ or some
shit.

He points to a picture. On the wall among the framed photos
is an old fight promotional. Mike takes a look.

MIKE
This guy? I could take him.

ALL THE BEAT UP BOYS
(Doubtfully)
Whoooooooooa!

MIKE
Fuck you!

54 INT. LOCAL BOXING GYM - DAY 54

The Beat Up Boys follow Mike into the gym to see if Mike can
kick Mr. Stewart's ass.

BOBBY STEWART, 30's, nods at Mike from inside the ring.

BOBBY
I heard about you. Suit up.

The Beat Up Boys hoot and holler.

55 INT. LOCAL BOXING RING - DAY 55

Mike, with boxing gloves on for the first time, steps into
the ring supremely confident.

MIKE (V.O.)
I figured the only thing standing
in the way of everyone sucking up
to me is this little white guy. Oh
I had this.

Bobby nods. Mike starts throwing punches wildly. Bobby covers himself, slips by Mike and BAM! Bobby punches Mike in the stomach and everything stops.

Mike tries desperately to breathe. The gang of Beat Up Boys think that's the funniest thing ever.

THEN MIKE THROWS UP. The gang really goes ballistic.

BOBBY

Get up. Walk it off.

From outside the ring PRESENT DAY MIKE looks at 13 YEAR OLD MIKE struggle to get his breath back.

MIKE

I remember I thought I was dying. Literally dying. But I was also thinking- if I learn to punch like that, all those Brownsville motherfuckers will go down and I'll go through their pockets.

13 year old Mike throws up again.

56

EXT. GYM - AFTERNOON

56

Mike, humble, laying it on thick, approaches Bobby as he leaves the gym.

MIKE

Excuse me, Sir. Could you teach me to punch like that?

BOBBY

No.

MIKE

Please, Sir. I'd really like to learn.

BOBBY

No you wouldn't. Get outta here.

He walks off. Mike follows.

MIKE

I wanna be a fighter.

BOBBY

So do the rest of these guys. But none of you have the balls to work to be a fighter. I heard about you.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You're a badass motherfucker. Sent to the hole the second night you're here. You don't wanna work for anything. I'm not teaching you shit.

MIKE

I do. Please...I'm not conning you, man. I need you.

Bobby stops.

BOBBY

I don't need you. You need credits to train with me anyway. Maybe if you straighten up your act and stop being such an asshole and show some respect around here, I'll work with you. Until then get the fuck out of my way.

He walks off. But Mike is intrigued.

57 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 57

Mike sits in the classroom with the other boys but now he is attentive.

MIKE (V.O.)

I started applying myself.

58 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY 58

Mike receives an honor roll certificate. He just stares at it, overwhelmed. He has no idea the right face to make.

59 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT 59

Mike smiles at the crowd. Despite everything, he is still proud of this.

MIKE

Eventually I even made the honor role. Me, right?

The audience applauds. Mike grins like a child, throws his hands up.

MIKE (CONT'D)
 I always thought I was the
 stupidest guy in the world. Turns
 out I'm smarter than stupid.

60 INT. LOCAL BOXING RING - DAY 60

Mike and Bobby spar in the ring, Bobby shouting out instructions.

MIKE (V.O.)
 So I start training with Bobby
 Stewart. Months in, turns out -
 well, I guess you know this part -
 turns out I'm pretty good.

61 INT. MIKE'S ROOM - NIGHT 61

Mike practices shadow boxing alone all night long.

MIKE (V.O.)
 It was the first time I was good at
 something that wasn't totally
 illegal.

62 INT. BOBBY'S GYM OFFICE - DAY 62

Mike holds out a telephone receiver to Bobby.

MIKE
 Come on man. Call her. Call her. I
 want my mom to know I'm good at
 something. She'll believe it if a
 white man tells her.

BOBBY
 Mike, I wanna talk to you
 seriously.

MIKE
 I didn't do anything.

BOBBY
 No, I know. I want you to meet
 someone. Cus D'Amato. He's a big
 time boxing trainer.

Mike's face clouds over.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
 He can take you to the next level.

He tries to process this.

MIKE
Why? What did I do?

BOBBY
What do you mean?

MIKE
I train with you, man.

BOBBY
He trained Floyd Patterson. He
trained Jose Torres. Trust me on
this.

MIKE
I'll do better. I promise.

Mike starts to cry.

BOBBY
Mike, no, this is a good thing.

Bobby comes over to Mike. Puts his arm around him. Mike cries
harder.

MIKE
Come on. What did I do? What did I?

BOBBY
Mike, you didn't do anything. Look.
You're up for parole soon. I don't
want you getting in trouble when
you go back to Brownsville. I'm
doing this *for* you, not *to* you.

But Mike's been thrown away too many times. He can't talk.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Come on. We're friends. Trust me.

Mike wipes his nose, staring at the floor.

63 INT. GYM - DAY

63

CLOSE ON: CUS D'AMATO, 70s, short, stout, bald headed,
without a happy muscle in his face, just stares.

Mike and Bobby are in the ring, sparring. Mike is looking
unusually strong.

At first Cus's face is unreadable. No, it's readable. He looks disgusted. As the sparring continues, he stares harder and harder.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the tiniest small smile comes to his face, behind his eyes.

CUS

All right. That's enough.

Mike and Bobby exchange a look. They climb out of the ring and approach Cus. They wait in silence. Finally:

CUS (CONT'D)

(To Bobby)

That is the heavyweight champion of the world.

Cus looks at Mike, seriously. Mike is unreadable.

CUS (CONT'D)

If you listen to me, I can make you the youngest heavyweight champion of all time... What do you think about that?

64 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

64

MIKE

I thought he was a pervert. Where I came from, people say shit like that when they want to perve out on you.

65 INT. CUS'S FAMILY ROOM - DAY

65

Mike, Bobby, Cus and TEDDY ATLAS, 20's, a trainer, sit around Cus's Victorian house as Cus holds court.

CUS

I can't believe you're just 13 years old.

MIKE

Yes, sir.

CUS

You have natural talent, Mike. You looked splendid. In time, you will be the best fighter that ever lived. Do you believe that?

Mike looks around this big house, thrown.

MIKE

I don't know what I'm supposed to say.

66 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

66

Onstage Mike shrugs.

MIKE

I didn't know *what* to think about that. I was honestly just thinking on how I was gonna rob his house.

67 INT. CUS'S FAMILY ROOM - DAY (CONT.)

67

Mike looks around this big house, thrown.

MIKE

I don't know what I'm supposed to say.

CUS

It's the truth. I think you're the one I've been waiting for. Sometimes it pays to stay alive. Now I'm glad I lived as long as I did.

Around the family room table, the coaches laugh.

BOBBY

So you up for it? You gonna work together? What do you think, Mike?

But Mike is transfixed by some flowers in a vase.

MIKE

Are those roses?

CUS

What?

MIKE

Roses. I've never seen them in life before. Only on television.

They take this in. Mike studies the roses in a vase in awe.

68 INT. BOBBY'S CAR - AFTERNOON

68

Bobby drives back to Tyron as Mike sits with a bunch of cut roses in his arms, gazing out the window.

BOBBY
You okay, Mike?

Mike tries but doesn't have the words to express himself. He nods. They drive in silence for a while.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Whatcha thinking?

Mike continues to stare out the window. He doesn't speak right away. Then, simply:

MIKE
...I think I'm going to be
somebody.

Bobby turns to Mike.

There is a fire in Mike's eyes.

69 INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

69

CLOSE ON: Present day Mike onstage. There is a fire in his eyes.

BLACKOUT.