

In BLACK we hear the recitation of the -- 'Our Father' prayer.

OPENING CREDITS appear throughout.

We hear the sound of a RING BELL.

INTERCUT: A crowd, at some sort of a sporting event, cheering in SLO-MO.

CLOSE UP: HANDS clasped together in prayer.

CLOSE UP: A FAN cheering -- BEER in hands spills over

CLOSE UP: Fingers being dipped into a GOLD CHALICE -- drops of HOLY WATER trickle off.

CLOSE UP: A MOUTHPIECE being fed into its respective place.

CLOSE UP: BODY OF CHRIST being placed on a parishioners tongue.

"...And lead us not into temptation..."

A BELL sounds.

A FIGHTER -- Large gash above his right eye.. blood streaming down his face, rises from his corner stool, leaving frame.

"... But deliver us from evil.."

A WOMAN (early 20's) accepts communion -- a beautiful array of purple and yellows outline one of her eyes. SHE crosses herself and leaves frame.

"...AMEN."

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT.

Two FIGHTERS stand in the center of the ring exchanging blows. One of them is who we've met already... JAMES NOLAN (Mid 20's) exchanges some heavy blows. Blood and sweat fly off of each fighters face.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - NIGHT - SAME.

TWO FIGHTERS -- dressed in full protective gear -- exchange blows in the center of the ring.

A few others sit ringside to watch the sparring session -- BERNIE (Middle Aged, Kind face, tough as nails, Boxing Club Owner and Coach) among them. The smaller fighter of the two (GRACE, early 20's) is doing a majority of the damage.

A BELL SOUNDS.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT - SAME.

JAMES walks back into his corner. His TRAINER pulls a stool out for him to sit on.

CUT TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - NIGHT - SAME.

GRACE stands in her corner... Pulls out her mouthpiece.

GRACE
(yelling)
You're fucking holding back!

SPARRING PARTNER
No, I'm not!

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT - SAME.

James breathing heavy... his trainer in his face.

TRAINER
You've got to let it all fly now,
James. No holding back!

JAMES
I won't!

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - NIGHT - SAME.

Another CLUB FIGHTER tries to feed Grace water from the ring apron.

GRACE
Yes, you fucking are! Stop being a
pussy.

The SPARRING PARTNER throws his hands up as if to say "What do you want from me?"

GRACE
(off the gesture)
What? What the fuck is that?

SPARRING PARTNER
(Turns to BERNIE)
Bernie... Come on! I don't want to spar with her anymore.

BERNIE
Why not?

SPARRING PARTNER
It's not fair... I'm not gonna hit on a girl.

GRACE
The fuck you say!?!

BELL SOUNDS.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - NIGHT - SAME.

James jolts out of his corner, meeting the other fighter in the center. He throws a barrage of punches.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS.

Grace, like a bull, launches out of her corner. She's holding nothing back. A complete melee is happening in the ring.

She's clearly taken offense to being called a "Girl" in the ring.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - CONTINUOUS.

JAMES sticking it to his opponent. Taking some shots in exchange to land a few more.

We hear -- KNOCKING -- indicating the round nearing a close.

JAMES lands a solid left hook which flattens his opponent.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - CONTINUOUS.

GRACE lands a tremendous body shot that brings the SPARRING PARTNER to his knees. She continues to throw punches... the boxing has clearly turned into a brawl.

BERNIE and another club fighter climb into the ring to break it up.

A RING BELL SOUNDS.

INT. BOXING ARENA - CONTINUOUS.

JAMES raises his hands in victory as his team climbs into the ring from his corner. His trainer -- bear hugs him, lifting him off his feet.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING CLUB - CONTINUOUS.

BERNIE bear hugs Grace, lifting her off the Sparring Partner. Grace still fuming.

A RING BELL SOUNDS.

BACK TO:

INT. BOXING ARENA - CONTINUOUS.

JAMES in the ring with his team and media -- post fight.

A RING ANNOUNCER stands center.

RING ANNOUNCER
Ladies and gentlemen...

FATHER O'BOYLE (V.O.)
That concludes our Mass for today.
Go with God.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING.

Parishioners exiting the Church. FATHER O'BOYLE (40's-50's) stands at the top of the steps -- a NUN at his side.

GRACE, with the bruised eye from the opening, appears through the crowd.

FATHER O'BOYLE
Grace! Can I have a word with you?

GRACE
Yeah, sure, Father.

FATHER O'BOYLE
How are you doing?

GRACE
Fine.

FATHER O'BOYLE
Good.

GRACE
Is that it?

FATHER O'BOYLE
Well... no. I've been told that these bruises have become a weekly occurrence and it's brought up a bit of concern, again. Are you sure you're alright?

GRACE
Yeah, fine. Just training is all.

FATHER O'BOYLE
Training? What sort of training are you doing that gives you markings like this?

GRACE
Boxing. I'm a boxer.

FATHER O'BOYLE
A boxer? Why would a beautiful woman like yourself participate in such a brutal manly sport?

GRACE
Fuck off with this.

Grace walks away. Father O'Boyle turns to the Nun next to him. Embarrassed, she scurries away.

INT. DOCTORS OFFICE - DAY.

JAMES sits in an examination room. His face shows the remains of the battle wounds patched up.

A NURSE finishes cleaning around some stitching over his right eye.

The DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR

Ok, James... let's see how those stitches cleaned up?

Examines James' eye.

DOCTOR

They look great. Congratulations on your win.

JAMES

Great. Thanks, Doc.

DOCTOR

Sure.

The Doctor picks up James' CHART -- looks through it, then closes it.

JAMES

Am I good to go?

DOCTOR

James... You failed your Neurological.

JAMES

What do you mean? Like you want to run the tests again?

DOCTOR

No. What I mean is that we've discovered some severe retinal damage. Which would explain the dark spots you have impairing the vision in your right eye.

JAMES

This happened after my last fight. I had these little spots and within a week they were completely gone. I'll be fine.

DOCTOR

I'm afraid not. The amount of blood that entered your eye cavity did a lot more damage this time. Similar to the way concussions work. Once the damage is done it doesn't necessarily reset... it just adds on. Those spots you see will not be going away any time soon.

JAMES

But I was fine last time. Can we wait a few weeks before we make any conclusions?

DOCTOR

James, I've seen you after every fight. How this has managed to get to this point is beyond me. I don't know any other way to tell you this but...I'm confident in saying that you will be going blind in that eye.

JAMES

Blind?

DOCTOR

I'm sorry. I can't give you clearance to fight and I have to inform the boxing commission that I am referring you to a specialist.

JAMES

So that's it? My career is over... just like that!

DOCTOR

James, cognitive impairment is irreversible. Modern science, as advanced as it is, has found no way possible to change that. We can see about putting you on a list for a transplant when you become legally blind but that could take years.

JAMES

I'm going blind anyway. Let me fight and we'll see what happens down the line.

DOCTOR

I can't do that.

JAMES
(force)
Why not!

DOCTOR
Because I cannot be responsible for that. James, you know as well as I do what can happen to a fighter when too much risk is involved. Go too far over the line and there is no way back. I let you fight and you risk putting yourself in severe neurological damage.
(beat)
I'm sorry.

He exits, leaving James in the room.

INT. BOXING CLUB - DAY.

GRACE is training -- Heavy Bag work, Speed Bag, Jump Rope, Shadowboxing.

INT. BOXING CLUB - BERNIE'S OFFICE - DAY- SAME.

Bernie walks into his office. KATE (middle aged, strong, loving, smart, Bernie's better half) sits behind the desk in Bernie's chair.

BERNIE
Hello, my love.

KATE
What's going on with Grace?

BERNIE
Are you referring to the ring incident?

KATE
Yes, I am.

BERNIE
What about it?

KATE
Well, what are you going to do about it?

BERNIE
What am I going to do about it?

KATE
Bernard, don't dance with me.

BERNIE
(amused)
Oooh. When I get my proper name I
know you mean business.

Kate gets up as if to go after him.

BERNIE
Ok! ok!
(moves to her)
I hear you, my little firecracker.

KATE
Then tell me what's to be done.

BERNIE
She's my sisters kid and I love her
as if she's my own. But you know as
well as I do that she listens to no
one.

KATE
(challenging)
Are you listening to her?

BERNIE
What do you mean?

KATE
She wants to be taken seriously,
Bernie.

BERNIE
I do take her seriously. She also
could have seriously hurt someone
acting out like that.

KATE
You're missing the point. She's
been training harder than anyone in
this gym, male or otherwise.

BERNIE
Yes, I'm aware of that.

KATE
Then why keep postponing her
turning Professional?