

BAR FIGHT: A LOVE STORY

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INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

You've spent a lot weekends and some of your weeknights here with your friends and co-workers. Walk in to see the wooden bar and dart boards to your right, pool table to the left near some booths, punching machine in the far corner, jukebox, foosball, bunch of low tables with chairs. Televisions on the walls show every sport known to man.

We're staring at a polaroid of JOSH DONNER, 30, good looking, an extremely surprised look on his face, like someone tapped his shoulder and snapped a picture as he turned his head. It's pasted on a leader bracket emblazoned with **CHICAGO BAR FIGHT CHAMPIONSHIPS - UNOFFICIALLY SPONSORED BY JACK DANIELS & BUDWEISER.**

CHRIS PRUITT, 30, steps up to the bar to order a drink, checks out the photo. Next to him sits DUSTIN DUDLEY, 30. Chris laughs, nudges Dustin.

CHRIS

Excuse me. I just moved from Milwaukee. What's this bar fight bracket?

DUSTIN

Bar Fight's a thing we do every summer. Guy and girl rep each bar, fight on the weekends. That guy? He's repping the men's division. First fight's tomorrow. You should come down, check it out. It's a good time.

CHRIS

What'd they do - tap the guy on the shoulder, snap the picture as he turned around?

DUSTIN

Yeah, that's precisely what happened.

CHRIS

He seems like a decent looking dude. But here he looks like a total schnook and it's hanging up for the whole world to see.

Dustin glances passed Chris. His expression turns to shock. Chris pivots - Josh is standing there staring right at him.

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SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris takes a hit to the face, his balance thrown backwards.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - OUTSIDE O'MALLEY'S -- NIGHT

Two cops, OFFICER RALPH, 40's, fit and OFFICER FELICIA, 30's, fit, sit in their patrol car drinking coffee. Ralph perks up, sees the fight.

OFFICER RALPH
Is that tonight?

Officer Felicia turns, squints.

OFFICER FELICIA
Tomorrow.

They relax, return to their coffee.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris has started fighting back. He and Josh both know MMA - fists, kicks, BJJ moves. Josh is getting the better of him, smirks, over confident, grandstands for the small crowd.

He drops his hands like Anderson Silva, taunts Chris to punch him. Chris sees an opening and connects - KNOCK OUT. Josh lays motionless on the ground. The small crowd cheers! Dustin's standing next to Chris, pats him on the back.

DUSTIN
You just beat our rep. YOU'RE
repping us now! Congratulations!

There's a tap on Chris's shoulder, he turns - FLASH! - a Polaroid camera pushes out a picture.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The photo's slapped over Josh's and develops, revealing a goofy looking Chris staring at us like a schnook for the whole world to see.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Pretty bare - box spring bed and mattress, shitty looking couch, table, couple chairs, fridge. Suitcase, duffel bag, boxes, tv. He literally just moved in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hear the city through an open window as a breeze blows the curtains.

Chris's alarm goes off. He slaps the clock, sits up, a bit of a shiner around his eye. Jaw hurts. Rubs it. Oh, yeah, got into a fight last night. He stands, stretches, peers through the curtains. Across the street he sees RUEDA'S MMA GYM. Hmmmm, might be a good idea.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- MORNING

Chris finishes filling out a membership form. Pulls out a credit card, hands it over to Dustin, the guy he met last night. Coloring next to Dustin is SWEET PEA DUDLEY, Dustin's five year old daughter.

DUSTIN

Sweet Pea?

Sweet Pea looks up.

DUSTIN

Keep an eye on this gangster.

She mimics shooting Dustin. He takes the membership form and credit card, walks down the hall.

CHRIS

You work here?

Sweet Pea nods.

CHRIS

You like it?

She nods.

CHRIS

That's awesome.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

A black and white framed photo of bullfighter Bette Ford's on the wall. This is an office but there's also a cot, clothes, shoes. MICHELLE RUEDA, 30's, lives and works here.

Dustin stands by her desk as she runs Chris's credit card.

DUSTIN

I haven't seen the cleaning service the past few days.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

I let them go. Been doing it myself
after we close.

DUSTIN

Why didn't you tell me? I'd stay
and help.

MICHELLE

Because...it's MY problem not yours.
(references
application)
You know this person?

DUSTIN

That's the guy from last night.

MICHELLE

What guy from last night?

DUSTIN

The guy who knocked out your ex-
boyfriend.

Michelle slides in her chair, cranes her neck into the hallway. Chris waits with his gym bag. She leans back in the office, glances at the credit card.

MICHELLE

Well, Chris Pruitt, you just got
yourself a free month.

The computer beeps as a message appears "APPROVED".

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- MORNING

A series of shots as Chris works the heavy bag, rolls Jiu-Jitsu, showers, zips his gym bag closed. We see OTHER MEMBERS and EMPLOYEES including ALEX, 30's, an instructor.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Dustin teaches a class as Chris approaches the front desk. Michelle's there.

CHRIS

Excuse me. When do I get a
membership card?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

We don't do that. We're more of a family gym. We'll get to know you. Come in when you like. Classes are extra.

CHRIS

Thank you.

MICHELLE

Have a great day.

She watches him leave.

INT. HOME DEPOT - FRONT -- DAY

Chris, in an orange smock, punches the time clock. He turns and TYLER, 30's, his Supervisor sees the facial bruise.

TYLER

Wow! There a story behind that there shiner?

They walk past the registers.

CHRIS

Got it last night. Stupidly made fun of this picture on a bar wall. Guy was standing right next to me.

TYLER

Ouch!

CHRIS

Yeah. Next thing I know, I'm repping the place in some bar fight competition.

Tyler stops.

TYLER

Wait. Was this at O'Malley's?

CHRIS

Yeah, I think.

TYLER

Guy have salon quality hair?

CHRIS

Yeah, he did!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tyler sways in excitement, reaches for the paging phone, punches in some numbers and the PA speaker squelches.

TYLER

Attention Home Depot staff. Make some noise if you like Josh Donner.

Silence.

TYLER

Ha! Our new hire -
(places hand over
phone)
What's your name again?

CHRIS

Chris Pruitt.

TYLER

Our new hire, Chris Pruitt, knocked him out and will take his place repping O'Malley's in this year's bar fight competition!!!!

Massive applause by the Home Depot workers. Tyler hangs up the phone.

TYLER

Welcome to Chicago, Chris Pruitt.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Phone to ear, Chris gets ready to go out. We can barely make out the voice of his mother on the other end.

CHRIS

New job's great, mom. Apartment's about there...

He glances at the room - he's gonna need an interior decorator and a ton a time to get it about there.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

I bet it's still a mess.

He cringes.

CHRIS

Eh, you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Making any friends?

CHRIS
I think I made one last night.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Chris takes a punch in the face.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Have you looked for a gym?

Chris peeks through the curtains. Sees Dustin leaving Rueda, Michelle locking up.

CHRIS
I'm looking at one right now, Mom.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
When can I visit my boy?

CHRIS
Soon, Mom. Lemme get settled in first.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Don't make me wait too long or I'll just show up.

CHRIS
I know you will, Mom. I know.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Okay. I love you. Be safe. Don't take any shit.

CHRIS
I love you, too, Mom.

He hangs up.

CHRIS
Oh, and by the way, I have a bar fight tonight, mom.

EXT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Chris exits to the sidewalk, sees Michelle inside Rueda Gym cleaning the mats.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris pushes through the crowd, sees Josh in the distance, overhears "*that's the guy*" as he enters.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris looks around, sees Dustin sitting at the bar with CINDY DUDLEY, 30. Dustin waves him over.

DUSTIN

Chris, this is my wife Cindy. This is the guy I was telling you about.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Michelle wipes down the gym mirrors.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

CINDY

Nice to meet you. You're taking Josh's place? Good for you.

CHRIS

Yeah, I wanted to talk to you about that.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Michelle cleans the shower with rubber gloves. Pulls something from the drain.

MICHELLE

That's disgusting.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER steps over.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER

This our boy? Good luck tonight! Whatcha drinking?

CHRIS

I'll have a light beer.

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CONTINUED:

The Bartender pushes off to grab a glass.

CHRIS
I'm not really a drinker.

DUSTIN
That's too bad.

CINDY
There's a three drink minimum.

CHRIS
They charge you three drinks to come
in here?

DUSTIN
No, man. It's a three drink minimum
before you fight.

CINDY
You have to *consume* at least three
drinks *before* you fight.

CHRIS
What? Why?

DUSTIN
'Cause it's a bar fight, man.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

In a Rueda MMA t-shirt and holding some stickers and cards,
Michelle locks up the gym, hurries down the sidewalk.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris barely finishes his first beer. Sets it down. Two
more glasses await him.

CHRIS
So how's this thing work?

DUSTIN
Well, you got a bunch of local bars
participating. One guy, one girl
rep each bar. You got your sports
bars like O'Malley's.

CINDY
You got your Upscale Bars -

INT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

A dark blue neon sign reads **Luke's Black Market Bar**. Black walls. No games. A few televisions. STAFF in uniforms. Glass case displaying sports memorabilia and a hand carved Bar Fight Bracket.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

DUSTIN
...Biker bars...

INT. BIKER BAR -- NIGHT

Tough crowd. Leather, beards, tattoos. Bar Fight Bracket held up by pocket knives.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR

CINDY
...Cop bars...

INT. COP BAR -- NIGHT

Lots of mustaches. Bar Fight Bracket displayed like a Most Wanted poster.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

DUSTIN
All hoping to get their fighters in the quarters, semis, finals. The girls fight first.

CINDY
Ladies first.

DUSTIN
Exactly. Then the dudes. OH - there's on;y really ONE rule. DO NOT. Hit the other guy. In the nuts. You do that - he gets a free shot at yours. Don't forget that. Accident or not. Free shot to the nuts.

CHRIS
My nuts hurt just thinking about it.

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CONTINUED:

CINDY

Mine too! I keep Dustin's in my pocket.

She winks at Dustin.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

COP CARS hit the sirens, divert traffic from each side of the block. Crowds flow into the street. Michelle approaches the sidewalk, sees the crowds.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris finishes his 2nd beer. He's leaning over, Cindy rubbing his back, eyes Dustin with concern.

DUSTIN

One more, buddy.

CHRIS

I don't wanna do this.

DUSTIN

Aw, man, really? I guess we can vote in a last minute replacement.

Chris sees Michelle enter. The bar applauds, cheers. She's winded, high fives some patrons, fist bumps others - they love their girl. He catches her eye, sees her smiling.

CHRIS

Okay, I'll do it.

Chris starts on his last beer as Michelle approaches, hands Cindy the stickers and business cards.

MICHELLE

Hey. Sorry I'm late.

The Bartender sets out three shots. She downs them like a pro, takes a sip from Chris's beer, exhales.

MICHELLE

Okay.

She observes Chris.

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CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

He looks like he's gonna throw up.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle takes a punch to the face. Fights her FIRST OPPONENT. Chris watches with Dustin and Cindy, checks out the crowd. He's amazed. They're into it. Michelle pulls guard, gets the girl into a D'arce choke, makes her tap.

Michelle stands, holds up her hands in victory. Behind her, the girl rises, pushes Michelle.

CHRIS

Can she do that?

DUSTIN

(shrugging)

It's a bar fight, man.

Michelle turns, the girl puts up her hands. Michelle straight rights her to the chin - out cold.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Ambulance doors shut on the girl, siren wails, it pulls through the crowd. Michelle stands by the others, ice bag on her hand. She's smiling, turns to Chris, winks at him.

MICHELLE

Good luck!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris takes a punch to the face. Again, he's on the receiving end of a beating.

MICHELLE

(to Dustin)

I thought you said he knocked out Josh.

In the crowd, Josh watches, smirks. Chris's FIRST OPPONENT goes for a leg kick, catches Chris in the crotch. The Crowd collectively "OHHHHHHHS..." settles to silence. The Opponent immediately knows he messed up big time. Chris is hunched over. Dustin and Michelle approach him.

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CONTINUED:

DUSTIN
You okay?

CHRIS
(though clenched
teeth)
Yep. Just....nuts.

MICHELLE
Hey -

She turns to Dustin, mouths "Chris?". Dustin nods.

MICHELLE
Chris, I don't know if they told
you, but you get a free shot to the
other guy's nads, okay? And as soon
as the kick happens the fight's
IMMEDIATELY back on!

CHRIS
Nope.

MICHELLE
No, you do. It's like, the ONLY
rule.

Chris straightens, looks across to the very concerned
Opponent parting his legs for the freebie.

CHRIS
(calling to him)
Accident?

The Opponent nods.

CHRIS
Figured.

DUSTIN
Chris, you're losing this fight.
You need this.

CHRIS
I know.
(exhales)
But I don't fight that way.

He steps forward, motions to the Opponent.

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CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Who is this guy?

DUSTIN

I don't know, but I like him.

Chris and the other guy bump fists, get to it. Chris is in the moment now. Good head movement, bobbing, weaving, fakes a throw, gets a takedown, goes for the guy's back - TAP OUT!! The CROWD ERUPTS!! Chris watches the excitement. Michelle and Dustin rush to him.

MICHELLE

You won!!!

She gives him a kiss. Josh watches, very taken aback.

DUSTIN

I'm just gonna bro hug you, okay?

MICHELLE

C'mon, we gotta buy some drinks.

CHRIS

What?!?!

DUSTIN

Yeah, I forgot to tell you - winners buy losers a drink.

CHRIS

What? Why?

DUSTIN

'Cause it's a bar fight, man.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris holds a light beer, his Opponent holds a shot. Michelle, Dustin and Cindy hold up drinks. They toast.

CHRIS' FIRST OPPONENT

I don't mind losing to you so much as that Josh guy.

Josh is passing by.

JOSH

That Josh guy can still kick your ass.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH (CONT'D)

(to Chris)

Shoulda been me out there. You do know that.

DUSTIN

Let it go, Josh.

JOSH

(to Dustin)

Maybe he wants Round 2.

(to Chris)

Whaddaya say, Champ? Wanna give me a shot at the title?

MICHELLE

Josh, you keep talking that way everyone's gonna know you're an asshole instead of just think it.

JOSH

Glass houses, girlfriend.

MICHELLE

I'm not your girlfriend.

JOSH

Look, you're right. I'm sorry. Guess I'm jealous. I mean, we all know I'm a better fighter. Just caught me with a lucky shot.

Josh pretends to throw a punch at Chris. Chris reacts, splashes beer on himself. Josh laughs, walks away.

MICHELLE

Whaddadick.

(to others)

I gotta make my rounds.

Cindy returns the Rueda stickers and cards. Michelle walks into the crowd, strikes up conversation, hands them out.

CHRIS

What's she doing?

DUSTIN

She fights for the free publicity. Hands out stickers, cards to drum up business.

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CONTINUED:

CHRIS
The gym pay her for that?

DUSTIN
She owns the gym.

CHRIS
No shit.

DUSTIN
No shit. Inherited it from her
father.

CHRIS
Good for her.

DUSTIN
Yeah, she's awesome. Gives these
free self defense classes to club
dancers.

Cindy points at her watch.

DUSTIN
I think my curfew's up. Good job
tonight. See you tomorrow?

CHRIS
You bet.

DUSTIN
Alright, man.

CINDY
Nice meeting you.

CHRIS
You, too.

They take off. Chris watches Michelle work the room, posing
for selfies, laughing - that honest, pure smile.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Michelle wakes. Sits up, sore.

MICHELLE
Geezus...

She lays back down.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Chris wakes. Sits up, sore.

CHRIS

Geeezus...

He lays back down.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM- WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- MORNING

Michelle showers, towels up, brushes teeth. Done.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM -- MORNING

We know who the peacock's gonna be in this relationship. Where Michelle has a toothbrush, toothpaste, bar of soap, this guy's bathroom is the Manscape Capital of Chicago.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Michelle picks up a t-shirt sniffs it, weighs the scent, good to go, pulls it on.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Chris opens his suitcase. Each shirt, each piece of clothing - in it's own ziplock bag. He picks up two t-shirts, decides on one, opens the bag up, pulls it out.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Three pairs of shoes and one's in a box with the receipt taped to it like she keeps forgetting to return it.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Chris shining his work boots.

EXT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Chris exits his building, sees Michelle unlock the gym, waves to her.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- MORNING

Michelle waves back, takes a moment, watches him walk away.

INT. HOME DEPOT - TOOL AISLE -- DAY

Chris finishes with a CUSTOMER as Tyler and ANOTHER EMPLOYEE rush up the aisle.

TYLER
Chris, come with us.

CHRIS
What's up?

TYLER
Smoking hot girl over in plumbing.
You HAVE to check her out.

Chris follows.

INT. HOME DEPOT - PLUMBING AISLE -- DAY

Chris is last as the guys approach Plumbing. They dramatically slow down to appear casual, turn into the aisle. Chris stops dead in his tracks, sees ASHLEY, 30, the most drop dead gorgeous girl next door in the midwest.

Chris dashes back around the corner, stays perfectly still. Like he's terrified. Ashley looks past all the other EMPLOYEES "helping" her, as if searching for someone.

INT. HOME DEPOT - MAIN AISLE -- DAY

Chris walks quickly as the loudspeaker squelches.

TYLER (O.S.)
Chris Pruitt, customer needs
assistance on -

There's a commotion, more squelching.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Chris, come on baby, I just wanna
talk.

TWO FEMALE HOME DEPOT EMPLOYEES walk past him, smirk.

HOME DEPOT EMPLOYEE #1
C'mon, Chris baby!

Another reaches out, lightly punches his shoulder.

HOME DEPOT EMPLOYEE #2
Tiger!!!

EXT. HOME DEPOT - HOT DOG STAND -- DAY

Chris sits at a picnic table across from Ashley who's eating a hot dog as intentionally PG-13 as possible.

ASHLEY

I feel like you're avoiding me,
Chris.

CHRIS

'Cause I am.
(looks at watch)
Welp, my break's over, Ash. Thanks
for stopping by.

Ashley points for him to sit.

ASHLEY

I asked your boss. He gave you 30.

Chris sits back down.

ASHLEY

You said I never took the time to
talk with you. I drove all the way
from Milwaukee. So lemme talk with
you.

EXT. HOME DEPOT - FRONT -- DAY

A Wisconsin license plate on a convertible BMW pulls away as Ashley drives off. Chris waves. Tyler exits the store, stands next to him.

TYLER

Dude. Who are you? Fighter.
Killer girlfriend.

CHRIS

Ex. Girlfriend.

TYLER

Oh, I'm sorry.
(Tyler pauses, smiles)
Mind giving me her number?

CHRIS

Not at all.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle works at the main desk. Alex, an instructor we saw earlier in the gym, knocks on the door.

ALEX

Got a sec?

MICHELLE

What's up?

ALEX

I, uh, got offered a job at Black Market MMA. I feel really bad, but since you reduced my hours -

MICHELLE

I had to reduce your hours to keep everyone on.

ALEX

I know, I know. But they offered me full time and -

MICHELLE

Can you work part time there and part time here? Is that an option?

ALEX

Luke said all or nothing.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle hugs Alex as he leaves. Wearing a Gi and sweating, Dustin approaches. Behind him, his class rolls on the mats.

DUSTIN

What's going on?

MICHELLE

Alex got offered a job at Black Market MMA. I told him to take it.

DUSTIN

Who's gonna teach his classes?

MICHELLE

I am.

Michelle walks away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUSTIN

Hey, Michelle? Maybe it's time you asked for help.

MICHELLE

(points at the front window)

As long as that glass with the painting my father drew's still standing, I'm not asking for help. I'll just have to work harder.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle sits at the bar alone. Josh approaches.

JOSH

This seat taken?

MICHELLE

Actually, yes.

He ignores her.

MICHELLE

But you go ahead and sit down anyway.

JOSH

You really gotta be this way?

MICHELLE

Josh, you suffocate me. You did it when we were together and you still do it.

JOSH

Cory's got a fight and he's coming back to train in Chicago. I might be able to get him into your father's gym.

MICHELLE

It's my gym. And if you think I'm letting him back in you're batshit. My father trained him for years, gave him everything and he bailed the first time he smelled money.

JOSH

He wants to get back to basics.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

He wants to snap a four fight losing skid before he gets dropped from the roster.

JOSH

And you need to generate some cash before they turn off your lights. Look, it's up to you.

(gently sets his hand
on her leg)

But I can make it happen if you like. Unless you want him to train at Black Market MMA?

MICHELLE

I appreciate the offer, Josh. I'd also appreciate you taking your hand off my thigh. This is just business. You and I go no further.

This stings Josh. He removes his hand.

JOSH

Okay, sure. Since it's just business I'll be taking 20% of what he pays you.

MICHELLE

I really need the money, Josh.

JOSH

Guess that's a yes.

EXT. BLACK MARKET MMA GYM -- NIGHT

A dark blue neon sign reads **Luke's Black Market MMA**. Black walls. Tinted black glass. Card swipe on door. Michelle steps up, cups her hands and face against the window, peers inside - MEMBERS and INSTRUCTORS including Alex, wear black Gi's. Equipment's modern, clean, shiny. Not much heart in this facility but it looks good.

LUKE (O.S.)

Scoping out the competition?

Startled, Michelle spins around. LUKE MANSON, 40's, business suit, fit, stands in front of her.

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CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Hello, Luke. How's my former employee Alex doing?

LUKE

He's doing great. Feel free to have a drink at my bar when you're done peeking through my windows.

Michelle glances across the street at Luke's Black Market Bar. Luke swipes his card, enters his gym.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Dustin trains Chris amongst others, catches Chris in a move. Chris taps, Dustin releases.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Michelle sits next to Sweet Pea, watches through the glass.

MICHELLE

What do you think about Chris? You like him? I mean, he seems honest. Didn't kick the guy in the shock box when he had the chance. We're in a bad way, Sweet Pea. Should we ask him to work for us?

She looks at Sweet Pea. Sweet Pea squishes her face in thought, gives a nod.

MICHELLE

Yeah, me too. Lemme check with your dad.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle enters the main floor, whistles. Dustin turns, she waves him over.

DUSTIN

(to Chris)

Work with these guys will you?

Dustin jogs over to Michelle. Bows to her.

MICHELLE

Yeah, whatever. Listen - what do you think about Chris?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUSTIN
He's a solid dude.

MICHELLE
You think he could take over some of
the classes? Like the White and
Blue Belts?

DUSTIN
Absolutely. 100%.

MICHELLE
Call him over.

DUSTIN
Yo. Chris.

Chris jogs over. Does the bow.

MICHELLE
Guys. Please? I hear you need to
train more.

CHRIS
Yeah, I can't afford it.

MICHELLE
You can if you teach a few classes.

CHRIS
I don't understand.

Michelle turns to Dustin, smiles.

MICHELLE
It means you teach some classes and
I comp your membership. Train.
Teach. Learn.

CHRIS
Really? That'd be great, thank you.

MICHELLE
Great. Dustin, finish up with these
guys and we'll get Chris started.

They both bow to her.

MICHELLE
Will you guys stop that please?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns to leave, remembers something and spins back.

MICHELLE

OH - and Chris? Gotta wear a Rueda
MMA shirt when you fight.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Michelle hugs Sweet Pea as she and Dustin, now in street
clothes, exit.

MICHELLE

Be good. I'll see you tomorrow.

DUSTIN

See you in the morning.

Michelle steps towards the mats as Chris begins his class
with about 20 WHITE AND BLUE BELTS, 8 to 14 years old.
Their PARENTS watch from benches on the side.

CHRIS

I am Master Chris. I want to set
some guidelines before we begin. We
are all on the road to success.
There is no failure only further
efforts to learn together. We don't
have problems. We have challenges
we overcome together. We are on
this adventure together, we are all
passengers on this ship together and
we'll reach our solution destination -

He pauses, raises his eyebrows.

CLASS

Together.

CHRIS

Correct. Let's pair off.

There's an odd number. RUSTY, 10, a red haired boy, looks
around. No partner. Chris steps over to him.

CHRIS

Hey. My name's Master Chris.
What's yours?

RUSTY

Rusty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Well, Rusty, it doesn't look like anyone wants to be my partner. I'd really appreciate it if you'd be my partner. Would that be okay?

Rusty gives a thumbs up. They start to drill. Michelle watches, reluctantly enamored.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Chris stands at the door. He and the students bow to each other as they leave. The parents and kids love this guy. They finish and he locks up. Michelle's watching from the office. She sees him leave frame, then reappear. He's cleaning the gym, she calls from the office.

MICHELLE

You don't have to do that!!

She rises, enters the main room.

MICHELLE

Chris? Yeah, you don't have to do that.

CHRIS

Where I come from the instructors clean the gym at the end of the day.

MICHELLE

That so? Where you from?

CHRIS

Milwaukee.

MICHELLE

I can't pay you for this.

CHRIS

Well, then maybe you buy me a beer when we're through.

He smirks. She kinda knows he's playing her but she's also kinda charmed by him. She smiles, nods.

MICHELLE

You think you're pretty clever don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS
Maybe a little, yeah.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

A rack of billiard balls breaks. Chris and Michelle shoot pool. On the counter there's a glass with about 95% of the beer still in it. Michelle's is empty.

CHRIS
Sure you don't want another one?

MICHELLE
I gotta go soon. Was hoping to wait until you finished yours so I wouldn't be rude. They really pace themselves where you're from, huh?

CHRIS
Nah, I'm a lightweight. Always have been.

MICHELLE
And you're from Milwaukee?

CHRIS
Mmm-hmmm.

MICHELLE
Why'd you move to Chicago?

CHRIS
I wasn't happy there. Was hoping to find what would make me happy here.

Michelle scratches, shoots the 8 ball into a pocket.

MICHELLE
That means I win, right?

CHRIS
Means you get to rack them up.

Chris punches in some more quarters, releases the balls. From behind them, a COUPLE, 30's, appear.

GUY
Feel like playing doubles?

Michelle looks to Chris. He shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUY
Wanna make it interesting?
Say...twenty bucks?

CHRIS
Yeah, okay.

The Guy turns to the GIRL.

GUY
Don't fuck this up for us.

Michelle finishes racking, walks over to Chris.

CHRIS
You hear that bullshit? I hate
that. Really want to win this now.

MICHELLE
How bad? 'Cause I kinda misled you
about something.

CHRIS
What's that?

Michelle breaks like a pro. She's a shark. Runs the table.
Wins. Guy hands her \$20.

MICHELLE
Wanna go again?

The Girl puts the quarters in. The Guy racks the balls.
Chris breaks, runs the table. The Guy hands over another
\$20, argues with his Girl on their way out of the bar.

CHRIS
That. Was. Awesome! Why'd you
hide that from me?

MICHELLE
Most guys are intimidated if you're
better than them at stuff.

CHRIS
Not me.

She raises an eyebrow.

FOOSBALL.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She manipulates the ball past all Chris's defenders, plays with him a bit, scores, slides the tally - she wins.

PUNCHING BAG MACHINE.

Chris steps up, punches it, the digital score runs up. Michelle punches it, the digital score runs up and slows, misses his by one point.

CHRIS
 (holds up arms; a la
 Bruce Buffer)
 Annnnnnd....STILL!!!!

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

They walk outside. It's a bit awkward.

CHRIS
 You know how to get to the train
 from here?

MICHELLE
 Your place is a couple blocks away.

CHRIS
 Yeah, but I wanna take the train.

MICHELLE
 Where? I mean, which direction?

CHRIS
 Doesn't matter.

MICHELLE
 I don't understand, you need a
 direction.

CHRIS
 Why?

MICHELLE
 So I can tell you which way you go
 to get it, silly.

CHRIS
 Michelle, I just wanna ride the
 train. Doesn't matter which one.

MICHELLE
 You just wanna ride the train?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Yeah. You wanna come with me?

Michelle's confused, but curious, slowly surrenders.

MICHELLE

(enamored, innocent,
going with it)

Okay.

INT. TRAIN -- NIGHT

Chris is like a little kid, gets up, checks out Chicago at night, sits back down, watches people get on and off, gives up his seat. Michelle's enjoying watching him enjoy something so simple.

It gets later, fewer and fewer people on it, Chris starts to fall asleep, his head settling on her shoulder. With reluctance, with care, she puts her arm around him, listens to him snore. It's adorable.

EXT. TRAIN -- DAWN

The train rolls away from us as the sun comes up.

FADE OUT:

EXT. BIKER BAR -- NIGHT

Cops let in a couple motorcycles as they close down traffic. Patrons fill the street as the bikes park alongside others. Again, Michelle pushes through the crowd, enters the bar. She's wearing a bright pink RUEDA MMA GYM t-shirt.

INT. BIKER BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle sees Chris hunched over the bar. Dustin and Cindy stand by him. Some O'Malley's patrons sprinkled in with the rough, leather and bearded Biker patrons.

MICHELLE

How's our boy doing?

DUSTIN

Two down. One to go.

Michelle puts a hand on his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

You know, people usually act like
this AFTER they've been drinking.

A few seats down the bar is Josh. He holds up a drink to
toast her. She flips him off. There's a commotion at the
front. Dressed head to toe in black leather with her blonde
hair flowing - Ashley enters. Chris notices.

CHRIS

Great.

He grabs his beer, starts to chug.

MICHELLE

You know her?

Chris holds up a finger, pauses mid chug.

CHRIS

Ex-girlfriend.

MICHELLE

THAT's your ex-girlfriend?

Chris nods as he chugs some more.

MICHELLE

That girl there?

Chris stops chugging.

CHRIS

Yeah.

MICHELLE

In the leather?

CHRIS

Yep.

MICHELLE

She's really beautiful, Chris.

CHRIS

Used to be a Dallas Cowboys
cheerleader. Does print work.

MICHELLE

Why aren't you still together?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

All she wanted to do - was have sex with me. Yeah. That's it. Never asked me for rent. Never talked to me. Paid for everything. Juuuusst sex.

MICHELLE

You're kidding me?

CHRIS

Nope. Not kidding.

MICHELLE

That girl?

CHRIS

Mmm-hmmm.

Chris finishes chugging his beer, nods.

MICHELLE

And why did she break up with you?

CHRIS

She didn't.

MICHELLE

I don't understand.

CHRIS

I broke up with her.

DUSTIN

(softly to Cindy)

Looks like we got us a genius here.

Cindy slaps his arm.

CHRIS

I know I'm not the smartest guy in the world. But I know when I'm not happy. She can have any guy in the world she wants.

DUSTIN

Yeah, no shit.

CINDY

Dustin!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

So if I'm not happy, and she's not interested in why, then what's the point? I need to get some air before I throw up.

Chris exits. Michelle looks at Ashley.

MICHELLE

I can't compete with her.
(doesn't change focus)
Did I say that out loud?

DUSTIN

Yep.

CINDY

Yeah, I heard it, too.

Dustin laughs.

MICHELLE

It's not funny! I have a business to run. I don't have time to be crushing on this guy!
(something occurs to her)
Did he bring his Rueda shirt? He's supposed to wear his Rueda shirt when he fights.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BIKER BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle takes a punch in the face from her TATTOOED OPPONENT. She drops back, takes a breather, looks around, sees Dustin and Cindy cheering her on, on the other side - Ashley. No sign of Chris. Michelle steps back in, the fight re-starts.

CHRIS (V.O.)

Just wanted to have sex with me-Just
wanted to have sex with me-Just
wanted to have sex with me-

She takes another punch, finds herself falling to the ground, the other girl on top of her, taking her back. Michelle fights the hands, defends the choke, her nose is bleeding, she looks up, sees Josh smirking, gets angry, spins, reverses, gets an arm bar - the girl taps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Out of breath, Michelle stands as the CROWD ROARS! She staggers to Dustin.

MICHELLE
Where's Chris?

DUSTIN
Went to get his shirt.

Chris pushes through the crowd.

MICHELLE
Where's your shirt?

CHRIS
I can't find it.

MICHELLE
We had a deal, Chris.
(peels off hers)
Here.

CHRIS
No way that's gonna fit me.

MICHELLE
Bummer.

CHRIS
You serious?

MICHELLE
Chris, I'm standing in public
bleeding on my sports bra. You
gonna trade shirts with me or not?

Reluctantly, Chris pulls off his. They trade.

CHRIS
You really want this kinda
publicity?

He struggles to get her shirt over his head. It rises like a crop top, looks thoroughly ridiculous.

CHRIS
My mom'd kill me if she saw this.

Chris walks into the center of the circle wearing the pink shirt. Quite a spectacle. The crowd's taken aback.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Amidst biker black leather, Ashley pushes through, stands next to Josh, sees Chris in the pink shirt.

ASHLEY

(softly, to herself)

You're mother would kill you if she saw this.

JOSH

You know this guy?

ASHLEY

We used to live together. Before he started making fashion statements by trading shirts with your Ex. Josh, right?

He smiles. The fight starts. Chris's Opponent swings a giant fist with a lot of power - just misses. The power creates a breeze tossing back the crowd's hair. Another swing - more hair breezed back. Chris rushes in, grabs the guy to avoid getting hit, the guy pulls on the shirt - it rips a little.

Chris reverses, it rips some more. The shirt's the star of the fight. No one's really interested in who wins, merely watching Chris avoiding these monster swings as his shirt falls apart and he attempts to keep it up.

Laughing, Ashley walks in between them.

CHRIS

Ashley, you really shouldn't be -

Suddenly, she RIPS the shirt the rest of the way, pulls on one end spinning Chris out of it. She twirls the shirt, throws it into the crowd as she exits the circle.

MICHELLE

(to herself,
discouraged)

That shirt cost me twenty dollars.

The fight's back on. Shirtless, Chris is focused, checks out his competition. Muscled, swinging for the fences while Chris plays it safe, ducking, bobbing, weaving. Slowly, the guy winds himself, drops to a knee. Chris relaxes.

CHRIS

Need a minute?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Opponent holds up a hand. Stands, nods his head. They engage, Chris avoids him as his opponent swings, pauses, puts his hands on his knees, waves Chris off in defeat. Slowly, the crowd moves closer.

DUSTIN
What's going on?

MICHELLE
I think Chris just won.

DUSTIN
You're kidding?

The guy stands, holds up Chris' hand. Pats him on the back. Dustin and Michelle throw their arms up in celebration, Chris joins them.

MICHELLE
Let's buy them drinks and get outta here before they make us fight again!

CHRIS
Can they do that?

MICHELLE, CINDY & DUSTIN
Yeah, it's a bar fight, man.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris is back in his shirt, Michelle wearing an O'Malley's sweatshirt. Dustin and Cindy sit with them.

DUSTIN
I've never seen a guy win a bar fight without throwing a single punch. Amazing.

CHRIS
My mom used to quote Sun Tzu all the time - "*To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill*". I didn't want to scrape my back so I gave it a shot.

The Bartender approaches with a small envelope.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER
For the winners. Good job. Both of you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He walks away as Chris opens it. Two baseball tickets.

CHRIS
What are these?

DUSTIN
If it's what I think, they do it for
the fighters every year.
(glancing at them)
Yep! Tickets to the Cubs game
tomorrow.

CHRIS
OH, MAN! I've wanted to go to a
Cubs game since I was kid!!

Dustin looks past Chris to Michelle who's waving him off and
mouthing "no". Dustin smiles, ignores her.

DUSTIN
You should take Michelle.

Chris turns to her, just as she's put her hands down.

CHRIS
You wanna go?

MICHELLE
Oh, I would LOVE to but -

DUSTIN
Cindy can come by and watch the
phones with Sweet Pea and I can take
the classes for the day.

CINDY
Yeah, that's a great idea.

CHRIS
(to Dustin)
You'd really do that?

DUSTIN
Of course.

Dustin looks at Michelle who's pointing at him and Cindy
while mouthing "Fuck. You. Both." Chris turns to her.

CHRIS
You know how to get there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles.

CHRIS

What?

INT. TRAIN -- DAY

They're riding the train, approaching the Wrigley Field stop. CUBS FANS swarm the street.

EXT. TRAIN STATION -- DAY

They exit the station, walk past the Ron Santo statue, reach the front. Chris stops.

CHRIS

Hang on. Been dreaming about this since I was a kid.

He rushes over to the souvenir stand. Buys two Cubs hats. Rushes back, hands one to Michelle.

INT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- DAY

They enter the stadium. Their tickets are taken and they stroll through the breezeway.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - SEATS -- DAY

They enter the ballpark likes it's a church, Chris cranes his neck like he's seeing heaven. They find their seats.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Cindy and Sweet Pea have the game on

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Wow, what a looker. I think this is the prettiest girl in Chicago.

The TV Camera shows Ashley strolling down the aisle in a Cubs jersey worn as a skirt. Josh follows close behind.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - SEATS -- DAY

Ashley and Josh take their seats a few rows behind Chris and Michelle.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Does the clubhouse sell those skirts?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The KISS CAM comes on the scoreboard, showing Ashley and Josh. Ashley smiles, points at it and waves, looks at Josh, touches his cheek and gives him a very wet kiss.

MICHELLE

Whaddadick.

Chris glances back. Ashley waves at him as if it's a surprise where they're sitting. Chris turns back around.

CHRIS

C'mon...

MICHELLE

I'm not giving them the satisfaction.

CHRIS

Neither am I. I'm upgrading my experience.

She reluctantly takes his hand, rises.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - BOX OFFICE -- DAY

Two tickets kick out.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - CENTERFIELD BLEACHERS -- DAY

Chris leads Michelle to their seats.

MICHELLE

You sure about sitting here?

CHRIS

I'll get us tickets to wherever you wanna sit.

MICHELLE

No, it's not that, it's - those were really great seats and you've never been to a Cubs game. I thought you'd want the best seats possible.

CHRIS

The best seat for me's the one where I see you happy.

Michelle points at the seat she's by.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

I think this is the one. No wait -
yeah, this is the one.

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD - CENTERFIELD BLEACHERS -- DAY

Chris and Michelle have their hot dogs and beers.

CHRIS

Ready? Set? Go!

They race to finish their hot dogs and beer. Michelle wins. The group around them applauds her. Laughing with her mouth full, she stands, does a curtsy, sits back down. She looks at Chris. It's over for her. She's gonna fall in love with this guy.

INT. TRAIN -- NIGHT

Chris's loving the ride home. She can't get enough of how pure, honest he is. He sits down, glances at her. She stares at him, turns her baseball hat around, pulls him toward her. She slowly moves in, kisses him.

EXT. TRAIN -- NIGHT

The train disappears into the night.

FADE OUT:

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

The door opens and a group of men enter wearing matching Team Cory sweatsuits and carrying Team Cory gym bags. These guys are Pros with attitudes to match. First is Josh, followed by ASTON, 40's, Cory's Coach, WILLIAM, 50's, Cory's Manager, then ERIC and DAN, 30's, Training Partners. Last to enter is CORY, 30's, the Fighter.

Cory stops, removes his sunglasses, looks around.

CORY

Place hasn't changed a bit. Exactly
as I remember.

WILLIAM

You mean it was a dump way back
when?

The guys laugh. From the office comes Michelle followed by Dustin. They reach the group.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

Good morning, gentlemen.

She looks them over, stops at Cory.

MICHELLE

Cory. Been a long time. Welcome back.

CORY

Nice to see you. Sorry to hear about your father.

MICHELLE

Thank you. Josh, you wanna introduce everyone?

JOSH

Yeah, sorry. You know Cory, this is Aston, his Coach, Eric and Dan, training partners and William, his manager who also pitches in with some coaching.

Michelle and Dustin shake everyone's hands, say their names. William stands his ground as Michelle reaches him, stares at her as her hand hangs in the air. This is a mini standoff, William disrespecting her. It's uncomfortable.

Dustin gently places his hands on Michelle's shoulders, addresses the group.

DUSTIN

How 'bout we show you around?

He turns Michelle to lead them.

MICHELLE

As you can see, we have mats for grappling and classes, free weights, ellipticals, treadmills, rowing machine, dumbbell racks. Over here we have an area for pad work, speed bags, heavy bags. Down this hall - men's and women's locker rooms.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

They enter the men's locker room.

MICHELLE

The plumbing in here's kinda tricky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORY

Still?

MICHELLE

Yeah, Cory. Still. We'd have to dig up the floor to find out what causes it.

WILLIAM

Causes what?

DUSTIN

You let the sink run too long it causes the toilets to massively overflow, could flood out the whole gym.

JOSH

What do you say we get after it, huh?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Cory sparring with Dan. Head gear. Boxing gloves. Really going at it.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Michelle sits next to Sweet Pea. William enters, takes a seat. Spins to face her. Quite a power play.

WILLIAM

What sort of gym is this?
(smirking)

There are gyms that cater to the professional athlete and there are other types of gyms. What type of gym might Rueda be?

MICHELLE

Well, we're a family owned business catering to local professional athletes and amateurs seeking training from the beginner level of white belt all the way to advanced black belt. My father built this gym, taught me and my brothers as well as ambitious young kids like Cory here. Cory walked through those doors twenty years ago and trained with my father until just prior to his professional debut.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

William notices the framed photo of Bette Ford on the wall.

WILLIAM

Pray tell why you have a photo of a bullfighter.

MICHELLE

My mother left our family when I was very young. My father emigrated from Mexico and was a fan of the Plaza de Toros. He felt I should have a role model and chose Bette Ford who was one of the first American Female Bullfighters. I've had that photo for years.

WILLIAM

Cute. Well, we'll need 24/7 access to the facility. We come and go at a variety of hours and will need the gym to receive us as such.

MICHELLE

We should to interface and plan Cory's training with respect to our scheduled classes.

WILLIAM

You'll need to reschedule your classes according to our training.

MICHELLE

I'm afraid that's not possible. We have families with small windows to bring their kids. School, jobs. You understand.

WILLIAM

I understand this may not be the gym for us.

(rises)

Consider your options.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris enters. Dustin's a few feet away on the mats. Josh and Eric sit on the mats with Aston. Cory's cranked it up a notch, really going after Dan. Cory hits HARD! Hits FAST! Chris steps up next to Dustin. They speak softly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

This the guy?

DUSTIN

Yeah. Started here then bolted first chance he got.

CHRIS

Why'd she let him back in?

DUSTIN

Needs the money. This could put her in the clear.

Dan's taken too much damage, cowers.

CHRIS

Cory gonna stop?

Cory throws an extremely hard punch - knocks Dan to the ground. This is not good. William and Aston step over, not so much concerned as inconvenienced, remove his head gear.

ASTON

This guy's done.

WILLIAM

Thank you for your service. Please collect your things.

They help him up, hand him his bag, send him on his way. He passes Chris and Dustin.

CHRIS

You okay?

Dan pushes out the door. Josh points to Chris.

JOSH

This guy here wants to spar. Don't ya', champ?

DUSTIN

He's got a class to teach.

JOSH

What about you, Dustin? Show your kid how tough daddy is?

DUSTIN

No, thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris's phone vibrates. He looks at the screen - "MOM". He steps aside, answers it

JULIANNE (O.S.)
I wanna meet this girl.

Chris glances at the the office.

CHRIS
Uh....

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Which is great 'cause guess what city I'm gonna be in tonight?

CHRIS
Chicago.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
See you soon, sweetie.

She hangs up.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Chris enters, knocks on the door.

CHRIS
This a bad time?

MICHELLE
Depends. What's up?

CHRIS
Probably a bad time. I'll come back.

MICHELLE
Chris. What's up?

CHRIS
I should probably go through Sweet Pea for this one.

He walks around Michelle, kneels down to Sweet Pea, whisper in her ear.

SWEET PEA
If you're not doing anything tonight....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
I'm not...

SWEET PEA
Maybe you'd like to go out...

MICHELLE
I would...

SWEET PEA
And meet my mom.

Michelle's a little shocked. Chris stands, moves quickly for the door.

CHRIS
Sounds-great-gotta-get-to-work!

MICHELLE
Chris...CHRIS?!?!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle looks terrified.

MICHELLE
I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

CHRIS
Michelle, this is my mother.

Wearing a bohemian print dress and flats, JULIANNE PRUITT, 50's, stands next to Chris. She's slim, pretty, very bright. Michelle snaps out of it, stands.

MICHELLE
I'm so, so sorry....I'm Michelle.

She extends her hand.

JULIANNE
Julianne. And give me a hug,
sweetie.

They embrace, slide into the booth. Michelle on one side, Chris and Julianne on the other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

Chris, you better lock this up
before someone swoops in and
birddogs you.

CHRIS

Mom?

JULIANNE

Just trying to help you out.

CHRIS

I'm gonna grab us some drinks.
(to Julianne)
Please behave.

JULIANNE

Hey, I just work here, pal.

She winks at him. Chris pushes through the crowd.

JULIANNE

You fell for my boy, huh?

Michelle smiles, embarrassed.

JULIANNE

Yeah...

MICHELLE

He just went through a break up,
right?

JULIANNE

Ugh. Ashley. I hate her she's so
beautiful.

MICHELLE

Right?!?!

JULIANNE

She's not a bad person. Not...evil.
Look, she's smart, has the looks,
knows what she wants and goes after
it. If she were a man she'd be
referred to as ambitious, a real go
getter.

Michelle's taking it in, worried.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

I don't meddle in my son's
relationships, but...

Julianne looks over at Chris, leans in closer.

JULIANNE

Hey. Come here.

Michelle leans in as well. Julianne whispers.

JULIANNE

You got nothing to worry about.

MICHELLE

Really?

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle observes Chris and his mom interacting. They're close, love each other. Julianne's a happy person. It's clear she raised him with care and attention. There's zero tension at this table, it's like they're instant family.

CHRIS

Michelle's a pool shark.

MICHELLE

I am not.

JULIANNE

Really? Feel like playing for my
approval?

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR - POOL TABLE -- NIGHT

Julianne breaks. DAMN! This is gonna be a match! Chris sits back, watches them play. Julianne starts running the table. Michelle stands next to Chris.

MICHELLE

Guess she taught you to play, huh?

CHRIS

She taught me everything.

MICHELLE

Who taught you to fight?

Julianne walks around the table. A GIRL stands in the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

Excuse me, sweetie. You mind moving
a bit?

The Girl looks back at her as if inconvenienced. Moves
maybe an inch.

JULIANNE

That's a good start but I'm gonna
need just a lot more.

The Girl moves back to where she was.

GIRL

How's that?

Julianne postures up a bit.

JULIANNE

Sweetie, are you gonna move or do we
take this outside?

GIRL #2 (O.S.)

I'll take this outside.

Julianne turns around. The crowd parts and GIRL #2 steps
though. Michelle turns to Chris. He sighs.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Julianne takes a punch to the face. She's fighting for
real. Not what we expected. Michelle stands next to Chris
who's holding his mother's shoes, shouting encouragement.

Julianne bobs, weaves. Michelle can't believe she's
watching her boyfriend's mother in a bar fight on the
street. Julianne takes a hit, rushes in, swoops behind and
climbs up her back like a spider monkey.

In a flash she's wrapped her legs around the Girl, has her
in a rear naked choke. The Girl drops to one knee, falls to
the ground, taps out. Julianne releases, rolls away, helps
her up.

JULIANNE

Whaddaya drinking, sweetie?

GIRL #2

White Claw.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

How 'bout I get you a whiskey?

GIRL #2

Yeah, okay.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Julianne's at the bar, raises a shot.

JULIANNE

To my son and his beautiful
girlfriend!!!

The entire bar raises their shot glasses, downs them. Julianne sees the Bar Fight bracket with Chris and Michelle's pictures. She turns to him, he shrugs.

Michelle swirls through the evening. They shoot pool, arm wrestle, play foosball, hit the punching bag.

The bar claps, cheers as Julianne and Chris dance together, but not traditionally, like something she taught him when he was a kid and they do it now, side by side, him nailing the moves with her. She's smiling, playing with her boy.

Michelle's falling for Chris even more, completely endeared by his mother.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle's teaching a self defense class to a GROUP OF WOMEN. They're practicing getting out of attack holds. Chris walks by the windows with Julianne. They enter.

MICHELLE

Gimme a second.

She walks over to say goodbye.

CHRIS

Michelle holds a free class every week, Mom. A lot of the girls work at local gentlemen's clubs.

JULIANNE

Need a hand? I can help.

Julianne waves, smiles at the class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

I should get back.

JULIANNE

It was a pleasure. Chris? Lock this up.

Chris leads her to the door, hugs her. She waves as she exits. Chris heads for the locker room.

DANCER #1

That your new guy?

MICHELLE

Let's focus on this, okay?

DANCER #2

You guys, uh...

MICHELLE

Please?

DANCER #1

That's a yes.

DANCER #2

We should trade skills. Give back, you know?

DANCER #1

Michelle. Try this.

Dancer #1 starts gyrating her hips. The other girls follow.

MICHELLE

I'm good. Really.

DANCER #1

C'mon. Try it.

They help her, she starts moving with them. Behind her, at the window, Team Cory appears, stops to watch. The other girls see the gawking, freeze. Michelle slowly turns around, gyrating, sees the guys at the window. Mortified, she turns around.

MICHELLE

Oh, my God!

Team Cory enter the gym.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAM

Don't stop on our account.

JOSH

Didn't know you held stripper classes.

MICHELLE

It's a self defense class, Josh.

JOSH

Yeah? What are they defending? Fertility?

MICHELLE

Ladies! Thank you! See you next week!

Michelle watches the guys enter the locker room.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. COP BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle takes a punch. She's fighting Officer Felicia from the beginning. Next to Dustin and Cindy, Chris stands in his Rueda MMA shirt. There's a pause in the action as Cory, followed by his team as well as Josh with Ashley, push through the crowd. A minor celebrity, Cory shakes hands, signs autographs. Felicia's waved over by a friend, poses with her and Cory for a selfie.

Chris and Dustin use the break to approach Michelle.

CHRIS

You okay?

DUSTIN

You seem a little timid. It's like your timing -

MICHELLE

(through gritted teeth)

I'm on my period!

Michelle sees Josh and Ashley as Felicia returns and the fight resumes. Michelle front kicks Felicia's knee. She tries to throw a punch, can't push off it. Michelle attacks the knee. Throw. Knee. Felicia switches stances.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Takes out the knee, Felicia goes to the ground. Michelle drops, gets her into an arm triangle, puts her to sleep. Michelle rises as Felicia comes to.

OFFICER FELICIA

Did I win?

Laughter from the crowd. Michelle hobbles past them.

MICHELLE

Remember, it's life without parole
if you kill a cop.

Chris steps into the circle opposite Officer Ralph. Their fight begins. Through the action, we watch William and Aston observing Chris. Cory, Eric and Josh are close by.

ASTON

He's got good technique.

WILLIAM

Pretty close in style to the guy
Cory's fighting. Cory, would you
say so?

CORY

Yeah. His movement, timing. Real
close.

ASTON

He's very natural. We should let
Michelle know we want him in our
fight camp.

JOSH

She'll probably say no.
(snickers)
Guy teaches White and Blue belts.

WILLIAM

You can take over those classes,
Josh.

The Crowd erupts. Chris stands, raises his arms. Josh watches him embrace Michelle.

EXT. COP BAR -- NIGHT

Dustin, Cindy and Chris stand outside the bar. Inside, Michelle's in conversation with William and Aston. It's cordial, though semi-intense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She slowly backs away, nods, turns and exits.

MICHELLE

They want Chris here to train with Cory. These guys are killers. I don't see this ending well.

CHRIS

How so?

MICHELLE

My business depends on these guys. Josh has it out for you so watch yourself. Please. I can't have any real fighting in my gym.

DUSTIN

Fight on the sidewalk. I mean, if you have to.

CHRIS

Like what we do here?

DUSTIN

Yeah, like it's a bar fight, man.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris is sparring wearing head gear, boxing gloves. Cory the same. It starts off slow, progresses really fast, but not on Chris's end. Cory's pushing the pace, Chris takes a beating, loses his mouthpiece. Cory keeps on hitting. Knocks him down. Jumps on him, keeps hitting

Dustin and Michelle rush from the office. Dustin gets between Cory and Chris, stops the fight. Cory rises, removes his mouthpiece.

CORY

I thought you said this guy was good?

He winks at Josh, fist bumps.

CORY

(softly)
I got you, brother.

Dustin helps Chris up.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Chris sits on the bench. Michelle's at the door.

MICHELLE

You did the right thing.

CHRIS

Really? How's that? By letting him
beat the shit out of me?

MICHELLE

Yes. We need this.

CHRIS

I don't need this.

MICHELLE

Okay, I need this.

Team Cory enter the locker room.

WILLIAM

We weren't aware that Chris here
couldn't take a punch.

CHRIS

It's not that I can't take a punch,
it's that I don't wanna hurt a guy
preparing for a fight. Plus I
wasn't aware we were starting off at
100%.

CORY

We can go for real right now if
you're up to it.

CHRIS

I'm only allowed to fight on the
sidewalk.

Chris exits.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris exits, Dustin approaches.

DUSTIN

You good?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Yeah, I'm good.

DUSTIN

Listen, Cindy and Michelle put together a barbecue at our place day after tomorrow. I'm supposed to mention it all casual like.

CHRIS

And?

DUSTIN

And her brothers are gonna be there.

CHRIS

Brotherssssssss. As in more than 1?

DUSTIN

As in 5. Guess it's meet the family time. You're the meat.

EXT. DUSTIN'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Michelle, Cindy and Dustin sit with Sweet Pea at a picnic table. Chris, in ridiculous chef's hat and apron, works the grill flipping burgers.

The gate opens and MICHELLE'S FIVE BROTHERS, early to late 20's, enter. They. Are. Big. Sweet Pea runs up to them and they lift her in the air, shake hands with Dustin, give hugs to Michelle and Cindy. Dustin turns, points to Chris.

Chris nervously flips only one burger. The other burgers are on fire. The Brothers slowly walk towards him, surround him, tower over him.

MICHELLE

Guys!?! Come on!!

They stop intimidating him, burst into laughter.

BROTHER #1

We're goofing on you.

BROTHER #2

Glad to meet you, Chris.

EXT. DUSTIN'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Later. All are at the picnic table. Chris sits next to Michelle.

BROTHER #3

Okay, my turn. Michelle's at this dive bar.

MICHELLE

Not true.

BROTHER #4

You know it's true, M.

MICHELLE

Only thing you've said that's true is me kicking your ex-girlfriends' asses 'cause no one breaks my baby brothers' hearts.

Collective "no way", "single fo' life", "we playahs!!".

BROTHER #5

So M's at this dive bar.

BROTHER #3

And this other girl pisses her off and M asks her to step outside.

BROTHER #5

Which the girl does.

BROTHER #1

Along with TWO of her friends.

BROTHER #2

This is on security tape, Chris.

BROTHER #4

Which we'll show you if you last three months with Red Sonja over here.

BROTHER #3

They go outside and BOOM! Jump her. It's on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROTHER #1

By the time Five-0 gets there, M's sitting on the curb, a chunk of her hair still in the bandanna she was wearing -

BROTHER #2

Clutched in one of the other girl's hands as they all lay spread out on the sidewalk.

BROTHER #3

Had to bail her out the next day.

BROTHER #4

BEST thing about the story? Judge watches the tape and says -

BROTHER #5

3 on 1?

ALL THE BROTHERS
CASE DISMISSED!!!

They all hit their hands on the table.

MICHELLE

Not true.

BROTHER #1

It's so true.

EXT. DUSTIN'S BACKYARD -- DAY

They're saying goodbye at the gate.

BROTHER #1

Nice meeting you, Chris.

BROTHER #2

Understand you have a wicked cool mom.

CHRIS

Yeah, she's wicked cool.

BROTHER #3

Be good to our girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROTHER #4

She's pretty headstrong. Won't ask for help.

BROTHER #5

Won't take any help.

BROTHER #1

Will never let you down.

They exit. Chris returns to the picnic table sits down with Dustin and Cindy. Michelle plays with Sweet Pea in the distance.

DUSTIN

She knows she's not taking Sweet Pea home with her right?

CINDY

Uh, I'm not really sure. Hope you want kids, Chris.

DUSTIN

Babe, can you not scare him off?

CINDY

She says whenever Sweet Pea's around her uterus starts doing somersaults.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Michelle sleeps. A "tink-tink-tink" wakes her up.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- MORNING

Michelle rushes towards the front door. Unlocks it for Dustin and Sweet Pea. Sweet Pea carries an Elmo doll.

MICHELLE

Sorry. Overslept.

DUSTIN

Sweet Pea has something for you. Overheard Cindy and I talking about how hard you're working and insisted on bringing this guy to help out.

MICHELLE

(taking Elmo)

Oh, thank you, Sweet Pea. I'll put Elmo right to work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They head towards the office.

MICHELLE

Team Cory'll be here any minute. If you can get them going that'd be great.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Later. Team Cory trains with Chris. Dustin teaches a class. Sweet Pea colors. Elmo sits on the desk by Michelle. Michelle's phone rings, she answers it and walks out of the gym to talk.

A moment later, Josh enters the office, doesn't see Michelle, points at her chair and addresses Sweet Pea.

JOSH

Michelle?

Sweet Pea shakes her head 'no'. Josh sees Elmo, grabs him, takes him to the sparring floor and plays around with Cory. Aston grabs it, tosses it against the far wall. Sweet Pea sees it land, crawls off her chair, enters the main room.

She slowly walks across the mats like it's freeway traffic, bodies passing her, falling behind her, stepping past her, not seeing her. She reaches Elmo, picks him up, turns and begins her return journey when suddenly, she's caught in the middle.

Chris stops everyone from moving. She looks up, sees sweaty bodies staring down at her.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

The gym's back to action as William berates Michelle inside the main office. We don't hear the words but feel the anger. Michelle takes it. William finishes, exits the office and slams the door.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Dustin loads Sweet Pea into his car.

MICHELLE

It's just until they finish their training camp.

DUSTIN

Understood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He closes the door.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Chris washes his hands at the sink. Josh walks from the urinal as Cory enters. They share a nod.

JOSH
(to Chris; points at
showers)
She ever tell you what happened in
there? I'm taking a whiz and hear
the shower turn on.

Josh twists the faucets full blast. Chris sees the water pour out as Josh walks to the second basin.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

MICHELLE
What are you gonna do about
childcare?

DUSTIN
Cindy and I'll figure it out.

Michelle takes this in.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Josh turns on the second faucet.

JOSH
Don't know who I prefer more, Ashley
or Michelle. What do you think?

CHRIS
I think you should turn those
faucets off before the toilets over
flow.

Cory steps up to the third basin, blasts the water.

CORY
You're the employee. You turn them
off.

Chris moves toward the basin. Cory blocks him.

CORY
Gotta get by me first, son.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

MICHELLE
You're fired.

DUSTIN
What?

MICHELLE
I'm firing you. You should apply at
Black Market MMA. They'll hire you
in a heartbeat.

DUSTIN
M, I don't want to work there. I
want to work here.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM/HALLWAY -- DAY

Chris lands in the hallway. Cory and Josh step out.

JOSH
Oops! Lost your footing there,
champ.

Chris stands up.

CHRIS
Turn off the water!

CORY
Gotta get past me. C'mon. You can
do it.

Chris tries to push past them. They shove him back further.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

DUSTIN
Look these guys, they're creating a
lot of stress for us. They grabbed
Elmo, threw him against the wall,
that's why she was on the mats.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris lands on the mats. He's in the middle of the room
now. William and Aston look up, grin, sigh, like "boys will
be boys".

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The sinks are overflowing. We HEAR water gurgling from the toilet stalls.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

DUSTIN

Let's get through this okay?

MICHELLE

Okay.

DUSTIN

I'll see you tomorrow?

She nods. He gets in his car, drives off.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Eric has joined in, they're taking cheap shots at Chris, pushing him further towards the front. He's unable to fight back, lucky to check the kicks and deter some hits. He's about three feet from the window when Cory front kicks him backwards through it, SHATTERING the decades old painting Michelle's father drew.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris lays on the ground surrounded by glass, looks at Cory, still inside with the others.

CHRIS

You better not come out here.

CORY

That so?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

The toilets overflow, water flooding onto the floor.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Cory steps through the window onto the sidewalk. Michelle dreads what's about to happen.

CORY

Why's that?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Water floods into the hallway.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris looks from the glass on the sidewalk up to Cory.

CHRIS

'Cause this is a bar fight now.

They go at it. Cory's a villain but Chris is wicked pissed off, a stone cold killer. It's real. Josh and Eric watch, entertained. William and Aston rush outside, stand by Michelle, very concerned like shit just got real.

WILLIAM

You have to stop this.

Michelle looks at him like, "sure, right..." Chris and Cory strike each other. Chris's kicks to Cory's knees doing some damage, Cory can't throw. There's glass on the ground so takedowns are off the table. Chris is chopping the legs, hooking into Cory's jaw. Aston turns to Eric and Josh.

ASTON

STOP THEM!!!

Reluctantly, Josh and Eric step through the window, get between them, Eric holding back Chris, Josh holding Cory.

WILLIAM

That's it. We're out of here. Get our stuff, let's find a real gym.

(to Michelle)

I'll be expecting a full refund.

MICHELLE

No way. I've not violated a single clause in our contract.

ASTON

How do you expect us to train here?

MICHELLE

It'll take me twenty minutes to clean up this glass and I'll have the window repaired in two hours.

WILLIAM

What about the water damage?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

What water damage?

Water begins pouring out the front door onto the sidewalk. Michelle's crestfallen. Team Cory steps through the window to collect their things. Chris approaches Michelle.

CHRIS

I was in the bathroom -

MICHELLE

Not now, Chris.

CHRIS

It wasn't my fault.

MICHELLE

You let a bunch of nickel guys beat you, Chris.

(points at her head)

Mentally. How could you be so stupid?

This stings Chris.

CHRIS

I know I'm not as smart as you. But I'd never let someone push you around then call you that for defending yourself.

Michelle watches him walk away, looks at the broken glass, the water. She's lost everything.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Later. A series of dissolves: GLASS WORKERS arrive, fix the window as Michelle single handedly mops up the floor, cleans what she can of the gym.

She walks over to the pile of broken glass, picks up a small 2x2 piece with some paint on it, turns to the Glass Workers.

MICHELLE

I'm gonna keep this.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Empty. Quiet. New glass in the window frame. Michelle locks the door, looks up towards Chris's dark apartment.

INT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

Cory, Eric and Josh sit with Ashley, toasting as they laugh.

ERIC
To Team Cory.

ALL
TO TEAM CORY!

ASHLEY
I imagine she was pretty pissed off
about the window.

ERIC
Yeah, she called him stupid and he
took off. Pretty sure they broke
up.

A speck of a smile gives her away.

INT. TRAIN -- NIGHT

Chris rides alone. We hear loud speaker announcements,
rails clinking.

FADE OUT:

INT. DUSTIN'S HOUSE -- DAY

Sweet Pea watches Cindy do Michelle's make up and hair.

CINDY
I'm sure it wasn't as bad as you
think.

MICHELLE
I soooooo want to believe that.

CINDY
You really called him -

Michelle nods.

CINDY
How long's it been?

MICHELLE
A week.

Cindy finishes, steps back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CINDY

Well, based on looks alone they should approve you.

MICHELLE

What do you think, Sweet Pea?

Sweet Pea gives her the thumbs up. Michelle's beautiful.

INT. BANK - LOAN OFFICER -- DAY

Michelle sits across from a LOAN OFFICER as he leans back with her application. He glances at her from over the papers. It's not positive.

EXT. BANK -- DAY

Michelle exits as a flurry of PEDESTRIANS pass by. She lowers to the sidewalk, defeated.

INT. HOME DEPOT - TOOL AISLE -- DAY

On his knees, Chris restocks the shelves with a bar code sticker gun and a pile of product. A girl walks up, skirt, flats. Chris cranes his neck - it's Ashley. He laughs.

CHRIS

You're like a shark smelling blood.

ASHLEY

What can I say? I'm a jealous bitch. How 'bout I buy you some lunch?

CHRIS

Ash, I have a lot of work to do.

She crouches down to him.

ASHLEY

I can come back. It's just lunch, Chris. Please?

CHRIS

Ashley, I don't want you to go off on me here, okay? You and I broke up, I left Milwaukee to start over. I wanna be happy.

ASHLEY

I'm not giving up on you, Chris.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

I wish you would.

ASHLEY

It doesn't have to be serious,
Chris.

CHRIS

If it's not serious, it's a waste of
time.

ASHLEY

Why is everything so difficult with
you?

CHRIS

It normally takes about 10 years to
become a black belt. It took me 12.
But when I tied it on, I knew I'd
earned it. Think about that.

ASHLEY

I walk around this store, EVERY guy
would go home with me. EVERY guy.

CHRIS

Well, Ash, it's a big store and we
close in four hours. Might wanna
get started.

She rises, walks away.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT BLDG - HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Josh, Cory and Eric enter the hallway.

JOSH

I'm serious. He's a lightweight.

They check numbers on doors, find Chris's. Knock on it,
stifle each other's laughter, get serious as he answers.

JOSH

Hey. We want to apologize for what
happened last week.

ERIC

Yeah, we got carried away and, you
know, we're fighters. Right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH

Come out with us. Let's squash the beef.

CORY

Maybe we do this and we end up back at Rueda. Help your girl out.

ERIC

Up to you, man.

Chris stares at them. Like he has a decent choice.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MICHELLE'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

Michelle's in bed. It's dark. Her phone lights up, vibrates. She wakes, answers it.

MICHELLE

Hello?

We HEAR a woman's voice on the other end.

MICHELLE

Dancing? I don't understand.

Michelle darts up.

INT. CHICAGO GENTLEMAN'S CLUB -- NIGHT

Carrying her purse, Michelle enters cautiously. Dancer #1 from the self defense class stands behind the bar, nods her head toward the stage.

DANCER #1

That's your man, right?

Michelle glances, sighs.

MICHELLE

That's my man.

We FOLLOW Michelle as she walks down the aisle to the stage, see Chris, shirt off, drunk as shit, spinning around the pole, kicking a leg out. Josh, Eric and Cory toss singles, video him with their phones. Michelle reaches the stage.

MICHELLE

Hey, Chris?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Hey, babe.

MICHELLE

Can you come over here?

CHRIS

I'm kinda busy can it wait?

MICHELLE

Please?

Chris jumps off the stage.

CHRIS

We're having so much fun! They're not bad guys after all. And hey, hey - they may come back to your gym! And you thought they were assholes! HA!! Joke's on you!

He heads back to the stage.

MICHELLE

Chris -

CHRIS

I gotta finish this song or I won't get paid.

MICHELLE

I'll pay you.

CORY

Let him dance!

JOSH

Yeah, Michelle. Let him dance.

Eric stands up, intimidating.

ERIC

You're gonna let him dance.

MICHELLE

I don't like people telling me what to do.

ERIC

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
CHRIS! Come here!

Chris jumps off the stage again. She hands him her purse.

MICHELLE
Hold my purse, baby.

CHRIS
Holy shit this is heavy! It's like
Thor's Hammer!

Michelle smiles at him.

MICHELLE
Yeah, it is.

She spins around, decks Eric on the button, he's out before he hits the ground. The Dancers are like "WHOA!!" Cory stands as Josh hops over the aisle, checks on Eric.

CORY
You hit like a man. Feel like
fighting one?

MICHELLE
Sure. As soon as one shows up.
(steps closer)
My father gave you everything. He'd
be ashamed of you challenging his
daughter to a fight.
(to Josh)
And you. To quote T-Swift, we are
never, ever, getting back together.

The Dancers have made their way down the aisle. They hand Michelle Chris's shirt as she helps him towards the exit.

DANCER #1
I think it's time you assholes got
outta here.

DANCER #2
And next time you think about coming
back, know the closest you'll get to
seeing us on stage is collective
imagination during a circle jerk.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

The door opens. Michelle helps Chris to his bed, takes his shoes off, gets him under the covers.

CHRIS

I know I'm not smart. I know it. Everyone's told me since I was a kid. But you made me feel really...not smart. You don't think you're pretty. But I think you're the most gorgeous girl I've ever met. I mean - when you're not making me feel like shit.

MICHELLE

Chris, I'm really sorry about that. I am. Can we start over?

CHRIS

If I called you stupid, your brothers would kill me. Nuh-uh.

MICHELLE

Chris, please?

CHRIS

You called me stupid, you called me stupid....

He falls asleep. She turns the light off, exits.

INT. HOME DEPOT - TOOL AISLE -- DAY

Chris helps a CUSTOMER. At the far end of the aisle, Tyler appears with ANOTHER EMPLOYEE playing a Youtube clip of Chris dancing at the club.

TYLER

Hey, Chris?

Tyler & Another Employee start gyrating. Chris ignores them.

TYLER

Am I doing it right? Where's my dollar? Gimme my dollar!

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle's teaching Chris's White and Blue belt class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

....And uh... no bad moves...we'll,
uh, be a team.

RUSTY

Where's Master Chris?

MICHELLE

Master PRUITT's taken some time off.
I'll be teaching his class.

RUSTY

Did you force Master Chris away?

KID #1

'Cause it seemed like he was really
crushing on you. Like heavy.

RUSTY

You pissed him off, didn't you?

KID #1

I watch my parents fight all the
time. And it's only after my mom's
mouthed off one time too many do I
hear bullshit like I'm hearing right
now.

MICHELLE

Okay, first off, it's Master PRUITT.

RUSTY

He said to call him Master Chris.

He fist bumps Kid #1.

MICHELLE

SECONDLY - watch your language!

KID #1

(softly)
I call bullshit.

MICHELLE

Thirdly - look - let's pair off and
start drills.

They don't pair off.

RUSTY

We want Master Chris!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
PAIR OFF! NOW!!

They pair off. It's still an odd number of kids and Rusty's alone again. He and Michelle size each other up.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Moments later. Rusty's crying right in our face. He moves away from us, revealing he's held by his FATHER as his Father walks away, briefly looking back.

RUSTY'S FATHER
What's wrong with you?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- DAY

Michelle sits at the desk, her face in her hands.

MICHELLE
What's wrong with you? What's wrong
with you? What's wrong -

There's a knock on the door. She peaks through her fingers. Alex, the instructor who left Rueda gym at the beginning, stands in front of her.

ALEX
Michelle, I have someone who's
interested in talking about buying
you out.

MICHELLE
What?!?!?

She cranes her neck, sees Luke Manson, the Black Market owner, standing in the gym. She and Eric exit the office. Through the glass we watch them speak with Luke.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Luke hands Michelle a black business card.

LUKE
Keep this in case you change your
mind. Or the place finally goes
tits up. Have a nice day.

He and Alex exit. She stares at the card.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The Bartender sets two drinks on the counter. Michelle picks them up, weaves through the crowd to a booth, slips in opposite Julianne.

MICHELLE

Does Chris know you called me?

Julianne shakes her head 'no'.

JULIANNE

He landed a quick job for tonight so I had a few hours. Figured I'd get a drink with my future daughter in law.

MICHELLE

Well, I'm not so sure about that. He's not talking to me. I really hurt him. I'm worried he's gonna leave Chicago to get away from me like he did with Ashley.

JULIANNE

Oh, sweetie, he didn't come here to get away from her. He came here to find YOU.

Michelle's affected by this, nearly tears up.

MICHELLE

How do I fix it?

JULIANNE

If you love him, you gotta fight for him. And he has to fight for you. There's a whole world out there trying to take everything you care about away. And the only way to keep it, is to fight for it.

A PATRON calls out to the Bartender.

PATRON

Hey, man, you gonna put Invicta on or what?

The Bartender turns to Julianne.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER

Sorry, ma'am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

No worries.

Julianne becomes nervous, embarrassed, squints up at the tv in dread. The channel switches over to an Invicta Fight, all women's mma. Chris, shirt off, shorts, walks around the ring holding up a Round 2 sign.

MICHELLE

Oh. My. God.

JULIANNE

Apparently, they saw some youtube video of him and offered \$200 for tonight.

MICHELLE

He's a silly boy.

JULIANNE

But he's OUR silly boy.

Julianne holds up her drink. Michelle toasts her. Julianne cranes her neck, searches the bar.

JULIANNE

Okay. Who we gonna throw down with tonight?

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT BLDG - HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Julianne and Michelle enter the hallway. They've been drinking. Julianne carries her shoes. They speak softly.

JULIANNE

When he was a white belt, I had the kids choose a safe word so their opponent would release them before they passed out. Chris chose, hee-
hee, *I want an ice cream.*

They laugh, stumble down the hall.

JULIANNE

Not *stop* or *Tahiti* or *biscuit* - *I want an ice cream.* I've wondered if that's what he hears before he goes under.

Julianne pauses at Chris's door, gently pushes Michelle to the side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

Just so you know - I never meddle in
my son's relationships.

She stifles a laugh, straightens up, knocks.

JULIANNE

Chris!!

We hear footsteps. Chris opens the door. Julianne stares
at him, steps to the side. Michelle takes her place.

CHRIS

Mom? Are you coming in?

Julianne reappears, hugs Michelle, enters. Chris and
Michelle stare at each other for a moment. It's clear he's
still upset. She nods and he softly closes the door.
Michelle takes it all in.

MICHELLE

I want an ice cream.

She steps away, heads for the stairs, shakes her fists in
frustration.

MICHELLE

(quiet intensity)
FUUUUUUCCKKKKKKK!!!!

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Chris peers through the curtains, watches Michelle cross the
street, enter the gym, lock the door.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Michelle looks up at Chris's window. The curtains close.

INT. BLACK MARKET BAR - AFTERNOON

Josh sits with Ashley.

JOSH

I've been thinking that maybe we
should take our relationship to the
next level.

Ashley stares at him blankly, tries to keep it together then
bursts out laughing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHLEY

I'm sorry. Tried to keep it in.
Wow!

JOSH

I don't get what's so funny? You
mind telling me what's so funny?

ASHLEY

Well, first off, don't talk to me
like that, okay?

(points at herself)

Smoking hot.

(points at him)

Not smoking hot. Secondly, I am
only here to get Chris back. THAT'S
IT. I thought it was mutually
understood.

JOSH

But what about -

ASHLEY

Don't get all butt hurt on me.
Geez.

Josh is taken aback.

ASHLEY

You assholes go to strip joints, hit
on fight fans and that's all cool
but GOD FORBID a girl does the same
thing!

JOSH

I thought I meant more to you than
that.

ASHLEY

Well, you don't. And what do I
really mean to you, huh? You
haven't tried to get to know me.
I'm a piece of eye candy you show
off in public. Nothing more than a
sports car or a Harley.

Josh takes it all in, rises to leave, stops.

JOSH

What is it about this guy, will you
tell me that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHLEY

He's probably the last good one left. For you and your fight buddies, women are accessories. Replacement parts. But to him? To Chris? I've never felt such a potential to be loved. Deeply, passionately loved - in my life. I fucked that up by taking it for granted and I want it back.

He nods, starts to walk away. She goes full court press charm on him, motions to the drinks on the table.

ASHLEY

Are you not gonna get these?

Instinctually, Josh reaches for his wallet before abruptly changing his mind.

JOSH

You know what? No. I'm not. YOU get them.

Ashley laughs, claps her hands.

ASHLEY

Alright! Good for you, Josh. FINALLY called me on my shit.

Josh reaches the bar.

JOSH

Shot of Jack.

The Black Market Bartender pours him one. Josh glances at their Bar Fight Bracket, sees their fighter on the opposite side of Josh's. Theoretically leading to both being in the finals.

JOSH

What time's the bar fight tonight?

BLACK MARKET BARTENDER

Gotta figure out who's fighting first.

JOSH

Don't follow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLACK MARKET BARTENDER
Our guy scratched. Bar's gotta vote
in a replacement.

JOSH
I'll do it.

BLACK MARKET BARTENDER
That ain't possible, man. You
fought for O'Malley's.

JOSH
Don't the patrons vote for the
replacement?

BLACK MARKET BARTENDER
Yeah but -

JOSH
Then it ain't up to you is it?

Josh turns, faces the bar.

JOSH
Lemme have your attention!

The bar quiets down, listens to Josh.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

Josh takes a punch to the face. Answers with his own
attack. On the sidelines, Dustin and Chris watch.

CHRIS
I thought -

DUSTIN
Yeah, me too.

Josh dominates the fight.

CHRIS
Dustin?

DUSTIN
Yeah, buddy?

CHRIS
Did I get lucky when I fought him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUSTIN

C'mon, man, you can't think that way.

CHRIS

You didn't answer my question.

DUSTIN

Do you think you got lucky? If you do, you need to tell me why so we can work on those things and get you back to being confident you can beat this guy 'cause in about 2.5 seconds this could be the guy you end up facing in the finals.

Josh destroys his OPPONENT, has to be pulled off.

JOSH

(to Opponent)

If you're still breathing I'll buy that drink.

Josh pushes off the people holding him back, walks by Chris.

JOSH

See you in the finals, pal. If you make it.

Josh heads into the bar.

INT. BLACK MARKET MMA GYM -- DAY

William and Aston watch Eric and Cory on the mats. Josh enters the front, he's late.

WILLIAM

Josh. Get over here.

Josh approaches. Aston turns Josh's head to the side, sees a bruise, glances at William.

ASTON

You're supposed to be training with US, not bar fighting.

WILLIAM

Pull your head outta goldilocks' thighs and get back on Team Cory.

INT. HOME DEPOT - TOOL AISLE -- DAY

Chris pushes a cart full of product down the aisle. The Loudspeaker squelches.

TYLER (O.S.)
Chris Pruitt, come to the front.
Chris Pruitt to the front.

The Loudspeaker turns off. Chris stops, hits the cart angrily, paces around. The Loudspeaker turns back on.

TYLER (O.S.)
Don't worry, it's not that red hot cheerleader you foolishly broke up with.

Another voice on the speaker's heard in the background.

TYLER (O.S.)
Yeah, that's HIS ex-girlfriend.

DISTANT VOICE ON SPEAKER (O.S.)
What an idiot.

TYLER (O.S.)
Right?!?!?

The loudspeaker squelches off.

INT. HOME DEPOT - FRONT -- DAY

Chris approaches the front. Rusty, the boy from his class, stands with his Father. Rusty's very excited to see him.

CHRIS
Hey, little dude, how are you?

RUSTY
I'm fine, Master Chris.

RUSTY'S FATHER
He insisted on saying hi.

CHRIS
Aw, thanks, buddy.

RUSTY
You coming back to teach?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

I don't know, gotta see.

RUSTY'S FATHER

He's been having trouble defending his guard and with his escapes.

Chris looks around.

CHRIS

You guys have a minute?

RUSTY'S FATHER

Uh....sure.

INT. HOME DEPOT - BACK OF STORE -- DAY

Chris's tool belt, vest, smock lay on the ground. A bunch of flattened out boxes are spread along the floor. Chris and Rusty are tangled, Rusty's trying to reverse Chris.

CHRIS

Keep pushing! Keep pushing!

Chris winks at Rusty's Father.

CHRIS

Oh, you got me now!!

Chris finishes rolling over, Rusty escapes, stands up proud.

CHRIS

Bang it out, gangstah!

They bump fists.

CHRIS

You understand now?

Rusty nods emphatically.

CHRIS

Good. Keep practicing that.

Rusty helps Chris stand, hands him his tool belt.

RUSTY'S FATHER

Really appreciate it, Chris.

CHRIS

Ah, my pleasure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSTY'S FATHER

The gym misses you. Michelle most of all.

CHRIS

Yeah, I miss it, too.

RUSTY'S FATHER

Thanks again.

He shakes Chris's hand. Rusty bows to Chris, Chris bows back, watches them leave.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

Michelle's showering. Suddenly, the lights go off.

MICHELLE

Are you kidding me?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

In a robe, Michelle opens the breaker box. Flips the switches back and forth. Nothing.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- NIGHT

A portable camping light illuminates the room as Michelle reaches into the shower, turns the knob - nothing. At the sink she tries the faucets - nothing.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- NIGHT

Michelle takes down the Bette Ford picture, holds it in her hands. She turns to the main room of the gym.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

MICHELLE'S FATHER, 30's, teaches YOUNG MICHELLE, 10, on the mats in the original gym. Young Michelle has her Father in a hold, he taps and they both stand up. He holds her arms up in victory.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- NIGHT

Michelle smiles.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Young Michelle holds a paint can as her Father draws the Rueda MMA logo on the glass.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MAIN OFFICE -- NIGHT

Sitting at the desk, the Bette Ford frame's next to broken piece of window. Near them both's Luke's business card. She picks it up, knows she's gonna lose her father's gym.

EXT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

Chris gets off a city bus. As he strolls down the sidewalk, he glances towards Michelle's gym, sees a flashlight beam moving around. He stops, looks closer, steps into the street. Michelle's taking things off the walls - trophies, ribbons, championship belts.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Chris approaches the door, knocks. Michelle glances over, sighs, continues taking things down. He knocks again.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Michelle unlocks the door.

CHRIS

You okay?

MICHELLE

Eh. Losing my gym. Gonna be homeless. But I think the Cubs won so I got that going for me.

CHRIS

Buy you a beer?

MICHELLE

Sure.

She walks out, heads down the sidewalk.

CHRIS

Aren't you gonna lock it?

MICHELLE

What's the point?

CHRIS

Lock it. Please? For me?

Reluctantly, Michelle walks back, locks it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
Happy?

CHRIS
It's a start.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

MICHELLE
I didn't know I was so bad at
business.

CHRIS
You just need some help.

MICHELLE
I WILL NOT be a burden on anyone. I
saw people do that to my father. It
destroyed him. Created so much
stress he passed sooner than he
should have.

CHRIS
Have you tried getting a loan?

MICHELLE
Yeah, that didn't go well. Plus, to
do it right I'd need like five times
what I asked for and there's no way
that's gonna happen so...

CHRIS
Five times?

MICHELLE
It's over, Chris.

CHRIS
Well, you wanna just give it to me?

MICHELLE
I'm not giving my gym away.

CHRIS
How 'bout I fight you for it?

MICHELLE
You wanna fight me for my gym?

CHRIS
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
You and me?

CHRIS
Yes.

MICHELLE
Chris, I love you. I mean - I
REALLY love you. But I will fuck
you up.

CHRIS
(to Bartender)
Hey, you mind keeping an eye on our
stuff?

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER
No problem.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Chris getting slapped.

CHRIS
Did you just slap me?

MICHELLE
Stockton slap, bitch.
(flashes gang sign)
209, yo.

CHRIS
I thought we were gonna fight -
Michelle throws a jab, springs his head back.

MICHELLE
Try and take my gym.

He dabs at his nose.

MICHELLE
(concerned)
OOOOOooo....was that too hard? I'm
sorry, that was -

He jabs her, snaps her head back a little.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
Did you just hit a girl?

CHRIS
I thought I hit another fighter. I
want that gym.

MICHELLE
Alright, dick. Let's do this.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

A BAR PATRON glances outside, sees Chris and Michelle
fighting. The Bartender's casually drying a glass.

BAR PATRON
Should we call the cops?

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER
Nah, they're just fighting. All
good.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle moves forward, puts the pressure on him. Jab.
Jab. Cross.

MICHELLE
You ain't taking my gym.

Chris shoots, takes her down.

CHRIS
I can't wait to teach those self
defense classes to your girls.

MICHELLE
OOOOOOOO...cheap shot.

She reverses him. Takes him by surprise. Total "oh shit"
moment.

MICHELLE
Like I'm not insecure enough about
my looks you gotta bring them into
it.

He fights her hands as she tries to secure a hold.

CHRIS
Yeah, well, you called me stupid!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

And I feel...
 (squeezes)
 ...Really...
 (squeezes)
Bad about it. Plus, I said
 sorry a million times.

CHRIS

I still think you're cute

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The Bartender approaches the front. Stands next to OTHER PATRONS who've gathered to watch.

EXT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle still has him in the hold. He's struggling.

MICHELLE

Look, you and I - we're not perfect.
 But we're...
 (squeezes)
 Perfect. Together.

CHRIS

Guess you're not ready to give up
 your gym after all.

MICHELLE

And I'm not giving you up. I love
 you, Chris.

She's really tightened her grip on him. He's having serious difficulty breathing.

MICHELLE

Say it back!

CHRIS

(barely audible)
 I...love...you..

MICHELLE

(squeezing tighter)
 MEAN IT!

CHRIS

I...want...an...ice...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Bartender exits, calls to Michelle.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER
Hey, Michelle. You're about to
sleep him. He's turning blue.

She releases Chris and he rolls off. They lay next to one
another in the street, lungs heaving.

CHRIS
If it's the end of the second round
and a fighter's losing, what should
they do?

MICHELLE
Adapt. Make adjustments. Don't
fight the same way.

Chris is quiet.

MICHELLE
Got it. They turned off my water.
Any chance I can use your shower?

CHRIS
Please.

She hits his shoulder, stands, helps him up.

MICHELLE
Chris?

CHRIS
Yeah, babe?

MICHELLE
I need help. Will you help me?

CHRIS
Of course.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

Michelle wakes up in Chris's bed, smiles, stretches, sees a
note: **GONE TO RUN ERRAND - C.**

INT. BANK -- DAY

Chris sits opposite the Loan Officer. Chris signs a document, stands, shakes hands with him, exits the office, fist bumps MICHELLE'S BROTHERS sitting by the door.

Chris takes a seat and Brother #1 rises, enters the office, hands an application to the Loan Officer.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

The lights come back on, ceiling fans begin to spin. Water rushes from the shower faucet. Michelle reaches into the stall, turns it off, splashes her Brothers.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM - MEN'S LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Plumbers have torn up the bathroom floor, work on the pipes.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

The entire main room has been emptied.

EXT. DUSTIN'S BACKYARD -- DAY

Another barbecue with Dustin's family, Michelle's family as well as Chris and Julianne.

INT. MODELING STAGE -- DAY

Ashley's doing print work as photography lights flash.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS -- NIGHT

A series of moving shots featuring Josh, Michelle and Chris advancing in the bar fight competition.

INT. VARIOUS BARS -- NIGHT

Chris, Michelle and Josh's photos advance on the Bar Fight Brackets.

INT. BLACK MARKET MMA -- DAY

Cory drilling with his team.

INT. HOME DEPOT - FRONT -- DAY

Chris punches in, heads to his aisle as Tyler and the Other Employees playfully shadow box him. They let him pass then break into gyrating like his youtube clip.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

New mats roll onto the floor, new equipment's unpacked, new heavy bags hung. Sweet Pea carefully walks out a tray of drinks for the crew.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

White and Blue Belts help put things back up on the wall.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

The Gentlemen's Club Dancers hold a Car Wash Benefit for the gym. Michelle's Brothers "help" the girls...

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Julianne teaches the Dancers' self defense class. They help her with her moves.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Julianne lines up a shot, stands back and glances at the Girl blocking her - this time she promptly moves.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle beats Chris at the punching machine - raises her arms in victory. Chris beats her at Foosball. Julianne and Chris do their dance with Michelle this time.

INT. CHICAGO DMV -- DAY

Ashley hands a DMV CLERK her Change Of Residency paperwork, stands in front of the DMV camera and strikes a pose as the light flashes. Her license looks like an Instagram post.

INT. HOMELESS CAFETERIA -- DAY

The group wears RUEDA MMA/GOOD FIGHT CHICAGO shirts help feed the homeless.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Dustin holds pads, training Chris - speed, power, wow!

EXT. WRIGLEY FIELD -- DAY

Rain pours down and PATRONS rush to take cover. Chris and Michelle carelessly remain in the bleachers. Michelle takes a bite of a hot dog, extends it to Chris.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He moves to take a bite and she stuffs it in her mouth.

INT. BLACK MARKET MMA -- DAY

A giant framed photo of Cory's raised to the wall.

EXT. SOFTBALL FIELD -- DAY

The Group wears Rueda MMA shirts, plays in a league.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Michelle carefully repaints her father's drawing on the front window.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris teaches his class. Rusty gets caught in a move with another student, starts crying and rushes past Chris, burrows into Michelle. She embraces him with care, looks to Chris amazed.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- NIGHT

Grand Reopening. All dressed to the nines. Reception with promotional stickers, key chains, water bottles. Everyone's here - the Brothers, the Dancers. Luke enters with Team Cory, mingle with the guests, check out the new place. Michelle returns Luke his business card - ripped in half.

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

The gym is full of members all standing, doing drills. Leading the instruction at the front are Michelle, Dustin, Chris and Julianne.

END MONTAGE:

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The place is PACKED. Everyone crowded watching the numerous televisions showing Cory's MMA fight.

INT. VARIOUS BARS -- NIGHT

Same thing all over the city - Black Market Bar, Biker Bar, Cop Bar, Blue Collar Bar - the fight's shown EVERYWHERE.

Ashley sits next to Luke.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

They watch as Cory does the walk to the Octagon, followed by Aston, Eric, Josh.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Cory's on a bit of a skid and this being the last fight on his contract, it's imperative he win otherwise he'll get dropped from the roster.

Michelle stands between Dustin and Chris, Cindy and Julianne on either end.

MICHELLE

I don't wanna be negative, you know, don't wanna wish ill will on someone -

DUSTIN

Michelle, we ALL want him to lose.

SURROUNDING PATRONS lean over, nod "yes".

On television, the bell rings, Cory and his OPPONENT move towards each other, the Opponent swings and BOOM! Cory's knocked out cold. The REFEREE calls the fight. Everyone's stunned.

INT. VARIOUS BARS -- NIGHT

All the Patrons are silent, shocked.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

Suddenly, the ENTIRE BAR throws their arms in the air and cheer!!! It's glorious.

DUSTIN

Karma's a bitch!

CINDY

And she brought some friends!!!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

That was the *fastest* knock out in MMA history!! Apparently, Cory switched gyms mid-camp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNOUNCER #2 (O.S.)
 Guess he should've stayed at the
 original gym, huh?

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

A NEW PATRON enters, steps to the new front desk in front of
 Michelle.

NEW PATRON
 Is this the original gym Cory
 trained at?

MICHELLE
 Yes, it is.

NEW PATRON
 (reaching for wallet)
 I wanna sign up.

He pivots, waves to OTHER PATRONS waiting outside to enter.

NEW PATRON
 They wanna sign up, too.

EXT. BLACK MARKET MMA -- DAY

Josh swipes his card - nothing. A BLACK MARKET MMA PATRON
 exits and Josh enters.

INT. BLACK MARKET MMA -- DAY

A BLACK MARKET MMA EMPLOYEE calls as Josh walks past.

BLACK MARKET MMA EMPLOYEE
 Sir, you have to swipe your card.

JOSH
 Yeah, I tried, it's not working.

In the distance, we see Luke by Ashley who's training. He
 walks over to the front.

JOSH
 Luke, my card -

LUKE
 Yeah, you're gonna need to join,
 Josh. Like Cory, we took a massive
 hit when he lost. You'll need to
 join for real.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH
She have to join?

LUKE
Ashley? Fuck no.

JOSH
Why, 'cause she's hot?

LUKE
Exactly. OH - one more thing.

Luke reaches behind the counter.

LUKE
I'm gonna need you to wear this when
you fight.

He tosses Josh a shirt - **BLACK MARKET BAR & MMA GYM.**

LUKE
Good luck in tonight's Semi-Finals.

Josh watches him return to helping Ashley.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREET -- NIGHT

Josh, in Black Market Shirt, mercilessly ground and pounds
his OPPONENT.

INT. BLUE COLLAR BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle and Chris, in Rueda Shirts, stand with their
drinks. Holding his phone up, Dustin pushes toward them.

DUSTIN
Josh won his fight. He's in the
finals. Guy's on the way to the
hospital.
(to Chris)
You seen your opponent tonight?

CHRIS
Oh, yeah. Try and guess.

Dustin looks around, there's a Mountain Of A Man at the end
of the bar drinking what looks like a 40 ounce mug of beer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DUSTIN

That guy.

CHRIS

Yep. THAT guy. Ever consider weight classes in these things?

DUSTIN

It's a bar fight, man.

MICHELLE

Look, I've beaten this girl before. I can carry her for awhile, give this guy some time to continue drinking.

CHRIS

Great. Thanks.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE COLLAR BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle's on the ground with her OPPONENT, has her in a hold. She releases her, both stand, dodge punches. The Opponent goes for a take down, Michelle faces Chris and Dustin, rolls her eyes, gently takes her to the ground.

Chris looks through the crowd into the bar, sees the Mountain Man downing another beer, trading the empty glass for a full one.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. BLUE COLLAR BAR -- NIGHT

Chris takes a big hit, lands on his ass. The CROWD picks him up pushes him into the circle where he takes another big hit, lands on his ass. Again, the CROWD picks him up, pushes him into the circle where he barely stops before taking another hit.

DUSTIN

Save it, Chris! Save it for one good punch.

Chris moves around the guy as the man grins, throws his monster fists through the air, Chris leaning back out of the way, holding his hands up, cocked and ready, waiting for that one punch. He waits, waits, sees his opening and GIVES IT HIS ALL, throws an UPPERCUT INTO THE MAN'S GUT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Immediately - everything inside the man's belly projectile vomits out his mouth, easily a gallon of beer. He crouches over, looks up as Chris comes down with another punch into his face, putting him down for good!

CHRIS

Holy shit!!

Dustin and Michelle rush him.

INT. BLACK MARKET MMA -- DAY

Josh trains on the heavy bag with Alex. Luke approaches.

LUKE

We need this last fight. Do what you gotta to win it. Understand?

Josh nods as Luke walks away.

JOSH

(to Alex)

You play basketball?

ALEX

Why?

JOSH

'Cause I'm asking.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Dustin and Chris burst in, Michelle rushes from the kitchen as Dustin helps Chris hobble to the bed.

CHRIS

Just wanted to meet a girl. Just wanted to meet my soulmate...

MICHELLE

What happened? What's he talking about?

DUSTIN

No idea. Been saying it over and over since the cops left.

MICHELLE

Since the **cops** left?

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT -- NIGHT

We're going back in time a little bit. Dustin and Chris shoot some hoops.

CHRIS
Where'd you meet her?

DUSTIN
High school.

CHRIS
No shit?

DUSTIN
No shit. Been ride or die ever since. Drove me to my first fight back when I made a run on that. Keeps our family together. I'd be nothing without her.

Alex and some OTHER PLAYERS walk onto the court.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

DUSTIN
They asked to play a pick up game. We're tired of playing horse, one on one, two bounce so we're like sure, man...

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT -- NIGHT

Middle of the game. Lots of physicality. Guys fouling Chris, rough, intentional. Alex and Dustin in the game, Alex a little concerned with what's unfolding.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

CHRIS
They messed up my knee bad.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - POLICE CRUISER -- NIGHT

We're inside the cruiser as Officer Ralph and Officer Felicia roll up in the dark.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT -- NIGHT

We see the cruiser park in the distance. Chris goes for a lay up, Another Player takes out Chris's legs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chris lands hard, jumps up, pushes the guy.

The others rush in except for Alex. Two hold back Dustin as the others start rat packing Chris on the ground, kicking with bad intentions.

Officer Ralph and Felicia run from their cruiser. Eric and the others flee. The Cops check on Chris, in a lot of pain.

INT. CHRIS'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

MICHELLE

Should we take him to the hospital?

CHRIS

I've had this type of injury before, they'll do an x-ray, wrap it in ice, tell me to take it easy and charge me a million dollars for an aspirin.

DUSTIN

He's kinda right.

CHRIS

Man, I just wanted to meet a girl -

MICHELLE

Okay. Lemme try this.

She rolls up her sleeves. Slaps her hands together furiously rubs her palms, touches his leg like Mr Miagi. Chris wails in pain.

MICHELLE

Sorry! It worked in the movie!

DUSTIN

Okay. This is probably crazy, but I saw this thing in a horror film once -

CHRIS

GUYS! Just get me a bag of ice and the tv remote. Please!

INT. RUEDA MMA GYM -- DAY

Chris on a single crutch. Dustin teaching. Sweet Pea following Michelle around. Alex enters. Michelle sees him, too, walks over with Sweet Pea, stands by Chris.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

I came to apologize to you. Man to man. They, uh -

MICHELLE

Who's they?

ALEX

I didn't come to snitch. I came to apologize.

MICHELLE

Go on.

ALEX

They asked me to go with, said we was gonna play some ball, might get a little rough. I didn't know who we was gonna be playin', 'til I got there and didn't say nothing about injuring you.

MICHELLE

You left here to take a job with my rival and I helped you.

Dustin steps over.

DUSTIN

Man, I think it's time you hit the road. Go back to Black Market.

ALEX

I can't. They're cutting back. I was sort of hoping maybe I could get my old job back.

CHRIS

Sweet Pea? What do you think?

SWEET PEA

Hit the road, Jack.

CHRIS

Guess you better hit the road.

They watch him leave.

CHRIS

Sweet Pea?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sweet Pea looks up at him.

CHRIS

I'm gonna need to go lay down, get some rest for tonight. Will you take care of my mom when she gets in?

Sweet Pea nods 'yes'.

MICHELLE

You know, when you do stuff like that my uterus does somersaults.

CHRIS

I'll see you guys in a few hours.

They watch him exit and cross the street.

MICHELLE

He's screwed, huh?

DUSTIN

Yeah, he's screwed.

SWEET PEA

So screwed.

EXT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

Giant crowd outside. In the distance, Chris hobbles with the help of his crutch and Julianne. We recognize a lot of the folks from O'Malley's as well as Michelle's Brothers, Cindy, Rueda Members, the Dancers, Tyler and the Home Depot Employees.

They're in a tight group, listening to the O'Malley's Bartender and Dustin. Michelle sees Chris and Julianne, moves from the group toward them.

MICHELLE

How you feel?

CHRIS

Great. Me and my mom just got back from a twelve mile run. Were about to swim five miles and hop on a bike. Figure an Iron Man's just the thing I need. You know, get the blood flowing and all.

Michelle looks at Julianne who rolls her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE

Pro tip? They don't let you give
the baby back after you've had it.

Patrons raise hands, vote.

CHRIS

What's going on?

He hobbles into the crowd.

CHRIS

Whoa-whoa-whoa. I'M fighting.

DUSTIN

Man, your knee. How you gonna fight
Josh?

CHRIS

I have this secret weapon I saw on
tv. I call it the "daniel-san".

Chris does the Karate Kid crane pose, shocks them.

MICHELLE

You're joking, right?

CHRIS

Yeah, just wanted to make you smile.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER

Chris, we can't let you fight. We
think it's best if Dustin takes on
this asshole.

CHRIS

I have to fight. I know, I know.
I'm injured. No chance. Got it.
But I have to fight. Guys like Josh,
they ALWAYS win. ALWAYS. They
cheat, manipulate. They're dopers,
corner cutters. And they're smart.
Man are they smart. They beat the
system, always find a way to make
themselves come out on top. By
doing shit like this.

(points to his knee)

Well, I'm not gonna let him get away
with it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna let Dustin kick his ass 'cause I'm gonna kick his ass with my GOOD leg. This time, there'll be no excuse for him losing and maybe he'll go away. Now, someone help me get those three drinks into my system before I realize how stupid I really am.

MICHELLE

HEY! You're not stupid!!

GIRL #2 who fought Julianne earlier hands Chris a shot. Chris looks at it, sees it's whiskey.

JULIANNE

I'll take that, sweetie.
(downs it)
OOOOOO, got a bit of a bite.
(returns glass)
Thank you.

ANOTHER PATRON hands Chris a beer.

ANOTHER PATRON

My wife drinks light beer, too.

Luke appears at the bar entrance.

LUKE

Let's get this started!!!

The crowd begins to cheer - FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

MICHELLE

I'm up babe.

She kisses Chris on the lips, starts to shake out her arms, starts her breathing. Julianne rubs her shoulders. The crowd parts more and more, reveals her competitor - Ashley, in Black Market MMA shirt, flanked by Josh and Luke.

MICHELLE

Fuck. Me.

JULIANNE

Dot. Com.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE

How does she get to fight? This is Chicago.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER

She's local now. And Black Market voted her in as the last minute replacement.

CHRIS

So.

O'MALLEY'S BARTENDER

So they're dicks.

CHRIS

Ah....got it.

MICHELLE

Chris? Is there something you maybe left out about her?

Michelle's watching Ashley warm up. She's a trained fighter.

MICHELLE

What....belt....is she?

JULIANNE

Chris, you didn't tell her?

MICHELLE

Tell her what?

CHRIS

It never came up.

MICHELLE

Tell her what?

JULIANNE

You should've told her, Chris.

MICHELLE

Tell her what?

CHRIS

Mom, it NEVER came up!

MICHELLE

Tell her what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JULIANNE
You still should've -

MICHELLE
Tell her what FUCKING BELT IS SHE?

CHRIS
Black...belt.

MICHELLE
What?

JULIANNE
Actually, she's a double....black
belt.

MICHELLE
Chris, you told me she was a
cheerleader.

CHRIS
(defensive)
Yes. And she was. Dallas Cowboys.

JULIANNE
And an NCAA Division 1 gymnast.

CHRIS
That's true as well.

JULIANNE
She's actually achieved quite a lot.
Plus, she's so fucking beautiful.
(softly)
Hate her for that.

MICHELLE
(still nervous)
And where did you meet?

CHRIS
At the dojo where my mom used to
teach.

MICHELLE
Your mom was her teacher?

JULIANNE
Yeah, but only from when she was 6
'til she went away to college. She
studied in Texas after that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MICHELLE
Dustin?

DUSTIN
On it.
(to crowd)
CAN WE GET ANOTHER SHOT OVER HERE
PLEASE?

A Patron hands him a shot. He gives it to Michelle who immediately downs it. She turns to Chris.

MICHELLE
Hey.

CHRIS
Hey.

MICHELLE
I love you.

CHRIS
I love you, too.

He moves in, gives her a big kiss.

ASHLEY.

Josh steps up close.

ASHLEY
No!

CHRIS & MICHELLE.

The crowd continues chanting - FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!

CHRIS
YOU GOT THIS BABE!!!!

Michelle nods, unsure of herself. She steps into the center of the circle as does Ashley. They're maybe a foot apart. This is it.

ASHLEY
When this is over, I hope we can be friends.

MICHELLE
Well, we're probably gonna need a babysitter so...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They bump fists, back up a bit, nod to each other and start MOVING FORWARD FAST.... We swirl around them, both trained fighters, both throwing down in the street, surrounded by Bar Patrons. They jab each other, block hits.

Chris, Dustin, Julianne and Cindy cheer for Michelle. Josh, Luke and the Black Market Patrons cheer for Ashley. In a flash, Ashley whips around, grabs Michelle and spider monkey's her way on Michelle's back like Julianne did in her earlier bar fight.

JULIANNE

Dammit.
 (frustrated, to
 Dustin)
 I taught her that.

Julianne shakes her head. Michelle lowers to the ground, this doesn't look good for her. Ashley's smiling, believes she has her. Meanwhile, Chris locks eyes with Josh. Josh does a head motion towards the girls, smirks.

CHRIS

Dustin, get me two more drinks.

DUSTIN

ANYBODY GOT A LIGHT BEER?

CHRIS

GET ME WHISKEY!!!

Chris downs the rest of his beer as two shots appear.

DUSTIN

You have to get him on the ground
 Chris. Your only chance at beating
 this guy's on the ground.

Chris downs the shots, it's difficult, but he stays focused on Josh. Michelle works Ashley's hands. Chris psyches himself up. Ashley's confidence fades and Michelle's created space, breathes deeply. Through the legs of the crowd, WE SEE Michelle escape as Chris's crutch lands on the ground.

Josh and Chris move towards each other. The crowd separates, creating two circles for both simultaneous fights. Ashley and Michelle rotate around in one, Chris and Josh in the other. Dustin peels off to coach Chris, Julianne remains with Michelle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Josh immediately kicks Chris's bad leg, it's a cheap shot, both know it. Josh goes for the leg again, Chris answers by connecting hard to Josh's jaw. Nods at him like expect it, buddy.

Josh circles, goes for the kick, Chris connects to the jaw. Josh circles but as Chris throws, he pulls back the kick and lands a solid hit on Chris.

Ashley and Michelle are exchanging punches and kicks as well. Michelle moves like a boxer - hunkered, power.

Ashley slips around more like a kickboxer, looks for the spinning kick. Michelle grabs her leg, rushes her backwards but Ashley's able to spin out, land an elbow. This is gonna get ugly.

The boys are still at it, both sport facial bruises, faking punches to get kicks in. Josh has the upper hand and knows it. Chris is fading, his kicks off the target until he accidentally catches Josh in the crotch. A collective OOOOOOOOOOOOOO from the crowd follows Josh down in pain.

Ashley and Michelle continue circling, fighting.

Chris stretches out, spreads his legs for Josh's free kick. Josh smiles, he's not gonna let this opportunity pass.

DUSTIN

Tough it out, Chris. You got this!!

Chris glances back at him like "*are you fucking kidding me?*" Josh steps up, takes some deep breaths as Chris exhales, prepares for what could be a fight and offspring ending kick to the nads. Josh rushes Chris, Chris closes his eyes, Josh runs, winds his leg back, Chris squints as hard as he can, Josh throws his foot forward AND SLIPS....

Chris squints an eye open, sees Josh dropping through the air, LANDING HARD ON THE GROUND.

DUSTIN

NOW, CHRIS!!!! NOW!!!!!!!

In the other circle, Ashley's taking a beating, her blonde hair now a slight crimson. She RUSHES Michelle, takes her to the ground.

Chris dives on Josh and they grapple for top control, trading elbows, positions, reversing each other. Chris will not let the fight get back to the feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashley's got Michelle, sinks in the choke. Josh does the same with Chris. Both are fading, gonna lose to their rival, their nemesis.

We PUSH INTO MICHELLE.

EXT. RUEDA MMA GYM - FLASHBACK -- DAY

Young Michelle holds the paint for her Father.

MICHELLE'S FATHER

Nothing will come easy for you,
Mija. Nothing. Life is hard. It's
harder if you're a girl, even harder
if you're an immigrant. But
remember - I'll always be proud of
you if you give 100%. A la verga.

YOUNG MICHELLE

A la verga.

EXT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

Michelle's re-energized, digs deep, pulls the hands, forces Ashley to release and reverses her, traps her in full mount.

MICHELLE

Your Instagram career's gonna be put
on hold for a bit, sweetie...

Michelle pulls her fist back.

Chris is fading, turning blue. We PUSH INTO CHRIS.

EXT. ICE CREAM TRUCK -- DAY

Chris stands outside the truck. Inside, Josh is the server.

JOSH

C'mon man, tell me what you want.

CHRIS

Hmmm...I.....want....an

KID #1 (O.S.)

I call bullshit.

Chris turns around. Rusty stands with Kid #1 and the rest of Chris's White and Blue Belt class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RUSTY

There is no failure only further
efforts to learn together.

KID #1

We have challenges we overcome
together. We are on this adventure
together.

RUSTY

We are all passengers on this ship
together and we'll reach our
solution destination -

CLASS

Together.

Julianne steps into frame.

JULIANNE

Don't you dare say you want an ice
cream.

EXT. BLACK MARKET BAR -- NIGHT

Chris ROARS BACK TO LIFE, spins around, gets Josh in an arm
triangle and applies all his pressure, goes for broke. With
his free arm, Josh punches Chris's side hard...

Ashley sees the anger, the power, squeezes her eyes shut,
turns her head waiting for impact.

Josh's punches lose their power, his arm goes limp. He's
out.

Michelle stares down at Ashley, shaking from anger.
Suddenly, her intensity lessens, she's won the fight,
doesn't hit Ashley. Ashley opens her eyes. Concedes.

In their respective circles, both Chris and Michelle rise as
the CROWD ERUPTS, ENCLOSSES THE OPEN AREA. Chris and
Michelle stand, turn and move through the mass of people,
trying to find the other, looking, searching, finally reach
one another.

CHRIS

How'd you do?

MICHELLE

I won!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHRIS

Me, too!!

They embrace in a big stadium finish.

Ashley makes her way to her feet, sees Julianne through the bodies. Defeated, Ashley respectfully bows to Julianne. Josh, though, rustles back to consciousness. Luke is there.

JOSH

Did I win?

LUKE

No, Josh. You did not win. And I'm gonna need that shirt back. It cost me twenty dollars.

Josh rips it off, hands it to Luke.

Followed by Dustin, Julianne, Cindy and the rest of Team Rueda, the O'Malley's Bartender pushes through the crowd, his arm's extended above carrying something we can't see.

He reaches Chris and Michelle, hands them two poorly crafted pieces of wood with an airplane size bottle of Jack Daniels glued to the top.

CHRIS

This is the trophy?!?

MICHELLE

Yeah, plus we qualify for Fall Regionals in Detroit!

CHRIS

(sarcastic)

You mean we get to do this again?

DUSTIN

It's just a bar fight, man

Chris and Michelle are tapped on the shoulder, turn - FLASH! - a Polaroid camera pushes out a picture.

INT. O'MALLEY'S SPORTS BAR -- NIGHT

The photo develops, revealing a goofy looking Chris and a very happy Michelle staring right at us, their friends and family caught mid-cheer behind them.