

"REAR NAKED CHOKE"

James Grayford
1626 North Wilcox Avenue
#482
Los Angeles, CA 90028
323.807.8599

INT. REGIONAL MMA - OCTAGON -- NIGHT

We pull back from a mouthguard emblazoned with the words **REAR NAKED CHOKE**, reveal TED DE LEON, mid 20's, Latin. Ted raises 4 ounce gloves, trades blows with his OPPONENT, 20's. This is regional pro MMA. Smaller crowds, weathered canvas. Draped banners display local sponsors.

The bell rings and the fighters return to their corners. CLEVON ALVARADO, 40's, slides a stool beneath Ted.

CLEVON

You're doing great, kid. How you feel? Like an Aztec?

Clevon glances to the stands. DIEGO VELASQUEZ, 40's, suit, paunch, sits with a group of PROMOTERS.

INT. REGIONAL MMA - STANDS -- NIGHT

Through the door enters CHARLIE UNO, 50's, Caucasian, fat cigar, Don King persona.

PROMOTER #1

The man's here.

They rise to greet him.

PROMOTER #1

Charlie, this is Diego Velasquez.

Charlie sits.

CHARLIE UNO

You want in?

VELASQUEZ

Very much sir, yes.

CHARLIE UNO

(opening his hands
toward ring)

Then make us some money.

INT. REGIONAL MMA - CAGE & STANDS -- NIGHT

Grandstanding, Velasquez rises, points at his watch. Clevon sees it, turns to Ted.

CLEVON

You know what time it is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Staring at the ground, Ted nods.

CLEVON
Hey. Hey, listen to me...

Clevon looks him dead in the eyes.

CLEVON
You got two fights left on your contract. Do this, you're out. You can make it to the show, Ted. No one has to know.

Ted doesn't answer.

CLEVON
Submit him - you'll never fight pro again. Velasquez'll hold onto your contract, man.

Clevon removes the stool, exits the cage.

The Ref starts the next round. Ted heads past us, goes at the Opponent. They spar as Ted cranks up the pace, throws a series of combinations, gets him against the cage.

They grapple, lock up. Ted takes him down to the canvas, his Opponent's in full guard. Ted glances at Clevon, then Velasquez. Everything SLOWS WAY DOWN as Ted loosens his grip, allows himself to be reversed.

The other fighter takes Ted's back, begins working him. Ted struggles, sees the crowd, the Ref. Suddenly, everything SPEEDS BACK UP as Ted reverses, rolls himself backwards, gets his hooks into a rear naked choke and pulls with all he's got.

Clevon lowers his head as the Opponent strains to free himself. It's no use - Ted's locked in - forces him to tap out. The CROWD GOES WILD. Ted releases, lays on his back as the Ref rushes in.

INT. REGIONAL MMA - STANDS -- NIGHT

Charlie Uno rises, bites hard on his cigar, gives Velasquez a sneer, files past with the other Promoters. Velasquez watches them descend the stairs, drawing his eye to the Octagon.

INT. REGIONAL MMA - OCTAGON -- NIGHT

We stare down at Ted, still on his back, lungs heaving, hands behind his head, taking in what he's done.

EXT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM -- DAY

"TEN YEARS LATER"

Cold and rain. Wind gusts against a rickety sign - BRUISER'S MMA. Open windows release the sweat and body heat.

INT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM -- DAY

A mop slaps on the ground and soapy water runs along the floor. At the end of the handle is Ted, now in his late 30's. Creases 'round the eyes betray his former boyishness.

Rundown, yet functional, the gym supports a sectioned off area of mats where YOUNG STUDENTS in Gis learn from an INSTRUCTOR. Other areas have weight lifting equipment, heavy bags, mats for advanced grappling. A boxing ring's tucked into the corner.

It's here Clevon trains SALVADOR, 18, a young fighter. MMA gloves slam into punch mitts as they dodge about the ring. Clevon's padded up, takes hits from hands, feet, knees.

CLEVON

Good, good, good. Okay, let's get on the mats.

Clevon steps back, removes the mitts, glances at Salvador.

CLEVON

What? Your ground game's horrible.

SALVADOR

I punch like a train.

CLEVON

Yeah? Then ride one. This is MMA, son. It takes more than one trick to win the pony. Ah, what's the use?

Clevon climbs out of the ring.

SALVADOR

Hey, where you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON
 Away from you.
 (under his breath)
 White belt...

Salvador turns to Ted mopping below.

SALVADOR
 Mind the floor there, Johnny Time.

Clevon spins.

CLEVON
 Who you talkin' to, huh, white belt?
 You got no ground game. You wanna
 be a fighter? You wanna make it to
 the UFC?

TED
 Clevon-

CLEVON
 The kid sucks on the canvas. He can
 barely hold his own in the ring.
 (to Salvador)
 Tell you what - you submit this guy -
 you train for free.

A few FIGHTERS take notice, drift over.

TED
 I don't have any gloves.

A pair hit his chest.

TED
 I really gotta do this?

SALVADOR
 C'mon, Mr. Clean, put your money
 where your spic and span is.

Clevon points at the ring. Reluctantly, Ted rolls into it.
 Clevon blows the whistle. They begin sparring.

INT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM - ENTRANCE -- DAY

Through the door walks Velasquez and his obese son JAIME,
 14, both dressed in fine suits. Velasquez notices Ted in
 the ring, snickers to himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUISER VILLAFINA, 60's, the Gym Owner, exits the office.

BRUISER
Velasquez?

Bruiser tries to stop Velasquez.

BRUISER
Lemme call him into the office.

Velasquez tosses him an envelope, smiles, heads to the ring.

VELASQUEZ
Conquer or be conquered, Bruiser.

Bruiser glances at Jaime who raises a defiant eyebrow as he follows his father.

INT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM - BOXING RING -- DAY

Salvador throws a few jabs, smiles at the other fighters when - BAM! - Ted catches him, knocks him back. Dazed, Salvador tries to regain composure but Ted takes him down, flips to side control, transitions into an arm bar. Salvador grits his teeth, taps out.

Clevon, smiles proudly.

CLEVON
(to himself)
I taught you that.

A moment later, some expensive shoes step into frame. The shine of new leather next to Clevon's sneakers - worn out, creased, ripped, taped. Velasquez stands next to him.

From the ring, Ted looks over Velasquez' shoulder, finds Bruiser. Ashamed, Bruiser averts his eyes. Velasquez beams.

Ted climbs out of the ring.

CLEVON
He needs this job.

VELASQUEZ
Yeah? How bad?
(to Ted)
C'mere.

Ted steps over as Velasquez takes the mop from the bucket. Water drips on the floor. He swings, Ted catches it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Velasquez pulls on the handle.

VELASQUEZ

I heard you needed this job?

Reluctantly, Ted releases the mop. Velasquez scans the roomful of hungry fighters.

VELASQUEZ

I am Diego Velasquez. And now I own this dump. If you want to fight, if you want to have a shot someday, then you'll have one point of view: mine. This is what happens when you stray from it.

(to Ted)

Still a single dad?

Ted deflates. Velasquez slaps the mop into his face, it knocks him down.

VELASQUEZ

Go on, Mijo.

As Ted struggles to his feet, Jaime spits on him.

JAIME

You're fired! Now, get out!

Ted rises. Clevon nods for him to leave. Ted makes his way through the gym as Jaime burrows back into Daddy.

VELASQUEZ

(to Clevon)

You talk Bruiser into hiring him?
Paying him cash?

CLEVON

You been kicking him to the curb the past ten years. He didn't have no place else to go.

VELASQUEZ

You're back to working for me,
Clevon. Got it?

Clevon nods as Velasquez strokes Jaime's head.

VELASQUEZ

Yeah, Clevon knows who El Jefe is.

EXT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM -- DAY

We're way up, looking down at the street. So high, the rain drops seem like cannon balls. Ted exits, quickly followed by Bruiser.

EXT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM - STREET -- DAY

BRUISER
Teddy?!? Teddy, wait!

Bruiser catches up.

BRUISER
He gave me a good price. I'm sure
'cause of you.

TED
Yeah? How'd he know I worked there?

BRUISER
I'm getting old, Ted.

Bruiser extends a roll of cash.

TED
Keep it.

Bruiser extends it again.

TED
Will it make you feel better if I
take it?

Bruiser nods. Ted leans into him.

TED
Then keep it.

Ted walks away.

EXT. MAIN STREET -- EVENING

It's getting dark. The sidewalks bustle as open store fronts sell inexpensive clothes, knock off electronics. STREET VENDORS hawk pirated Blu-Ray's, batteries, food.

We pick up Ted in the crowd. He stops at a store, checks out a toy doll, smiles briefly until it fades and his attention turns to a pair of kid's shoes. He *wants* to buy the toy - *needs* to buy the shoes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We TRACK ACROSS a brick wall as he disappears into the store.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET -- EVENING

We TRACK ACROSS the brick wall as Ted exits with a small black plastic bag, crosses the sidewalk, hops on a bus.

EXT. RUNDOWN BUILDING -- EVENING

Ted gets off the bus, turns a corner. Down the block, LOURDES MORALES, 40's, and a POLICEMAN place Ted's daughter, CALLIE DE LEON, 12, into the back of a patrol cruiser. Lourdes gets in beside her and the cruiser takes off.

Ted breaks into a sprint, but he's too far away. As the cruiser disappears, Ted slows down, stands in the street. Alone.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

I keep telling you, you gotta come back in the morning.

INT. SOCIAL SERVICES -- NIGHT

Still holding the plastic bag, Ted argues with a portly SECURITY GUARD, 50's, sitting behind the front desk. They speak over each other.

TED

I need to know she's okay. She's only 12 years old.

SECURITY GUARD

Come back in the morning!!

Ted pauses. Lowers his voice.

TED

Look - she's all I got. Can I at least wait here? I'll just sit right there. Please.

The Security Guard stares at him, gives in, waves to the floor. Ted sits on the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Ted and his wife MARINA, 20's, sit with their twin daughters, Callie and LIZZIE, 2. Across from them is Dr. Taskey, 40's. He references a model of an infant's heart.

DR. TASKEY

The blockage in the left ventricle has increased. Forcing the right ventricle to work twice as hard. She won't survive another year.

He sets down the model.

DR. TASKEY

It's not an inexpensive procedure.

INT. BUS - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Ted and Marina each hold a daughter. All of the flashback dialogue between Ted and Marina's in Spanish with subtitles.

MARINA

We don't have insurance.

TED

Velasquez got me a fight with some big promoters. I'm going to win, mi amor.

MARINA

What if you don't? I'm tired of living this way. I want to go back to Chiapas.

TED

I'm going to win.

Marina's skeptical.

TED

We'll be fine. I promise.

Marina continues studying Ted, turns away.

TED

I promise.

He gently kisses his daughter's head.

INT. VELASQUEZ' GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

This place is like a dream. New equipment, MMA cage, boxing ring, mats, locker room. Ted trains with Clevon. A MANAGER, 40's, steps out of his office, whistles. Clevon turns and the Manager waves.

CLEVON
(slipping under ropes)
Boss wants to see us.

TED
He's not pulling me from the fight?

Ted rolls off the ring, follows Clevon.

TED
Clevon. He's not pulling me from the fight?

INT. VELASQUEZ' OFFICE - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

The walls are full of Aztec artifacts, ornate gold, feathers, spears, crossbows and art. This guy sees himself as a nobleman, a warrior, a god.

Velasquez lays on a massage table. A MASSEUSE, 20's, long black hair, flimsy top, runs her press-on nails over Velasquez' back. Ted stands in front of him, Clevon by the door. The Manager leans against a desk.

VELASQUEZ
Ted, every fighter does it. Think of it as paying tribute for my giving you opportunities.

TED
I understand, Mr. Velasquez, it's just, you know, one of my daughters isn't well and I need the win money to pay her medical bills. It's serious.

VELASQUEZ
I'm sure she'll be fine, Ted. Do this for me and we'll work out some kind of loan.

Clevon rolls his eyes. Even the Masseuse knows it's bullshit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

Mr. Velasquez, I appreciate everything you've done for me.

VELASQUEZ

So we understand each other?

TED

No, sir, I don't think we do. First off, this fighter, he's way below me. I take a dive, I could lose my card.

VELASQUEZ

Don't make it obvious.

TED

But the main thing's my daughter. I really need the win money. She's in a bad way.

VELASQUEZ

I said we'd talk! Now listen to me, you little prick, this is my gym, I'm the owner around here. Velasquez Gym. I'm Velasquez. I bark. You bite.

Ted bows his head. Velasquez relaxes.

VELASQUEZ

Besides, I know the Commissioner. I bought his house for Chrissakes. Now get out of here and practice losing.

Ted and Clevon exit. The Manager rises.

VELASQUEZ

After the fight?

MANAGER

Yeah...

VELASQUEZ

Dump him. Fuckin' savage.

*INT. VELASQUEZ' GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY*

Ted and Clevon work in the ring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON

*You're not gonna do anything stupid
are you?*

TED

*Of course not. I'm gonna take care
of my little girl.*

Clevon stops, watches Ted walk away.

FADE TO BLACK.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LOURDES' OFFICE -- DAY

Through the window Ted sees Callie, now 12, sitting at a table eating from a tray of Social Service food. Across from Ted is Lourdes. She studies Ted. The guy's worked, wants his daughter back.

LOURDES

*Give me something. Proper residence.
Employment. Something.*

TED

*I waited 12 hours for you. How many
parents with proper residences and
employment would do something like
that?*

Lourdes exhales, lowers her defenses.

LOURDES

*What do you say you visit Callie for
a bit. Would you like that?*

TED

Very much so, yes.

INT. LOURDES' OFFICE -- DAY

Through the window, Lourdes watches Callie rush into Ted. He kneels down and she wipes his face. She reaches to the table, grabs her juice box and makes him take a sip.

Lourdes smiles. Directly in front of her - Callie's file. To each side of her - STACKS of files. She glances at Ted, concerned.

INT. CHILD SERVICES -- MORNING

Ted and Callie follow Lourdes down a hall where a GUARD opens a door. A room full of kids bolt for it like convicts rushing to freedom. SOCIAL WORKERS hold them back.

BD, 8, thick glasses, very small for his age, tries to push past the older bodies. His face, full of fear, makes an impact on Ted. Callie's scared, doesn't want to go in.

CALLIE

Dad?

TED

(to Lourdes)

Please don't do this.

LOURDES

It's not up to me, Mr De Leon.

TED

Then who's it up to?

Resigned, Ted kneels down, hugs Callie, holds her tight as she cries, releases her.

TED

It's gonna be okay, baby. I promise, okay?

She nods her head, turns to the room. It's pretty terrifying. Some kids look mean, other's appear intimidated. Callie enters. The door closes. Ted steps up next to Lourdes. They peer through the small window.

LOURDES

Mr. De Leon, I have to check out all child endangerment reports. Off the record - and I'll deny saying this - I believe you're a good man, a good father. You take her to school, you spend every cent on her well being. Whomever made the call on you? They really want to hurt you. Because of this the State sees you in an apartment not up to code in an area not designated for residential use and having no proof of taxable income.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOURDES (CONT'D)

The State has stringent requirements
for parents in your situation.
Quite often, children are remanded
back to custody days after being
released. Unless, of course...
(she whispers, steps
away)
....The State can't find her.

EXT. BUS STOP -- DAY

Ted sits on a bench. Through a series of HIGH SPEED
DISSOLVES, PEOPLE sit next to him, board buses, get off
buses. Traffic rolls back and forth, back and forth, back
and forth....

INT. TED'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Very small. Tiny kitchen area with a table, two chairs,
miniature refrigerator, hot plate, a few cabinets. To one
side - a bathroom, the other side - living room with two
beds, couch, tv, dresser. Doubtful it's up to code.

Hanging in the middle of the kitchen's a heavy bag which
Clevon barely steadies as Ted works out his frustrations.

CLEVON

If you think about it, Bruiser
selling you out saved about ten
jobs, including mine.

TED

Glad I could be there for ya'.

Ted throws a series of combinations. Clevon loses his grip,
stumbles back. Ted grabs Clevon's shirt, steadies him, they
laugh.

There's a creaking. Both Ted and Clevon turn toward the
door. Clevon picks up a barbell. Beneath the crack, a
shadow disappears then reappears. Ted grasps the knob.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

The door swings open as Clevon wields a baseball bat. No
one's there - until they look down. Shaking in fear is BD,
the boy who tried to get out when Callie was taken away.

CLEVON

You should put out more mouse traps.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON (CONT'D)

Get rid of them little white boys
before they multiply.

BD extends one of Callie's new shoes to Ted, raises a shaky
finger to the stairwell. Callie steps from the shadows.

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

The heavy bag's stored in a corner. Clevon sits at the table
across from BD who drinks from a cup of water.

CLEVON

Boy, those are some lookers you got.
What are they, quarts? Half gallons?

BD adjusts his glasses. Milk bottles. For sure.

CLEVON

Better learn braille.

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Ted packs his and Callie's things into a duffle bag.

CALLIE

She let me go.

Ted turns to her.

CALLIE

That lady? She put me at a table
with BD and left the door open on
purpose, I know it, Dad.

Ted continues packing.

CALLIE

The older kids, they make him do
things.

Ted cinches the bag closed.

CALLIE

I don't wanna go back there.

TED

You're not.

CALLIE

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED
Neither is he. C'mon...

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

CLEVON
What does "BD" stand for?

BD
Bad. Dude.

Clevon laughs. Callie and Ted enter with duffel bags, jackets, hats.

CLEVON
Where you all going?

TED
Your place.

CLEVON
Am I invited?

Ted turns to BD.

TED
Bad Dude. Is Clevon invited?

BD pauses, then nods 'yes'.

CLEVON
Mighty white of you.

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Callie and BD sleep in Clevon's bed. Peaceful. Secure. Ted turns out the light.

EXT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - FIRE ESCAPE -- NIGHT

It's beautiful out here, though slightly chilly. Cars move along the street below, pedestrians sprinkled along the sidewalks. A protective moon watches over one and all.

Ted steps through a window, sits next to Clevon.

CLEVON
They asleep?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

Yeah... I'm thinking about going back on that Cortez circuit.

Clevon stares off, shakes his head.

TED

What?

CLEVON

Your Road Show days are dots in the rear view. Ain't no money there for no old timers.

TED

Just 'til I can figure this thing out.

CLEVON

Ted, you ain't gonna get no contract. That's not even a dream. And if it were, Velasquez'd tie you up in court, turn it into a nightmare.

TED

I'm not expecting a contract.

CLEVON

Then what are you expecting?

TED

To get by. What choices do I have, Clevon? I run from this guy, he finds me. I need to figure something out, get far enough off his radar I can start over, take care of my kid. She's getting older and they're gonna take her away from me. Then what? MMA's all I know.

There's a slight pause.

CLEVON

Listen, when we started, there wasn't a lot of interest in MMA. You were...noticeable. Today, guys are *young*. *Refined*. *Hungry*. Fights flow into the street. Winners get jumped and regain consciousness without prize money. Or teeth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON (CONT'D)

Hell, some even wake up without shoes or pants! Fighters these days - they can get *hurt*. And folks like me and you? Man, we don't have no health insurance. You gotta be lucky to survive the circuit these days let alone make it to the UFC. And you, my friend - you ain't lucky.

Ted turns to him.

CLEVON

You get sick, run down - you'll get beat up. 'Til you ain't nothing but a shell.

From far away, we see the two of them sitting.

CLEVON

You ever regret it? Not throwing that fight?

TED

I regret the outcome. You got any suggestions?

CLEVON

(rising)

Lemme see if I can find the map.

INT. TED'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

An ELDERLY ASIAN MAN opens the door, steps aside. TWO POLICEMEN step into the apartment. Lourdes follows, sees a small bed, stuffed animals, story books, little girl things.

On the table is a folded card with her name on it. She picks it up, turns it over. On the inside, Ted's written -

JOHN 3:16

Lourdes smiles.

LOURDES

Gentlemen? We're outta here.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT -- DAY

The countryside flies past us. We're stowaways on a train. BD stands by the opening, holds onto an open door. His face says it all - this is cool.

Ted sits next to him, Callie at his side. This is very romantic. And though it may provide a false sense of security, life is good. For now...

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

We intercut Clevon and Ted the night before with our trio's current journey. Clevon spreads an old map on the table.

CLEVON

The Bare Knuckles Circuit's half MMA, half bar fight sideshow, half talent search.

TED

Three halves, huh?

Clevon eyes him, points to a rail yard on the map.

CLEVON

Hop the train outside of town...

EXT. RAILYARD IN SOUTHWEST -- NIGHT

Ted helps Callie and BD off the compartment. RAILYARD GUARDS rush from afar, their flashlights streak the night.

CLEVON (V.O.)

You'll have to swap trains here and here. It's dangerous. They have the bulldogs out and the kids'll slow you down.

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Clevon draws a finger across the states to New Mexico.

CLEVON

Ride the rails. They'll get you into the southwest, my guess'd be someplace around Albuquerque's where you'll join up for your first fight. After that, the circuit trails away from the rails up to Stockton. You'll be hoofing it.

INT. CIRCLE K - BACK AISLE -- NIGHT

In the background, Ted and Callie pay for soup at the counter. In the foreground, BD walks around the store, slips a candy bar in his pocket.

INT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

BD walks down the aisle, reaches the door as Ted opens it. Callie exits, then BD.

CLERK

You gonna pay for that?

TED

Excuse me?

The Clerk points at BD. Both Callie and Ted turn to him, he bows his head, pulls the candy bar from a pocket.

EXT. TRAIL TO HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The Circle K's in the distance. We briefly hear the dialogue before Ted appears followed by BD and Callie.

TED

Towns like this, they take the purchase price outta your hide.

Ted walks out of frame. BD stops in his tracks. Passing him, Callie gently whacks the side of his head.

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Clevon continues referencing the map, circles various points with a pencil.

CLEVON

*The Circuit goes 'round and 'round.
Where you start's where you end up.
You'll fight a lot of the same guys.
A bunch of cherries, some ex-cons,
some with training, others spending
too much time watching FightPass on
their iPads thinking "I can do
this"...*

INT. 1ST HOTEL -- NIGHT

Ted opens the door, enters with BD and Callie.

INT. 1ST HOTEL -- NIGHT

The soup can cooks on a hot plate. Ted wraps a towel around it, pours some into bowls. Ted motions toward the bathroom.

TED

What's he doing in there?

Callie shakes her head.

INT. 1ST HOTEL - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Quietly, BD pulls a new asthma inhaler from his pocket, removes the plastic. Stealing the candy was a diversion.

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Ted holds a sleeping bag. Clevon drops in utensils, bowls, the hot plate.

CLEVON

*This is a vicious lifestyle,
brother. Take as much time between
fights as you can. Once you start
to fray...it's over. For the wounded
or sick, The Circuit's a meat
grinder. And you might wanna
consider checking that Gentleman Jim
attitude of yours at the door.*

EXT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Standing outside, Ted watches the kids sleep. He locks the door, jogs across the grounds.

EXT. RAILROAD BAR -- NIGHT

A train roars past, whistle blowing, steam flowing. We CRANE AROUND, find a bar across the street. A ratty "**CORTEZ MMA - Winners Paid Cash**" sign hangs above the door. Ted enters. The romanticism's gone. Real life begins.

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Ted, BD and Callie stand in the hall, Clevon at the door.

CLEVON

*Most important of all, keep your
head down around the top dog. He
used to be in Velasquez' pocket.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON (CONT'D)

*They ain't battle tested no more,
but like the Italians say, "silence
is a friend who won't betray you".*

Clevon looks at them. At Ted. At the predicament.

CLEVON

*Ted, I work for Velasquez
now....This really doesn't concern
me, you know. It's between you and
him.*

Ted nods.

CLEVON

*Submission's your best bet. Stay
away from standing and trading.
(extends a hand, this
is goodbye)
Bet you wish you'd taken that money
from Bruiser now, huh?*

TED

A little, yeah.

INT. RAILROAD BAR -- NIGHT

Not much more than an empty warehouse.

SPECTATORS surround a makeshift cage. Like they pulled a fence off someone's yard, spray painted it black. Ted stands shirtless in shorts. His opponent, GILROY, 20's, wears worn out boxing shorts. Their hands are barely protected with 4 ounce gloves.

Gilroy's face is bruised. Ted's quick. Throws few punches. Chooses carefully, delicately. Avoids the nose, the mouth.

A bell sounds and Ted lowers his guard, turns. POP! Gilroy lands a shot to the side of Ted's face. Ted staggers, regains his balance. The Ref pushes Gilroy to his corner.

The Crowd ROARS! Gilroy smiles, feels the encouragement. He has TWO FRIENDS in his corner. One laughs at Ted as the other extends a beer to Gilroy.

We PULL BACK from the ring. Standing in the aisle is HERNAN CORTEZ, 40's, fit, suit, the Top Dog. HODGES DE OLID, 20's, the muscle, steps up next to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DE OLID
 (points at Ted)
 What's the spread on this guy?

CORTEZ
 10 to 1.

DE OLID
 You take all the action?

Cortez glances at him, smiles.

DE OLID
 How'd you know, man? Can you learn
 me that?

CORTEZ
 Guy's a sleeper.

DE OLID
 The old guy?

CORTEZ
 Yep. Only two things can defeat
 experience: fatigue. And a champion.

Cortez nods. De Olid turns from the ring, leads us to a table with a white sheet across it. RAE MALINCHE, late 20's, a medic, holds a flashlight into the eyes of a BEAT UP FIGHTER. The FIGHTER'S BUDDY stands next to them. Cortez pauses.

CORTEZ
 He gonna be okay?

RAE
 Well, he won't be driving for
 awhile.

FIGHTER'S BUDDY
 How's his wife gonna get to work?

Rae clicks off her light.

RAE
 I know a divorce lawyer who'd be
 happy to give her a lift.

The Fighter's Buddy helps his friend stumble away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE
Just lemme know!

Cortez smiles at her, walks away.

INT. RAILROAD BAR - CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted sits in his corner alone, glances around the place. Guys hanging out with pals, guys on dates, girls watching boys, weathered people winning and losing. All manner of folks living life, Ted's trying to survive it.

He spits a little blood, sips from a water bottle. Across from him, Gilroy's Friends scream obscenities. Ted zeroes in on Gilroy.

Gilroy spits, scowls. The bell rings again. He takes a quick drag off a smoke, rises from the stool, hops around, whoops it up. His Friends yell, pump arms. Ted puts up his dukes, jockeys around. Gilroy throws one punch, a second, a - Gilroy's pulled out of frame!

Gilroy lands on the canvas.

Everything stops. All movement. All sound. Gilroy's face reverberates with the impact. His friends aren't so much shocked as entertained. The Spectators, though, are amazed. Cheer like Romans.

A subtle grin appears on Cortez's face. He was right about this guy. Gilroy tries to put up guard but it's of little use. Ted has him in side mount, transitions to an Americana, puts extreme pressure on the wrist while preventing Gilroy from rising. Gilroy taps out and the Ref calls the fight.

Gilroy's Friends enter the cage, help Gilroy stand as he cradles his wrist.

INT. RAILROAD BAR - MEDICAL TABLE -- NIGHT

Ted walks past Rae's table.

RAE
Hey...

Ted stops. Rae motions to the chair.

RAE
...Park it.

Ted takes a seat. Rae gives him a once over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

Thanks for taking it easy on the amateurs. Lotta guys go to town on 'em. Turn their mugs into hamburger, break an arm or two.

TED

They're kids.

Rae holds up a small light, checks his eyes.

RAE

No, they're little McGregor's. At least in their shorts.

(clicks off light)

Get some rest.

Ted nods, walks away.

EXT. EMPTY WAREHOUSE -- NIGHT

The MANAGER slides a clipboard to Ted, counts out some bills. Ted signs his name, slips the money into a pocket. He turns around. De Olid extends an envelope.

DE OLID

From the boss.

Ted glances at it, moves for the door.

DE OLID

(sticking envelope in jacket)

I'll tell the boss you said thanks!

De Olid turns into Cortez who snaps his fingers. As De Olid hands over the envelope WE DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Ted enters quietly. There's a lump of kid on the couch. Probably Callie. Ted closes the door. Sees another form sleeping between two aligned chairs. Probably BD. Ted sits on the bed, sighs.

A moment later, the bathroom door opens and Callie exits.

Ted's eyes go from her to the other two bodies. There's one extra. He pulls down the couch covers revealing POSSUM, 13, red hair, freckles.

INT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Ted sits on the tub. Callie stands by the sink.

CALLIE

She doesn't have anywhere to go.

TED

Callie....

EXT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Poss and BD sit on the bed, hear muffled parts of the conversation.

POSSUM

Later...

Poss rises, walks out of frame.

INT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Ted and Callie hear a door close.

INT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Ted opens the bathroom door. BD points toward the front.

EXT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Ted steps outside. Poss stands at the side of the road, thumb in the air. A car stops for her.

Ted takes a breath to yell, turns to Callie.

TED

What's her -

CALLIE AND BD

POSSUM!!

Poss glances back at the hotel. A moment passes and the car peels out. Poss is still standing there.

INT. 1ST HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Poss and Callie sleep in the bed. BD sleeps between the chairs, Ted tries to get comfortable on the couch.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- DAY

A truck ROARS by, revealing Ted, Callie, Possum and BD walking along the road. Ted glances back, sees a vehicle.

TED

Car!

All spin, extend their thumbs, turn slowly with the car as it passes. They continue walking.

BD

(to Possum)

Why aren't you with your parents?

POSSUM

Why ain't you with yours?

BD

They kept trading me.

CALLIE

Excuse me?

POSSUM

Yeah, what?

BD

They kept trading me. Took me awhile to figure it out. First time, all I remember is this police officer finding me in a bus terminal outside El Paso. He tracked my parents down but they pretended not to know me, 'cuz, you know, when it comes to a deal they're pretty honorable.

TED

Car!

Again, all spin, extend thumbs, turn as the car passes.

BD

Another time, they traded me for a Samurai Sword. My pa beat me 'cause I ran away and the guy made 'em give it back. He loved Bruce Lee, my pa. After that, I left. Figured, what the hey, you know? I could trade myself, cut out the middle man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POSSUM
That's messed up.

Callie steps up to Ted, takes his hand. Possum watches them, a little put off, a little envious.

BD
Car!

Spin. Thumbs. Turn. Except for Poss.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

We quickly TRACK past Ted as he throws a kick, spinning a FIGHTER to the side. Blood flies from his mouth.....lands on an OVERLAY of Clevon's map.

INT. 2ND HOTEL - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Ted sits on the closed toilet seat as Possum puts antiseptic on a cut. Callie and BD stand at the door, BD winces.

CALLIE
You're doing it wrong.

No response.

CALLIE
It's gonna fall off.

TED
Callie, she's doing fine.

Callie pushes off the door jam.

INT. RAILCAR -- DAY

The kids jokingly help Ted inside.

EXT. RAILCAR - DOOR WAY -- NIGHT

It's raining as the group huddles to keep warm. A Police Cruiser drives past.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Gilroy corners Ted, but Ted quickly maneuvers around, gets the upper hand. The bell rings and Ted back steps from Gilroy, worried he'll cheap shot him again.

EXT. RAIL YARD -- DAY

The Group follows Ted along the tracks.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

De Olid and Cortez remove the MMA banner.

INT. 3RD HOTEL - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Possum washes dishes in the sink, BD dries and sets them on the toilet. In the background, Callie hangs up wet clothes cleaned in the tub.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

As she works on an INJURED FIGHTER, Rae's distracted, watches Ted and a YOUNG FIGHTER, dodging, pulling punches, grappling. Ted's on bottom but in full guard. He transitions to a Leg Triangle and the Young Fighter submits.

Inattentive to her duties, Rae snips the bandage a little too close. The Injured Fighter winces. Rae turns, apologetically placing gauze on the new wound.

EXT. REST STOP -- NIGHT

Ted serves soup and bread to the kids. He sits down next to Callie, lays his head on the table.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

A LARGE BIKER grabs Ted, throws a few punches before the Referee can separate them. Blood drips onto the canvas.....which again becomes an OVERLAY of the map, detailing their route.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Cortez watches Ted extricate himself from the Biker, take his back. The Biker struggles, pulling at Ted's hands. Both fall to the canvas but Ted holds on. Cortez stares suspiciously.

EXT. TRUCK STOP -- DAY

A Pickup lets Ted, et al, out. Tired and hungry, they walk past us and cross the street toward a Truck Stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

END MONTAGE:

INT. TRUCK STOP -- DAY

Ted orders from a fast food counter. The Kids sit in a booth. At the next table, BULL KELLER, 40's, barrel chest, trucker, glances up from his newspaper, checks out the kids.

BD

I'm hungry.

POSSUM

Me, too.

Callie's hungry as well but pride keeps her silent.

BD

How'd he do last night?

POSSUM

Duh. We're hitchhiking.

Bull watches Ted approach the table with a tray of food. He places a burger, fries and drink in front of each child.

POSSUM

I don't eat meat, remember?

CALLIE

No problem.

She flips open her burger and Possum's, trades the patty for the veggies, returns them. Callie shifts around to face BD. He shoves the whole burger in his mouth.

Ted glances at his watch: 4 PM. He's worried.

BULL

I'm headed East if that'll help.

Ted looks up.

BULL

My rig's outside. I was fixing to leave but I can hold on 'til y'all finish up.

Ted eyes him with concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BULL

Saw you fight on my way out. You obviously ain't no criminal. Only an honest injun'd risk his hide like that for his kids. 'Cause come hell or high water, a shot in the face is, after all, a shot in the face.

Ted remains silent.

BULL

Ain't no slight. I've been there. That's why I'm offering my rig.

INT. BULL'S RIG -- DAY

Poss, BD and Callie sleep in the back. Ted rides shotgun.

BULL

Hell, if not for the circuit it'd be just titty bars and truck stops. There's more to life than a two pack habit and a motel tan.

Ted sees a photo dangling from the rear view. Two kids.

BULL

They used to drive with me after I busted up with the Ex. I hear they're doing good now, going to school and all. They deserved better than some free wheelin' trucker making ends meet with a few bare knuckle matches.

Ted glances at the outside rear view mirror. Sees the land pass by.

TED

How far away are we?

BULL

I'll get you there. Maybe just under the wire, but I'll get you there.

TED

I gotta find a hotel. Tuck in the kids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BULL

I were you, I'd take advantage of this here good Samaritan and get me some shut eye. 'Cause Lord knows in about five hours somebody's gonna be ready, willing and more than able to shut 'em for ya'.

Ted smiles, rests his head on the window, closes his eyes.

BULL

You're either a shark or you're meat, Ted. Shark or meat.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- EVENING

Bull's rig rolls away from us.

INT. DOWNTOWN GYM - BOXING RING -- NIGHT

Velasquez approaches the ring. Clevon works Salvador.

VELASQUEZ

(waving him over)
Clevon.

Clevon motions for Salvador to relax, walks over to the ropes, crouches down.

VELASQUEZ

I got a recruit from Chichen Itza. You're gonna be training him.

CLEVON

When's his flight get in?

Velasquez looks at Clevon like he's an imbecile.

VELASQUEZ

His *car* should be here in a couple days. He works for me.

CLEVON

I understand.

VELASQUEZ

Not the other way around.

CLEVON

Mmm-hmmm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VELASQUEZ

Just like you.

CLEVON

Mind me asking what his name is?

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD -- NIGHT

A beat up Chevy's on the side of the road. On *fire*.

DIEGO (O.S.)

Navarez!

JESUS NAVAREZ, 21, the fighter, pulls a bag from the back seat, rushes toward his friend, DIEGO CARRERA, 21.

EXT. ROAD -- NIGHT

Carrying back packs, Navarez and Diego trudge along. In the deep background - car fire.

DIEGO

Can't you ask him to wire a bus ticket?

NAVAREZ

This is El Diablo, my friend. We need to find another way.

Sirens blare out, swirling lights, emergency vehicles. Diego and Navarez smirk, start running.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

The MMA banner's draped over another bar entrance. Navarez and Diego stand beneath it. Diego walks away.

NAVAREZ

C'mon, it's easy money. They'll see me as a scrawny Mexican kid. Before you know it, we'll have the prize money and be back on the road.

DIEGO

You're not supposed to fight until you get to Los Angeles.

NAVAREZ

Pendejo, I won't get to Los Angeles unless I fight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He winks and opens the door. A moment later, Bull's truck slows to a stop. Ted hops out of the cab, rushes across the street. Bull calls out from the cab.

BULL
Shark or meat?!?

TED
Shark!

Bull honks his horn, pulls out.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ted approaches the bar, waves over a BARTENDER.

TED
Excuse me, where's the sign in?

BARTENDER
Your fighter's gotta be present.

TED
No problem. Where do I take him?

The Bartender points across the room. Ted turns, sees a table set up behind the makeshift cage. Fights have begun.

TED
Thanks.

The Bartender shakes his head, watches him leave.

INT. BAR - SIGN IN TABLE -- NIGHT

BERNAL DIAZ, 20's, glasses, techie, sits behind a kiosk. A PATRON, 40's, swipes his ATM card on an electronic machine then follows Diaz' directions.

DIAZ
Put in your pin number, then the
match and boxer. All bets are final.
There's a five dollar charge to
place a bet and a 5% fee on all
winnings

As the Patron punches in his numbers, Ted reaches the table.

TED
Am I too late to fight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATRON

Yeah. By a decade.

Diaz hands the Patron a receipt, slides Ted the clipboard.

DIAZ

We're short one fighter. You can hope someone else shows up, or, if you wanna, you can double dip.

TED

Double dip? What's double dip?

A bell sounds.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Navarez steps from his corner. Ted stands in his, glances to the other side where FIGHTER #3, 20's, steps from his corner. It's a three man fight, no waiting - plenty of mayhem.

The Fighters feel each other out. Dance a bit, move a bit, toss a jab here, a jab there. Navarez turns to Fighter #3, motions with his head toward Ted. Get rid of the old guy, deal with each other. Fighter #3 smiles and winks. They move toward Ted.

INT. BAR - RAE'S TABLE -- NIGHT

Rae sees Ted, slowly drifts over by the stands.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted's taken aback. One on each side, he ducks and covers two sets of flying hands. Very unorthodox. They're trying to pin him against the cage.

INT. BAR - RAE'S TABLE -- NIGHT

Rae closes her eyes, returns to her table

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted clears the two of them, winds up and lands a hit HARD! into the face of Fighter #3, knocks him down, then turns to Navarez, locks him up, goes at his ribs.

Fighter #3 starts to rise and Ted steps away from Navarez. He dodges a couple blows, sends Fighter #3 back to the ground, locks up Navarez, uses his other hand to work the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ribs. A second later, he takes a hit in the back of the head.

Ted pauses then quickly moves out of the way. Fighter #3's momentum pulls him past Ted. Navarez catches him. Immediately, Ted throws a fist into Fighter #3. His eyes blurry, he steps away.

Ted pauses, catches his breath. Fighter #3 turns to Navarez, swings blindly. The Alliance over, Navarez has no choice but to finish him with a combination. The Ref helps Fighter #3 from the cage, passes him off to a SECURITY GUARD who escorts him to Rae.

INT. BAR - RAE'S TABLE -- NIGHT

Fighter #3 sits heavily, takes Rae by surprise. It's not Ted. Impressed, she cranes her neck to see him.

RAE

A toda madre!

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Meanwhile, Ted's caught his breath. Navarez aggressively comes at him. Ted swings around with a leg kick, sends the overconfident Navarez to the mat. He's out cold.

Diego jumps from his stool, rushes into the cage, leans over Navarez. Slowly, Navarez's eyes blink open. He sits up, touches his chin.

NAVAREZ

How we looking?

DIEGO

Like pedestrians.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ted steps up to the counter. The Bartender approaches.

BARTENDER

What can I get you?

TED

Milk of Magnesia, some bran.

The Bartender smiles, nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

Just a water, please.

BARTENDER

You got it.

The Bartender steps away. Diego helps Navarez to walk. As they pass, Navarez sees Ted, reaches for him. Diego has a grip on Navarez, pulls him out the door.

EXT. FACTORY -- MORNING

Ted passes a factory, jogs out of frame. A moment later, he runs back in, stands by a fence. Workers file into the building, some having car pooled, others walking onto the property from the road.

Ted stares, grabs the fence, gazes longingly - a job.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

A MAID rolls her cart along the hallway. In the yard below, Ted stands with Callie, BD, Poss. He's tying long strips of white fabric around BD and Poss's waists.

POSSUM

What about Callie?

TED

Beginners are White Belts. She's at least a Brown Belt by now.

(steps back)

I don't have much to teach you kids and eventually we're gonna need to figure out the whole school thing. What I can teach you is self defense.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted's taking a beating. He's not on. Trying unsuccessfully to duck punches. The bell rings. He steps aside.

OPPONENT

Time to go back to the Senior's Center, Gramps. Be good to your ticker.

The Opponent points to his chest, laughs. Ted stares at him, angry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMASH CUT:

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted's on a side mount with a Kimura, slowly applying pressure onto the Opponent's arm. The Opponent grimaces. The Ref stands over him, hands on knees.

OPPONENT

Uncle! Uncle!

REF

You gotta tap out, son. That's how seniors do things nowadays.

He taps out.

REF

Good boy.

Ted releases and rolls off. The Ref helps Ted hep.

REF

Us Old Timers gotta stick together.

Ted winks at him.

INT. MEDICAL TABLE -- NIGHT

Ted sits in a chair as Rae watches him struggle to remove his glove.

RAE

We may have to cut it.

TED

Only pair I got.

He pulls it off. She unwraps the tape, holds his hand, rubs the knuckles, the bones. He can't look her in the eye. Really wants to but with a kid, two strays and a brutal income, what's the point, you know?

She senses he's shy, kinda smitten by it, by him. Suddenly, Ted winces in pain, surprises her back to the here and now.

RAE

Sorry.

She releases his hand. He gently shakes it out. Rae breaks an ice-pack. Works the chemicals together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

You need something for the pain?
Before you say yes you should know I
gotta send you to an urgent care.

Rae wraps the ice-pack on Ted's hand, studies him.

TED

I'll be fine.

RAE

You're good to go. Ice pack's on me.
Don't come back before it's healed.

Ted stands, slips on his jacket.

RAE

I'm serious.

Ted nods.

TED

Thank you.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

De Olid watches Rae and Ted from afar. Saw the whole thing.
Cortez sits next to him, his back to the scene.

CORTEZ

She's a big girl. Let her be.

DE OLID

You kidding me? I'm worried about
him.

Cortez laughs, brings a smile to De Olid.

DE OLID

I'm serious. She's a ball buster.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The Full Moon stares down as Ted turns up his collar. He's
lost in thought and has a long walk home.

INT. REGIONAL MMA - CAGE - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

*Ted's fight from the opening. The bell rings. Ted returns to
his corner. Clevon slides a stool beneath him.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON

*You're doing great, kid. How you
feel? Like an Aztec, huh?*

*Ted nods. Clevon turns to the stands. Velasquez points at
his watch. The bell rings. Ted moves past us.*

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

*Ted quietly closes the door. Lays on the pull out couch with
Callie and Lizzy. Marina awakens.*

MARINA

Que tal?

TED

TKO. 3rd.

Marina purrs.

TED

How're my ladies?

MARINA

Fine now daddy's home.

We PUSH IN on Ted as he curls up next to them.

FADE OUT:

INT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

*Ted sets milk, juice, cereal, sandwiches and soup on the
counter. As the CASHIER rings the sale, BANDIT, 15, street
kid, enters.*

CASHIER

Hey, hey, hey. YOU! Get out. Now!

Bandit exits the store.

CASHIER

(to Ted)

*Street rats. That's all they are.
You know, in Brazil, the police just
exterminate them. It's legal.*

EXT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

*Ted exits the store. Bandit leans against the wall,
cigarette in mouth, matchbook in hand.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He repetitively strikes a match against the book. Failing, he rips out another match, repeats the process

Ted tosses him a sandwich, Bandit tosses it back. Ted knows the kid's too proud

TED

I been there. Actually, I'm still there. Here.

Ted extends the sandwich. Bandit takes it, has a hard time making eye contact.

BANDIT

Thanks.

Ted tosses him a milk, walks away.

EXT. ROAD TO HOTEL -- NIGHT

Ted walks along the road. Every so often he stops, turns around. There's no wind but some bushes move behind him. He continues walking.

EXT. ROAD BY 4TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

A large sign with a flashing arrow sits on the edge of the road. Illuminated words spell "**CHRISTIAN OWNED AND OPERATED**".

In the distance, Ted unlocks the door to his room and enters. A moment later, Bandit steps into frame.

EXT/INT. 4TH HOTEL -- MORNING

Bandit sleeps by the door. Looking out the curtains, the kids whisper.

POSSUM

We should invite him in.

CALLIE

Do you know him?

POSSUM

Yeah, from New Orleans. His name's Bandit. He's cool.

(softly)

His father used to boost cars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BD
Really?!?

POSSUM
Yeah. He rocks.

BD
Callie, ask your dad.

CALLIE
You sure he's not violent?

POSSUM
(condescending)
Please...

INT. 4TH HOTEL -- DAY

Possum, Callie, BD, Bandit and Ted eat breakfast. Ted rises, takes his dishes into the bathroom, rinses them.

BANDIT
You all related?

Possum and BD point to Callie.

CALLIE
Just me.

POSSUM
But we're close enough.

BD
(to Bandit re: toast)
You gonna eat that?

BANDIT
Trade it for your juice?

Bandit slides the juice over. BD grabs the toast.

INT. 4TH HOTEL - BATHROOM -- DAY

Ted rinses off his dish, overhears the whispers.

POSSUM (O.S.)
Why'd you leave New Orleans?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BANDIT (O.S.)

I was tired of my dad kicking my
ass. Figured, what the hey, you
know? I could get my ass kicked
anywhere, why do it at home?

INT. 4TH HOTEL -- DAY

CALLIE

(proudly)
My dad's an MMA fighter.

POSSUM

BD's his trainer.

BD straightens up, smiles. The kids laugh.

4TH HOTEL BATHROOM -- DAY

Smiling, Ted turns off the water.

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Ted and Bandit jog. Ted's in good shape, has endurance.
Bandit sucks wind trying to keep up, slows down.

BANDIT

It's in here.

He slips into some bushes. Ted catches his breath.

TED

When I was your age, I ran five
miles a day.

Bandit emerges with a duffel bag of clothes, cigarette
dangling from his mouth.

BANDIT

I smoke five *packs* a day.

Ted removes the cigarette.

TED

Not anymore. You're in training now.
My guess is you've got power and
intelligence, but you need skill.

BANDIT

What if I just wanna kick some ass?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Bandit smiles. Ted takes the duffel bag.

TED

Let's go.

They start running again.

TED

Geez, whattaya got in here?

BANDIT

Cigarettes.

TED

What?!?!

BANDIT

I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

INT. 4TH HOTEL -- DAY

Through the window, we see BD, Callie, Possum and Bandit training outside with Ted. All have their White Belts including Bandit. Callie wears her makeshift Brown Belt.

TED

BD. Tell Bandit here the three instances we engage in physical confrontation.

BD holds up a finger for each answer.

BD

Protect yourself. Protect your loved ones. Test your skills against another in organized competition.

In the distance we hear a car trying to start, metal on metal - someone trying to fix a vehicle.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - GROUNDS -- DAY

Bandit's really throwing his punches hard. Ted motions for him to lower his arms.

TED

Power uses a great deal of energy. Before you know it, you're taking shots and eating canvas.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED (CONT'D)

Skill and precision allow you to conserve strength, outlast your opponent. Skill and precision win over power.

BANDIT

Unless you take one in the jaw.

TED

Unless you take one in the jaw.
(smiling)
There is that.

More noise. GABRIEL SANTOS, 50's, the Motel Owner, leans in a Jeep Cherokee. He climbs off, tries to start it.

TED

C'mon, let me teach you something about engines.

Ted and Bandit approach. Gabriel gets out of the jeep.

TED

What's the problem?

GABRIEL

Won't turn over. Everything seems fine, it just....won't turn over.

TED

I used to work for someone who had one of these.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL GROUNDS - PICNIC TABLE -- DAY

Callie, Poss and BD watch Ted lean over the engine.

POSSUM

It's not gonna start.

CALLIE

Yeah? Five bucks.

They slap hands.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL GROUNDS -- DAY

Ted calls to Gabriel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

Try it now.

Gabriel gets in, turns the key. It starts.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL GROUNDS - PICNIC TABLE -- DAY

Callie smiles.

POSSUM

I'm gonna have to owe ya'.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL GROUNDS -- DAY

Gabriel steps from the Jeep, reaches into his wallet.

TED

I wasn't doing it for money.

BANDIT

(softly)

Duuude...take it.

GABRIEL

The kid's right. You saved me a trip to the garage and a haggle with a mechanic. Take the fin.

Ted notices a barbecue grill near the main house. Gabriel sees what he's looking at, glances at all the kids, smiles.

GABRIEL

Okay, but you're cooking.

They shake hands.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - BARBECUE -- AFTERNOON

Gray coals heat up hot dogs, hamburgers and chicken. Ted's cooking. Possum and Callie throw a Frisbee. Ted sees Bandit sitting alone at the table.

TED

Bandit, c'mere.

Bandit rises. Ted hands him the spatula.

TED

Watch these for me, will you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BANDIT

How do I know when they're done?

TED

You'll know.

BANDIT

What if I don't?

TED

They'll burn.

Bandit's taken aback. Behind them, a Patrol Car pulls into the driveway.

POSSUM

Bandit, we got Five-0.

Bandit looks to Ted for instruction.

BANDIT

We should bolt.

TED

Everyone relax.

(to Bandit)

Keep an eye on those.

CALLIE

Dad?

Ted winks at her. Turning, his reassuring manner dissipates. He's worried, heads toward the patrol car.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - GROUNDS -- AFTERNOON

PEDRO SANTOS, 30's, local Sheriff out of uniform, climbs from the driver's side helps his WIFE, 30's, from the passenger's side. She's pregnant. Gabriel exits the office and greets them.

PEDRO

That kid. Cooking.

GABRIEL

One of the guests took him in.

Nothing funny. Giving him guidance.

It's a good thing.

Pedro nods.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - BARBECUE -- AFTERNOON

The Kids watch as Ted reaches the car.

POSSUM
Your dad's shaking hands with The
Man.

BD
What's burning?

Bandit furiously flips the burgers.

CALLIE
Why not just pour some kerosene on
the cruiser.

POSSUM
Yeah. Or give BD some everclear and
a couple'a Roman Candles.

BANDIT
I'm afraid to turn around, okay?

Callie grabs a plate off the table.

POSSUM
And you think torchin' the place'll
be incognito?

BANDIT
I didn't ask to cook, alright?

BD continues watching Ted. Pedro's Wife and GABRIEL'S WIFE,
40's, each carrying aluminum covered bowls, approach the
picnic table. The Men, however, move toward the Office.

BD
They're going inside.

Callie and Possum turn.

POSSUM
This could suck.

CALLIE
In a big way, Otto.

POSSUM
C'mon...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Possum leads Callie, puts on a big smile, happy demeanor.

POSSUM

Howdy! I'm Possum. This is Callie.
 (takes bowl from
 Pedro's Wife)
 Why don't I give you a hand with
 this. You're carrying enough
 already.

Poss heads for the table. Callie's in awe, damn Poss is good. Following her lead, Callie takes the plates from Gabriel's Wife, beams a smile.

INT. 4TH HOTEL - LOBBY -- AFTERNOON

Ted stands opposite Gabriel and Pedro.

GABRIEL

Son, just tell us the truth.

Ted looks them deep in the eyes. Decides whether to trust them or not.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - BARBECUE -- AFTERNOON

Sitting on a bench, the Wives watch as Ted's Brood sets the picnic table.

BD

I was born three months early.

PEDRO'S WIFE

Yes?

BD

That's why I'm so small. I still
 kick ass, though. I'm a Bad Dude.

POSSUM

(re: baby)
 You got a crime fighter in there or
 a little heartbreaker?

INT. 4TH HOTEL - LOBBY -- AFTERNOON

Pedro rubs his eyes, puts his glasses back on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED

I'm sure he believes he's doing the right thing. He invested in my development. He's not as wise as he is smart, gets in his own way.

PEDRO

That's a generous point of view considering what he's done to you the past decade.

Ted's silent. Pedro glances from Ted to Gabriel. Gabriel waits for a decision. It arrives as a gentle smile and series of thoughtful nods.

PEDRO

Well, I'm not wearing my badge today. And someone promised me a barbecue.

TED

I'll go check on the bonfire.

He shakes Pedro's hand.

TED

Thank you.

Gabriel hands him a business card.

GABRIEL

Stick this in your wallet. In case you get in a jam.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - BARBECUE -- AFTERNOON

Pedro scoops some potato salad as the kids surround his Wife, their hands on her tummy. Suddenly, they all jump away in unison.

BANDIT

That was wicked cool!

BD

Make him do it again!

GABRIEL

Ted, come take a walk with me.

They walk toward the tree line. An old Stationwagon's parked on grass.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIEL

I've had this here eye-sore mucking up the place for too long. And since I've squared you up with the law, in these parts at least, I'd like you to get her running and drive her off my property.

Looking through the front window, dirt and leaves obscure our view. Gabriel clears the windshield.

GABRIEL

I'll help with parts, you do the labor. We'll have my brother process the papers. What do you say? Will you do that for me?

TED

I'm not good at accepting gifts.

GABRIEL

This ain't for you, son. I wanna get into Heaven someday. This here could put me over the top.

TED

I need a job, Gabriel. Something. Even if it's part time.

INT. VELASQUEZ GYM - RING -- DAY

We're in the nice gym again. Navarez, slightly bruised but little worse for wear, spars with Salvador. Clevon watches from the corner. Next to him, Diego eats a sandwich.

In the background, Velasquez gives a tour to a group of EXECUTIVES. They stop and he points to the ring. A moment later, they shake hands and the Executives leave.

VELASQUEZ

Clevon!

Clevon hops from the ring, confers with Velasquez.

VELASQUEZ

(pointing at Navarez)
What do you think?

CLEVON

Doesn't matter what I think. What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VELASQUEZ

Stop being a drama queen and tell me what you think.

Clevon faces around, watches Navarez bob, weave, jab.

CLEVON

He's the most natural boxer I've seen in ten years. Power, skill, intelligence. His ground game is exceptional, his kicks are fast, cardio off the chart. He has what it takes to go all the way, provided he doesn't decide he knows better and gets himself knocked out.

Diego chokes on his sandwich. They turn toward him, he waves them off.

VELASQUEZ

(to Clevon)

Really?!?

Clevon nods. Velasquez takes a moment, leans in close.

VELASQUEZ

He as good as our friend?

Clevon's silent.

VELASQUEZ

It was just business, Clevon.

CLEVON

You've had that guy in a rear naked choke for ten years.

VELASQUEZ

Maybe he should've tapped out.

CLEVON

Guy like Ted never taps out.

Velasquez pats Clevon on the shoulder, heads to his office.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

TWO MEN sit at a table. Dirty dishes, including a very crusted, messy soup bowl's placed in a bin by a BUSBOY, 18.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIRST MAN

You really like that? French Onion
Soup?

SECOND MAN

Nah, I just order it to piss off the
dishwasher.

They laugh. The Busboy carries the bin past a line of
tables into the back, sets them down on a washing counter.
Ted turns around, starts sorting them, rinsing them, sighs.

TED

Whaddadick.

INT. RESTAURANT - FRONT -- NIGHT

Ted and the RESTAURANT MANAGER walk down a hall, stop near
the front.

RESTAURANT OWNER

Listen, Ted. I gotta level with you.
The Santos came to me, asked for a
favor, you walked through the door.
I never thought you'd last the
night, let alone two weeks. But you
have, and you've been great.
Problem's I can't keep you on.

TED

Can I finish out the night?

RESTAURANT OWNER

Sure.

Ted turns to leave.

RESTAURANT OWNER

Hey, Ted.

Ted looks back.

RESTAURANT OWNER

I am sorry.

Ted nods, walks back into the kitchen.

INT. RESTAURANT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Ted stretches his hand, forms a fist. Wonders if it's
healed, if it'll hold up, if he can *fight*.

INT. 4TH HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

A sheet divides the room. Ted steps around it, finds the bed. He removes his jacket. Hears a growling. Followed by a Shhh. Growling. Shhhh. Ted sighs.

INT. 4TH HOTEL - BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Ted stares at Callie. He's stern. She's sad. Stern. Sad. Rubs his forehead. Looks at her again. She's giving him the doe eyes. He exhales, caves in.

TED

Does he have a name?

Callie beams.

CALLIE

I'll give you a hint - he wears a fluffy hat before he fights.

TED

You named a **dog** after -

She smiles and nods excitedly.

INT. 4TH HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

As Ted sleeps soundly, the Kids move about the room, quietly setting the breakfast table, preparing the meal, putting away blankets, pillows, sheets. They're a unit, a family, a team. With a sheepdog.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL ROOM -- DAY

The Kids sit at the picnic table as Pedro's Wife tutors them. Again, they're very happy here. The dog sniffs around the yard, looking for a place to relieve himself.

PEDRO'S WIFE

He knew he couldn't trust the Cuban Governor, so he set his ships on -

The dog carefully begins to squat.

ALL THE KIDS

Khabib!

Khabib darts into the woods. The hotel room door opens and Ted exits. The room's clean, and bags are packed. She watches him cross the grass toward the office.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Callie's demeanor immediately changes, knows they're leaving.

PEDRO'S WIFE

So he set his ships on fire and pushed on through the jungle, hoping to impress King Charles I...

One by one, the kids rise from the table, head for the room. Still seated, Callie turns from the table toward us.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - GROUNDS -- DAY

Through the car window, we see Callie next to Khabib. Reflected on the glass, Pedro, his wife and Gabriel stand outside the Hotel. The car pulls out.

INT. VELASQUEZ' GYM -- AFTERNOON

Clevon trains Navare as the Manager appears below.

MANAGER

Velasquez wants to see him.

Clevon lowers his arms. Defeated. Another great talent about to shit the bed.

INT. VELASQUEZ' OFFICE -- DAY

Velasquez lays on a massage table. ANOTHER MASSEUSE works on his back. Navarez knocks on the door, opens it.

VELASQUEZ

Navarez, come in. Hey, shut the door, guys. I'm not putting on a show.

Clevon shuts the door, leans against it. The Manager finds his place by the desk. Jaime sits in Velasquez' chair, dropping coins, dollar bills and bus tokens into a large mason jar.

VELASQUEZ

Navarez, at some point in every fighter's career, they're asked for a favor by the people investing time and money into their careers.

Navarez glances at Clevon. Clevon looks down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VELASQUEZ

Think of it as a tribute you're
paying to the Gods ruling your
destiny.

EXT. VELASQUEZ' OFFICE -- DAY

Diego stands by the door. Navarez and Clevon exit.

DIEGO

What's going down?

CLEVON

Your buddy.

Clevon continues walking.

NAVAREZ

Velasquez wants me to take a dive.

DIEGO

Is he still breathing?

Navarez pauses.

NAVAREZ

I told him yes.

He resumes walking.

DIEGO

What?!?

Diego pursues him.

DIEGO

I didn't come here to help you throw
fights. I came here to help you win
them.

NAVAREZ

I will. Just not this one.

DIEGO

Hey.

No response.

DIEGO

Hey!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEGO (CONT'D)
(grabbing Navarez'
shoulder)

In Mexico, our relatives are University Professors and Civic Leaders. In this country, we're seen as laborers and servants. Even their President says horrible things about us. You have an opportunity to set it straight, be a champion. Don't let Velasquez steal that from us.

NAVAREZ
It's only one match.

DIEGO
No, pendejo. It's every match. It's every Latin fighter who follows you. Every Latin boy or girl who looks up and admires you and decides to change their life through Martial Arts, hard work, determination. 'Cause you'll be dirty. And then every Latin who loved you will be dirty, too.

Diego waits for a reply but there isn't one. He steps back, shakes his head, walks away.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL MARKET -- AFTERNOON

An open air atmosphere for fruits, vegetables, what have you. Numerous lunch counters, stands, displays.

Navarez walks through the market, sees his contemporaries behind counters, sweeping floors, replacing stock, serving others, the majority of which treat them with impatience, condescension and intellectual ignorance.

Navarez notices a Hispanic CASHIER, 20's, doing her best to help a WESTWOOD WOMAN, 30's, tan, big sunglasses, jogging outfit, miniature-whatever dog in her arm.

Navarez can't make out what she's saying, but by her mannerisms, it's not pleasant. And the Cashier's taking the brunt.

WESTWOOD WOMAN
Forget it! You understand *that*?!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She stomps past Navarez. Upset, the Cashier wipes the counter, tries to compose herself. Navarez stares at her, smiles. It's disarming. She gets it, he's just being nice. She blinks, bears out a grin. No words exchange. Navarez bows his head, exits.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

The Station Wagon passes a series of Motels. All have the "No Vacancy" light on.

EXT. GAS STATION -- NIGHT

The Station Wagon's parked on the far side of the lot. Ted stands at the kiosk window speaking with the CASHIER. He points across the street.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

A little more seedy. STRIPPERS work the poles, some GOOD OLE BOYS shoot pool. The middle's been cleared out for the cage and low stands.

TWO FIGHTERS go at it, really brawl with each other. Great endurance, viciousness. The match comes to an end as one's knocked out.

In the crowd sits Cortez. De Olid stands below on the aisle. A PATRON steps past carrying a couple beers, hands one to his FRIEND.

PATRON

The old school guy fighting?

FRIEND

For five bucks a beer he better.

PATRON

Too bad he fights fair.

The Patron puts a hand up to his head, makes an "L".

FRIEND

No shit, huh?.

They laugh. Cortez's thinking. He descends the stands.

INT. BAR - OTHER SIDE OF CAGE -- NIGHT

Cortez side steps to an open seating area. In the background, Ted enters the cage.

INT. MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

The Ref starts the fight. Ted steps to the center. He's fighting Gilroy again. Gilroy's Two Friends stand outside the fence.

GILROY

Gonna take it easy on me tonight?

He puts his mouthguard in, swings and Misses. Gilroy takes another swing. Ted ducks, throws a couple jabs into the ribs. Gilroy winces. Ted realizes the guy's still injured.

He steps back, removes his mouthguard.

TED

You should let those heal.

(to Ref)

This guy's injured.

Gilroy swings again.

GILROY

Fuck you!

TED

They could crack. You don't want that. Trust me.

Gilroy tries to kick him, nails the Ref by accident. Pissed off, The Ref punches Gilroy in the ribs.

GILROY

Ahhhhhhh!

REF

(to both fighters)

Let's go!

Ted pops in his mouthguard, ducks a punch, takes Gilroy to the canvas.

INT. STANDS -- NIGHT

The Patron turns to his Friend, shouts over the crowd.

PATRON #2

You see that!?!?

PATRON #3

I told ya'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PATRON #2

Imagine what he was like in his
prime.

We PUSH IN on Cortez.

INT. MEDICAL TABLE -- NIGHT

Gilroy's pals help him limp to Rae.

RAE

You need some tape?

GILROY

Yeah, Babe. Around my balls.

RAE

Not here?

She jabs his ribs. He cowers, winces, swears.

RAE

Wow, those are tender.

She jabs him again.

RAE

It's a waste to put 'em on your
balls, but it's your call, pal.

Rae sees Ted pull on his jacket and walk out the door. She
walks from the table.

GILROY

Hey, where ya' going?!?

RAE

Shut up.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

Rae peers outside as Ted crosses the street.

EXT. GAS STATION -- NIGHT

Ted waves to the CASHIER, steps up to the car. The Kids are
sleeping. Except for Bandit who's outside walking Khabib.
Ted approaches, pets Khabib. They speak softly.

TED

You guys okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BANDIT

Yeah, we're fine. They really miss Pedro's Wife. She was nice.

TED

(re: Khabib)

I better get back before he demands a title fight.

Ted jogs away.

BANDIT

Lemme know if you need some backup.

Ted waves. Bandit takes a beat, throws a couple jabs.

EXT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ted nears the entrance. Rae waves for him to surrender his hand, eyes the Stationwagon.

RAE

A little past their bed time.

She inspects his hand. Maybe a little too gently, gives him a nod, releases it.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Ted and Rae enter. Suddenly, Cortez steps up to them.

CORTEZ

You ever fight pro?

Ted's taken aback.

TED

A long time ago. Didn't turn out the way I dreamed.

CORTEZ

Too bad we didn't cross paths then. I would've set you up with some people I do business with in Los Angeles.

RAE

He'd be better off working the pole.

Cortez cocks his head at her. She shrugs, looks away. Cortez turns his attention back to Ted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORTEZ

I have a proposition. A private party's holding their own match. Intimate setting, low profile. I trust your ability and restraint.

Ted glances at Rae then back to Cortez.

CORTEZ

I need a single competitor to fight another opponent. We're talking minimal injury and sportsmanly effort on your part. As for the other side - doubtful. It'll take a couple days for me to pay you. Rae here'll accompany you.

RAE

You know I don't like those things.

CORTEZ

You wanna practice medicine or work the pole? Your choice.

Over her shoulder in the background, a Stripper spins upside down. Rae smiles at Cortez. She'll practice medicine.

TED

Do I get to win?

CORTEZ

Of course.
(to Rae)
Get him there early.

Cortez exits.

RAE

Great. I get to spend the evening with a room full of wagging tongues discussing how they'd "do me" given the opportunity.

Ted takes a breath, searches for words.

RAE

Say it's a compliment. I dare you.

Ted holds up his hands. Rae storms off, walks past Gilroy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GILROY
What about my tape?

RAE
Use your balls.

INT. VELASQUEZ GYM - LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Stealing money from a Boxer's locker, Jaime's startled when he hears Diego and Clevon enter on the opposite side.

CLEVON
What is it?

DIEGO
He's spooked. He's never been
knocked out before and on the way
out here, this local guy sucked his
blood.

CLEVON
Older guy?

DIEGO
Yeah. Wicked skills.

Jaime replaces the wallet in the Boxer's pants, stealthily closes the locker and sits on the bench.

DIEGO
We needed some quick cash. Don't
tell Velasquez. Navarez doesn't
want him to know. But it's in his
head, man.

Clevon's lost in thought.

DIEGO
Hey, are you listening to me?

CLEVON
He still has it.
(to Diego)
The guy's name is Ted DeLeon.
That's the guy who knocked out your
buddy. Please tell me he made some
money that night.

Clevon smiles, exits the locker room. Diego follows him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIEGO
It's not a good thing...

Jaime remains behind.

EXT/INT. 5TH HOTEL -- AFTERNOON

Rae's Explorer pulls up and stops. The door opens and we see a rockin' set of high heels hit the pavement, click their way toward his door.

She knocks. Bandit answers. Callie and Poss turn. Their jaws drop. BD rises from the table. His leg starts shaking. Poss swings a hand into his chest to stop him.

Khabib trots forward, starts panting. Bandit kneels down, holds him. We TILT UP on Rae. Absolutely drop dead gorgeous.

Ted exits the bathroom in his jeans and t-shirt. He's taken by how beautiful she really is. There's an indefinite silence as everyone stands still.

The kids notice the awkwardness between Ted and Rae. Realizing there's something going on, they smirk, try to control the giddiness.

RAE
C'mon...

Ted throws on his jean jacket, follows her out. As he closes the door, the Kids immediately begin howling.

INT. RAE'S EXPLORER -- AFTERNOON

Rae drives. Ted sits in the passenger seat.

RAE
Not a word.

Ted grins.

RAE
No smirking either. Guys.....

EXT. EL DORADO CASINO -- NIGHT

A wicked nice place, ornate gold, Mayan art. Money, class, gambling. All rolled into one.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM -- NIGHT

TWO VALETS open a set of carved double doors. Rae and Ted enter. High ceiling, chandelier, crafted molding. Tables, with full sets of china and silver and crystal, surround an MMA cage. A full audience watches a fight.

RAE

This way.

She leads Ted through the maze of tables.

INT. EL DORADO - SIDE ROOM -- NIGHT

A spread of fruit, meats, cooler full of bottled water, clean, bright white towels, weight set. Ted warms up, throwing wrap hands into De Olid's punch mitts. Sitting on the table, Rae checks him out. Really, checks him out.

A knock on the door startles her. Cortez enters carrying a small box. Behind him, the cage fight continues.

CORTEZ

How is he?

De Olid removes a punch mitt, shakes out his hand.

DE OLID

Hits hard, man.

Cortez sets his bag on the table and opens it. He removes some MMA shorts and new gloves.

CORTEZ

You're representing me.

Ted nods. Cortez opens the door, waits for Rae.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM -- NIGHT

Rae steps outside, stands before a room of well groomed MEN IN BUSINESS SUITS accepting drinks from COCKTAIL WAITRESSES. A wave of awareness streaks through them and they turn, check out Rae. She shivers.

CORTEZ

Mingle.

RAE

How 'bout I just grab a round card and stroll through the ring?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORTEZ

Go.

Rae approaches a GROUP OF FOUR MEN holding their Suit Jackets. They range in age from 40's to 50's. All in shape. All clean cut.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Wearing Cortez's shorts, Ted stands across the cage from his opponent, PALHARES, 30's, black shorts.

Cortez and Rae stand deep in the crowd, her white medical jacket cropped at waist level.

The REF calls a start to the action. Palhares is a lefty. Ted switches gears, begins fighting as a lefty.

The audience is taken aback. Even Cortez's surprised at Ted's ability. Rae turns to him.

RAE

Is he fighting as a lefty now?

CORTEZ

Pretty impressive. Most Lefties can't fight other Lefties.

RAE

Not enough around to spar, I guess. You should've told him how dirty this asshole is.

CORTEZ

He'll find out.

INT. 5TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

BD and Callie play Go Fish at a small table. Laying on the bed, Poss and Bandit watch tv, listlessly run through channels. Khabib sleeps on the carpet.

BANDIT

You guys as bored as me?

Poss smiles nefariously. At the table, BD and Callie exchange concerned expressions, then smile. All rise and run out the door.

EXT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted takes a hit to the face, a hit to the ribs, he looks up in time to see Palhares push two thumbs into Ted's eyes. The Ref steps in, separates them.

REF

You do that again I'm deducting a point.

Palhares smirks.

REF

(to Ted)

You okay?

Ted nods. The Ref re-starts the action.

INT. STATION WAGON -- NIGHT

Poss and Bandit are laughing. Bandit drives, shotgun. Riding in the back are a smiling BD and Callie holding Khabib.

BANDIT

Hang on!

He speeds up, hits a rise, catches some air, bounces a bit.

BANDIT

WHOO-HOO!

Khabib looks scared.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted's hunkered over on a stool, De Olid holds a bag of ice on his chest. Rae peers through the fence.

RAE

Hey...

Ted looks up.

RAE

They should've told you. This guy's known for that kinda stuff.

De Olid pulls Ted's stool, exits the cage as Ted stands. The Ref starts the next round. They exchange a few blows, occasionally connect. Ted's working slowly, his guard up as is Palhares'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We move around them in a circle, watching, waiting. A blow here, a blow there, ducking, dodging, jockeying for position. Uneventful, yet tense.

And then Ted sees it: the twitch and the throw. Palhares has a tell. Ted watches, waits - the twitch, the throw. Ted dodges. He's 100% focused now. Waiting, waiting....

...The twitch, the throw - Ted connects with a cross, knocks him down. He backs off, breathes, as Palhares rises - swollen cheekbone. The fight resumes. Ted stands, waits - twitch, throw - Ted connects - Palhares lands on the ground. Rises. It's worse.

INT. STATION WAGON -- NIGHT

BD and Khabib sleep on Callie's lap. She stares blankly.

EXT. STATION WAGON -- NIGHT

Poss stands on the road, thumb out, trying to hitch a ride. She calls back over her shoulder.

POSSUM
How's it looking?

Bandit's got the hood up, staring at a smoking engine.

BANDIT
Uh.....

Poss steps over.

POSSUM
You call yourself a car thief?!?

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Palhares has Ted against the cage. He's all over him.

PALHARES
Yeah, Jose. Now, you know who El Jefe is.

Ted gets some room, jumps up and goes for a flying arm triangle, both he and Palhares hit the canvas. Ted pulls on his own shin, tightens his grip. The Ref moves around them, attempts to see if Palhares taps. As the Ref switches sides and loses sight, Palhares quickly taps.

Ted releases and Palhares goes for the ground and pound. Ted covers and Palhares takes his back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bell rings but Palhares lets a few more shots fly. The Ref rushes in, breaks them up.

They rise abruptly and continue fighting. The Ref, De Olid and OTHERS split them up. It's become very heated with Palhares side squaring off against Ted and De Olid. Palhares spits in Ted's face.

The sides part. Ted sits down as De Olid tends to him. Cortez steps up to the fence.

CORTEZ

I can tell you're pissed.

Ted ignores him.

CORTEZ

And I appreciate whatever restraint you have left. But this guy - and all his people - are assholes. Know what I mean? I need you to win this, Ted. I have a lot riding on it and I'm counting on you. You have it in you, old man?

TED

Yeah, I think I do.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

The Ref brings them back. Palhares is at it again. But things are different. Ted's showing his anger, his intensity, gradually stepping up the pace, hitting harder, faster, more variety. Like a strobe light, Palhares' face changes back and forth to that of Velasquez.

Rae watches with concern. In the audience, Cortez sits up.

CORTEZ

Jesus Christ.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted cocks his fist back throws it into Palhares, knocks him backwards. We ZOOM INTO Ted's fist, past the glove, the wrap, the skin - see his bone hair line splinter.

Ted recoils, jumps on Palhares, and with his other hand, lands a series of hammer fists. Palhares guards but Ted keeps at it, sees Velasquez on the ground beneath him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Ref tries to break them apart, has to physically restrain Ted. De Olid rushes into the cage, helps out as the cage fills with people.

Cortez searches for Rae. Makes eye contact. Points.

CORTEZ
Get Ted out of here.

RAE
Where are you going?

Cortez rolls his fore fingers and thumb together - money.

The Ref helps Palhares into a sitting position. Palhares face is hamburger, the Ref's shirt a bloody black and white.

Rae enters the cage. Ted sees the shock on her face, realizes he lost control. He continues to breathe deeply. Sweat pours from his face.

DE OLID
Holy shit that was amazing! We
better get out of here!

RAE
You think?

EXT. TRUCK STOP -- NIGHT

Ted sits in the open hatch of Rae's Explorer as she fixes him up. Cortez and De Olid park their car, leave the lights on. They approach Ted. Cortez looks him up and down, extends a hand.

CORTEZ
Nice fight.

RAE
He can't -

Ted shakes Cortez hand. Cortez stops the motion, stares into Ted's eyes, squeezes. Ted tries to mask the pain but it ain't easy.

TED
Okay.

He pulls back. He's hurt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORTEZ

You know I only make a living when
my fighters are healthy.

TED

Good thing I'm not one of your
fighters.

CORTEZ

(to Rae)

He doesn't come back until he's
healthy.

Cortez and De Olid head for their car.

TED

Cortez?

Cortez opens his door, faces around.

TED

How'd you know I would win?

Cortez smiles, gets in the car and De Olid drives off.

TED

Can I trust him?

Rae laughs a little.

RAE

Really?

INT. RAE'S EXPEDITION -- NIGHT

Rae drives Ted home. His hands are bandaged with ice.

RAE

You wanna tell me what happened to
you in there?

TED

You guys wanted to win some money
off me. I'm guessing you did.

RAE

That's not what I mean and you know
it.

TED

Someone from my past.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

Not your ex?

TED

My ex never spat in my face.

Up ahead, sure enough, Bandit flags down the Explorer. Behind him, the others stand by the stalled Stationwagon. Ted sighs.

TED

Will you pullover?

RAE

I don't do that anymore. I got screwed helping a stranger. Practically had the ambulance drive her to Larry H Parker. Wait - is that your car?

EXT. HIGHWAY -- NIGHT

Bandit sees the SUV pull over, doesn't know it's Ted.

BANDIT

Who's the man? Huh? Huh?

Possum and Bandit bolt for the Explorer. Walking, albeit briskly, Callie keeps a protective arm around BD. He wipes sleep from his eyes. Khabib remains in the Station Wagon.

As Possum and Bandit approach the Explorer, Ted opens the door and steps out. They skid to a stop.

TED

What are you doing out here!?!

Bandit and Poss watch Ted approach and pass them. Poss's eyes are pinned to Ted. Watching her, Bandit sees disappointment as Ted beelines to Callie.

TED

I can't lose you, too.

Callie releases BD, moves into Ted, he hugs her, holds her tightly. Hurt, Poss glances at Bandit, bolts across traffic. Bandit follows and they disappear into the woods.

TED

(to Callie & BD)
Stay here!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Ted dashes after them, Rae jumps from the truck, approaches Callie and BD. They watch Ted disappear.

RAE

Hi. I'm Rae.

INT. WOODS -- NIGHT

Ted moves through the woods. Pitch black. Traffic keeps him from hearing trampled twigs or leaves. He stares into the darkness.

INT. WOODS - POSS AND BANDIT -- NIGHT

Crouched down, Bandit holds Possum. Above them, some twenty feet away, Ted calls into the woods.

TED

Bandit?!?! Possum?!?!

Seeing nothing, he retreats.

POSSUM

Quite the search and rescue,
wouldn't you say?

BANDIT

C'mon.

They rise and move past us.

INT. 5TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

Callie and BD sleep. Khabib stands at the window watching as Ted walks Rae to her car.

EXT. 5TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

Ted opens the car door.

RAE

Those kids? They're not your
responsibility.

TED

Thanks for everything. Get home
safely.

She slides in. He closes it. She starts the engine. As Ted walks away, though, she turns it off, gets out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

Hey!

She approaches him.

RAE

Was that a blow off? 'Cause it sure
as shit sounded like a blow off.

TED

Go home, Rae.

RAE

You stop and talk to me. Did you
father them?

TED

What?

RAE

You heard me.

TED

No, I didn't father them.

RAE

Then they're not your
responsibility.

Ted glances back at the room, sees Callie and BD duck
beneath the window. He lowers his voice.

TED

Saying "they're not your
responsibility" sounds pretty very
accurate. But we both know it's not
accurate. I can't afford to take
care my own kid let alone three
strays and a dog. But they have no
one else and no where else to go.
So instead of the people with enough
money to help them it's up to the
guy with no money to help them. And
that guy's me. Goodnight, Rae.
Please get home safely.

Ted walks away.

RAE

I'm gonna check on you tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED
That's okay -

RAE
I wasn't asking.

INT. 5TH HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Callie and BD crawl back to the bed as Rae drives away and Ted approaches the room.

CALLIE
I gotta make some money.

BD
You're not gonna sell me are you?

CALLIE
Maybe.

His eyes go wide. Ted enters the room and they pretend to be asleep. Ted places a bowl down for Khabib. As Khabib burrows into the food, Ted sits on the ground, pets him. BD wheezes, coughs.

TED
Where's your inhaler?

BD
I'm out.

TED
You need a new one?

BD
I'll be okay.

EXT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

Ted's reflection appears in the window. He pulls out his wallet. Two dollars. He looks inside, sees TWO GOOD OLE BOYS chatting up the FEMALE CASHIER, enters the store.

INT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

The Good Ole Boys continue flirting with the Cashier, glance at Ted, snicker at his bruises, cuts, then turn back to the girl. Ted walks down the aisles, glances at the food, then back at the cashier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He begins stealing, slips cans of soup in his pockets. Turns the corner, picks up a piece of candy and makes his way to the counter. The conversation stops as he pays for the candy, heads for the door. The Good Ole Boys follow him.

EXT. CIRCLE K -- NIGHT

As Ted exits, one of the Good Ole Boys spins him around. The Other opens his jacket, pulls out the soup, holds it up to the Girl and throws a fist into Ted's face.

The Two men proceed to pummel Ted. He doesn't fight back. When it's over, they stand above him, pick up the cans and take them back inside.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

BD and Callie cry. BD holds a new Asthma Inhaler. They watch Ted delicately remove his jacket, lay on the couch. He's in even worse shape. Callie and BD remove his shoes.

BD drags the blanket up as Callie looks at his hand, the cuts on his face, the swelling on his eyes. Her dad's in bad shape.

BD

You're our responsibility now.

Callie kisses Ted's forehead.

INT. TED'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Marina sits with Callie and Lizzy. Ted kisses her cheek, moves for the door.

MARINA

You'll be back to take us to the Hospital?

TED

Yes, mi amor.

He exits.

INT. VELASQUEZ' GYM - STAIRWELL - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Ted enters and moves up the stairs. On their way down, OTHER FIGHTERS watch in awe and silence.

INT. VELASQUEZ' GYM - LOCKERS - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Silence as Fighters stoically ignore Ted as he cleans out his locker. Clevon rushes in.

CLEVON

What are you punch drunk? Velasquez dropped a dime on you.

Ted picks up his bag, moves toward the door. Passing Clevon, he slips a small, black & white picture of his family in Clevon's pocket.

TED

THAT's what's important, Clevon.

CLEVON

There's a Commission Rep in his office with a failed urine test. They're gonna DQ you.

TED

He can't do that, I'm clean.

As Ted moves through the door, a fist knocks him backwards, leaves a cut above the eye. The Manager steps up, shaking out his hand. Velasquez pushes past, followed by a COMMISSION REPRESENTATIVE, 40's, heavy set, and a POLICEMAN.

VELASQUEZ

(to Locker Room)

He stepped into his fist.

Velasquez turns to the Commission Representative.

VELASQUEZ

He's always stepping into things he shouldn't.

Velasquez nods at The Manager. The Manager throws another fist into Ted's face.

VELASQUEZ

See? He stepped into it again.

CLEVON

Velasquez, his daughter -

VELASQUEZ

I know! I own this place, remember?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VELASQUEZ (CONT'D)

I got three fights next week and everyone's walking around like my kid's sick.

Velasquez turns to Ted.

VELASQUEZ

There's such a thing as ethics, Ted. You shouldn't have forgotten who you worked for. But then, maybe that's why your life's so fucked up. I have a career. I have money. I....

(slight laugh)

...Have a family.

TED

I have honor.

Velasquez steps up to Ted.

VELASQUEZ

Yeah? Well, maybe now you'll know who El Jefe is. You cost me a lot of money.

(spits in Ted's face)

He's all yours.

The Policeman and Commission Representative exit with Ted.

VELASQUEZ

You're quite the stand up guy, Clevon.

Velasquez exits, laughs. Clevon glances at the photo.

END FLASHBACK.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLEVON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN -- NIGHT

PULL BACK from the photo, a magnet keeps it on the refrigerator, we PUSH THROUGH the apartment, find Clevon sitting out on the fire escape, alone.

INT. 5TH HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

Ted, bandaged hand, sweat suit, slips quietly out the door with Khabib. Through the window, we see him start jogging toward the road. In a flash, Callie's out of bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALLIE
Get dressed.

BD groggily sits up.

CALLIE
Get dressed right now or I'm trading
you for a sword.

BD jumps to the floor.

BD
I'm up! I am up!

EXT. HIGHWAY - STATION WAGON -- DAY

Jogging with Khabib, Ted approaches the Station Wagon. Cars roar up and down the road.

EXT. JUNKYARD -- DAY

BD stands next to a weathered student desk and a pair of mismatched chairs. He looks around suspiciously.

BD
You sure this is cool?

CALLIE
Totally cool. Think we can clean
these out enough?

BD nods affirmatively. Callie stands on a dump hill holding a couple soiled glass pitchers.

EXT. LOCAL HOUSE -- DAY

Again appearing very suspicious, BD stands under a neighbor's tree, holds an open paper bag. A lemon falls into it from above, ripping the bottom. BD looks up to Callie in the tree, mouths "sorry".

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER -- DAY

Callie and BD sit behind a lemonade stand. The pitchers have been cleaned but we're still a little reticent about drinking from them knowing where they came from. A sign reads "GLUTEN FREE LEMONADE".

BD
What's Gluten Free?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CALLIE

My dad says it means folks can
charge more.

BD

Hollah!

They bump fists.

EXT. HIGHWAY - STATION WAGON -- DAY

Ted has the hood up, leans into the engine. He removes a hose, fiddles with it, finds a section leaking from a small crack.

INT. STATION WAGON -- DAY

Ted roots around the car, comes up empty. He sits in the passenger side, defeated, then glances at his bandage. He carefully removes it, wincing slightly.

EXT. STATION WAGON -- DAY

The Engine hums to life, the gauzed hose strong.

EXT. GAS STATION -- DAY

A MAN walks from his car to the cashier. A moment later, Bandit steps from behind the gas pump, hops in the car and steals it. He skids to a stop at the street to pick up Possum and they're gone.

POSSUM

So much for the hot wiring, eh?

EXT. ROAD -- DAY

Driving home with Khabib, Ted sees a group of MEN pile into the back of a truck. A FOREMAN type stops them, then gets into the truck and pulls out. The remaining Men step back to the curb, await another chance for work.

EXT. PICKUP -- DAY

We PULL BACK from Ted. He sits in the back amongst other transient workers as it pulls out.

EXT. WORK SITE -- DAY

The pick up truck stops by a fence. The Men climb out, file past.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A construction site, the FOREMAN hands out shovels, points to a pile of debris. We PULL AWAY, see the expanse, the sheer number of workers.

INT. DOWNTOWN GYM - BOXING RING -- DAY

Diego tapes Navarez' gloves. Clevon opens the cage, lets Navarez through. Clevon leans on the fence watching Navarez train with Diego.

This is where we see just how fast, young and good Navarez' skills are. We're dancing around the guy as he ducks, jabs, punches, kicks, spins. He's in his element - talented, happy, a star.

Velasquez steps up next to Clevon.

VELASQUEZ

I'm thinking about taking a vacation. Wanna go with?

Clevon turns to him.

VELASQUEZ

Your boy here's gonna use those new skills of his against your buddy. I know where Ted is.

(smiles)

It's curb kicking time again, amigo.

Velasquez pushes off, exits.

CLEVON

You gonna let Navarez win?

VELASQUEZ

Of course.

(leans in, quiet)

For a little while.

He winks, walks away.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL MARKET -- DAY

Diego walks Navarez through the marketplace, passes the earlier kiosk. The Cashier's at the front helping another CUSTOMER.

DIEGO

What Velasquez is doing for himself affects everyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Navarez glances around, sees his fellow country men and women working hard, working proud. The Customer finishes his transaction.

EXT. WORK SITE -- DAY

Ted pushes a wheelbarrow full of rubble, dumps it into a bin, returns to fill it up again, pushes it to the other area and dumps it, sees The Foreman staring. The Foreman waves him over.

FOREMAN

You a fighter? You look like a fighter.

Ted doesn't answer.

FOREMAN

Where you fight, man?

INT. TRUCK STOP - FAST FOOD COUNTER -- DAY

Bull receives his change from a CLERK.

BULL

Where's the pisser?

CLERK

(handing back change)
Down the hall.

Bull leaves. A moment later, the Clerk sets a Carry Out Bag on the counter. Bandit steps into frame, looks around, smoothly steals it.

EXT. TRUCK STOP -- DAY

Bandit exits with the food, finds Possum waiting. From far away, we see them walk around the corner.

EXT. DUMPSTER BEHIND TRUCK STOP -- DAY

We hear voices as we move between the dumpsters. Sitting on the ground, Bandit and Possum mow through the food. They look up as Bull steps into frame.

He goes right at Bandit. Picks him up.

POSSUM

No, Bull, he's cool!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Too late. Bull throws a punch right at us.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER -- DAY

The pitcher's running low.

CALLIE
Hold down the fort.

EXT. LOCAL HOUSE -- DAY

Callie picks more lemons by herself. She jumps down from the tree and turns around. A WOMAN, 40's, kitchen apron, stands above her. She extends a lemon. Callie takes it, gathers the others and walks away.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER -- DAY

Approaching the parking lot, Callie sees BD struggle with THREE LOCAL KIDS. She drops the bag and breaks into a sprint for the table.

The Local Kids push BD and flip it over. Callie braces herself and plows into them, fists flying.

Ted's taught her well. Too well. Like Krav Maga or Combat Sambo well. She connects with two of them. The Third stands back, holding the money box as BD does his best to attack. Laughing, he pushes BD down. Callie goes at him, spins a leg kick.

EXT. SHOPPING CENTER - POLICE CAR -- DAY

Through the window of a passing Police Car, we see the Third boy flip around, money flies from his hands as blood flies from his mouth. The Second Boy grabs Callie and she takes out his knee.

Lights and Sirens as the Police Car rolls up. BD and one of the local kids run. The POLICEMEN grab hold of Callie.

EXT. 5TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

Ted and Khabib return to the room, open the door. BD's crying in the dark.

BD
I ran away...

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Rae enters, finds Cortez at the bar.

CORTEZ
Thanks for showing up.

RAE
Blow me.

She sits next to him. Cortez motions to the Bartender.

CORTEZ
Scotch on the rocks for the lady.

RAE
(waving off Bartender)
Any alcohol hits my system someone's
bound to lose a testicle.
(to Cortez)
Today's my day off, Cortez. What's
so important?

CORTEZ
Ted.

RAE
I'm listening.

CORTEZ
He was the fighter Velasquez ruined
for standing up to him. I knew I
recognized him. He was gonna be
great. I mean - *great*.

RAE
I don't understand.

CORTEZ
Velasquez set Ted up to take a dive
against another fighter. It was a
sweetheart deal with Charlie Uno.
It's been a decade, but Velasquez
found another ringer. This kid -
Navarez - he's a prodigy.

RAE
Certainly explains why Velasquez
ain't on Ted's buddy list. Is he
gonna use the kid to get another
shot at Charlie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORTEZ

Yes. And once he's in with Charlie, he'll cut his ties. He'll drop him like the day laborers he's always seen his fighters as.

RAE

Why do we care? I mean - what can we possibly do about it?

Cortez chuckles.

CORTEZ

Well, this Navarez kid, he thought he'd make some quick cash on the way to Los Angeles. But Ted knocked him out. Velasquez got wind of it, wants to bring him back, make Ted bleed.

Rae takes it in, pauses for a moment.

RAE

You can pick up those fighters, treat 'em right, put Velasquez out of business.

(a beat)

Think Ted'll go for it?

CORTEZ

He's exceptionally motivated. Five-0 just nabbed his daughter.

Rae steams. The Bartender walks by.

RAE

Hey! I changed my mind.

The Bartender makes her drink, slides it to her, she downs it in one gulp, sets it on the bar.

RAE

(to Bartender)

Thank you.

Rae turns to Cortez, smiles, grabs his crotch.

CORTEZ

It wasn't me!!! Jesus!!!

He pulls her hand free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

Where's Ted now? You sell him out,
too?

Cortez points across the room. Ted and BD sit with De Olid.

RAE

I'm sooo sorry. I - I didn't see
him when I came in.
(slight laugh)
You do a lot of shady shit I thought
you -

CORTEZ

I'm not Velasquez, Rae.

RAE

I know. I'm - I'm sorry.

CORTEZ

Ted called me. He knows some cop
who told him Callie's at Child
Services. Callie's staying quiet.
The cops don't know he's with us. I
asked he hold tight and not do
anything stupid. She's also being
charged with aggravated assault for
knocking out a 17 year old boy's
teeth and dislocating another's knee
cap.

RAE

My kinda gal.

She pushes off the bar, approaches Ted's table.

RAE

BD?

BD

Yes, ma'am?

RAE

Whaddaya say I give you and your boy
here a ride home? Is that cool?

BD nods.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Ted pretends to box with Callie. He has bruises from the match. A butterfly bandage secures a cut over an eye. Marina sits across from them, burrowed deep in the couch.

Doctor Taskey's hand pushes open the double doors, walks into the room, finds Marina and Ted in the corner. It's clear from his face the news is not good. Marina begins to weep. Callie keeps punching Ted, laughing, smiling, oblivious.

EXT. BUS STOP - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Carrying Callie, Ted exits a bus. He turns, sees a catatonic Marina at the top of the stairwell. She steps back, and the bus doors close. Holding Callie, Ted stands helplessly as the bus, and Marina, disappear.

EXT. 5TH HOTEL -- NIGHT

Ted and Rae sit next to each other on a swing set.

TED

It wasn't gonna be alright. I'd broken my promise to her.

RAE

Where is she now?

TED

Back in Chiapas. Fell in love again. Started a new family.

RAE

You don't seem bitter.

TED

The way she left, it's easier to look back knowing she's happy now.

RAE

'Bout that same time, I was doing my residency. I'm driving home, see this accident, woman, two kids. I'm not allowed to do shit, supposed to wait for the EMT's, I'm required to have direct supervision for anything medical but they're running out of time.

Ted listens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE

Single mom. Two kids. She needed money, saw a way to get it. So when it was over - she sued me. Despite knowing I did the right thing - she took me down. You know, the thing about it that really sucks? She blew the money. I feel like - you ruin someone like that, you honor the deceit by not blowing the money.

TED

Still doesn't make it okay.

RAE

Amazingly, my parents were never upset it. They saw the accident as destiny. My education saved those lives. That's what mattered. Not what came afterward.

TED

They sound like good people.

RAE

But the law, it didn't really do all it could to help me. No one did. 'Cause it wasn't in their self interest. Which is why assholes like Velasquez keep getting away with it. Everyone's either profiting from his bullshit or afraid to stand up to him.

TED

I'm fighting, Rae. You don't have to work me.

RAE

I'm not working you. I'm standing by you.

Suddenly, a Mack Truck's headlights cross the lawn as it pulls into the driveway and parks. Bull hops from the rig.

BULL

You gotta do a better job teaching this kid to fight.

Poss and Bandit step down from the passenger side. Bandit has a black eye.

INT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

The group's finished dinner. A WAITRESS brings a check and Bull grabs it.

TED
Lemme give you some money.

BULL
Feel that warm breeze, Ted?

Bull slips some cash in the folio.

BULL
Hell ain't froze over yet.

RAE
Though it's about to.

Bull hands BD the folio.

BULL
Take this to nice lady, young fella.

BD slides from the booth.

BULL
(to Poss & Bandit)
Make sure he gets it there.

Poss and Bandit follow BD.

BULL
How're the paws?

RAE
They've been better.

TED
They've been worse.

Bull nods.

RAE
Can you get your pals to show up,
lay some bets?

BULL
It'd be easier if you were gonna
have strippers there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE
It always is.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DREAM SEQUENCE -- DAY

The room's in disarray. There's a knock on the door, Callie opens it. We PUSH IN as a smiling Velasquez steps through.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- MORNING

Ted wakes up frightened.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM -- MORNING

Ted splashes water on his face. He's still not well. He wipes off his face, opens the door. Poss, Bandit and Khabib stand behind BD. BD holds Ted's shorts and MMA gloves, raises his inhaler, takes a puff, exhales and smiles.

EXT. EL DORADO CASINO -- NIGHT

Scores of Mack trucks line the road.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM -- NIGHT

Cortez stands at the bar with Diaz. A line of TRUCKERS place bets at an official El Dorado betting booth.

DIAZ
That's a lot of road.

CORTEZ
Velasquez is matching the bets, yes?

DIAZ
This doesn't work the way you're planning it'll ruin us.

CORTEZ
It's in God's hands now.

Bull enters from Ted's room, approaches Cortez.

CORTEZ
How is he?

BULL
He's doing great.

CORTEZ
Really?!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BULL

Hell, no, he's terrified. Nothing the first punch won't snap him out of.

Through the crowd, Bull sees Velasquez sitting next to Rae.

BULL

Is that El Diablo?

CORTEZ

In the flesh.

BULL

Mind if I Stockton Slap him?

CORTEZ

Maybe after the fight.

Cortez pats his shoulder, walks toward Velasquez.

EXT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM -- DAY

Velasquez sits at a high table with Rae. Cortez reaches them, takes a seat.

VELASQUEZ

Ted's on a string, right?

CORTEZ

He'll do exactly what I tell him.

VELASQUEZ

That's what *I* thought. Prick cost me plenty.

RAE

Cost Ted a lot more, don't you think?

Velasquez laughs. Cortez offers a grin.

VELASQUEZ

I always liked you, Rae. After the fight, what do you say we call some of your friends, hit the town?

RAE

I don't think your wife would like my friends.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAE (CONT'D)

(to Cortez)

Excuse me.

She walks away.

VELASQUEZ

You tapping that? You should be. Way I see things, if it's your business you're entitled to some employee benefits. Do this for me, I'll take care of you. Slip you something on the side.

CORTEZ

Like all those other times?

VELASQUEZ

Excuse me?

CORTEZ

The Fighters I'd scout for you, send to you. You said you'd give me a piece of them. But there was never enough to go around. Even after you built your mansion, bought your Mercedes. I've been hearing your bullshit for years. And I've never seen you do anything for anyone but yourself.

Velasquez smiles.

VELASQUEZ

You'll never be more than a regional promoter.

CORTEZ

You've never cared about Hispanic fighting. It was all just propaganda to get Velasquez ahead in the world.

VELASQUEZ

It takes money to make money. Sometimes, it takes a little sacrifice, too.

CORTEZ

You nearly ruined a great man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CORTEZ (CONT'D)

(points at Ted)

That man's a champion. He's the best Latin fighter I've ever seen. And you destroyed his career.

VELASQUEZ

They don't call me El Diablo for nothing.

CORTEZ

Fuck you.

Cortez walks away.

VELASQUEZ

I'm hoping you don't think you're smarter than me.

The crowd comes to life as the fighters step into the cage. Ted wears his MMA clothes, Navarez sports Velasquez's colors. Clevon and Diego tend to Navarez, Bull and De Olid to Ted.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - NAVAREZ'S CORNER -- NIGHT

Velasquez approaches, calls to Clevon.

VELASQUEZ

How's my boy?

CLEVON

He's good.

Velasquez looks across the ring, yells at Ted.

VELASQUEZ

Ganar Wei!

Velasquez winks at Clevon, walks away.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - TED'S CORNER -- NIGHT

Bull watches Velasquez sit back down, turns to Ted.

BULL

Shark or meat?

TED

Shark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BULL
Shark or meat?!?

TED
Shark!

BULL
That's my boy. That's my boy.

He slips in Ted's mouthpiece.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

The Ref motions for Ted and Navarez to start fighting. This is the beginning of what we've been waiting for. The two move about the ring. Throw here, throw there.

A flurry ensues, they lock up near the fence, stare, get their first up close look - Ted, older, beat up, experienced, Navarez, younger, faster. They see the past and the future. What could have been, what may be.

Suddenly, Ted moves Navarez sideways and runs toward the fence, jumping and taking two steps along the cage as he flips himself and Navarez over, achieves an arm bar.

BULL
He's got him!

A ripple raises the crowd to their feet. The Ref stares down at a struggling Navarez as Ted applies pressure. Ted has him.

RAE
It's over! He won! Holy shit it's over!

Navarez escapes, stands. The entire room settles. Now the fight *really* begins. They may respect one another, both may be good men, in a different time may have been friends. In the here and now - in the cage - they're combatants.

The fight. Both men throw blows, duck, go for broke.

Ted tries a series of combinations, but when he takes a step back, Navarez sees an opening and lets one loose. It corkscrews through, finds Ted's cheek. Ted shakes it off. Navarez is taken aback.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - TED'S CORNER -- NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ted's got a shiner. Bull checks it out.

BULL

You caught one. How's the paw?

Ted doesn't answer.

BULL

Two more rounds, pal. You got this.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - NAVAREZ'S CORNER -- NIGHT

Clevon and Diego tend to Navarez.

NAVAREZ

You were right. He's tough.

CLEVON

He won't let himself lose.

DIEGO

Any suggestions? You used to train him, right?

Both Navarez look to Clevon for an answer.

DIEGO

You've been telling me how tight you are with Ted. But every time Velasquez swings by, you treat him with respect.

CLEVON

The bad blood's between him and Ted. It ain't got nothing to do with me.

DIEGO

The bad blood's between you and your paycheck. 'Cause every time you take Velasquez' money, you spit on your friend.

CLEVON

He signs you and your buddy's checks, too.

DIEGO

Not after tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON
 (to Navarez)
 Are you taking a dive or what?

The bell rings.

CLEVON
 You do this, you'll never fight
 again.

NAVAREZ
 Watch me.

Diego slides Navarez' mouthpiece in, grabs the stool.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Again, both fighters step forward, throw the occasional blow. Navarez lands a combination, catches Ted off balance, uses a series of blows to push him across the floor, against the cage.

The lock up. Struggle. Both using their footwork as offense, defense. Ted's able to reverse Navarez, gets him to the side, makes a move -

They land on the canvas. Navarez on the bottom, full guard, Ted on top, trying to find an angle, an opening. They exchange blows, but it's still even.

Ted gets his leg over, tries to move to the side. He's on the wrong side though, and as they lock up again, has to use his left hand to punch. He throws one, two, three -

WE PUSH INTO HIS GLOVE again, see the fracture splinter further through the bone.

Shock registers in Ted's eyes and Navarez seizes the moment, Ted favors his left hand, Navarez starts to reverse, escapes. They're back on their feet. They're standing and trading, slowly paced. Ted's fighting righty now, keeping his left hand back.

Couple punches - Navarez throws a kick to Ted's right leg, gets him off balanced - jabs with his right hand. Does it again - leg kick, jab with his right. Ted knows he's in trouble.

Navarez goes again - leg kick, jab - then RUSHES toward Ted - Ted swings the left uppercut, stings Navarez who steps back - Ted goes for the right - misses and Navarez locks him up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Both take a moment to regain their senses. The Ref breaks them up, re-starts the fight. Navarez jabs at Ted, gets him to back up then shoots for a takedown. Ted holds him, continues against the fence. He spreads his legs, tries to maintain balance but can only grip with one hand.

Navarez takes him down. Ted goes into full guard, holds Navarez in place. Navarez tries to move out of it, gets some room, throws an elbow.

Blood bleeds from Ted's eyebrow. Navarez gets over Ted's left leg, locks up Ted's right hand, has side control. He starts hitting Ted again, Ted tries to hold his wrist with his bad hand. It's of little use.

Ted's taking a beating. He has no choice but to give up his back. Navarez gets a hook in, then another, has him in a rear naked choke. Puts all his strength in it. Ted works the arm, gets some daylight, manages to break free.

Navarez transitions around, grabs Ted's neck in a D'arce Choke. Again Ted struggles. The Ref has his eyes on him, seeing if he's gonna lose consciousness or tap out.

The bell rings.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - NAVAREZ'S CORNER -- NIGHT

Navarez takes a seat. Diego and Clevon work on him.

DIEGO

Ah, man, saved by the bell.

Velasquez appears. He's very concerned.

VELASQUEZ

Uh, everything okay?

CLEVON

Yeah, we good.

VELASQUEZ

I'm talking to him. That last round almost ended different than I expected.

No answer.

VELASQUEZ

Clevon?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLEVON

Yes, sir?

VELASQUEZ

Keep your eyes on me.

Velasquez points to his wrist.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - TED'S CORNER -- NIGHT

De Olid and Bull clean up Ted. Rae and Cortez stand by the fence.

TED

I broke it. I broke my hand.

Bull starts to take the glove off.

RAE

Leave it on! You take that off
it'll swell up like a cantaloupe.

BULL

He broke his hand, the fight's done.

RAE

(though gritted teeth)
Put it back on.

TED

I'm fighting!!!

Bull stops peeling the tape, re-wraps it on.

TED

I'm getting my kid back.

Ted glances through the fence as Velasquez finds his seat.

TED

He's not taking her away from me
again.

Velasquez points his hand like a gun, pretends to fire.

RAE

What a dick.

Bull puts Ted's mouthguard in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TED
Shark or meat?

BULL
You're a fucking shark, buddy!

Bull and De Olid step from the cage.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted and Navarez stand on their respective sides. Sincerely, Navarez motions toward Ted's left hand. Ted shrugs. The Ref starts the round. Both competitors focus. They're gentlemen - and now they're fighters.

They step forward. As they stand and trade blows, Navarez over extends and Ted rushes in for a take down. He gets Navarez down, takes his back. Like the opening, everything SLOWS WAY DOWN.

We hear Cat Power's THE GREATEST begin. *"Once I wanted to be the greatest"...*

EXT. EARLY GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

A Younger Ted and Clevon work the ring. Ted punching, ducking, punching, ducking....

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Winded, Ted works his arms attempting a Rear Naked Choke.

EXT. EARLY FIGHT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

...Ted rises into frame, in the cage with ANOTHER FIGHTER, takes him down, puts him into a D'arce Choke forcing a tap out. He rises in victory.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted has one hook in, attempts another, strains.

EXT. RESTAURANT - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Bruised, Ted sits as Marina, in waitress uniform, serves them. They bow their heads, say grace, give the sign of the cross. He kisses her and they start eating.

*EXT. VELASQUEZ' GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY*

Pushing a double baby carriage, Ted and Marina enter the gym. Clevon steps over, introduces them to Velasquez.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

His hand impaired, Ted can't hold the choke, loses his grip. Suddenly, Navarez reverses, takes Ted's back.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - AUDIENCE -- NIGHT

Alarmed, Velasquez stands, catches Clevon's attention, angrily points at his wrist. Clevon merely points at Navarez as if to say "good luck".

Velasquez panics, pushes through the crowd to the better table, screams at Diaz. Velasquez checks out the room - crowd of truckers, crowd of Ted's fellow migrant workers, crowd of rough looking locals. He's ruined.

He turns to the hallway - sees Cortez speaking in a room with Charlie Uno and CHARLIE'S ASSOCIATES.

Relieved, Velasquez smiles - until Charlie looks over. Charlie motions to one of his Associates who steps into frame, closes the door. Velasquez' smile vanishes.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Navarez' movements are seamless. He's younger, stronger. He has Ted in a Rear Naked Choke, pulls his arms tight.

*EXT. TED'S YARD - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY*

Ted stands in front of 4 year old Callie teaching her martial arts.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Bull and Rae watch from the other side of the fence. They cheer him on.

*EXT. FACTORY - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY*

Ted's tapped on the shoulder by a SUPERVISOR.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Diego's excited to see his friend winning, Clevon empathetic as his loses.

EXT. RUN DOWN APARTMENT - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

Wearing a backpack, Ted looks around his apartment, lifts a young Callie up and exits. The MANAGER closes the door.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted works at Navarez' hands. It's of little use. And he will not tap out.

INT. MMA OCTAGON - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

The first fight of the film, Ted has the fighter in a Rear Naked Choke, forces him to tap out.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Doctor Taskey's hand pushes open the double doors, walks into the room, finds Marina and Ted in the corner. It's clear from his face the news is not good. Marina begins to weep. Callie keeps punching Ted, laughing, smiling, oblivious.

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Ted's hands lose all strength. He's losing consciousness.

INT. BRUISER'S MMA GYM - **FLASHBACK** -- DAY

VELASQUEZ
Still a single dad?

Ted deflates. Velasquez slaps the mop into his face, it knocks him down. As Ted struggles to his feet, Jaime spits on him.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

BD drags the blanket up as Callie looks at his hand, the cuts on his face, the swelling on his eyes. Her dad's in bad shape.

BD
You're our responsibility now.

Callie kisses Ted's forehead.

EXT. BUS STOP - **FLASHBACK** -- NIGHT

Carrying Callie, Ted exits a bus. He turns, sees a catatonic Marina at the top of the stairwell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She steps back, and the bus doors close. Holding Callie, Ted stands helplessly as the bus, and Marina, disappear...

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

From above - refusing to tap out, Ted loses consciousness. The Ref rushes in, waving his hands. The fight's over.

FADE OUT:

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. EL DORADO - BANQUET ROOM - MMA CAGE -- NIGHT

Like a drowning victim suddenly taking in air, Ted regains consciousness. Bull and Rae get him onto the stool.

TED

What happened?

BULL

You're one tough SOB my friend.

RAE

Ted. Take it easy. Breathe for me,
Ted. Breathe.

TED

Where's Navarez?

BULL

Navarez won. Ref called it. Rear
Naked Choke.

TED

Why are you smiling?

BULL

'Cause we just won soooo much money!

Ted turns to Rae.

RAE

We wanted you to win.

TED

You all bet against me?

RAE

Yeah, but we all *wanted* you to win.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Having entered the cage, Velasquez is going batshit trying to get to Navarez. He's held back by Clevon and De Olid. Diego holds Navarez.

NAVAREZ

Let him loose. C'mon, let him lose.

They let go of Velasquez. Velasquez sobers, takes in his surroundings, thinks better of it, takes a look to Ted, eyes both Navarez and Clevon, smirks, turns to leave.

BULL (O.S.)

El Diablo?

Velasquez glances back - his eyes go wide. Bull full on open hand Stockton Slaps him across the face.

BULL

God says hi.

Meanwhile, Navarez steps over to Ted, kneels down, throws his arms around him.

NAVAREZ

Thanks for taking it easy on me.

Ted pats him on the back.

GABRIEL (O.S.)

Ted, we have a problem.

INT. HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA -- DAY

Wearing his jean jacket over the hospital smock, Ted sits across from Gabriel and Pedro. Rae is next to him.

GABRIEL

See, my brother and I told a couple white lies and we need you to help us out. Pedro here phoned up Los Angeles and explained how we have this upstanding citizen with two kids whom his wife -

RAE

She teaches at the grammar school.

GABRIEL

Has been tutoring.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

They wanted to know what you've been doing for work. I explained how you and your kids have been living here, working for me. Now, we could get in a lot of trouble.

RAE

Pedro could lose his badge.

GABRIEL

We're hoping you and the kids would stay on, run the place so me and the Mrs. could take that trip we've been planning for years.

PEDRO

You think that might be something you'd be interested in doing?

Ted doesn't know what to say. Rae beams a smile.

GABRIEL

We should get going, leave him with his daughter.

Lourdes and Callie step into the cafeteria. Callie runs to him as Gabriel, Pedro and Rae exit.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL -- DAY

"ONE YEAR LATER"

We're TRACKING along a series of new cars and Mack Trucks. Everyone did well betting at Ted's fight.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR #1 (O.S.)

This up and comer's here and now. He's unstoppable. Skill, power, intelligence. He can do it all.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR #2 (O.S.)

It's also noted he paid for a satellite feed of this match to his hometown in Chichen Itza, Mexico.

INT. 4TH HOTEL - MAIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

On the television, TWO SPORTS COMMENTATORS discuss a pending title match.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPORTS COMMENTATOR #1

Navarez' fans have labeled this match "La Noche Triste", meaning Sad Night. Apparently in reference to their hopes the Champ will lose his crown to Navarez.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR #2

Here comes our challenger now.

Navarez and Diego step into the ring, turn, face us. They cut to Cortez sitting in the front row, suit, very proud.

SPORTS COMMENTATOR #1

That's his manager, Hernan Cortez. He claims to have discovered this kid in a bare knuckles match fighting guys twice his age.

We PULL BACK, into the room, hear howls from a party in progress. Bull and his Trucker pals, Clevon, Rae, the Santos' clan, complete with Gabriel's one year old baby, the Restaurant Owner, Possum and Callie - all crammed around a televised MMA match.

Lourdes enters, pushes through the crowd, finds an open spot near Bull.

BULL

You know, I got a couple kids you could check up on some time, if you find yourself out here again.

The line of truckers await her response. She smiles.

LOURDES

Is that your way of asking me out?

BULL

Maybe, darlin'.

Rae walks by, exits outside.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - BARBECUE -- EVENING

Petting Khabib, Ted sits at the picnic table watching Bandit at the barbecue scooping hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken and placing them on a tray held by BD. The two enter the house, passing Rae as she steps outside.

RAE

The fight's about to start.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She reaches the table.

RAE
Hey? You okay?

TED
Yeah. Go ahead, watch the fight.
I'll be there in a minute.

She studies him. Sits next to him, drapes an arm around over his shoulder.

TED
I never got my fight. I feel like I
worked my whole life for nothing.

Bull calls from the window.

BULL
Hey, Teddy, they rang the bell!

Rae waves to Bull, turns back to Ted. Suddenly, shouts and excitement erupts from the house.

INT. 4TH HOTEL - MAIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- EVENING

Rae and Ted enter the living room.

BANDIT
He knocked him out in 25 seconds!

Bull points to the tv.

BULL
There they are!

Cortez and Navarez have an arm around each other. Navarez holds the Championship Belt.

CORTEZ
...And we'd like to thank our
sponsors for believing in us,
Charlie Uno for getting us the shot,
our friends and family...

A shout from the crowd distracts Cortez. Navarez leans into the microphone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAVAREZ

I wouldn't be standing here today
were it not for the Latin fighters
who paved the way for me to make it
out of the Yucatan. Most of all, Ted
De Leon, he should've won this a
long time ago.

CORTEZ

We share this with him.

Callie and the kids turn and smile in awe. Rae whispers in
Ted's ear.

RAE

Your whole life has been the fight.
And we're all here 'cause you won
it.

She kisses his cheek.

EXT. 4TH HOTEL - MAIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

We PULL BACK from the window, reach the barbecue. A couple
burgers smoke on the grill. Khabib devours the others on
the ground.

FADE OUT: