

BEAST MODE

Pilot

Written by

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TNT

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ACT ONE

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EARLY MORNING

From wide we see a pickup truck kicking up dirt as it crosses along the horizon. Though the visual is scenic and peaceful, we hear the faint sounds of a HEAVY DUTY HIP HOP TRACK cutting through the silence of the countryside. Then BOOM...

We're IN CLOSE on the flatbed of the truck. Sitting on a mounted chair that faces backwards is...

MARSHA BLACKSTONE

...probably the most badass 42-year-old black woman you have ever seen. She wears a "uniform" of Timberlands, cargo pants, a t-shirt and ball cap. Marsha is a former criminal and homeless woman who at one time in her life had no prospects. And the feeling that she could be right back there at any moment fuels her every waking moment. Which is evident as she YELLS over the music that pours out of two mounted speakers beside her chair and the truck's engine.

MARSHA

Pick it up! Pick it up! You are the
weakest bitch I ever seen, Troy!
The weakest!

We pan off Marsha and see that she's demeaning...

TROY "THE DISPATCHER" DANIELS

Troy, 25, African American, is ripped and handsome despite his flattened nose and scarred eyebrows. He picked up his nickname because he used to work dispatch at a cab company. And because he's a middleweight boxer with a record of 21 and 0 with 19 KO's. (Troy fights like ERROL SPENCE JR., acts more like Adrien Broner.)

A rope around Troy's waist is tethered to a tractor tire that he drags as he tries to keep up with the truck.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

This is probably why your father
left you. He got one look at your
sorry ass and said, "look at this
sorry ass punk!" And took off
running.

TROY

You couldn't do what I do.

MARSHA

Runnin' your mouth.

TROY

You the one running your mouth. I'm the one running my black ass off strapped to this here hillbilly tire. I'm the king and you should be treatin' me like the king.

MARSHA

Bitch, kings get dethroned. I used to run this five with two tires strapped to my back.

TROY

Yeah. Them tires probably too scared not to keep up. Did they own runnin'.

MARSHA

My twenty-two and "O" says they got they ass dragged just fine.

Troy, straining every muscle, falls a little behind.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Keep up! You ain't losing this fight as long as I'm trainin' you. I don't train no goddamn losers.

TROY

Oh, I'll win this thing. I'll win it all goddammed day. But I hate you every step! Every. Damn. Step.

MARSHA

Win the fight and you can hate on whatever, T. I won't give a shit.

EXT. CRAZY SHITTY PART OF TOWN - MORNING

An industrial building sports a mural declaring it home to the BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB -- Marsha's gym. A camera truck courtesy of HBO SPORTS sits out front.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Marsha's gym is worn and smelly, but organized and loved. Posters on the walls cement her past status as a championship boxer as well as Troy's rise to boxing prominence.

In the gym today: MEDIA DAY.

PRODUCERS, CAMERA PEOPLE, GYM RATS and Marsha's daughter...

KERRY BLACKSTONE (23)

...look on as JIM LAMPLEY interviews Marsha and Troy.

Kerry is beautiful, educated, but still a little hood.

Standing next to her, holding her hand is her precious daughter, EVE aka TOTS (2).

JIM

Troy... How do you see yourself? As a pure boxer? A boxer-puncher? Describe your style.

TROY

I don't think about labels.

Jim looks at Troy to see if he wants to elaborate. He doesn't. The intimate interview is not Troy's strong suit. Marsha steps into the silence.

MARSHA

Here's the thing about boxers, Jim. We ain't normal. What kind of person wanna go into a ring and get hit in they head over and over? Not a normal human being.

TROY

I don't know--

MARSHA

Is Troy a... boxer... a puncher, a brawler? It don't even matter, he beat on you the way he beat on you.

TROY

I like to think of myself as--

Some of the HBO crew giggle. Troy can't imagine why. Then he notices that Eve has WANDERED INTO THE SHOOT.

KERRY

(whispers)

Tots... get back here.

Tots doesn't. While everyone else is thrown off, Marsha barely reacts to the intrusion, evenly eyeing Tots, who does a series of little poses, and Jim.

MARSHA

My daughter's daughter. We good.
Keep going.

JIM

Okay. Troy?

Troy's thinking: CUT! Start over. This is bullshit. But the cameras continue to roll.

Marsha lifts Eve as she toddles by and puts her on her lap.

MARSHA

You know what he is? Come fight
night... he one thing: a murderer.
Plain and simple.

Lampley and the cameras turn their focus on Marsha, it's not that she's trying to steal the spotlight, it's just that she's so compelling.

JIM

What's your assessment of David
Lemieux, the champion?

MARSHA

He crazy too. We all crazy to get
in that ring. But Lemieux is the
past, Troy is the future and he's
gonna make Lemieux sorry he ever
even had that strap.

JIM

Troy, let's talk about Marsha...

TROY

Or let's talk about Troy Daniels.

JIM

She had a storied career in the
ring, but, if you win this title
she'll be the first woman to train
a man to a world championship. What
does that mean to you?

Eve squirms, whines. Marsha grabs a nearby glove and puts it in Eve's hands to distract her. It works.

TROY

(frustrated)

Man, it's cool. Marsha been like a
mother to--

MARSHA

Gotta act like his mama too so he
make weight...

TROY

I'm my own man.

MARSHA

...prepare his meals, keep him from
gettin' in trouble, shit, I watch
him when he take a piss so he don't
drink the water out the toilet.

TROY

(getting more frustrated)
But at the end of the day, I have
to get in the ring and she doesn't.

JIM

That's true. But the cultural
significance... Marsha, does it
mean anything to you as a woman?

MARSHA

Don't matter if I'm a man, a woman
or an alien. Troy needs to be ready
to kill. That's all I care about.

JIM

Okay. You guys want to work some
mitts for the cameras?

Troy is left disappointed, but Marsha is oblivious.

Marsha looks at Eve as she hands her back to Kerry.

MARSHA

Fifteen minutes are over.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - LATER

Troy is gloved up. He peppers Marsha's mitts with rights and
lefts. It's a superhuman feat of speed, strength and
coordination. Troy puts more power than necessary into each
shot to let off steam.

MARSHA

Don't have to load up on everything.

Troy hits harder. Like he wants to break Marsha's hands
through the mitts.

Jim and other REPORTERS watch, film, photograph.

Afterwards... Troy turns to each photographer and mugs for their cameras. It's all him now, he's feeling it. Then...

PHOTOGRAPHER

How about we get some of Marsha?

Troy's face falls.

EXT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - THAT EVENING

The HBO truck pulls away.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - SAME

The place has cleared out for the most part. Left behind, working the front desk, is Kerry with Eve on her lap.

EVE

Go home?

Kerry pops a Goldfish cracker in Eve's mouth.

KERRY

Soon, Tots.

Nearby, Marsha weighs Troy on the scale.

TROY

What the hell, Marsha?

MARSHA

What?

TROY

You stealing my thunder.

MARSHA

Ain't stealin' shit.

TROY

Talkin' over me. Getting upstaged by a toddler. Amateur hour shit. I'm the fighter. This is my moment.

MARSHA

So fight. Don't bitch and moan about cameras and lights and all that bullshit. You whoop ass. That's all the thunder you got to worry about.

CHARLIE

Let your fists do the talking.

CHARLIE (30) another one of Marsha's fighters, a gargantuan heavyweight jumps rope a few feet away. Charlie is a man of few words, none of them graceful.

MARSHA

See, Charlie know.

Marsha finally finds Troy's exact weight on the scale.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

One-sixty-five? Damn! We got two days to get that last five. No sneakin' water, a chip even a Fruit Loop.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - NIGHT

Marsha's home, like her gym is well organized, but shopworn. Jesus figures into the artwork, but for the most part she doesn't know a thing about decorating.

Seated around the dinner table are Troy, Charlie and Marsha's girlfriend ROSIE. Rosie is in her late-twenties, normal and attractive.

Marsha serves herself, Rosie and Charlie full plates of food: breaded chicken, rice, broccoli.

Then she puts a plate in front of Troy: half a plain chicken breast, a small serving of broccoli and a half cup of water.

TROY

Damn, Marsha! I'm gonna starve straight to death.

MARSHA

You want that belt?

TROY

Yeah.

MARSHA

Then you gotta make that weight. Rosie?

ROSIE

Yeah, sweetie?

MARSHA

Troy and I need to share the bed tonight.

TROY

C'mon, Marsha!

MARSHA

You don't like it? Find another coach.

ROSIE

Is this really necessary?

MARSHA

You know this boy can't be trusted.

ROSIE

Where am I going to sleep?

MARSHA

You and Charlie figure it out.

Rosie looks at Charlie.

ROSIE

I hate fight week.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marsha climbs into bed next to Troy. The air feels heavy. Troy looks vulnerable, like a little boy.

TROY

Marsha...

MARSHA

Yeah?

TROY

Why you gotta push so hard? Why can't you be nice?

MARSHA

Nice? Troy I'ma tell you what my momma told me: *I ain't gonna break you, but I'm gonna make you.* Let's leave it at that. Get some rest.

Troy falls asleep wondering why this matters to him.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - BEDROOM - DEEP NIGHT

Marsha and Troy sleep. It's quiet, it's calm.

We give it a minute and then Troy stirs. His hunger pains make noise. Troy quietly gets out of bed and semi-sleepwalks out of the room.

IN THE LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - SAME

Eyes at half mast, Troy ambles past Charlie and Rosie as they sleep soundly on the pullout couch.

Troy makes his way to the fridge and looks inside. He spots a dish of chicken and picks up a drumstick.

Troy brings the chicken to the edge of his lips when...

WHAP! Marsha is right behind Troy having smacked him across the back with a switch.

Rosie shoots up in bed with a start.

WHAP, WHAP! Marsha cracks Troy two more times, hard. Troy groans in pain, but still gets the drumstick into his mouth. He bites down.

ROSIE

C'mon, Marsha...

Suddenly Marsha is on Troy, digging the food right out of his mouth with her fingers. Troy resists, but Marsha doesn't take no for an answer -- not now, not ever.

MARSHA

Bitch you trippin'! Get that out!
Can't be midnight snackin'!

Marsha extracts the chicken. Troy is crushed.

TROY

It's not me, it's my body. So
hungry it's getting its own food.

MARSHA

Get back in that bed before I sew
your mouth shut. I ain't
bullshitting.

Of course she isn't.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - MORNING

Gym rats do their thing.

Kerry puts Eve into a portable "Pack-and-Play" crib as she handles business on her phone. The Pack-and-Play is a staple at the gym.

As a businesswoman, we see that Kerry is truly Marsha's daughter.

KERRY (INTO PHONE)
 No, that's not enough! We need more
 tickets. Troy's got his people,
 Marsha has hers... Don't tell me
 "no" because I'm not hearing that.
 (she's told "no")
 I'm not hearing that.

Marsha has Troy back on the scale.

MARSHA
 One-sixty-six?! Troy what you put
 in your mouth when I ain't looking?

TROY
 Nothing. I swear.

MARSHA
 (with an intense look)
 You swear you swear?

TROY
 Truth woman.

Marsha smacks the scale.

MARSHA
 You pile of shit. Why you do this
 to me?

Marsha's assistant, cutman and former trainer...

POPPY CASTELLON

Enters. Poppy is in his 60's, but fit. He is an old Mexican
 fighter who once lost a title shot and is now both a drunk
 and a little punch drunk.

POPPY
 Don't break that scale, mama. Two
 hundred dollars.

MARSHA
 You late. Where you been Poppy?

POPPY
 Rubbin' one out.

MARSHA
 What?!

POPPY
 Didn't want my purple pill to go to
 waste.

(MORE)

POPPY (CONT'D)

(off looks)

It's Glo. She won't put out if I don't wear a rubber and I'm too old to be bagging it up. We got into one of those--

CHARLIE

Mexican standoffs?

POPPY

That's racist. Coitus interruptus moments. Got me thinking I need a snippy snip. Vasectomy.

Marsha shakes her head at Poppy.

CHARLIE

What's that?

KERRY

It's a surgery to make men unable to get women pregnant.

TROY

That's what Marsha does with her personality.

Marsha ignores Troy's quip.

CHARLIE

Gonna get your nuts chopped, Poppy?

MARSHA

Shit, I can't have you all laid up right now.

POPPY

It's *nada*. *Nada*, mama. Snip, snip, ice it for a few days. *Finito*. I'll do it after the fight.

MARSHA

Not gonna be a fight unless we get six pounds off Troy. Poppy, turn the heat up.

Poppy walks to the thermostat on the wall and CRANKS it all the way up.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Okay, let's boil this boy down.

Marsha pulls the blinds on the few windows in the gym and turns to Kerry.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Clear the room.

Kerry walks around the gym asking everyone who was not in "camp" with Troy to leave.

KERRY

Closing early today... Time to go... Fight prep... Thank you.

Marsha pulls two blankets from a duffel bag, lays them on the floor of the ring and then waves Troy over.

TROY

We gotta do this?

MARSHA

How long we been together?

TROY

Since I was little, but...
(off her look)
I'm a man now, Marsha.

MARSHA

We gotta sweat you good.

TROY

I'll get on the bike.

MARSHA

This work better than that.

Troy lays down on the blankets and lets Marsha wrap him up cocoon-like with his head sticking out.

By now the gym is a HOT BOX. Everyone covered in sweat. Marsha lays on the ground, ear to ear with Troy, their legs in opposite directions.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Come on Poppy. Kerry get Eve.

KERRY

We're not doing this.

MARSHA

Yes, you are.

Kerry stands her ground. Marsha delivers her a crushing look. A moment, then Kerry folds.

She, Eve and Poppy lay down next to Troy so they are all clumped together. Marsha looks at Charlie.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Yo, turn out the lights.

CHARLIE
Why me?

MARSHA
Turn 'em off before I turn your
lights off.

EVE
Mawa...

Eve calls Marsha MAWA, God forbid she calls her "grandma."

MARSHA
It's all good, baby.

CLICK. The room is plunged into darkness. Charlie joins the
body-mass. Things settle. Eve sweats, squirms.

EVE
Hot, mama.

KERRY
Told you.

MARSHA
Eve, you be fine.

EVE
No. I'm hot.

KERRY
We're out.

Kerry gets up with Tots and walks her out of the gym. Marsha
is pissed, but quickly regains control of her emotions.

MARSHA
We gonna pool our energy now. Help
Troy get to the finish line as one.
This is the team. We in the eye of
the hurricane. This is what we do.

The team lays there silently. The heat rising. Sweat dripping
down their brows. We only hear their breathing. Just laying,
breathing, sweating -- becoming one. This goes on for as long
as we can take it, then...

SLAM CUT TO:

EXT. BARCLAY'S CENTER ARENA - NIGHT

City lights. We sweep the top of the pretzel like building. Our pulse quickens as we hear the THUDDING SOUNDS of pugilism inside.

INT. BARCLAY'S CENTER ARENA - INSIDE THE RING - SAME

Troy is fighting DAVID LEMIEUX -- a tough, white, heavy-handed puncher. They trade blows in the center of the ring. It's round three. Lemieux backs Troy up to the ropes right above Marsha.

MARSHA

Kill, Troy! Kill the body!

Troy turns Lemieux around and digs a left to the body that stuns Lemieux. He's hurt. Takes a knee.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

That's what I'm talking about!

THE REFEREE sends Troy to a neutral corner then turns to Lemieux.

REFEREE

3... 4... 5... 6...

Lemieux takes a deep breath and gets to his feet. He's going to survive the shot. The ref squares the fighters up and...

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Box!

The contest continues until...

DING! The round ends and the fighters go to their corners.

MUSIC plays. A ROUND CARD GIRL circles the ring.

SLURP, PA-TOO, SWIPE. Troy drinks, spits, gets slathered in Vaseline by Poppy.

MARSHA

Good round, T. Just keep hammering that body like we talked about.

DING! We're back...

INSIDE THE RING - A FEW ROUNDS LATER

BAP, BAP, WHAM! Troy hits Lemieux with a double jab, left hook. Lemieux strikes back with a jab to the body followed by a straight right hand that causes a clash of heads.

It's hard to tell what caused it, but the collision splits the skin over Troy's left eye.

A moment, then blood starts to gush from the wound. It becomes a target for Lemieux and a distraction for Troy as blood pours down into his eye.

The Ref halts the fight and checks the cut. He calls to the judges...

REFEREE

From a punch! A punch!

Marsha cries out from Troy's corner.

MARSHA

Bullshit! That's bullshit!

The ref lets the fight go on and the boxers go back to banging. DING!

IN THE CORNER - BETWEEN ROUNDS

Poppy works on Troy's gash. It's so deep you can see almost to the bone. The Ref comes over.

REFEREE

Let's keep an eye on that.

MARSHA

Why don't you keep an eye on white boy's head, fool. That shit was a butt!

REFEREE

I saw a punch.

MARSHA

Get some glasses Mr. Damn Magoo!

POPPY

Marsha.

Poppy puts a calming hand on Marsha's shoulder. He's one of a few people who can do that and not get clocked in return.

MARSHA

(to the ref)

Don't you dare try and stop this!
You hear?

The ref gestures, *it is what it is*. Marsha turns back to Troy.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Put that shit out your mind, Troy.
I need you to go in there and
murder this boy. Double up your
jab. Strike. Put him in the grave!

DING!

IN THE RING - MOMENTS LATER

Lemieux pops his jab at Troy's cut. More blood flows -- it starts to streak their gloves and soil their trunks. Troy hits Lemieux back clean and hard. He lands a series of devastating power shots. Lemieux tags the cut again and gets jolted by an uppercut for his trouble. He clinches.

The ring is a bloody mess.

The ref steps in again. He sends Lemieux to a neutral corner and brings Troy to a RINGSIDE PHYSICIAN.

The doctor wipes and checks the cut. He and the ref look unsure. They look over at Marsha. The look on her face is devastating -- *stop the fight and I will stop your life.*

The doctor nods -- *good to go.*

REFEREE

Time in.

Troy and Lemieux get back to it.

IN THE CORNER - BETWEEN ROUNDS - LATER

The round card girl passes -- her placard reads ROUND 12.

MARSHA

This cut be like a pussy that
Lemieux gonna keep taggin' if you
let him. You wanna get pegged like
little bitch or you wanna kill?
(off his look)
Then kill, T!

DING!

IN THE RING

The 12th and final round. Troy clearly has more energy, more confidence, more strength. He could probably cruise through the round, but no, he goes for the kill.

He gets Lemieux on the ropes. Batters him. Lemieux shows a superhuman amount of heart -- it's all that's keeping him on his feet.

The ref watches closely, is on the verge of stepping in. Marsha screams her head off from the corner.

MARSHA

Murder, Troy! Murder!

Troy tries to put Lemieux down. Lemieux gets off a jab or two -- just enough to hold off the ref. Troy smashes him with a right. A left. The CROWD is on their feet. The KO is imminent. It's going to be decisive. But then...

DING! The ref jumps between the fighters. The round and the fight is over.

INT. BARCLAY'S CENTER ARENA - INSIDE THE RING

Post fight. Waiting for the RING ANNOUNCER to declare a winner. Aside from Marsha and Troy and Lemieux and his TRAINER the ring is packed with PROMOTERS, MANAGERS, ROUND CARD GIRLS and SYCOPHANTS. Troy's cut looks bad, but Lemieux's face looks worse.

RING ANNOUNCER

Annnnnnnnd NEW World Champion...
Troy "The Dispatcher" Daniels!

Troy shoots a fist in the air triumphantly. His entourage celebrates. Lemieux looks heartbroken.

Troy and Marsha embrace. A powerful embrace shared only by those who bled for this win.

Marsha is on top of the world.

IN THE RING - MOMENTS LATER

Troy is being interviewed by MAX KELLERMAN.

MAX

Troy, how does it feel to win your first world championship?

TROY

It's a dream come true, Max. A dream come true. All praise be to Jesus. And I want to thank the fans and my manager and my promoter and my team.

Troy's team nods behind him.

MAX

Speaking of. Going with Marsha Blackstone was a risk for you. We all know she was a great fighter, but we didn't know that she'd turn out to be a world class trainer.

TROY

True, true.

MAX

Okay, the big question, Troy... Who do you want next?

Troy, confidence soaring, adrenaline peaking, reaches out for the mic. Max relinquishes it to him.

TROY

I don't give a shit! Max, I'll take on anyone. I'll dispatch anyone. I'm unbeatable! I'm the king! I'll let my managers figure that out. The one thing I do know about my next fight is...

Troy turns to Marsha. He stares daggers at her.

TROY (CONT'D)

Marsha Blackstone will not be my trainer.

Troy does a mic drop and walks off -- disappearing into the crowd. As Max picks up the mic we see Marsha. There's a very brief moment of heartbreak on her face followed by a steely look.

MAX

(into camera)

I think that's a first, Jim. I mean this guy just wins his first belt and then turns around and dumps his trainer. Only in boxing.

Marsha turns into the fray.

MARSHA

Get the hell out my way!

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - MORNING

Early morning. Let's say 5:00am. Only homeless meth zombies are up at this hour.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - MORNING

WHAM, WHAM, WHAM. Marsha, the only one here at the moment, pounds away on a heavy bag. She attempts to relieve her aggression with each blow, but we can sense that, try as she might, there aren't enough punches she can throw to truly throttle down. As she slams away we dip inside her mind...

INT. WOMEN'S PRISON CELL BLOCK - MORNING - **23 YEARS AGO**

It's 5:00am here too. Still dark out. Most of the block is asleep, but in a cell we find...

YOUNG MARSHA (20), hair a greasy mess, perched on the edge of her bed. Two CORRECTIONS OFFICERS arrive at her cell.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

Already up, Marsha?

YOUNG MARSHA

Never even slept.

They open her door.

INT. PRISON HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

In the near dark, cuffed and chained, Marsha is led down the hall. She looks nervous, fidgety.

INT. PRISON R&R (RELEASE AND RECEIVING) - MOMENTS LATER

Marsha signs a ton of paperwork. Her handwriting is shaky because the truth is... she is mostly illiterate. After signing, she's handed a bag of clothes.

PRISON CLERK

Your dress outs.

Marsha takes the bag.

INT. CHANGING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marsha, rather than looking excited about her release, looks worried. She removes her prison uniform and pulls on her daily "uniform": cargo pants, t-shirt, Timberlands, ball cap. Same as usual.

She slows as she pulls a wife-beater over her swollen belly, she is SIX MONTHS PREGNANT. She considers the baby within, then something breaks the memory...

KERRY (V.O.)

Mom...

BACK IN THE GYM

Kerry, holding Eve, has entered and stands behind Marsha.

MARSHA

(to Eve)

Hey, baby.

(to Kerry)

Don't even think about messin' with me yet.

As Marsha continues to throw punches, Kerry moves on, puts Eve in the Pack-and-Play and unlocks the front door. There are already a few EARLY BIRDS waiting to come in.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - LATER

MEN large and small, young and old, occupy the gym. Some spar, some lift weights, some work the bags.

Marsha multi-tasks: she works with Charlie as he hits the speedbag and deals with Kerry who shadows her, carrying a handful of bills.

KERRY

Call Troy, mom. Fix it.

MARSHA

I didn't break nothin'.

KERRY

He just wants to know you love him.

MARSHA

I raised that boy. Put food in his mouth.

KERRY

Yeah, but would it kill you to say something nice to him? To anyone?

MARSHA

We past all that now.

KERRY

Then we gotta start thinking ahead. These bills don't pay themselves.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

Why don't we design some new merch?
Put it online, you post about it on
Twitter.

CHARLIE

What I'm talking about.

Marsha jabs Charlie in his chest. He loses his rhythm.

MARSHA

You ain't talking. You fighting.
Don't lose your rhythm.

(then; to Kerry)

Girl, I need a new project. Make
some money the way I know how.

KERRY

We're gonna run out of money before
you can cash in on Charlie or a new
fighter. What about an endorsement
deal? Everlast used to be
interested.

MARSHA

Nobody lookin' at me like that no
more. I gotta set up a showcase.
Get some fresh fighters in here.

Kerry's frustration rises.

KERRY

Just call Troy.

MARSHA

Troy who?

KERRY

Mom, I know you had your heart
broken, but--

Marsha steps to the wall and tears down a poster of Troy from
his fight with David Lemieux.

MARSHA

I didn't have my heart broken.
Ain't nobody breaking this heart.

KERRY

Mom...

Marsha tears down another Troy poster.

MARSHA

You can't break somethin' that's already broke. Anyway, Charlie here is the focus now.

CHARLIE

Eleven and "O" -- eight knockouts.

KERRY

And how much are you getting for your next fight?

CHARLIE

Ten grand.

KERRY

You'll only make a thousand dollars, mom. See what I'm saying?

Marsha spots Eve watching her from the Pack-and-Play. Eve chews on a toy.

MARSHA

Why she always locked up in that thing? Let her free.

KERRY

This place has mold growing on the fungus.

MARSHA

She gonna think prison is a good place to end up.

With a venomous look into Troy's photographed eyes, Marsha tears down his last poster.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

I need to find me a middleweight. Special. I need some black magic.

KERRY

That's how you're playing it?

MARSHA

That's how it is. I paid for your college so that we could do this together. Mother-daughter style. Family business. So just keep the books cookin'.

Kerry is exasperated. She needs Marsha to make up with Troy for reasons beyond what she's expressing here.

KERRY

There will be no books to cook
unless you make up with Troy.

Marsha raises an eyebrow, Kerry's truth creeping over her.

Suddenly, a WHITE DUDE stumbles into the gym -- nose
bloodied, face reddened. This is...

ROB

...early-30's, handsome, upper-middle class, not from this
part of town, but likes to tell his friends that he belongs
to a boxing gym in the hood. Someone's beaten the crap out of
him.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Jesus... Rob.

The gym rats crowd around like, well, rats.

ROB

Some guys. They just...

MARSHA

They still out there?

ROB

I--

Marsha grabs Rob by the collar and...

EXT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - SAME

...marches him out onto the sidewalk. Everyone in the gym
follows including Charlie and Poppy.

MARSHA

Point.

Rob points up the street to TWO BOYS walking off. They're
both around 18 years-old.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

You get your ass whooped by them
kids?

POPPY

It's just sad, mama.

CHARLIE

That's messed up.

ROB

They're pretty big for their age.

MARSHA
Hey, yo! Little bitches!

The two boys turn. One of them is DUANE, a squat, but powerfully built erstwhile bad kid, the other is C-MATION just a bad motherfucker.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Get your asses over here.

The boys confer for a moment, then swagger up to Marsha.

C-MATION
What?

MARSHA
You rob this poor fool?

C-MATION
Ain't sayin' we did. Ain't sayin' we didn't.

DUANE
Ain't saying shit.

Marsha looks at Duane, recognizes him.

POPPY
Bust these Kermit the Frog looking putas up, mama!

Kerry stands in the door, now holding Eve.

KERRY
No, Poppy.

MARSHA
Tough little niggas, huh?

C-mation pulls up his hoodie and shows Marsha that he's strapped. A few of the gym rats scuttle back into the gym.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
That don't make you hard. I still whoop you ass.

C-MATION
You ain't whoopin' shit.

MARSHA
You think you can take me?

C-MATION
I ain't hit no bitch.

WHAP! Marsha slaps C-mation across the face -- HARD. The kid looks shocked.

C-MATION (CONT'D)

Don't you put your hands on me.
This here is loaded.

MARSHA

Any little bitch can pull a trigger. You so bad, put that back in yo waistband, come inside and we see who can fight like a man.

C-MATION

I'll crack your skull, lady. Don't think I won't.

DUANE

It's not a good idea, C.

MARSHA

You drop me, you can jack e'ryone that comes by the gym. But I mess you up, you give homeboy back his shit and leave my spot alone.

C-mation stares at Marsha. *Is she serious?*

MARSHA (CONT'D)

You a pussy.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Marsha and C-mation are gloved up and in opposite corners of the ring. Duane holds C-mation's stuff. Kerry holds Eve. C-mation mumbles to himself.

C-MATION

Callin' me out? I ain't hearin' that.

MARSHA

How many rounds?

C-MATION

Bitch, I need but one minute to knock you out.

Duane leans into C-mation's ear.

DUANE

Maybe use a shoulder roll defense.
Hit her with a--

C-MATION

Dude, I just gonna bounce her
around a bit. Then we out. Take a
video.

Duane lifts up his phone to film. DING!

Here's how it goes down:

-C-mation charges Marsha like a bull, swings wild and crazy.

-Marsha sidesteps his attack and rips a right hook to C-
mation's ribs. It hurts like fuck. The rats react -- *OHHHH!!!*

-C-mation stumbles aside, gets his footing and scowls at
Marsha. He thinks better of charging in again and beckons her
with a glove.

-POP, POP. Marsha humiliates C-mation with two jabs to his
face -- each one snapping his head back.

MARSHA

You should just run.

C-MATION

Don't think so.

-C-mation ducks in and throws an uppercut at Marsha. It just
barely catches her chin. Not enough to hurt her, but enough
to make her angry. Then he clinches.

-Marsha pushes C-mation back and then beats the shit out of
him. At first the peanut gallery is in HYSTERICS. But
suddenly, C-mation is on the canvas being pummelled
relentlessly by Marsha. *RELENTLESSLY*. Blood and teeth fly.

DUANE

Yo! That's enough.

ROB

He's out, Marsha!

Kerry hands Eve off to Charlie, jumps in the ring and pulls
her mom off of C-mation.

KERRY

Mom! Stop, mom! Stop!!!

Marsha, like "whatever," gets off of C-mation and stalks over
to Duane who still has his phone up.

MARSHA

You get that shit?
(off Duane's nod)
(MORE)

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Hook me up. I'm @blackstonegym on
Twitter. You *little* Duane, right?

DUANE

Duane.

MARSHA

I used to pick you up. Feed you.
Train you. You was a good little
fighter. Why you stop comin' by the
gym?

Duane shrugs.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

You should stop messin' around and
bring that cute left hook back over
here. We do something with that.

Duane's unsure. Marsha points to Rob.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Now give me his shit, *Little* Duane.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - LATER

Kerry is patching up Rob. Marsha holds Eve. The rats are back to working out.

ROB
Marsha... jeez. You almost killed that kid.

MARSHA
Know what I tell my fighters, Rob?

ROB
To win?

MARSHA
I tell them to kill. Not to win, to kill. If you go out there and you opponent think you gonna try and beat them, they got something to fight for. But if they see you comin' to kill 'em then they just start thinking about survival. That just breaks they spirit and then they don't want to fight you no more.

ROB
But that kid was not your opponent. Not in the same sense.

MARSHA
E'rybody's your opponent, Rob. Every-body.

Rob gives Kerry a look -- *your mom is crazy*. Kerry returns it -- *yeah, and I've been living with it my whole life*.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Rob, why the hell you come down here to workout anyway?

Rob looks at Kerry again -- it's clear he'd like to hook up with her. She knows it, likes it, but is not ready to act on it.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
First time you throw up in my planter.

Marsha points to a DEAD PLANT by the front door.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Now this bullshit. Plenty of gyms
uptown cater to your type.

ROB

My type?

MARSHA

Don't play that reverse racism shit
with me.

ROB

I like it here. It's authentic.
It's real.

MARSHA

Real stupid. Don't be parkin' your
Jag on the street no more. Put it
in the back.

ROB

It's a Tesla.

Nearby, Poppy hangs up his cell.

POPPY

Gonna need a ride to get snipped
tomorrow, Marsha.

MARSHA

Get Gloria to do it.

POPPY

Can't. She's a young lady, still
wants kids. I gotta keep her in the
dark, mama.

MARSHA

You don't need no ride, Poppy. You
wanna get sterile, I do it for you
right now.

POPPY

No, thank you.

Marsha puts Eve down and lets her wander. Eve toddles to a
heavy bag and hits it.

KERRY

Mom! The Pack-and-Play.

MARSHA

Let her be free.

KERRY
My kid, my rules.

MARSHA
I ain't doin' it.

Kerry walks over, plucks Eve up and puts her in the crib.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Poppy, get on over here. I take
Obamacare.

Poppy can't tell if Marsha is fucking with him. Poppy stands his ground just to be safe. Marsha calls out to the gym rats.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Yo! Get Poppy! Bring him up. Up on
the apron. And someone get me an
eight ounce glove.

Poppy tries to escape, but the gym rats, like a pack of laughing hyenas nab him and haul him up on the edge of the ring so he's just over Marsha.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
We gonna make it so that Poppy
can't be a daddy no more.

POPPY
Don't do it mama.

Marsha pulls on a glove as the rats start to chant.

GYM RATS
Marsha! Marsha! Marsha!

MARSHA
Just close your eyes, Poppy. This
gonna hurt like a bitch.

POPPY
Please, don't do it.

Kerry shakes her head. Can't look. Neither can Poppy.

MARSHA
I'ma save you from the knife.

POPPY
I don't want it.

MARSHA
Too late for that. Three!

GYM RATS

Two! One!

Marsha reaches up and pants' Poppy. He's got pink "tighty-whities" underneath. The rats explode with laughter. Poppy pulls up his pants. Off Marsha, pleased with her prank...

INT. PRISON VAN - DAY - **FLASHBACK**

Marsha and few other INMATES are un-cuffed and let off the van in front of the...

EXT. PRISON GATE - SAME - **FLASHBACK**

This prison is in the middle of bumble-fuck Texas. The other ex-inmates are greeted by FAMILY and FRIENDS.

Marsha looks around for her ride, but no one is there to meet her. *Damn*. She's so much less sure of herself at this age.

The prison van and all the other cars pull away leaving Marsha alone and bewildered. A long beat passes, then she starts walking down the road to nowhere.

She gets about a hundred yards down the road when an old Chrysler pulls out from behind a tree and slowly begins to stalk her.

Marsha feels the car creeping behind her. She's tense, doesn't turn around. A few more paces then Marsha can't take it anymore. She wheels on the car.

YOUNG MARSHA

What the hell you want, motherf--?!

The car stops and Marsha calms, breaks out in a smile.

YOUNG MARSHA (CONT'D)

Damn you, Buddy.

Marsha's older brother BUDDY BLACKSTONE (22) a Baptist minister in the making gets out of the car LAUGHING his ass off. These two have a lot in common: authenticity, drive, a sense of humor.

BUDDY

I got you good, Marsha! Got you so good.

YOUNG MARSHA

Thought I got disowned back there.

BUDDY

That is not God's way. But a little pranking can put a smile even on Jesus' face.

They hug. It's warm and familial. Marsha looks at the car and sees HER DAUGHTER JACKIE (3), shy, standing beside it.

YOUNG MARSHA

How you doing?

Jackie nods as if to say, "okay."

YOUNG MARSHA (CONT'D)

Cool.

INT. FIGHTLIFE BOXING ACADEMY - DAY

With its slick signage and color coordinated heavy bags this gym rides the line between real training facility and catering to upscale professionals who take "boxing" classes after work. Rob would fit right in here.

In the back of the gym, JACKIE BLACKSTONE aka JACKIE GONZALES (mid 20's) a half black/half hispanic boxer gets her hands wrapped by gym owner/head trainer RICK BENNY (50). Rick is a bald and tattooed white guy who has successfully melded his boxing roots with the trendy gym scene.

Jackie listens to music in her headphones. As an apple she didn't fall as far from the Marsha tree as Kerry did. She looks ready to rumble.

COLUMBUS (40's, black), a local boxing promoter with hustle to spare, walks in and joins them. He fist bumps Rick and head nods with Jackie.

COLUMBUS

What's good?

RICK

Sparring. Got a girl from Houston coming in.

COLUMBUS

Love it. Look... we got a problem. What are we introducing Jackie as? 'Cause I got a message here that says she goes by "Gonzales" now.

Rick finishes Jackie's handwraps and gets her attention. She pulls off the headphones and looks up at Columbus.

COLUMBUS (CONT'D)
Who the hell is Gonzales?

JACKIE
My father.

COLUMBUS
Your father? Who's that?

JACKIE
It don't matter.

Rick helps Jackie into her gloves and ties the laces.

COLUMBUS
That's right it don't. I got to promote this fight and the Blackstone name... people know it. It sells tickets. Fifty other fighters named Gonzales, no one even knows which is which.

JACKIE
Marsha ain't in my corner no more.
Or my life. Rick, tell him.

RICK
(to Jackie)
Look, her name does raise our profile. That's all he's saying.

JACKIE
Our?

COLUMBUS
It's a small community. Everyone knows you're Marsha Blackstone's daughter. Use it. It's good for business.

JACKIE
I fight as Gonzales or I don't fight at all.

Jackie and Columbus stare each other down.

COLUMBUS
You best be entertaining or I won't put you on anymore cards.

Columbus stalks off. Jackie turns on Rick - shades of Marsha.

JACKIE
What the shit?!

Rick gets personal with Jackie.

RICK
Come on. Gonzales could be a made
up name. You never even met the
guy.

JACKIE
I know it ain't her.

RICK
Does he have a first name?

JACKIE
You don't think I asked a million
times?

RICK
Look, I'm on your side.

JACKIE
Yeah? Then act like it.

Jackie pops her earbuds in, grabs a rope and starts jumping.

INT. FIGHTLIFE GYM - LATER

Kerry enters and looks around at the high end clients cooling
off after class. She's impressed by the vibe in here.

IN THE BACK OF THE GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Kerry chats up Jackie as she works through a rotation of ten
heavy bags. Some of Rick's other fighters work out too.

Jackie throws twenty shots per bag then moves to the next.
WHAM, WHAM, WHAM! 18, 19, 20. Switch. They chat between bags.

KERRY
Anyone worth mentioning?

JACKIE
Nah. Just the usual dogs. I ain't
letting her steal anyone good.

Switch. WHAM, WHAM, WHAM...

KERRY
Don't think of it as stealing.

Kerry looks at the gym's ring and eyes Rick as he hustles on
the phone while one of his FIGHTERS waits.

KERRY (CONT'D)

Maybe there's someone number three in Rick's mind that deserves more attention -- could be a number one or two for Marsha.

18, 19, 20. Switch.

JACKIE

Why she doing this? 'Cause she lost Troy?

KERRY

Not according to her, but yeah.

Suddenly Jackie stops her workout.

JACKIE

Kerry, why come here?

KERRY

I'm hitting up all the gyms. Why should this one be any different?

JACKIE

Know what you are?

Kerry can takes some guesses, but she doesn't know exactly what Jackie is going to say.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You a mama's girl.

KERRY

Jackie...

JACKIE

Look, Marsha got some shitty ways of doing things and you just let her keep doing them. Why? 'Cos she put you through college? Puts food in your mouth? So you can be the good daughter?

KERRY

I've got plans of my own, Jackie.

JACKIE

What plans you got?

KERRY

As soon as I get mom straight, I'm out of there.

JACKIE

To do what?

Kerry demurs, but Jackie doesn't let her off the hook.

KERRY

Maybe open my own gym. A high end spot like this, but nicer. Just for rich people. Make a chain of them. I was going to jump, but Troy messed things up.

JACKIE

Sounds like an excuse.

KERRY

It'll happen as soon I get mom back on track. Watch.

JACKIE

Marsha gonna kill you when she finds out.

KERRY

I can handle mom.

Jackie doesn't believe that. Kerry barely does either.

JACKIE

How's my little cutie?

KERRY

Eve is good. With her dad today.

Jackie goes back to slamming away at the heavy bags. WHAM, WHAM, WHAM!

KERRY (CONT'D)

Mom wants to come to your fight next week.

Jackie hits the bag harder and HARDER. 18, 19, 20... switch.

JACKIE

She say that? Bitch, please. Tell her no. This is my life.

KERRY

She may show up anyway.

JACKIE

Free country. Just tell her not to talk to me. I ain't havin' that.

KERRY

So, you gonna help me or not?

WHAM, WHAM, WHAM! Kerry waits for an answer. 18, 19, 20... switch. Jackie takes pity on Kerry.

JACKIE

Might be one or two guys. I'll let them know.

KERRY

Thanks.

Kerry flashes her sister a genuinely appreciative smile. Jackie nods and WHAM, WHAM, WHAM. Goes back to work.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lights are dim. Soft R&B plays. Marsha's girlfriend Rosie dances for her in her bra and panties. Marsha likes the show.

MARSHA

You dance so good, baby.

Rosie is happy to please.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Turn around.

Rosie does.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Now bring it on over here.

Rosie comes over to the bed and Marsha grabs her by the hips. Sex evolves from there. Marsha, like in all things, is a forceful lover.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - BEDROOM - LATER

Post coital. Marsha spoons Rosie.

ROSIE

I heard Troy went over to Garcia.

MARSHA

Bitch, we just got nasty. Why you bringing that up?

ROSIE

I thought you'd want to know.

MARSHA

I don't want to hear about that
bullshit.

Rosie turns to Marsha. She's not intimidated by her.

ROSIE

It's not like he left the planet.
You were going to hear about it.

MARSHA

Better to hear it from you?

ROSIE

Yes. From someone who loves you and
knows how hurt you are.

MARSHA

Kerry wants me to call him and get
him back.

ROSIE

Are you thinking about it?

MARSHA

Some... feels like a razor blade
running down my spine.

ROSIE

That's your ego talking. Maybe
you're focusing on the wrong thing.

Marsha reflects on Rosie's words.

Rosie takes Marsha's hand, has just the right surprise to
change Marsha's mood.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

Want some good news? It's a little
early, but... I'm pregnant. It
worked.

MARSHA

Don't mess with me.

ROSIE

Our baby, Marsha. Ours.

MARSHA

Damn, Rosie... we havin' a baby?

ROSIE

That's right.

They celebrate with some kissing. Marsha adores Rosie. Marsha rolls her hand over Rosie's belly feeling the life energy growing within. She talks to it.

MARSHA

You gonna be normal.

As Marsha dozes with her hand on Rosie's stomach...

INT. BUDDY'S CHRYSLER - LATER - **FLASHBACK**

Marsha, Buddy and little Jackie head into the city. Marsha enjoys the fresh air from her open window. It's been a minute since she tasted freedom. She looks in the rearview at Jackie, then at Buddy.

YOUNG MARSHA

How's she?

BUDDY

Bullheaded. Like someone I know.

(off Marsha's look)

Got your strength too. No one messes with her in the sandbox.

YOUNG MARSHA

Thanks for doing right by her.

Buddy gets tight lipped, then...

BUDDY

Look, Marsha, I can't take you guys home.

YOUNG MARSHA

What?

BUDDY

I got me my first pastorate, but I have to move to Dallas. Like yesterday. They putting me up.

YOUNG MARSHA

You and the Lord... always close.

BUDDY

Amen.

YOUNG MARSHA

I'm proud of you.

(but...)

Where you taking me and Jackie?

As the question hangs in the air...

EXT. KERRY AND DANIEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A cute little collegiate rental near the UT Austin campus. Two cars, one Kerry's beater Civic; the other a Prius with UBER and LYFT stickers in the window sit out front.

INT. KERRY AND DANIEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

It's bright and lively with lots of books and toys around as well as interesting art on the walls. Kiddie music plays.

Kerry and Eve live here with two roommates, one who happens to be Eve's father...

DANIEL PARK (25)

Daniel is a handsome Korean dude with a millennial spirit - side-hustle economy, tech savvy, enjoys wine and is in no rush to get married. The knock on Daniel is that he may never leave college. Ever.

Eve plays with toys on the floor while Kerry makes dinner (pasta, jarred sauce, zucchini) and Daniel reads a textbook.

KERRY

I saw Jackie today.

DANIEL

(looking up)

What's she up to?

KERRY

She's in camp for a fight.

DANIEL

You going?

KERRY

Probably. You want to?

DANIEL

Will your mom be there?

KERRY

I thought you liked my mom.

DANIEL

I do, but sometimes she treats me like I'm from another planet.

KERRY

Planet normal. I like that planet.

Kerry and Daniel share a look. The chemistry here is good.

DANIEL
Let's do it. We can bring Tots. Her
first professional fight.

EVE
Da-da.

DANIEL
(picks Eve up)
Yes, sweetie...

EVE
Noodles?

DANIEL
Almost.

Kerry watches Daniel with Eve, he's good, loving, she marvels
at him.

INT. KERRY AND DANIEL'S HOUSE - NURSERY - LATER THAT NIGHT

This is a TINY room, just big enough for a crib and a
dresser. Daniel puts Eve down for the night with a kiss.

Kerry watches from the door.

EVE
Door open.

DANIEL
Got you.

IN THE HALLWAY

Daniel joins Kerry and they close the door, leaving it open a
crack to let some light in.

KERRY
You're good.

DANIEL
Why wouldn't I be?

KERRY
You could be a drug addict. Run
off...

DANIEL
Hell no. We're going to make her
life awesome. Even better when I
get my PhD.

KERRY

In twenty years. I ever tell you
you're too fine to need all those
degrees.

DANIEL

Yes, but it never gets old. I'm
going to drive around and make some
diaper cash.

They walk to the front door. Kerry flashes some jealousy.

KERRY

Is that what you say when you
really have a date?

DANIEL

I don't have a date.
(off her look)
I would tell you. Aren't you seeing
some guy from the gym?

KERRY

Rob? He's just trying to hook up
with me.

They stop at the door.

DANIEL

We're better this way. If we got
together we'd break up in a few
years and things would go bad for
Tots. This is better for her.

EXT. KERRY AND DANIEL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel gets in the Prius with the Uber and Lyft stickers --
he's on the clock.

Kerry watches him drive away longingly.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - DAY

A DOZEN SERIOUS LOOKING MIDDLEWEIGHTS are crowded around the ring. It's a sparring session/showcase. Kerry organizes the fighters. Eve is not in the gym today.

In a montage, Marsha ushers the fighters in and out of the ring / watches what they got / makes adjustments / etc.

Poppy, sitting in a chair with a bag of frozen peas on his junk, takes notes.

MARSHA

You wanna help with this Poppy?

POPPY

I'm good, mama.

He's not.

Intermittently Marsha barks orders at Charlie as he trains nearby ala:

MARSHA

Give me fifty more you weak ass bitch! / Ain't no lazy champions! / Harder! Don't make me kick you out on yo ass!

After a bit, she stops a couple of fighters in the ring -- one A JACKED WHITE GUY.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Hold up. Dude, you roided?

The jacked guy shrugs.

JACKED GUY

Supplements.

MARSHA

Supplements my ass. Anyone else here jacked?

A few of the guys look caught.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

A'ight, next thing we do is get a blood test. You gonna fail it then don't waste my damn time.

Marsha points to the door. The caught guys pack up and leave. The jacked guy stays in the ring with Marsha.

JACKED GUY

I'm clean.

Marsha can't believe the balls.

MARSHA

Get the hell out of here!

The guy hangs his head and mopes away.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - LATER

The showcase is on hold for now.

Kerry, at the front desk, fills out a Credit Card application for the gym.

Behind Kerry, Marsha pushes some buttons on an treadmill that Charlie's standing on.

CHARLIE

I thought a half hour?

MARSHA

You come back at me one more time I move it up to a buck fiddy. Get. Movin'.

As Charlie starts jogging, Marsha approaches Kerry. Kerry hides the application. That's a story for later.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Kerry, where you find me these clowns?

KERRY

All over.

MARSHA

All over like you pick 'em up at the McDonalds?

(off Kerry's look)

I told one of these dummies to go downstairs and he asked where the staircase was.

KERRY

Mom, no one's going to be like Troy. And he's gonna get a half mil to defend his title.

(MORE)

KERRY (CONT'D)

That would be fifty thousand to you plus expenses paid by his manager. Add a another belt, he's a million dollar fighter. In a few years he could be making Mayweather money. All you have to do is play nice.

Marsha looks ninety-eight percent sold.

KERRY (CONT'D)

What? You gonna close the gym? What happens to all your people? To Charlie? To Poppy?

Marsha eyes both men and the rest of the gym rats. She doesn't want to disappoint the folks loyal to her.

MARSHA

All right. All right. I'll text him.

(then)

You check in at Fight-whatever-they-call-it?

KERRY

Fightlife. Yes.

MARSHA

You tell her not to lean in?

Marsha is talking about Jackie.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

She got that problem. Like she wanna be hit. Like she need the pain.

KERRY

I'm not her trainer, mom. And neither are you. You pushed too hard.

MARSHA

It's gonna get her knocked out.

KERRY

She doesn't want you at the fight.

MARSHA

I keep it low key. Drop my brim down, keep to myself.

KERRY

Why don't you just not go.

MARSHA

She might not want me training her
no more, but I'm still her mom.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - LATER

Showcase -- Round Two. More sparring/auditions. Marsha looks
spent. There's no one special.

MARSHA

Next!

From behind a few guys, Duane emerges. The way he sways when
he walks makes him look like all sorts of trouble.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Oh, shit. It's Little Duane.

DUANE

Just Duane.

MARSHA

All right, *Just* Duane, let's see
you remember what I taught you when
you was a kid.

Over the next minute or so we see Duane dropping guys left
and right. He's ferocious in the ring. Head shots, body shots
and everything in between. Duane's got brute talent.

Marsha looks to Poppy, *we got a ringer!*

POPPY

This kid's a *perro extraviado*.

(A stray dog.) Marsha blows Poppy off.

Afterwards, Marsha helps Duane out of his gear in the corner.

MARSHA

That's pretty good work, Just Duane.
Why you stop coming by the gym?

DUANE

Had my reasons.

MARSHA

Jail one of those reasons?

Yes.

DUANE

I'm straight now.

Kerry, passing, can't believe her mom is going to sign Duane up.

KERRY

Mom...

MARSHA

(ignores Kerry)

I take you on, you going to be loyal?

DUANE

Like a dog.

KERRY

(to Marsha)

Can I talk to you?

Marsha turns her back to Kerry and gets closer to Duane.

MARSHA

I need to know you mean that. That you ready to put in the work. You gotta earn this.

DUANE

You tell me what to do to get me in that ring punching guys in the face for money and I'll do it.

Kerry pulls Marsha away for moment, whispers to her.

KERRY

My whole life you've been trying to save these trouble-makers.

MARSHA

I got him.

KERRY

No, you don't. And if, IF, he stays out of jail and puts in the work it'll still be five years before he's making any real money.

(off Marsha's look)

Get Troy back.

Marsha pulls away from Kerry and goes back to Duane.

MARSHA

And no trouble. I don't want that bullshit from the other day.

DUANE
Scout's honor.

MARSHA
I'm gonna hurt you, Just Duane.

DUANE
Duane.

MARSHA
(ignores him)
Gonna break you down to nothing.
You gonna hate me. Wanna kill me.
But then I gonna rebuild you better
than you were. I'm make you a
machine. A killin' machine. You do
everything I say and I'ma make you
king of the world Just Duane.

DUANE
I'm cool with that, but, yo... when
you gonna stop calling me Just Duane?

MARSHA
When I call you champ.

Duane and Marsha share a look then bump fists. Kerry hangs her head in frustration.

EXT. STREET - AUSTIN, TX - LATER - **FLASHBACK**

Buddy drives through a rough area of town. The car slows in front of... A BOXING GYM. "CASTELLON'S DOWNTOWN BOXING" -- Poppy's old gym. A YOUNG POPPY stands in the doorway talking with a FIGHTER.

It feels like Buddy is going to stop at the gym, but no, he passes it and parks in front of a WOMEN'S SHELTER a few doors down.

Marsha, Buddy and Jackie exit the car. Marsha holds Jackie's hand as Buddy gets a suitcase from the trunk.

BUDDY
You covered?

YOUNG MARSHA
They gave me two hundred on my way out.

BUDDY
Here's a little something extra.

He hands her a few more twenties. Puts his arms around her.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

Look, no one can tell you anything. Lord knows many have tried and failed. But I'm your brother so... God gave you a second chance to do it right. But, Marsha, you need to show some love.

YOUNG MARSHA

What I need to do is put food in these baby's mouths.

BUDDY

Marsha...

YOUNG MARSHA

You be like mom. I'm like our father.

Buddy breaks the embrace.

BUDDY

Just remember... you gotta be a provider *and* a mother.

Marsha considers Buddy's advice as she watches him get in his car and drive away. Then she turns to the shelter on unsteady legs. As she lifts the suitcase...

EXT. AIRPORT HOTEL - NIGHT

We follow an airplane across the night sky and then tilt down to find a generic hotel.

You may think we're here for a seedy tryst or a seedy deal or a seedy drink, but as the sounds of boxing from within start to assault us we dive into the building.

INT. CONVERTED BALLROOM - SAME

Fight night -- women's boxing edition. The joint is LOW RENT - a half step up from a high school gymnasium. The sound of every blow and cheer bounces off the plastic divider walls.

INSIDE THE RING

Jackie boxes a MOHAWKED WHITE GIRL. And not to put too fine a point on it, she's getting her ass kicked. Her hands are down, her chin is out, her footwork is sloppy.

IN THE SEATS

Marsha sits with Kerry, Daniel and Eve. Marsha has her ball cap pulled low and a hoodie pulled up over it. She watches her daughter get smashed with lefts and rights and stews.

Kerry doesn't like seeing her sister get beat up any more than Marsha does, but she handles it passively. Daniel, in amazement, covers Eve's eyes.

MARSHA

Baby Daddy, your people don't like boxing?

DANIEL

No, it's fascinating. I read Joyce Carol Oates' "On Boxing." She says "Boxers not only accept, but invite what most sane creatures avoid - pain, humiliation, loss, chaos."

MARSHA

Did Joyce "whatever whatever" ever get punched in the face?

DANIEL

I doubt it.

Marsha dismisses Daniel with a look. He turns to Kerry so they can share their own look.

IN THE RING

Jackie throws a few punches, but doesn't bring her hands back and pays the price for letting them go. Her opponent lands clean, hard shots to her head.

IN THE SEATS

Marsha keeps her head down, but can't contain herself.

MARSHA

Hands up, Jack! Hands up!

Kerry waves a hand in front of her mom -- *behave*.

Nearby, Jackie's trainer, Rick, locks eyes with Marsha. Marsha raises her hands to him -- *what the fuck are you doing?* Kerry pushes her mom's hands down.

A flash of anger crosses Rick's otherwise laid back face before he turns back to the action in the ring.

Jackie takes a few more punches and then...

DING. Round over.

Jackie goes to her corner and Rick climbs into the ring. He delivers instructions in a calm and collected manner.

RICK
How do you feel?

JACKIE
(lying)
Fine. I'm fine!

RICK
We had a plan, but you're not sticking to it. Luckily we have time to get this back.

Marsha gets out of her seat and starts towards Jackie's corner. Kerry reaches out and grabs her mom's hoodie in an attempt to hold her back, but Marsha pries Kerry's hand off and walks on.

Marsha meanders to Jackie's corner and listens in.

RICK (CONT'D)
...build off your jab. But don't worry, she's got nothing on you. Nothing.

MARSHA
Except a desire, a strategy and a trainer who gives a shit.

Jackie and Rick instantly turn to Marsha with no intention of suffering her.

JACKIE
Get the hell--!

Kerry tries to gently ease Marsha back.

KERRY
Mom.

JACKIE
I said leave, bitch!

MARSHA
Baby, you getting punished 'cos you got your chin out there on a damn platter.

Rick leaves the corner and gets in Marsha's face.

RICK
This is my fighter!

MARSHA
Then act like it, Rick. That uptown
gym got your shit twisted.
(pointing to Mohawk)
That bitch be dropping her left
every time she shoots her right.

RICK
I said I got this!

MARSHA
She's open to Jackie's hook. That's
her money punch.

Daniel and Eve watch the circus in awe.

RICK
Get the hell out!

MARSHA
I wanna watch my daughter, I'm
gonna watch my daughter.

RICK
You're not watching.

JACKIE
Rick, just forget her.

RICK
(to Marsha)
She doesn't even want you here.
Hell, she doesn't want your name.

MARSHA
You ain't her daddy! Don't have no
hold on her.

The ref comes to the corner.

REFEREE
Got like ten seconds.

MARSHA
Baby, you gotta get your weight
back, tuck your ch--

RICK
Marsha, I swear...

Rick puts his hands on Marsha to turn her around. Wrong move. Marsha swings at him. Rick rolls under the punch. Marsha then shoves him. He shoves back and it's on!

THE AREA ERUPTS. PURE CHAOS. Fists flying, arms shoving and pulling. A human train wreck. People grab at Marsha and Rick - - trying to separate them.

Daniel grabs Eve. He carries her away from the skirmish.

IN THE RING

As the melee continues... DING... Jackie and her opponent return to their own fight -- Jackie distracted.

OUTSIDE THE RING

A few SECURITY GUARDS get a hold of Marsha and drag her towards the door.

IN THE RING

Jackie, watching them escort Marsha out, takes a stiff jab that reminds her she's fighting. With Marsha practically out the door in the background, the Mohawk Girl shoots a straight right, drops her left and...

WHAM! Jackie clobbers her with a devastating right hook that drops her. Indefinitely.

As her opponent is counted out, Jackie goes to a neutral corner and stares at the ballroom door. It closes behind her mom. Who was right. Which Jackie hates.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - LAUNDRY CLOSET - LATER

Marsha, still raging, storms in, pulls off her slightly bloodied hoodie, throws it on a pile of laundry waiting to be washed and throws it all in the machine.

MARSHA

Good God Damn!

SLAM! She throws the door of the washer shut.

IN THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ZIP. She pulls on a fresh pair of cargo pants.

IN THE LAUNDRY CLOSET - LATER

SLAM! SLAM! Out of the washer into the dryer.

IN THE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

SLURP. She chugs a beer.

IN THE LAUNDRY CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

WHOOSH. Marsha opens the dryer expecting to find a normal lump of dry clothes and sheets, but instead finds EVERYTHING somehow twisted inside a duvet cover.

MARSHA

The hell?

Marsha goes to work on the snafu, but finds that somehow (and this happens, trust me) the thing has spun itself into a knot internally. She tugs and pulls, but can only loose a few inches of duvet. Suddenly, it's war!

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Damn you, shitpile! I'ma kill you!

Marsha yanks, pulls, stretches the fabric to its limits.

IN THE HALLWAY

Marsha needs more room and wrestles the ball of twisted fabric into the hall. Like a mace she starts swinging the stuffed duvet around and SLAMMING it into the wall.

MARSHA

Goddamn! Asshole! Bitch! Just tryin' to help. Ain't no one help me. No. One. Help--

POP! Marsha finally gets to the center of the twist and the pants and shirts and whatnot spill out from inside the duvet.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

Me! I told you. I told you!

Marsha starts to LAUGH. She can't believe she was almost bested by the laundry. Then the laughter turns to tears. Suddenly, Marsha is crying. She looks around to make sure she's alone. Of course she is. Then she lifts up a t-shirt and bawls into it.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - DAY

Marsha works mitts with Duane and Charlie.

Kerry's not around at the moment, but Eve stands in her Pack-and-Play chewing on a toy and watching.

DING. Round over. Marsha looks around, takes off her mitts, walks to Eve and takes her out of the crib. She puts Eve on the floor and lets her roam.

DING. Marsha and the boys go back to the mitts.

After a beat, Kerry enters carrying some boxing gear in boxes. She heads to the desk and starts opening them before she checks in on Eve.

Kerry's POV: The empty Pack-and-Play. Kerry's face: Worried. Her POV: She scans the gym, past Marsha, Duane and Charlie, past rats who move around dangerously, thudding blows on heavy-bags and each other, ropes being skipped. Where is Eve?

Kerry's eyes finally find her in the back. Eve has a grimy, sweaty, nasty hand-wrap in her mouth.

KERRY

Oh, hell no. Mom!

Kerry makes her way to Eve. Rats clear a path.

MARSHA

She be fine.

Kerry takes the wrap away from Eve, drawing some tears.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

It's okay, baby.

Kerry rolls up on Marsha in a way no one else can. She waves the hand-wrap in her mom's face.

KERRY

You know what's on this? Shit!
Industrial strength sweat and grime
and who knows what! Who knows what,
Marsha?! And it's a choking hazard!
What if she started to swallow this?

MARSHA

You grew up in a gym. Let you run
everywhere and you good.

KERRY

(too pointed)

I don't want her to have my life!

(pulling back)

I'll probably end up with cancer
from all the things I got in my
mouth.

MARSHA

Ain't no cancer in the gym.

KERRY

I ask you one simple thing. Just
leave her in the Pack-and-Play. But
you don't listen.

MARSHA

This is my place.

KERRY

This is my kid. You don't listen to
me, to Jackie, to Troy. You don't
hear anyone but yourself.

Kerry storms away.

On Duane and Charlie, nervous. Marsha holds up the mitts.

MARSHA

Back to work.

INT. BLACKSTONE BOXING CLUB - NIGHT

Marsha, Kerry, Eve, Rob, Poppy, Charlie, Duane and a group of
gym rats crowd around the computer at the front desk. Kerry,
still upset, deliberately keeps her distance from Marsha.

ON THE SCREEN

As seen on YouTube through iPhone footage, Troy spars with a
SPARRING PARTNER.

POPPY (O.S.)

Espera... Espera... Annnnnnd...

WHAM! Troy gets clocked by an overhand right and goes down
hard! In the background Troy's NEW TEAM laughs at him.

IN THE GYM

Everyone CHEERS, HOOTS, HOLLERS.

CHARLIE

Troy's nothing without you.

POPPY
Boy got dropped, mama!

GYM RAT
Got dispatched!

POPPY
I'm so happy I'm gonna take my new
polla out and celebrate!

CHARLIE
Yo, not in here!

As the gang rags on Troy and teases Poppy, Kerry looks over at Marsha and sees stoicism on her face -- stoicism with hints of *schadenfreude*.

KERRY
He's coming by. Right?

Marsha lets the satisfaction of seeing Troy embarrassed pass.

MARSHA
Yeah. Tonight.

Marsha looks a little nervous about seeing Troy.

INT. WOMEN'S SHELTER - MARSHA'S ROOM - NIGHT - **FLASHBACK**

There's one small bed in a dank little room. Marsha lays on it with Jackie, stroking Jackie's hair as she sleeps.

Marsha's in that other gear, the one she never shows anyone else, like when she was wrestling with the laundry. She's got tears quietly rolling down her cheeks. She rubs her pregnant belly, Kerry growing within.

YOUNG MARSHA
I'ma figure this out, I tell you
the truth. It's me versus the world
with the two of you in the balance.
I see that. Gonna get my shit
correct, put food on the table,
make good decisions.

INT. MARSHA'S HOME - NIGHT

Marsha's on the couch drinking a beer. Duane and Charlie (who has Eve on his lap) sip water beside her. They're watching the Troy knockdown on a laptop over and over. Kerry and Rosie are in the kitchen cleaning up.

WHAM, Troy goes down again.

MARSHA
How many times you gonna watch that
boy get dropped?

DUANE
You want us to stop?

MARSHA
Might as well look now. Once he
back, you won't see that shit
happen again forever.

DING DONG.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
Put it away.

Marsha crosses to the door and peeks through the spy hole.
She holds a beat and then opens the door.

Staring back at her is Troy. His face looks like shit. He
holds out a bouquet of flowers.

TROY
You're the only coach for me,
Marsha.

MARSHA
Sure of that?

TROY
I wasn't thinking. Had a moment.

MARSHA
Hell of a moment.

TROY
I'm sorry, Marsha. I'll do whatever
you say. Pull a big rig with a rope
tied to my dick. No problem. I need
you in my corner. We good?

Troy looks expectantly at Marsha. Kerry and Rosie stop
cleaning and wait for Marsha to say go.

Marsha takes a beat then eases the door open just a little
bit to let him in. He smiles, exhales, opens his arms to
share a hug with Marsha.

But then Marsha reconsiders.

MARSHA
Fuck you.

She can't do it, at least not yet. She shuts the door in
Troy's face.

THE END