

# THE FIRE INSIDE

Written By Barry Jenkins

Based on the documentary  
*T-Rex*

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First, OVER BLACK, we HEAR the sound of wind, the gentle whisper of air, then...

FADE IN:

...on a picturesque landscape – falling snow and treetops, a beautiful tulle of white as far as the eye can see.

EXT. FLINT MICHIGAN (JAN '06) – LATE AFTERNOON – AERIAL

We're floating, *soaring* along above this vista when, slowly, our view shifts, from the horizon to the city directly below to reveal...

RUIN -- Abandoned lots, dilapidated roofs, squalor so pervasive and thorough it betrays the beauty of our opening horizon.

As we continue over this landscape, a chyron:

**"Flint, Michigan  
2006"**

A moment later, a street coming into view, a single girl there running, from the looks of her, ten, eleven years old.

The girl continues her run as WE GO --

EXT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE (JAN '06) – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Plodding along, the snow fresh but insistent.

The girl stops, panting heavily, hands on hips.

In this moment, settling on her eyes for the first time, who this girl is becomes clear: CLARESSA SHIELDS, future Olympic Gold Medalist and pound for pound greatest fighter in the world.

For now though... she's a scrawny eleven-year old staring longingly at...

*A nightclub, a club-house?* Perhaps a combination of the two, the rear door of the place open, spilling light onto the asphalt parking lot.

A boy or two exiting with towels over their heads, body heat throwing waves of smoke into the night air from the backs of their necks.

As Claressa takes a deep breath, steels herself... CUT TO:

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JAN '06) - NIGHT

And what a sight – every inch of this place showing the weight of time, walls covered in news clippings worn clear of color, decades of sweat you can smell on sight.

A few young men at seven makeshift stations on the edges of the room -- speed bag, heavy bag, the familiar markers of gym life.

But we're not here for all that just yet. Instead we go to...

THAT REAR DOOR

Claressa entering, eyes low, heads for the water fountain.

After a long swig, moves a few feet in and settles against a wall, eyes trained on...

## THE RING

A coach there working a drill with a handful of fighters, seven to seventeen. The kids are a rag tag bunch but Claressa is focused solely on that coach: JASON CRUTCHFIELD, 40s, a small paunch at the belly and worn around the eyes but... a liveliness to him.

JASON

Jab. Go.

They jab.

JASON

Jab, Jab, Go. Right hand, go.

The kids follow along, jabbing and punching at the air with conviction.

Claressa throws her coat and gloves against the wall and tentatively approaches the ropes.

JASON

Add the hook, go.

From outside the ring, Claressa joins the instruction. Two jabs, right hand, and a hook...

In the ring, three pre-teen boys take notice, snickering.

BOY 1

*Ain't no cheerleading practice up  
in here.*

Jason clocks her, sympathy in his look but not much else.

(CONTINUED)

JASON  
Cool it with all that.

A deep breath from Jason.

JASON  
Claressa, how many times I gotta tell you -- you wanna hang around the gym? Fine. You wanna go through some drills with Bean? *Fine*. But we don't train no girls at Berston Field House, you hear me?

Jason shakes his head and returns focus to his fighters.

JASON  
Right hand, Go! Uppercut Go.

Claressa just stares at him. Then... an idea.

We don't see clearly what she's doing, fumbling with something, Then she returns, face enshrouded in plastic face protection. Steps all the way to the ring.

JASON  
Okay so you got some headgear, now what? What you think you gon' do with that?

Jason leans on the ropes, waiting for a response but gets... just eyes; pleading eyes.

We haven't heard her speak a word these first few moments. And if we didn't notice already...

BOY 1 (O.S.)  
Ain't no use, coach, she on that short bus, gotta use sign language talkin' to her.

A round of laughs from the other boys, yuk'n it up. Jason looks from them to Claressa, her eyes narrowing at the wisecracks, a quiet but palpable rage.

He makes a choice --

JASON  
Alright: you got three minutes.

Helps Claressa into the ring.

JASON  
(to Zay)  
Put yo headgear on.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)

(to Claressa)

Boy been fightin' two weeks and  
already think he Floyd Mayweather.  
Now listen to what I say -- *do* what  
I say. No questions, just *do*,  
understand?

A quick nod from Claressa, eager, willing.

JASON

But don't get used to being in this  
ring, need this for the fighters.

(and)

Where yo gloves?

(off her silence)

Claressa's eyes go to her hands and, continue down to her  
feet; those ratty shoes on her feet.

A flush of shame, but --

JASON

Bean?

Bean hands Jason a pair of gloves from a pile of gear.

JASON

(returning with gloves)

Ain't got no wraps but try these.

If you can fit 'em, they yours.

Jason helping her as she works the gloves on. They're a bit  
big but they'll do.

Claressa smiles. It must be said, she has a *glorious* smile.  
Jason unwraps a cheap, generic mouthpiece.

JASON

Alright. Let's give his ass  
somethin' to talk about.

INT. BERSTON, RING (JAN '06) - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In one corner, those three knuckleheads, smiles on their  
faces like jackals. Boy 1, aka LIL' ZAY, (skinny, smug),  
fastens his head gear, a hyena preening at his prey.

In the other, Claressa and Jason. Secures her headgear, fits  
her mouthpiece, a grossed out groan from Claressa as the  
mangled plastic molds to her teeth.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

(at the gathering)

One round and then we gettin' back  
to work.

LIL' ZAY

One round is all I need, coach.

JASON

What you need is a ass whoopin' and  
we gon' get there soon enough.

Jason looks back to Claressa.

JASON

You good?

A furtive nod from Claressa, but... in her eyes? *Oh my.* Jason  
comes in close, a last word of advice:

JASON

Alright, the first rule of boxing --  
*eyes open, eyes always open.* Worse  
punch to get hit with is the punch  
you can't see.

Slaps her across the head, affectionate:

JASON

Let's do this.

Jason clicks his stopwatch. The boy comes after Claressa,  
charging in. Instinctively, she backs away, backs so far  
she's quickly on the ropes.

Jason in the ring with these two -- not so much a referee,  
but keeping watch, staying close.

*BRAP BRAP BRAP!* -- Zay's showing off, a Pee-Wee League  
Mayweather, jabbing and side stepping while throwing laughs  
at his friends.

Claressa throws a few jabs back but she's uncoordinated,  
gangly.

JASON

(stepping in)

Hold up hold up.

Jason gets down on a knee, eye to eye with Claressa.

JASON

Hey look here --

(takes her by the chin)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)

Don't you hang your head, you hear?  
You can lose a fight but can't let  
nobody take your heart -- it's a  
difference.

A nod from Claressa as Jason squirts a bit of water in her mouth.

JASON

Show me the jab.

(she does)

Show me the cross.

(she does)

Jason looks over her shoulder across the room, yells out:

JASON

Bean, what you been teaching this  
girl?!

BEAN

Don't put that on me.

JASON

You the one been working with her.

BEAN

You said, "ain't no girl fighters  
at Berston."

Jason flushes -- just a moment though, he's righting the wrong. Takes her hand, adjusts her stance.

JASON

(demonstrating)

*Jab.*

She jabs.

Jason catches her hand, adjusting its position.

JASON

*Cross.*

She crosses swinging so wildly she nearly loses her balance.

JASON

Keep your front foot planted. This  
ain't ballet.

LIL' ZAY (O.S.)

She don't want no mo' coach, she  
don't want no mo' of Zay!

(CONTINUED)

Jason looks above Claressa, at Zay and his knucklehead buddies. He puts Claressa's mouthpiece back in, leans in close, so the others can't hear:

JASON

(hushed)

Watch his shoulders, not his hands.  
When he come in with that wild  
mess, slip left -- *blast* him.

Off Claressa's affirmative nod... Jason waves Zay in.

JASON

(resumes stopwatch)

Here we go!

The trading of jabs, Zay more cautious now -- Jason's word worth *that* much. And yet...

...this is a *girl*: Zay lets a combination fly -- more show than effect, Jason rolling his eyes as the other boys in the room *oohhh* and *ahhh*.

He could stop this thing short, but...

JASON

C'mon Ressa, remember what I told  
you now.

In the center of the ring, Zay circles Ressa like a satellite orbiting a planet.

Through his headgear, he's smiling, prancing, a shit-eating grin. And set to this prancing, Claressa focused, narrowing in--

*Watch his shoulders, slip left. Watch his shoulders--*

Zay's pivots opening up. Claressa slips left --

*BRAP BRAP!* Claressa's hands lightning quick -- and *powerful*. Years of suppression erupting through those hands.

Zay stunned, steps back in confusion -- *A girl did that?*

And before he can fully gather himself, Claressa charges in, an animal unleashed, *BRAP! BRAP!* -- Zay stumbling across the ring, Claressa, raw fury, charging after him. *BRAP! BRAP-*

Jason's instincts kick in, rushes between Claressa and Zay, a CTE saving gesture.

Zay struggling against Jason, the shame fueling tough guy adrenaline:

(CONTINUED)

LIL' ZAY

Man let me go, let me *go!*

But as Jason holds the boy back, long enough for Bean to enter the ring and help out, Jason's eyes clearly, steadfastly fixed on Claressa: Yup, a girl *DID* that.

Jason goes to bring Claressa in for a hug and...

...she recoils: sudden, instinctual, distinctive. Jason raises his hands, a step back, just as instinctual.

JASON

Easy now, easy -- just let me get that headgear off you.

A subtle hesitation but Claressa relents, a soft nod *yes*.

Jason steps closer and carefully removes her headgear. A wave of empathy passing through him as we CUT TO...

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (JAN '06) - NIGHT

*SQUALOR -- worse than the exterior of the homes viewed in our opening let on, a sink full of dishes swimming in sludge.*

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (JAN '06) - NIGHT

Claressa's fragile eyes staring at that sludge of dishes.

QUICK SNIPPETS of action:

-- Claressa opening the fridge. She finds a few condiment packets, a moldy hot dog bun and a half empty jar of pickles.

-- Claressa climbing to the top cupboard - save a sad grouping of rat droppings - *EMPTY*

-- Claressa peaking into the "pantry" - a can of green beans. No can opener. Besides... ew.

Claressa's eyes flittering with her mind, the mental calculations impoverished kids know too well -- *When is my next meal? How hungry I will I be until then?*

She grabs a pickle and a packet of mustard, heads into...

INT. JACKIE'S, LIVING ROOM (JAN '06) - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

...finds two young kids there sat on a second-hand couch, staring at a 19-inch television on crates.

These are Claressa's siblings, BRIANA and PEANUT, nine and six years old.

(CONTINUED)

Briana reaches into a couch cushion, exhumes a bag of Salt and Vinegar potato chips.

YOUNG BRIANA  
Peanut ate your hot sausage.

YOUNG PEANUT  
Sorry 'Ressa.

Claressa settles in beside them, digs into that bag. Munches a few chips, something funny on the television. Briana and Peanut laughing aloud... But Claressa?

Claressa's attention is elsewhere.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM (JAN '06) - MORNING

*Bright light -- harsh sun cutting through a window as gnats dance in morning light.*

The siblings share a full bed, pushed up against the wall.

Claressa stirred awake by the clang of glass and swish of water.

Clothes and toys litter the floor. Claressa steps over Briana and Peanut carefully, trying not to wake them.

CUT TO:

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (JAN '06) - DAY

At the kitchen sink: a woman, making the noise that drew us here -- cleaning bowls, rinsing utensils. This is JACKIE, Claressa's mom. Jackie is 35... approaching 60.

JACKIE  
Hey baby.

ANGLE ON: Claressa, standing at the threshold, mouth agape.

JACKIE  
What? You act like you ain't never seen me cook before?

Claressa wakes from her stupor, takes a few steps into the kitchen. A pop up table there. As Claressa pulls back her chair to sit...

...Peanut arrives, followed closely by Briana, both with the same bewildered look as Claressa -- *What in the HELL is going on?*

(CONTINUED)

Jackie makes a place setting before each kid, a bowl, a spoon, a glass -- all of it freshly washed. Turns back towards the cabinet, stoops down in the pots.

JACKIE

Uh huh -- y'all think y'all know  
all my tricks but y'all don't know.

Jackie turns back to them, a fresh box of cereal in her hand, something name brand like Captain Crunch.

Genuine delight spreads across the children's faces as Jackie pours generous portions into each of their bowls. She opens the fridge next, but...

JACKIE

*Shit.*  
(and)  
I forgot the milk.

YOUNG BRIANA

Dang Ma'--

She reaches back to the table, grabs her bowl of Captain Crunch and pours a bit of water over it.

YOUNG BRIANA

Water taste like milk here anyway.

Yes, that would be *Flint, Michigan* water.

Claressa and Peanut come over to the sink and do the same as  
WE CUT TO...

*A CHILD'S FACE -- bursting with joy and laughter.*

INT. JASON'S HOUSE (JAN '06) - DAY

And we know it's Jason's home because opposite a child we find the man himself, chest bared as he pounds his belly like King Kong.

The "child's face" belongs to Jason's son, YOUNG COREY, 5 (a striking resemblance). Another kid here, KEISHA, 15.

JASON

Show me the growl!

YOUNG COREY

*Grrrrrrrr.*

JASON

That ain't no growl man, show me  
the *GROWL!*

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG COREY  
GRRRRRRRRRR!

Jason scoops Corey up and helicopters him around the room, a twirl that gives us a full glimpse of this house -- the living room, dining room, kitchen all wedged into a single twenty by ten space.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Tell you what, them kids better  
growl they way over to this table  
and eat this food.

Jason and Corey sharing a look as he sets the boy down, both turning to that voice, a kind-looking woman of Jason's age.

MICKEY, 40s, Jason's wife. Sits at a fold-up table just off the stove, eggs, bacon, biscuits and grits laid out.

JASON  
My bad, babe.

The kids join Mickey at the table. Jason pulls on a gray cable company uniform shirt, *the logo* stitched over the front pocket.

He sits down and helps himself to some food. Forks a mouthful of eggs, looks around the table lovingly at his kids, his wife.

In his eyes, though, it's clear something's on his mind.

JASON  
What you think about girls boxing?

MICKEY  
Nuh uh, you ain't finna have my  
baby up in no gym.

KEISHA  
I can fight, see watch my--

YOUNG COREY  
No you can't, you ain't got  
no hands, I--

MICKEY  
Corey/Keisha, *shut it*.

A moment.

JASON  
I ain't talkin' about them.  
(and)  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)

This lil girl been hanging around the gym a lot, Claressa, from out there in Frog Town.

MICKEY

Jackie's little girl? I thought she was mute.

(and)

What she doin' all the way over at Berston?

JASON

Wants to fight I guess. Runs all the way there most days.

MICKEY

Huh. Probably just an excuse to get out that messed up house.

(a shrug at Jason)

Don't see no reason why she can't. She got hands?

JASON

Yeah, I mean... I just never...

MICKEY

You just never what?

JASON

I ain't never thought about no girls boxing.

MICKEY

And why is that?

Jason thinks about that. So obvious an observation it takes him by surprise. Yeah. Why *is* that?

As he runs the answer around his mind....

CUT TO BLACK:

And over BLACK, a TITLE CARD: "**FIVE YEARS LATER**"

The roar of a small, blood-thirsty crowd, then...

FADE IN:

*ON CLARESSA AND A GIRL -- Claressa, now 16, in a proper ring dominating a girl, and, to our surprise, a proper referee.*

INT. TOLEDO TRINTY CHURCH, BOXING RING (NOV '11) - DAY

A fight in full swing, the two young women circling one another as a chyron appears:

**"2011 Toledo Regional Championships"**

And let's introduce an older, more seasoned CLARESSA SHIELDS: 16, broad shoulders, lean muscle and a face that cuts from the promise of merciless death to wicked mischief on a dime.

As she goes toe to toe with another young woman -- a female boxer of equal skill and stature -- that the lessons Jason's imparted have borne fruit becomes clear.

Jason in the corner, a little worse for the wear but not much, the five years Claressa aged less noticeable on him.

Instead, a different kind of change -- there are no boy fighters under Jason's stewardship. This is the Claressa Shield's show. And so WE GO...

INSIDE THE RING -- up close with the action, Claressa's face enshrouded in head gear, all eyes.

Jason yelling from beyond the ropes -- a nonstop commentary:

JASON

Let her come to you! That's right!  
She ain't seen nothin' like you!  
Work her! Jab outside! She ain't  
got no defense! There we go! We  
finish strong, 'Ressa!

In the way she drifts across the ring, that same sway in her shoulders, Claressa still a clear marker of her former self.

But better: *a pivot forward on her right foot, two jabs and a cross and WHOMP!* Her opponent crumples to the floor.

JASON

Thass a blow out! Thass a blow out  
right there! T-REX!!! T-REXXXXXX!

Claressa's opponent struggles to regain composure but its no use, the ref administers a standing eight count and then--

Jason careens into the ring, throws his arms around Claressa.

JASON

Thass how we *do!*

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

They don't want none!

(and)

They don't want none, coach!

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (NOV '11) - NIGHT

Claressa in the passenger seat of Jason's minivan with her duffle on her lap, Jason idling in "park."

He looks past her.

JASON

Want me to walk you in?

CLARESSA

Nah, I'm good.

He nods, a puncher's fist as she moves away up the walk. After a beat...

JASON

(calling out)

*Ressa.*

She looks back.

JASON

I'm proud of you.

(and)

I'm real damn proud.

Ressa takes that in a moment. Let's out the most beautiful, unbridled smile. For a moment, you might mistake this for the Brady Bunch, but...

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (NOV '11) - NIGHT

Jackie upright like a shot when Claressa enters, clasps her hands together in boozy joy:

JACKIE

There go my baby, there go the champ!

CLARESSA

Hey mama.

Jackie upon her, an awkward hug, Claressa's shoulders like a baby Serena Williams.

JACKIE

'Ressa, you remember mama friend Johnny, right?

(CONTINUED)

Gestures at a man on the couch (JOHNNY -- *trouble*) nursing a pint of liquor. He nods and... Claressa pays him no mind.

CLARESSA

Where Bri and Peanut?

JACKIE

They back there.

CLARESSA

They ate?

JACKIE

What you *think*? Don't be askin' me no question about my damn kids.

Mother and daughter lock eyes a moment.

Claressa pushes past Jackie toward the back bedroom.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM (NOV '11) - NIGHT

Claressa's duffle overturned, a grab bag of power bars, Powerades and various fresh fruits, clearly rummaged from the Golden Gloves competition.

BRIANA and PEANUT (14 and 11 now) descend on that pile.

From the way they ravenously go through the food, it's clear they haven't eaten.

CUT TO:

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (FEB '12) - DAY

Claressa and Lil' Zay sparring center ring. And like Claressa, ZAY is not so little anymore, a tall, rangy fighter swinging with smooth feet, quick hands.

JASON

Work her, Zay.

Jason watching from the floor. The action in the ring fast but cordial, Zay pushing without *pushing*.

JASON

Come on now, don't give her nothin', make her earn it.

Zay spins out of a corner and throws a cross with the movement, a connection that forces a reaction -- *BAP! BAP!*

JASON

That's it -- *press her*.

(CONTINUED)

He does as told, and -- *BRAP BRAP BRAP!* -- Claressa tags him. Jason smiles, blows his whistle:

JASON

*Time.*

Claressa and Zay tag hands center ring. As Zay removes his shirt, heads for the ropes, Claressa watches him, subtly checks out his abs.

JASON

'Ressa, I gotta head out early,  
Bean gone make sure you get home,  
cool?

Claressa nods, wipes some sweat:

CLARESSA

Okay coach.

But as Jason accepts that, heads for the door... her attention shifts elsewhere, across the room.

Her eyes land on Zay.

ZAY

I can take you.

CUT TO:

*CLARESSA -- gliding along North Saginaw, face as open as we've seen it here, not a fighter, just pure teenage girlhood.*

EXT. FLINT STREET (FEB '12) - DAY - MOVING

Claressa and Zay hang a left, float through backroads Flint -- Zay peddling a bike as Claressa balances on the handle-bars.

She's smiling, laughing. There's a magic in this moment: it's February; snow, a light flurry drifting. No less magical for the decrepit homes they're passing.

ZAY

Watch this!

Zay releases the handle bars, arms wide.

CLARESSA

(laughing)  
You crazy!

Claressa leans farther back into Zay to balance, the crown of her head at the nape of his neck.

(CONTINUED)

Light snow on her face, the warmth of this boy at her back.  
Claressa... *smiles.*

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (FEB '12) - NIGHT

Zay guides the bike as they arrive at Claressa's house. A  
sweetness here, puppy love:

ZAY

It was real nice to give you a ride  
home, 'Ressa.

Beat.

CLARESSA

We walked most of the way.

ZAY

Not my fault your butt got sore.  
Claressa laughs.

ZAY

Besides Jason'd kill me if I laid  
you up before the big fight.

CLARESSA

True.

A suspended moment. Taking it all in.

ZAY

You represent out there. Show 'em  
how we do it in Flint.

Claressa watches him as he raises his hoodie, heads away with  
his bike into the building snow.

Once he's completely out of ear-shot... she lets loose the  
deepest, most Jane Austen sigh.

As she turns for that door...

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY (FEB '12) - AERIAL

*POV out a plane window. A thin patchwork of clouds veil a  
nameless city. Timeless. Relatable.*

INT. DELTA FLIGHT 270 (FEB '12) - DAY - MOVING

Claressa and Jason side by side on this regional flight.

(CONTINUED)

Just a beat of this though... enough to note the wonder on Claressa's face, childlike looking down at the approaching landscape.

There's no proof of this but it would not be a stretch to surmise that we are witnessing her very first flight.

The plane hits a little pocket of turbulence and Claressa startles, instinctively grabs Jason's hand.

He shoots her a look, smiles. Embarrassed, Claressa does the same, both of them smiling at the warrior undone by a little turbulence.

As the moment passes, *the SOUND drifts, floats away into a muted hum.* Those smiles still on Jason and Claressa's faces, but...

*...accompanied by disparate SOUNDS -- sharp breaths, snorts. Coarse, heavy grunting as we CUT TO:*

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL & SUITES, HALLWAY (FEB '12) - DAY

A MAKESHIFT BOXING REGISTRATION, just outside the main event. Tables and folding chairs... controlled chaos.

All around, boys and girls, young men and women in boxing robes bob and sway on their feet.

Claressa and Jason, carrying small duffels, make their way to the registration line.

At the front of the line, a posse in matching "Fitzgerald" garb.

KIRA FITZGERALD, early 30's, signs her form and turns away from the table. She is sculpted, battle-worn.

As she passes Claressa, Kira leers,

KIRA FITZGERALD  
Time to teach these babies to stay  
outta grown folks business.

Off Claressa, the older fighter instilling a hint of fear in our young heroine...

JASON  
(prelap)  
Don't even pay her no mind.

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL & SUITES, SWIMMING POOL (FEB '12) - NIGHT

An *Anywhere, USA* indoor hotel pool. Jason and Claressa the only folks here. Jason sips a beer, empty take out container in evidence. Claressa dangles her feet in the water, no appetite tonight.

JASON

This ain't just messin' around no more. You win tomorrow you goin' all the way to Olympic trials. You won't get many opportunities. When you do, you gotta' take 'em.

Claressa, silent, stares down at the light refracting in the pool.

Jason leans in, his gaze tethered to her.

JASON

You been through more in sixteen years than most people go through in a lifetime. You a survivor. You got fire inside. Turn all that pain into something good, you hear?

Still a glimpse of uncertainty in 'Ressa's eyes. Then, like a kind of transfusion, she looks up and meets Jason's gaze.

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL, CLARESSA'S ROOM (FEB '12) - NIGHT

Claressa asleep on the couch, a fist mashed into her cheek, light from the TV playing on her face.

*And all of a sudden, we're back in Flint, Claressa's home...*

INT. MISC. LIVING ROOM (FEB '01) - FLASHBACK

A TV: The static aftermath of a VHS that run its course.

And then we catch it... a girl on the couch, fast asleep, bathed in a similar glow.

We know from a few unmistakable details, this is a YOUNG CLARESSA (five, six years old).

A MAN enters, tall, imposing. No one but this man, Claressa, and the static vibration.

The Man stands over Claressa, slowly removing the sheet she's draped herself in.

As his hand lowers toward her brow...

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL, CLARESSA'S ROOM (FEB '12) - MORNING

Bright sun through the window, Claressa awake, staring up into that light with the most vacant, melancholy face.

She stays this way a beat, breaths shallow, FURY gathering in her eyes like storm clouds as WE CUT TO:

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL & SUITES, BALLROOM (FEB '12) - DAY

From the corner, Kira Fitzgerald bounds into focus, meeting Claressa at the center of a makeshift boxing ring in the ballroom of this middle of nowhere resort. A chyron:

**"2012 US Olympic Boxing Trials Finals  
Spokane, Washington"**

In the bright light, a roughness visible that runs way down deep; *pain*.

In ten years, Claressa will be Kira. And yet... Claressa is here. *Already*. Kira's fury is palpable.

Crystal Chandeliers and backlit faces as Claressa basks in the roar of the crowd. Well, "*roar*" is a bit of a stretch -- a hundred people here, dispersed at white top tables, eager to be *entertained*.

REFEREE 1

Alright fighters, let's have a--

KIRA FITZGERALD

Time to pay your dues.

REFEREE 1

Let's have a--

KIRA FITZGERALD

You way outta your league,  
scrub.

REFEREE 1

(at Kira)

*Fighter.*

All eyes between these two -- with that head gear, *just eyes*, searching left and right, barely a blink. If you squint, a visual rhyme: they could be twins.

REFEREE 1

Alright fighters, let's have a  
clean fight.

Claressa heads to her corner. Met by Jason's focused gaze, a simple truth becomes clear: *This is everything*.

DING. The world slows as --

(CONTINUED)

*Rhythmically, balletically, Kira Fitzgerald approaches, all shoulders and headgear, larger than life.*

A blend of sounds, our ringside announcer sets the stage...

EMCEE

Here we go folks, winner takes all:  
Kira Fitzgerald and Claressa  
Shields battling it out to decide  
who will advance to the next round  
on this journey to the 2012 Summer  
Olympics...

*BOP BOP BOP!*

Kira lands a vicious combo, bears down on Claressa with heavy shoulders, a mauler -- *this is war.*

We go in CLOSE -- all headgear, short, choppy breaths. Kira is smothering her.

KIRA FITZGERALD

(close)

*All them baby games is done.*

CLARESSA

*Let me go.*

KIRA FITZGERALD

*You with a **real** one now.*

CLARESSA

*Get off of me.*

**A DETAIL** -- Kira's smirk through her mouthpiece.

She does two things at once: Heels up, on top of Claressa's toes, BUT... shoulders heavy, shoves Claressa back.

*Claressa lunges* -- fills the space created too quickly. Kira pivots, swings, connects: *BOP BOP!*

She's beside and behind Claressa all at once, humbling. Off the crowd's lusty roar...

*DING DING DING!*

CLARESSA'S CORNER

Jason here, has her by the face, both hands at her chin:

JASON

'Ressa!

Claressa... *breathing.* All she can manage right now.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

'Ressa wake up.

Didn't land: Jason smacks her across the face, crisp, sharp, as he would a male fighter (but through head gear, more assertive than violent).

JASON

WAKE... UP!

Claressa shaking her head fervently -- she's up.

JASON

You good?

CLARESSA

I'm good.

JASON

Is you *good*?!

CLARESSA

I'm good coach.

He smiles -- despite the circumstances, that same old Crutchfield smile; joyous, generous, unnerving.

JASON

Okay, that's what I'm talkin' 'bout. When she come at you, move with her, not against her. Long as y'all move the same way, she can't hang. Have her ass on the ground in one second, c'mon now.

IMAGES -- RYHMED TO JASON'S VOICE

-- *SEE Claressa and Kira drifting towards one another.*

JASON

Stick and clutch, stick and clutch:  
There we go.

FLASH CUT:

-- *Kira's head heavy on Claressa's shoulder, the women close, Kira grabbing at Claressa.*

And then, moving back to real time, as Claressa throws Kira off her creating space to recompose.

JASON

There we go! Now dig to the body!

(CONTINUED)

Claressa, doubling down, threes and fours, below the belt.

JASON

(with the biggest smile)

That's how we do. That's how we do.

Let them hands go. T-Rexxxx!!!

CLARESSA HURTLING towards Kira as though pulled by a rubber band -- *BOP BOP!* -- a combination that Kira matches in form.

CLARESSA

Who's the real one, now!

In this match, all those things that are broken, that are damaged and pained in these two women seeps out of them.

And rather than beat down that pain or its cause... they'll stand toe to toe... and beat on each other.

JASON

Yeahhhhh Come on, babygirl: we having too much fun to stop now?!

OF THE BOXING -- Claressa is a model student, Kira takes a half step back... Claressa takes a half step forward, measures her up and unloads.

Tide turning, Kira shielding more than throwing, defending more than attacking...

UP CUT TO:

*CLARESSA -- standing, sweaty, exhausted, **pissed.***

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL & SUITES, BALLROOM (FEB '12) - DAY

Claressa stands before a modest USA Boxing sponsor's backdrop.

A clutch of print reporters here, even a few video journalists. Claressa in a *mood*. Downright pissed.

REPORTER

Claressa, do you feel like even though you won, there are things you are bothering yourself about?

CLARESSA

My, uh... I didn't like the score.

REPORTER

Whats the matter with it?

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

15-23. I could have sworn... I was  
in the corner, what'd he say 29-9,  
something like that-

She flinches as if the numbers are hard to utter.

REPORTER

You thought you were in the lead  
more?

JASON

The score was fine, we--

CLARESSA

(to herself, disgusted)  
I ain't never scored twenty-  
three in my life!

REPORTER

Whats your normal score?

CLARESSA

31,32...

BEAT. We pick out a WOMAN standing at the back of the room,  
30s, separate from the reporters, watching with interest.

JASON

(cutting Claressa off)  
Well, we good, we won.

Claressa distracts herself from Jason's words, playing with  
her shirt.

JASON

23 is bigger than 15, you feel me?  
Pick it up. We can't get into  
that. You gotta get the emotions  
out of it. This is business. I  
want you to go to the Olympics.

Claressa refuses to make eye contact.

Jason walks up to her and attempts to crack her. Claressa  
tried to avoids him but Jason tilts his head and forces it.

Finally Claressa's scowl begins to transform.

CLARESSA

(annoyed but a smile  
breaking through)  
What?

The reporters and Jason laugh.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

See that! I know her like a book!

INT. SPOKANE HOTEL, SUITE (FEB '12) - LATE AFTERNOON

The USA Boxing tournament hub: formerly a pop-up admin suite, currently a celebration -- bottles of domestic beer being passed around, Solo Cups of lord knows what.

Amongst this hodgepodge of coaches and fighters we've seen throughout the tournament, find Jason, nursing a drink. The woman from the press junket walks over.

NICOLE

Hi, Jason? I'm Nicole Thompson, head of marketing and media relations for USA Boxing.

JASON

(shaking her hand)  
Hey, Nicole. Good to meet you.

NICOLE

Congratulations!

A smile from Jason.

NICOLE

Where's Claressa?

JASON

She in her room. I mean, she sixteen: any party I'd go to she wants no part of.

Nicole smiles at that, lighthearted, but... in her eyes, it's very clear she's deciding what to make of Jason.

JASON

I know what you thinking -- where she come from, right?

NICOLE

Yeah. Something like that.

JASON

None of that matter. That's the past. She the future now. You see we taking that gold medal.

Nicole shakes her head -- polite, but... skeptical.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

What? What's that face? Every time we talk about medals round here somebody shaking they head like we crazy.

NICOLE

Jason -- USA boxing hasn't won a gold medal since 2004, we've only won *three* in the last twenty years.

JASON

Well... none of them boxers was Claressa.

NICOLE

Yeah. And none of them were sixteen. Look she's a strong fighter, I give you that, I just want you to manage expectations, the Olympics isn't just boxing, it's... the weight of the world.

(and)

Could you handle that at her age?

Something shifting in Jason's demeanor at that, a flash of something. There's a story there, but... we won't get to it for another lil' bit. Instead...

INT. SPOKANE HOLIDAY INN, CLARESSA'S ROOM (FEB '12) - NIGHT

Looks like Claressa had a party of her own but we're just evidencing the average mess of an anything but average teenage girl.

Clothes strewn about the floor, contents of Claressa's bag emptied on the bed, room service remnants spread about, a pink duvet draped over the chair, and finally the only carefully positioned item - a framed photo on the bed side table, Claressa's grandma.

Over to Claressa, laptop open, skyping with Briana and Peanut. She paces the hotel room, amped-up.

BRIANA

Look 'Ressa, who we is?

On cue, Briana winds up like she's Mike Tyson and fake wallops Peanut across the chin, the child dazedly going to ground, shaking like an 80s break-dancer with convulsions.

CLARESSA

It ain't like that fool.

(CONTINUED)

BRIANA

You didn't knock her out?

CLARESSA

You get points for every hit. You gotta score the most points to win. Like this--

Claressa, excited, air punches an imaginary opponent.

CLARESSA

Brap Brap... Brap Brap Brap....

Kids being kids. Fresh off a big win.

CLARESSA

Best part- we goin' to China for the qualifiers -- after that it's London and a gold medal; umma get *paid*, you watch. Move us up outta that house.

PEANUT (ON SKYPE)

Fo real, Ress?

CLARESSA

Hell yeah! You heard Jason - can't nobody beat me!

Excited laughter from Briana and Peanut, lapping it up.

INT. SPOKANE HOLIDAY INN, BAR (FEB '12) - NIGHT - LATER

Jason's on his second drink and looking tipsy. He is talking to a well-groomed sports agent, DANNY TURNER, mid 30s.

DANNY TURNER

(handing Jason a business card)

I'd be happy to sit down with you and Claressa, talk strategy. What endorsements does she have right now?

JASON

Oh, we ain't into that yet -- you think we're ready?

DANNY TURNER

Absolutely. Start the buzz now. That way when she gets to London, Madison Av' will be watching.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Right, right, I feel you.

As agent types go, Danny is a class act. Jason's intrigued, but also... wary.

DANNY TURNER

This is a big deal. First year of women's boxing. A lot at stake here. I have great relationships with Nike, Visa, Pepsi... You have to think about her public image. Social media, too. Building her brand that way--

JASON

*Social media?* Nah man, it's a distraction. I tell her all the time, back up off the Facebook--

DANNY TURNER

Well, we could handle Claressa's social media accounts--

JASON

Oh you could, huh?  
(and)  
You handle her *bank* accounts, too?

Jason chuckles, only half kidding. Danny just stares at him.

JASON

Look, bruh, I appreciate the interest, but they'll be time for all that after the gold. I got this  
(raises his drink)  
Cheers.

Danny looks a little bemused, can't quite read Jason -- is it hubris or is Jason just naive, maybe a bit of both?

*Over this: the sound of a high school marching band letting rip...*

CUT TO:

EXT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH (FEB '12) - DAY

Faculty and students cheer and yell as Claressa, all smiles, steps off the school bus.

Banners reads "USA Champion Claressa Shields." The student marching band plays while a procession of kids dance and celebrate their way into school.

(CONTINUED)

Claressa, confident, cocky even, dances her way through the crowd, soaking up the attention as she goes. She spots Zay and grooves her way toward him.

In the middle of all this energy, a high school lover's lane:

ZAY

So...

CLARESSA

So...

ZAY

Did you miss me?

CLARESSA

(laughs)

I was only gone like four days,  
boy, you lame.

A bashful smile from Zay -- kind of adorable.

Claressa... *melts*. But only for a second, a fleeting moment, Zay doesn't even clock it.

INT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH, CAFETERIA (FEB '12) - DAY

Claressa in the lunch line beside other students.

It's burger and fries day, we can see it on all the other kids trays. When Claressa steps up to the line, however, the lunch lady reaches into a microwave, pulls out a simple meal of grilled chicken and yams.

CLARESSA

What's this?

LUNCH LADY

Your coach came by. Say you need  
that good protein. Me and the  
girls made this for you special.

Claressa rolls her eyes, reaches beneath the glass partition.

CLARESSA

At least lemme get some fri-

*Pop!* -- the lunch lady smacking Claressa's hand with a pair of tongs.

LUNCH LADY

Jason say no french fries, no fried  
chicken. And lay off them Red  
Vines.

(CONTINUED)

A bit of comedy as the two hold eyes here: Claressa dumbfounded at the exchange, the lunch lady like Wonder Woman defending her french fry throne.

Claressa goes to reach for the fries again, and... the lunch lady raises those *tongs* again. Claressa... takes the chicken and yams.

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, RING (MAR '12) - DAY

A session in progress, Jason working Claressa on the pads. Brap, Brap, Brap... Brap, Brap, Womp. Moving in sync, as Jason barks combos and Claressa delivers.

Jason hands off to Zay and ducks under the ropes.

JASON

Take over Zay, *work her* -- do like I told you.

On command, Zay digs his shoulder, a three-shot body combo.

Claressa fires right back. Brap brap brap. Zay is wirey and spry but Claressa's punches are sharp and unexpected. They go toe to toe.

JASON

*Again!*

Zay complies, all his weight, heavy punches but Claressa slips them and returns fire.

JASON

*That's it, that's it right there -- Ressa, you gotta take that now, keep yo breath.*

They're in the corner, clogged up, heads on each other's shoulders, both exhausted, out of gas.

Zay's skin so near and close, the lashes of their eyes nearly touching were it not for that headgear.

A beat, then...

Jason's eyes narrow in recognition...

JASON

Look here: your job... is to *work her*, you understand me? If you don't work her here, she gone get worked over there.

(CONTINUED)

ZAY

Yes coach.

INT. JASON'S VAN (MAR '12) - DAY - MOVING

Jason driving Ressa home, the two sitting in silence as they drift through these empty Flint streets.

Claressa knows something's up, eyes decidedly out the window, away from Jason. Jason stares at her, eyes as much on her as the road.

JASON

Hey look here, we need to talk.

Nothing from Claressa, eyes still out that window, she's a moody one:

JASON

Claressa...

CLARESSA

*What?*

JASON

We need to talk about you and Zay.

CLARESSA

What about us?

JASON

Look umma tell it to you straight:  
*No. Dating. At the gym. You cannot  
mix business with pleasure.*

Rolled eyes from Claressa.

JASON

'Ressa.

CLARESSA

I hear you, *dang*.

JASON

I mean, look out there.

(and)

*Look.*

They drive in silence a moment, Jason letting his point take hold as they pass battered, boarded up homes. One after another.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

You on a path right now and everything you see out there is one more thing to get in the way. All the *boys...*

CLARESSA

*Coach.*

Jason smiles.

JASON

What? You think I don't know what it's like to be sixteen, hormones all everywhere.

Now Claressa busts a gut, both of them laughing here.

CLARESSA

Coach stop it, don't nobody want to hear about you nasty ol' hormones.

JASON

You don't even know, I had *all* the girls, I was a *playa*.

CLARESSA

Oh nah man, stop, *please*.

Jason smiles at Claressa, loves it when can she let her guard down, be a kid. They continue on a bit, the moment passing.

Jason goes serious again:

JASON

You win that gold medal, you can date who you want, when you want, how you want. You got nothin' else to prove. You up here--

(raises his hand)

But until then, no dating at the gym. You got too much at stake.

Claressa looks out the window again, avoids his eyes.

JASON

Trust me, them boys will leave you high and dry. I done it -- I know!

Off Jason's smile, half cheeky, half reflective, CUT TO...

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (MAR '12) - NIGHT

Jason feeds a VHS into an antiquated VHS player, backpedals to the couch. A grainy BOXING MATCH begins to play on the TV.

A lithe and loose Jason Crutchfield, sixty pounds lighter and twenty years younger, bounds around an opposing fighter like a gazelle.

A gazelle with sledgehammers for hands, the Young Jason we see is an impressive fighter, full of promise.

After a few beats, Mickey slides beside him, takes his hand.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GALAXY LANES( MAR '12) - NIGHT

Claressa and Zay, hand in hand, hanging out with a group of friends in this bright-lit bowling alley. Eating pizza, horsing around. Claressa, for once, allowing herself to let loose, be a *kid*.

Claressa and Zay cackling at some joke. Bodies intertwined. Never more than a foot apart. An innocence, a purity in this short montage. Teenagers in love.

INT. ZAY'S BASEMENT BEDROOM (MAR '12) - NIGHT - LATER

Zay beside Claressa -- on top of Claressa, the two of them making out on a bed.

A locked door, the soft glow of a television, late night videos playing on mute.

The heaviest petting, Claressa and Zay grinding, making out. At this age, so many hormones, they both want this and yet--

CLARESSA

Zay, wait.

Zay continuing, because, patriarchy, that "wait" a *yellow*, not a red.

CLARESSA

Zay.

He stops, panting heavily, Claressa pushes him off, sits up on the bed.

CLARESSA

Look -- if this what you want... If this the only reason why you with me --

(CONTINUED)

ZAY  
It's not the only--

CLARESSA  
*Listen to me.*

Beat.

CLARESSA  
I gotta tell you something. It  
might be hard for you to hear but I  
gotta tell you.

ZAY  
Okay.

A pause. Zay nervous now, waiting for her to continue.

CLARESSA  
Look... when I was little, when I  
was a lil' girl. My mama friend. He  
used to...

Claressa closes her eyes, takes a beat to gather herself.

CLARESSA  
He used to touch me.

Zay clenches his jaw, ill-equipped for this.

Claressa struggles, but pushes on.

CLARESSA  
He used to touch me... like that...

Zay stands, seething. So much anger. Ready to throw down.

CLARESSA  
It ain't about all that. He locked  
up now. I'm good. I just... I  
just need to take it extra slow.

It takes a minute. Processing. Zay softens. Reaches an arm  
around her, but... stops short of embracing her. Claressa  
notices.

CLARESSA  
(leaning into Zay)  
It's okay. I'm not scared of being  
touched. Not by you.

Zay wraps his arm around her, leans in.

(CONTINUED)

ZAY

I'm sorry that happened to you.  
(and)  
But it don't change nothing for me.

Off Claressa, a weight lifted...

CUT TO:

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Claressa entering, finds Jackie's crew in full-force, Johnny, a few lady and guy friends all topsy-turvy on the threadbare furniture.

Claressa rolls her eyes at the spectacle, makes her way towards her bedroom.

JACKIE

Where you comin' from?

CLARESSA

Nowhere.

JACKIE

Nowhere?  
(and)  
Come here for a minute.

CLARESSA

I'm goin' to bed, I got training in the morning.

JACKIE

(to Claressa)  
Oh you too good for your mama now?

A boozy grin from one of the gathered folks.

There's music playing, something full of groove and soul. One of Jackie's guy friends rises, shimmies his way over to Claressa.

GUY FRIEND

Come on dance with me Ressa. Aint no one here can keep up with ya boy.

JACKIE

Leave her alone, Alfred. She too high and mighty for us. She a big shot now.

(CONTINUED)

The man shimmies his hips in a boogie rock, closes in on Claressa and throws his head back in laughter. Claressa rolls her eyes, pleads at Jackie:

JACKIE

Girl we just playin with you--

Claressa pushes past, headed for the hallway

GUY FRIEND

C'mon just one-

Alfred puts a hand on Claressa's hip from behind -- IN A FLASH -- WHOMP...CRASH!

The spray of various liquids, inebriated chaos, Claressa having sent him ass over heels to the ground.

JACKIE

GODDAMMIT Ressa!

A melange surround Alfred trying to gage the extent of his injury.

LADY FRIEND

Help

Jackie ambles over to help Alfred. Glares over at Claressa.

JACKIE

Get yo' ass outta here! *This my house.* You so fancy now y'all better go out and get your own damn house.

CLARESSA

Mama, I'm sorry, I -

JACKIE

Whatchya hard of hearing, princess?  
I said GET THE FUCK UP OUTTA MY HOUSE. You ruinin' my buzz.

Claressa takes a tentative step towards them but that step is met with the coldest glare.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, JASON'S BEDROOM (MAR '12) - NIGHT

Jason and Mickey passed out.

A beat of Jason's carburetor-like snore contending with his sleep apnea, then...

(CONTINUED)

...his cell rings, buzzing on the nightstand.

He sleeps through it. Instead, Mickey stirs, reaches over to the other side, across and beyond Jason.

One look at the screen and her face changes.

MICKEY

*Jason...*

INT. JASON'S VAN (MAR '12) - NIGHT - MOVING

Jason piloting his van through these Flint streets, neck craned as he searches the sidewalks.

Something desperate in Jason as what he finds out there looking back at him are the less savory aspects of Flint:

-- *Doped up zombies stumbling out of derelict houses*

-- *A few "coulda been" men hanging on street corners.*

--*a cordon of cop cars, two cops making an arrest.*

We're on Saginaw Street, a wide thoroughfare cutting through the heart of "wrong side of the tracks" Flint. On either side of the road, pawnshops, liquor stores.

A figure up ahead catches Jason's attention. He speeds towards it. Claressa striding down the block in a daze.

He calls out from the van...

JASON

*'Ressa!*

...but she continues on, trancelike.

Jason cuts across Saginaw and onto the sidewalk. Gets out of the car, engine still running -- she'll have to go through him.

Claressa gets a few feet from him and stops, eyes low, chest heaving -- she's crying.

JASON

*It's me.*

Jason raises his arms, shows himself as friendly.

JASON

*It's me, okay?*

(CONTINUED)

Claressa raises her eyes, slowly meets his. She drifts forward, allows herself into his embrace, and...

...it all comes out: tears, clenched breaths. Jason is patient, says nothing. Off this embrace, CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAR '12) - DAY

Mickey in the bathroom, brushing her teeth. Calls out to hallway.

MICKEY

Corey, wake Ressa up before she late to school.

Corey happily abandons his cereal, rounds the six feet separating this kitchen from the living room. Claressa is on the couch, a simple pallet of blankets.

For once, she sleeps peacefully. Before Corey can reach her, she grabs at him --

CLARESSA

*Boooooo!*

The boy squeals with laughter, that lovely smile of the younger Claressa showing through again.

Claressa stretches her arms skyward, goes to rise when the door opens, Jason stepping in from the front porch.

JASON

You alright?

CLARESSA

I'm good.

Jason goes into his pockets, passes something to her. As she looks down, sees the set of keys in her hands:

JASON

You can take Keisha ol' room while she at school.

CLARESSA

Thanks coach.

Jason looks past her now, locks eyes with Mickey there in the kitchen. Mickey smiles.

A thought flashes through him. Gets more serious:

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Now this don't change a thing --  
I'm your coach and you my fighter.  
Ain't gone treat you no different  
just because you here.

CLARESSA

Yes coach.  
(and)  
You tell my mama?

JASON

Not for me to tell -- that's on  
you.

Claressa drops her head but nods in the affirmative.

JASON

Worlds is right around the corner.  
Road to the Olympics go through  
China so get your mind right, you  
hear?

Off Claressa's determined face...

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, JASON'S OFFICE (MAR '12) - DAY

The door closed, Jason and Claressa here huddled over Jason's  
cell. It's in speakerphone mode.

JASON

(into cell)  
Yeah uh huh, we went down and got  
it, they had her in the system  
already and everything.

NICOLE

(through phone)  
That's great Jason, thank you. All  
her flights have been taken care of  
as well, all she has to do is check-  
in at the counter.  
(and)  
Claressa, are you excited to go to  
China?

Claressa nods her head sheepishly -- she's still a kid.

JASON

Yeah she good, she ready.

Something flashes across Claressa's face.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

What about Jason?

Beat. A long, silent beat in which we can HEAR Nicole's discomfort on the other side of that line.

NICOLE (O.S.)

I'm sorry Claressa, Jason's not sanctioned with AIBA let alone USA Boxing.

CLARESSA

You not coming?

JASON

Look, 'Ressa -- China a long ways away.

NICOLE (O.S.)

I'm sorry, Claressa. We can only travel in officially sanctioned coaches. Jason would have to fly himself there and even then, it would only be to support from the sidelines.

CLARESSA

(looking to Jason,  
disbelief)

*Coach?*

NICOLE

Our coaching staff is excellent, you'll be in good hands...

Claressa didn't hear a word of that. She just stormed out.

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, HALLWAY (MAR '12) - DAY

Claressa, pissed.

JASON

'Ressa, listen. Gettin' to China ain't cheap, and my cable job the one that pay. Cant miss any more shifts. Got a family to feed, you know what I'm saying?

Jason moves closer, sees that beneath the anger she's fighting back tears.

JASON

Don't go cryin' on me. Only tears we cryin is tears of joy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)

Tell you what, when you win that gold medal I'm gone be crying like a lil' bitch.

Beat. Then Claressa cracks a smile. Jason too. The pair of them lock eyes--

JASON

Even when I ain't there, I'm there.

Claressa still trepidatious as WE CUT TO:

*CLOUDS -- a wave of low-hanging weather over a foreign landscape.*

EXT. SHANGHAI CHINA (MAY '12) - NIGHT - AERIAL

A floating intro to this futuristic metropolis; materializing through fog or pollution or both.

As a domed Convention Center comes into view announcing itself as the hub of the competition, a chyron:

**"2012 Women's World Boxing Championships. Shanghai, China"**

OMITTED

INT. SHANGHAI HOTEL, CLARESSA'S ROOM (MAY '12) - NIGHT

The lights turn on as Claressa enters the room, a sleek blend of Feng Shui and 21st century gadgetry.

She dumps the contents of her duffel bag on the bed, takes grandmas framed photo and wanders to the window. Up in the clouds -- engulfed by shimmering skyscrapers.

CLARESSA

You ain't never gonna believe all this, Granny.

EXT. FLINT STREET (MAY '12) - LATE AFTERNOON

Jason atop a ladder leaning precariously against a cable wire. His laptop open on his van with volume full up.

ANNOUNCER 1

And that looks to be another point for Shields who is riddling her opponent Pooja Rani with body blows.

JASON

There you go! Thats how we do!

(CONTINUED)

Jason throws both arms in the air.

JASON

Yes! That's what I'm talkin'  
about!

A passerby looks up with a curious regard.

JASON

(to passerby)  
Ressa destroyin' her! It ain't  
even close.

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER, PRESS LINE (MAY '12) - DAY

This place more like Comic-Con than Madison Square Garden.  
Claressa in conversation with a JOURNALIST.

JOURNALIST

27-10? Thats quite a debut out  
there. Really impressive. She didnt  
stand a chance. Is that why they  
call you T-Rex?

CLARESSA

Naw, thats account of my short arms  
actually. I got no reach but I'm  
still fierce as they come.

JOURNALIST

Well thats clearly the truth. So  
Claressa, tell me: Why boxing?

CLARESSA

I like to beat people up.

Claressa's response reflexive. From the gut. Real. The  
journalist laughs as she scribbles in a small notebook.

JOURNALIST

You like to... beat people up?

CLARESSA

That's right.

The hovering Nicole Thompson has listened to her answer with  
a wince.

NICOLE

(to journalist)  
Excuse me, I'm gonna borrow  
Claressa for a moment.

Off Susan's understanding nod, Nicole steers Claressa away.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLE

You might want to rethink your strategy.

CLARESSA

What you mean?

NICOLE

People expect female athletes to behave a certain way, look a certain way. Boxing is no exception.

CLARESSA

Thats bullshit.

NICOLE

It sucks, I know...but the reality is, if you want to succeed *outside* the ring, you have to play the game.

Beat.

Let me show you something.

Case in point -- they round a corner and are confronted by a curious sight: the US Boxing featherweight fighter MARLEN ESPARZA (*petite, feminine*), dressed in boxing gloves and cocktail dress, posing for a photo shoot.

CLARESSA

What's this? Ain't she got a fight today?

NICOLE

Photo shoot.

(and)

*Covergirl* picked up Marlen after the trials. I think it's the hair.

CLARESSA

But I can kick that girl ass. I'm a better boxer than her.

NICOLE

Well that remains to be seen. But that is exactly my point, Claressa. Its not fair but especially for women, it's not just about how skilled you are.

Off Claressa's look, taking in Marlen Esparza with child-like curiosity...

INT. SHANGHAI GRAND HOTEL, CLARESSA'S ROOM (MAY '12) - NIGHT

Claressa in front of a mirror applying mascara. Its an awkward process. She tries not to blink. Then lipstick, a tulip red. She takes herself in, not sure what to make of her own reflection. A beat. Then, wipes it all away.

CUT TO:

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE (MAY '12) - NIGHT

4AM. A quiet street. All asleep. But for a single light on in the kitchen of Jason's house.

UP CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAY '12) - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jason at the kitchen counter, a fresh pot of coffee gurgling in a cheap percolator.

A laptop open on the kitchen table, other than a dim bulb above the oven, the only source of light in here. As Jason pours himself a cuppa...

...the SOUND of feet padding through the home, Mickey appearing in the kitchen; takes a seat before the laptop.

JASON

My bad. Figured I'd watch out here  
so I wouldn't wake you.

The look on Mickey's face: *Wake me?*

On cue, Jason pours another cup, sits beside his wife.

On the laptop screen, we SEE Claressa standing at center ring, a referee between her and a much taller fighter.

Mickey takes a long sip of coffee. Jason, a ball of nerves.

MICKEY

Dang, that girl tall.

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER (MAY '12) - DAY

Bright light, top lit, a pristine if cold arena overflowing with female athletes and Chinese spectators. We take in the energy as an announcer sets the stage:

ANNOUNCER 1

*Welcome back. We're coming to you  
live from the Women's Boxing World  
Championships in Shanghai, China.*

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON: Claressa, down there in the pit of the arena, dressed for her second bout, now in red.

ANNOUNCER 2

*Kind of an interesting set up here in this inaugural year of Olympic Women's Boxing: the top eight finishers here at Worlds will qualify to move on to the summer Olympics in London.*

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER, BOXING RING (MAY '12) - DAY

Claressa beside the ref, looking up at her opponent here: SAVANNAH MARSHALL, all 5'11 of her, three inches taller and with the limbs to prove it.

Claressa looks... *unsure.*

The ref speaks instructions to the fighters but we don't hear it. Instead...

ANNOUNCER 1

*That's right and Flint Michigan's 17 year old Claressa Shields can punch her ticket to London right now with a victory in this semi-final match against England's Savannah Marshall.*

ANNOUNCER 2

*Shields cruised through her opening bout here yesterday with India's Pooja Rani, but Marshall is a much more seasoned fighter.*

The ref concludes, Claressa retreating to her corner. COACH PARKER (stiff, subdued; the opposite of Jason in every way) readies for battle.

COACH PARKER

Alright now she has a reach advantage so you let her come at you and you counter, okay?

CLARESSA

Huh?

COACH PARKER

When she punches, I want you to counter, and then give her the slip.

(CONTINUED)

Coach Parker taps Claressa across the headgear, exits the ropes. From Claressa's face though, it's clear what Coach Parker said makes no sense to her, but -- *DING DING DING!*

The bell forces Claressa to her feet, propels her across the ring at an oncoming object -- Savannah Marshall.

Claressa approaches Marshall, and...

...Marshall pivots away, those long arms coming at Claressa from odd angles, from everywhere, Marshall like an octopus riding a whirly-gig.

As Claressa struggles to get her bearings...

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAY '12) - NIGHT - SAME

The *same* messy fight playing out on Jason's laptop.

A bit of comedy, however, as Corey appears wiping sleep from his eyes, drowsily hoisting himself onto Jason's lap.

ON THAT SCREEN, Marshall continues to frustrate Claressa, throwing punches from befuddling angles.

COREY

Daddy what's wrong with 'Ressa?

JASON

Nothin' baby, she just need a minute to figure her out, they'll get her right once she get back to her corner.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER, BOXING RING (MAY '12) - DAY

Between rounds, Claressa in her aforementioned corner guzzling water at a furious clip, eyes wide and dilated.

CLARESSA

(flustered)  
She keep *runnin'*.

PARKER

Calm down.

CLARESSA

She not comin' at me.

COACH PARKER

I know, calm down.

CLARESSA

What I need to do?

(CONTINUED)

Claressa looks up and into Parker's face, sees something that strikes her down -- *uncertainty*.

COACH PARKER

Look, when she step to throw -- and  
I know she way out there, Claressa  
but when she steps...

Parker's lips keep moving. Her voice should be coming right at us, but... a separation of sound and image, Coach Parker speaking, but... her voice inaudible.

Instead, we HEAR something else, a voice wholly detached from this boxing arena. As Claressa rises from her corner, heads out to meet Marshall for the start of the second round...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAY '12) - NIGHT - SAME

On the laptop screen, Claressa and Marshall meeting at center ring, the second round underway.

The "voice wholly detached" clearer now: it's Jason, speaking to himself in a stream of consciousness.

JASON

*C'mon now, she got long arms. You  
gotta work your way in, gotta move  
with her and close that space.*

But what we SEE on that laptop is the opposite, Marshall dictating the spacing, swinging from odd angles and resetting the distance. Claressa getting worked.

JASON (V.O.)

*Work your way in, close that gap.*

*BOP!* -- a gangly left jab across Claressa's chin.

JASON (V.O.)

*Close her down, don't give her the  
reach.*

*BOP! BOP!* -- a pivot, a dig, two more shots against Claressa's temple.

CUT TO:

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER, BOXING RING (MAY '12) - DAY

Not used to defending, Claressa is visibly shaken, a deer in headlights. Defeat begetting more defeat.

(CONTINUED)

On the sidelines, Team USA, dismayed, shout words of encouragement.

TEAM USA TEAMMATE  
To the body, Ressa! Don't over  
think it! Take it to the body!

Nicole clenches.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE (MAY '12) - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Jason's hands above his head, pacing the living room in frustration. Glances down at the laptop on the table: the closing of Claressa's bout playing there, her head hung low in defeat.

Mickey and the kids watching, unsure what to give him, what he needs. The look on Jason's face: utter SHOCK.

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER, LOAD-IN AREA (MAY '12) - DAY

Claressa, on a gear case, hunched over, defeat personified. Unprompted, she slaps at her thighs, throws her head back:

CLARESSA  
*Wake up wake up **wake up!***

At a door opening, Claressa sits up, composes herself.

REVERSE ANGLE: Nicole Thompson opens the door, steps into the stairwell.

NICOLE  
I've been looking all over for you.  
It's Jason.

Nicole goes to hand Claressa the phone but... she won't take it. Claressa only clenches her jaw tighter shut. She's pissed.

CLARESSA  
I ain't talkin' to him.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

NICOLE

(into phone)

Jason, I'm not sure if you're aware from the coverage over there but Claressa's not out just yet: if Savannah Marshall wins the tournament tomorrow, it'll weight Claressa's strength of competition. That along with her impressive score from round one should be enough for the final seed into the Olympics. Think of it like a wild card spot in football.

Nicole looks to Claressa here, a "chin up" gesture.

JASON

(on speakerphone)

That's good, that's something to hope for.

(and)

Ressa! I know it's a loss. But that's your first loss. That's all it is, one loss! That loss is over with, it happened already. That loss is *done*. This is a new day. It's time to get back up.

CLARESSA silent, utterly distraught.

JASON

(speakerphone)

It ain't about the physical thing, it's about what's up in your head, up in your mind, what's in your soul, what's in your spirit. Now if you stay down, then you down, that's your character. But if you get back up, you the truth. It's gonna be up to you to show who Claressa Shields really is.

Off Claressa, full of self loathing -

INT. SHANGHAI GRAND HOTEL, CLARESSA'S ROOM (MAY '12) - NIGHT

Unable to sleep, Claressa shadowboxes her reflection in the window.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. SHANGHAI CONVENTION CENTER (MAY '12) - DAY

Ringside. A grouping of three pedestals. Savannah Marshall and three other fighters [Vystropova, Torlopova, Laurell] waiting to take the pedestals at three different elevations.

A Gold Medal around her neck, it's clear Marshall has won.

A beat of pageantry, the CHINESE TOURNAMENT SPONSOR speaking at the mic. We can hear what's said but it goes untranslated, no subtitles.

Instead, standing among Team USA, Nicole and various other spectators, we find Claressa; Sulking -- *Marshall's medal, Marshall's joy.*

All eyes going to the screens as a list of names appears.

ANGLE ON: "8 Seed: Claressa Shields"

A yelp from Nicole as she turns back to Claressa, fists raised.

NICOLE

You're in, Claressa that's you! You made it!

(grabs her shoulders)

Claressa: you're going to the *freaking* Olympics!

And yet, Claressa non-plussed, attention instead focused across the room, at Savannah Marshall and the English contingent, celebrating their victory.

Claressa should know what that feels like. It's subtle, but... something hardens in her. As her jaw sets...

CUT TO:

EXT NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH (JUN '12) - DAWN

Were back in Flint. Sunrise over an empty football field.

INT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH, CLASSROOM (JUN '12) - DAY

Passing the desks of listless students as an exhausted TEACHER lectures from the head of the class.

At Claressa's desk, absolute focus. But not on the lesson at hand.

Placed flat and out of view behind her textbook: a smartphone. The tiny screen (circa 2012) devours her attention. After a beat, we come around her, REVEAL:

(CONTINUED)

*Savannah Marshall* - or rather, Claressa's bout with Marshall.

Prelap-

JASON (O.S.)  
How many times you gon' watch that?

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (JUN '12) - NIGHT

Tight on fingers weaving thin strands of hair. We cut wide to see Mickey making quick work of a new extensions in Claressa's hair.

A laptop rests atop Claressa's lap.

And on its screen, that same video of her bout with Savannah Marshall. The volume off, a hint of shame at even watching this thing.

Claressa's eyes shoot in the direction of that voice, clock Jason appearing from the rear of the house.

JASON  
How many times?

Jason crosses the living room, takes a seat beside her. Claressa tenses at the proximity.

JASON  
You okay?

CLARESSA  
I'm fine.

JASON  
You fine? You sure bout' that?

Beat.

CLARESSA  
I don't feel like talking.

JASON  
You need to talk, can't just be watching that fight over and over again hatin' on everything, you need to let it out.

Beat.

JASON  
'Ressa.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

I hear you, man, dang.

JASON

Yeah well don't ignore me,  
never, I hate being ig--

MICKEY

Jason why you bothering her,  
she don't feel like talking--

CLARESSA

You just keep flying at me -- I  
told you, I don't want to talk  
about the stupid fight, I *lost*.  
Umma try to do better and it's  
like, it's just not enough. Even  
when I win it's not enough.

Beat.

CLARESSA

You told me you were gonna be  
there. You wasn't there. It ain't  
my--

JASON

So now she *is* blaming me, right?  
(and)  
Okay.

CLARESSA

Can't blame nobody else.

JASON

Oh you can't, huh?

MICKEY

*Jason.*

Just then, a KNOCK at the front door, all three of them  
looking towards it, not expecting visitors.

CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, CLARESSA'S ROOM (JUN '12) - NIGHT

Claressa fully focused on the thing in her hand: a pregnancy  
test.

BRIANA

If its a girl umma name her Miracle  
and we can dress her all cute in  
one of them bow headband things-

CLARESSA

You sure?

(CONTINUED)

Briana cocks her head at that --

BRIANA

Of course I'm sure what kinda question that is? Ain't like I'm some dude what can claim it ain't mine.

Briana looks down at herself, rubs her belly now, a genuine awe at the life growing inside her now.

CLARESSA

You.. you told the baby daddy, yet?

Briana meets Claressa's gaze here. Doesn't answer the question. In the non-answer, an answer.

CLARESSA

Shit Bri, where you gon' live? Y'all can't stay at mama's.

BRIANA

Well when you win that prize money, we can get our own place. Just us, together.

CLARESSA

Yeah, well...  
(and now a big ass smile)  
...don't get it twisted though, no matter how cute that baby is, I ain't changin' no stinky diapers -- that's all you!

Briana laughs, happy to be the center of attention for once.

CUT TO:

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JUN '12) - DAY

A handful of fighters spread around, Claressa and Zay sparring in the ring. After a few beats, Claressa throws a jab which Zay slips.

ZAY

Come over later?

She throws another combo which he again ducks, side-stepping out of reach-

CLARESSA

I can't.

(CONTINUED)

ZAY

Tomorrow then? Ma got nights this week.

Claressa frustrated, keeps trying to tag Zay while he keeps slipping her crosses.

ZAY

Come on, it's been a minute.

CLARESSA

Zay, focus.

ZAY

I am focused.

Like a game of tag, Zay continues to evade Claressa's punches

ZAY

On you coming over.

From the looks of it, Claressa and Zay in two different sessions. She keeps trying to spar while he continues to play keep away.

Claressa, frustrated, pulls her head gear off, throws it at Zay, and storms out of the ring.

ZAY

Ress, I'm just messin' with you-

Claressa, already out the side door.

EXT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE (JUN '12) - DAY

Claressa pulling her gloves off. Zay spilling out after her.

Just these two, door closed firmly behind them, tucked away from Jason's watchful eye.

ZAY

I was just playin'-

CLARESSA

I think we need to chill on us.

ZAY

Jason wasn't even lookin'.

CLARESSA

It ain't about Jason.

ZAY

Huh?

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

Look. I ain't got time to mess around. Like... I been working my whole life for this so right now, I don't need a boyfriend, I need a sparring partner. I need workouts and reps and that's it.

Zay listens, thinks on that a moment.

ZAY

So you breakin' up with me?

CLARESSA

No.

(and)

I mean not really, but... until these Olympics? *Kinda?*

ZAY

Kinda?

CLARESSA

I seeded last, Zay. The girls I'm fightin' over there like 30. They ain't got school or homework. They got people working 'em out all day and feeding them green smoothies and shit. I just don't need any distractions right now.

A nod from Claressa, making sure he *gets* it.

ZAY

So that what I am?

She takes a step towards him, and... he takes a step back.

CLARESSA

I didn't mean it like that, it's-

ZAY

Nah, I get it. We good.

And he's out.

Claressa eyes cast down. *Yeah.* He gets it.

INT. NORTHWESTERN S.H., HALLWAY (JUN '12) - MORNING - MOVING

Claressa, shouldering a flaking Transformers backpack. *Alone.*

Kids line the building, babbling cliques as she passes. Up ahead, Zay and his boys one such clique.

(CONTINUED)

Zay averts his eyes as she passes.

EXT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE (JUN '12) - NIGHT

From a distance we see a dinged up Oldsmobile Cutlass pull up in front of the gym.

The headlights switch off and a male figure steps out.

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JUN '12) - NIGHT

A bit lively in here, a dozen boxers work out in pairs.

Over in the ring, Claressa and Zay sparring. The exchanges sharper and crisper than we've seen previously.

Jason within the ring with them, pivoting as they pivot, a three-person dance.

The man from the Cutlass enters. We've not seen him before. Bulging eyes and a frizz of charcoal gray hair, tall and lean, wispy mustache.

This is Claressa's father, CLARENCE, the very definition of an "old school playa."

Clarence walks up to the ring, stands there for a long beat watching Claressa and Zay pound each other. No one inside the gym has even noticed Clarence yet.

As Claressa and Zay break off to receive some instruction:

CLARENCE

Ressa?

Claressa's gaze snaps to her father.

A tense silence.

CLARENCE

Lookin' good up there, baby.

Beat. Then Clarence nods to Jason:

CLARENCE

Jason Crutchfield. Longtime no see--

Jason turns away, making his feelings for Clarence patently clear.

CLARENCE

I come to pick my daughter up. We havin' a lil' get together.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

She training.

CLARENCE

Come on, man, I just got out the joint. She can skip out a lil' early tonight, Ressa' what ch'you say?

Jason ignores him, says to Claressa:

JASON

Don't pay him no mind, you hear?

CLARENCE

(shuffling forward)

Hey! Who the hell you think you talkin' to?

JASON

I'm talkin' to my fighter.

CLARENCE

You talkin' to my daughter.

JASON

Is that right?

Jason turns to Clarence and straightens, the challenge clear.

Claressa's eyes flit between the two men, conflicted.

Finally:

Jason watches Claressa dip under the ropes and hop down, dutifully joining Clarence. A girl who'll love her father through thin and thinner.

CLARESSA

I got to get changed.

CLARENCE

Wait right here for you, baby.

Claressa marches off toward the changing room.

Clarence's gaze returns to Jason. Something dark, triumphant in Clarence's eyes.

CLARENCE

Look here, I appreciate everything you done for her... but some things you gotta recognize, you feel me?

(CONTINUED)

No response from Jason. He exits out the opposite end of the ring as we pre-lap Clarence shrieking:

CLARENCE (V.O.)  
*T-Rexxxxxxxx!*

INT. TORCH BAR AND GRILL (JUN '12) - NIGHT

Squeezed into a corner booth, the Shields clan. Clarence, Claressa, Briana, Peanut.

CLARENCE  
England, London. Damn,-- you did good. You did *real* good.

CLARESSA  
I didn't win nothing yet.

CLARENCE  
Don't matter. This a proud papa right here.

Clarence stands up and yells out to the smattering of patrons in the diner--

CLARENCE  
My baby girl going to the Olympics!

Claressa sinks deep down in her seat, somewhere between amused and embarrassed.

CLARENCE  
(pointing at himself)  
Um the one who done told her she a boxer!!!

CLARESSA  
Dad, stop!

Briana and Peanut crack up as Clarence continues to regale the family with stories and wit.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (JUN '12) - NIGHT

Jason sitting on the couch, watching tv. Headlights wipe the curtains. He mutes the TV as we hear the door--

...Claressa enters, keys in hand as she locks the door behind her, steps into the room but only so far.

A frozen moment, neither sure what to say to the other. Jason wades in:

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Sit down a minute.

Claressa thinks on it a moment, the briefest moment, then... makes her way over to him, eases to the couch beside him.

JASON

So... daddy home again, huh?

A nod from Claressa.

JASON

That's good. That's real good, we all need family, you know?

CLARESSA

Yeah.

JASON

He ask you about London?

CLARESSA

He on parole, so it might just be Mama, Bri, and Peanut. But Bri pregnant so I guess she might not go, I mean...

Beat. Something *else* is on Jason's mind, going somewhere with this.

Claressa follows his gaze, sees that tape of herself and Marshall running on the television.

JASON

You want my opinion? And umma tell you, you ain't gotta want mine, but umma tell it to you straight--

Beat.

JASON (CONT'D)

When you leave all of 'em right here, ain't no bullshit around you.

(beat)

This is the highlight of your life right now. You came up *hard*. You gotta look out for *you*, and your better interests. Cause guess what - - somebody didn't care about they better interests when it was on *them*.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

Yeah, but... they my *family*, they all I *got*.

JASON

I know it feel like that, but you all you got. You got more heart, more discipline, more *fight* than any of them ever had.

Beat.

JASON (CONT'D)

You drown out all that noise, stay focused. You want to take care of your family? You gotta win that gold first. Endorsements gon' come after that. Nike, Visa... just you wait, the whole world gonna know who Claressa Shields is. They come lookin' already. And when you *win*, oohweee just you wait! Buy your mama a new house with space for Bri' Baby. Buy you a car - There go Claressa, drivin' around in a big ol' Cadillac...

CLARESSA

*Cadillac?* Nah man, you high, I ain't drivin' no pimp car.

They share a little chuckle. Claressa looks at Jason and nods, total trust here.

JASON

Tell you somethin' else too -- I apologize for not bein' in China with you. That's on me.

Woah! A legit apology. That's huge. Only one person more stubborn than Jason -- she happens to be sitting right in front of him.

JASON

You been sacrificing. So I gotta sacrifice too.

Jason reaches into a folder beside him, removes an 8x11 printout, a flight booking with United.

JASON

Umma be there in London, 'Ressa.

(CONTINUED)

Claressa pulls that paper closer, almost as though to verify, to be certain and sure.

JASON

Umma be right there with you but...  
the question is, is you ready?

As Claressa takes in those words, let's them sink into her being...

CUT TO:

EXT. FLINT BACK ROADS (JUL '12) - NIGHT - MOVING

Bird's-Eye view of Olympic qualifier Claressa Shields, recalling her eleven year-old self from film's opening.

Only this time she's not running alone, Jason pacing behind her in that van. As something akin to Beyonce's *Run The World* bubbles onto the soundtrack, we plunge headlong into...

A MONTAGE

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JUN '12) - DAY - MONTAGE

Claressa at the speed bag, pounding away with skill and precision as Jason barks through her reps.

JASON

*Git it git it git it GIT IT!!!!*

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BERSTON, HALLWAY (JUN '12) - DAY - MONTAGE

Claressa pulls a weighted sled behind her with two small kids, giggling as they hold on for the ride.

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JUN '12) - DAY - MONTAGE

*ANGLE ON: Claressa's core, her obliques taugt and ripped as she works through pull-ups -- rise and twist, rise and twist.*

*ANGLE ON: Claressa's working the speed-bag. A steady rhythm - bap bap bap bab and then she lets loose and the bag whires in a blur of motion.*

*ANGLE ON: Claressa does suicides up and down the Berston hallway, as smaller kids scramble to keep up, and older women cheer her on from the doorways.*

*ANGLE ON: Claressa on the heavy bag, stick and move, stick and move.*

(CONTINUED)

*ANGLE ON: Claressa on the floor doing crunches. Every time she releases a clinch and exposes her mid-riff, Jason tags her across the abs with a pad.*

EXT. BERSTON, (JUN '12) - DUSK - MONTAGE

Claressa skips rope, first slowly, deliberate, then gaining speed and rhythm until she reaches a dynamic crescendo.

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE (JUN '12) - NIGHT

*ANGLE ON: Claressa shadow-boxing in a pool of streetlight. A light June mist makes a halo around her.*

INT. NORTHWESTERN S.H., CLASSROOM (JUN '12) - DAY - MONTAGE

Chaos in the classroom before the teacher arrives. Cheering. We find Claressa in a push-up competition with one other guys. He relents and the kids go wild.

EXT. SAGINAW STREET (JUL '12) - DAY - MOVING - MONTAGE

*Running with Claressa. Again.*

*Not a whole lot going on out here, just a lonely stretch of road but... still that empowering anthem over the soundtrack, pushing Claressa through sweat and grime.*

As a man HONKS from a passing car:

PASSING MAN

*T-Rex!*

CUT BACK TO:

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (JUL '12) - NIGHT

Jason wraps Claressa's hands. A tender moment. The calm before the storm.

*Jason with pads, dictating Claressa's movements. Jab Jab Cross. Left Uppercut, left cross, right hook. Right uppercut, left cross, right hook...*

*She's getting it.*

UP CUT TO:

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (JUL '12) - NIGHT - MONTAGE

That beat still going, winding itself down now, drifting away as we watch Jason and Claressa continue this montage in...

(CONTINUED)

...the living room of all places? The furniture pushed aside, Jason with soft pads over his hands, taking punches from Claressa in syncopated combinations.

A rhythm here, Claressa's blows syncing up with the soundtrack, overtaking the soundtrack that the beat is composed solely of these punches, Claressa running the world now.

As the session continues...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FLINT STREETS (JUL '12) - DAY - MOVING - MONTAGE

This time find Claressa alone running through these streets; no van, no Jason.

Her footfalls the only beat left, the anthem melted completely away now. Just her breaths, the hiss of her breath as she floats blows at imaginary fighters. At ghosts. At her past.

She's passing broken down homes; held together by sticks and tape. Scorched by flame.

Claressa stops to catch her breath then sets off again, determination and grit prevailing...

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON (JUL '12) - AERIAL - NIGHT

AN AERIAL: the glorious city of London- a few iconic markers, Big Ben, London Eye, then, coming into view... one of the most stunning Summer Olympic builds in the history of the games.

A beacon of light - a majestic outdoor arena awash in violet, a ball of fire burning bright at the center...

CUT TO:

INT. OLYMPIC OPENING CEREMONY STADIUM (JUL '12) - NIGHT

Opening ceremony -- athletes representing the participating countries make their way into London's impressive arena.

No need for replication -- this actually happened, the splendor of it pristinely captured in HD footage of the 2012 games.

Within the action, however, we find Claressa, the most earnest and joyful smile on her face.

(CONTINUED)

Clad in the official USA ceremony uniform, Claressa, brims with pride as she watches the torch get lit.

...we HOLD with her. Her guard down, hope personified.

CUT TO:

SAVANNAH MARSHALL -- *jaw set, towering forty feet above us, eyes following us as we make our way through...*

INT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE, USA BOXING FACILITY (JUL '12) - DAY

And all at once it hits us -- a billboard-sized portrait of Marshall greeting new arrivals.

Draped in the flag of Great Britain, Marshall's image a sobering reminder to all comers: this is *her* turf.

JASON (O.S.)

Soak it in.

Jason catches up to Claressa, falling into step as she continues to gawk at Marshall's improbable face.

JASON

We in the lion's den, now.

Claressa drinks in her enemy's visage, channeling it into--

INT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE, USA BOXING TRAINING AREA (JUL '12)- DAY

*PUNCHES -- Hot and heavy.*

Claressa sparring, pounding away at a tall, lithe woman, a Savannah Marshall clone.

Coach Parker in the ring around the two women, within them, instructing Claressa in that cool, mellow way of hers.

COACH PARKER

Okay Claressa, fool me twice, shame on me. Keep that distance now.

Jason watching from the wings, arms folded across his chest, trying not to jump in, but can't help himself...

JASON

No, no... you got to pivot, keep them feet moving. Close that gap.

Claressa glances at Jason, then back at Coach Parker. She shuffles in, throws a vicious combination at the other girl.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

That's it! Now you in your range...

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me, sir.

Spoken with an English accent, Jason ignoring it. Or just oblivious?

VOICE (O.S.)

(nearer)

Sir?

Jason looks to that voice now, an Englishman dressed in official OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION gear.

OLYMPIC ADMIN

I'm sorry, but... you can't be here, this area is restricted to the public.

The most defeated look from Jason, helpless. Opens his mouth to call out to Claressa, to Coach Parker, but...

OLYMPIC ADMIN

*Sir?*

Hands up, Jason relents and heads for the door.

CUT TO:

INT. OLYMPIC FACILITY, COMMON SPACE (AUG '12) - NIGHT

Claressa gathered amongst a cross-section of US Olympic athletes, multi-hued, multi-disciplined, all united under Phelps quest for history.

INTERCUT BROADCAST AND COMMON ROOM -- Phelps turning and resurfacing for the final lap, no-doubt exhausted from this madman's pursuit of unmatched heights.

BROADCAST PLAY BY PLAY

*He's seventh at the turn now and is in front, Deibler leads ?Avi?, Phelps I don't know! Can he do it again?!*

The room up on its feet, nearing that television, *willing* Phelps onto glory.

We know how this ends: a photo-finish, Phelps pushing himself to that finish line, coming from behind, pushing and pushing and...

(CONTINUED)

THE ROOM ERUPTS -- everyone on their feet jumping around in celebration. On the television screen, a completely spent Phelps, basking in the ovation and revelry.

Claressa's eyes glued to Phelps, from completely different worlds and yet, everything she aims to be.

As the image lingers on Phelps, CUT TO...

INT. OLYMPIC VILLAGE, DORM ROOM (AUG '12) - NIGHT

Claressa in bed, eyes wide open, trained on the ceiling. There's still the SOUND of all that noise out there.

And yet... absolute focus from Claressa. As we take her in for a beat, a prolonged, extended beat of Claressa getting herself together...

...a SOUND -- of voices, of a crowd. As this chorus escalates, makes itself more known...

CUT TO:

INT. OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA, THE STANDS (AUG '12) - DAY

And rather than the locker room or the boxing ring, we find ourselves in the stands?

With Jason, looking at a vendor wearing a collection of english snacks, no clue what to make of it.

NICOLE (O.S.)

I recommend the green ones.

Jason turns, sees Nicole Thompson beside him.

NICOLE

(to the vendor)

Two Heinekens please and a pack of vinegar crisps.

(to Jason)

You can get the next round.

JASON

Oh hi, Nicole. Appreciate you.

Nicole settles up with vendor. Jason, taking it all in. Then - points to jumbotron-

JASON

There's Laurell.

JUMBOTRON (JASON'S POV)

(CONTINUED)

Anna Laurell, blonde and lithe, enters through the red tunnel.

And then--

JASON

Look at Ressa! She look good. She all fired up!

JUMBOTRON (JASON'S POV)

Claressa enters through the blue tunnel, led by Coach Parker, other USA Boxing personnel.

This isn't a professional bout, there's no spotlight or pyrotechnics, just two fighters led by a group of nondescript coaches and officials.

It *is* loud though. As Claressa and her Swedish opponent enter the ring, we hear the Olympic Boxing Arena Announcer.

ARENA ANNOUNCER

*The woman wearing red representing Sweden, Anna Laurell, is one of the most decorated women amateur boxers of all time. And her opponent is at the opposite end of the experience spectrum, it is the teenage phenom from Flint, Michigan, representing the United States of America in her Olympic debut.*

IN THE STANDS: Jason and Nicole settling in. Amped up.

JASON

Shouldn't you be in a box suite or something?

NICOLE

Need a few more gold medals before we can talk box suites.

A nod from Jason at that.

NICOLE

Besides, I've seen you at Claressa's fights, this is where the action is -- I even brought my ear plugs.

JASON

Oh you got jokes?

A small laugh between these two. As they settle in...

(CONTINUED)

IN THE RING: As the ref completes his instructions and sends the two fighters to their corners, we go with Claressa.

COACH PARKER

I know you still focused on Savannah Marshall but you got to get through these next two girls if you wanna get to her. This one wiry. I want you to keep yo feet moving and yo hands up. Locate where the punches be comin' from.

The sway of air, SOUND of the crowd, all of it gelling into a persistent hum as Claressa looks across the ring... sees Laurell bounding on her toes ready for action.

At the SOUND of the opening bell...

IN THE RING: Claressa arrows forward like a buzz saw. Only one way for Laurell to go and it sure as shit ain't forwards.

Claressa weaves left and right, then rocks Laurell with a powerful UPPERCUT. Laurell is built like a Redwood, but staggers a bit here, legs noodly.

IN THE STANDS: The arena a cauldron of noise. Jason going berserk:

JASON

Stay right there, Ressa. *Hold yo ground.*

IN THE RING: A series of body blows.

JASON (O.S.)

That's beautiful! There you go!  
There you go!

JASON

*Let her come to you. She ain't seen nothin like you.*

An onslaught. The Swede flailing her arms. Another colossal hit jerks her head back. We travel with Laurell and pivot, 360, behind her head, revealing first Claressa, then behind Claressa to reveal... MARINA VOLNOVA, 23, staring Claressa down.

Claressa and the Kazakhstani fighter circling each other center-ring, a chyron bottom right setting the stakes clearly:

**"Olympic Boxing Women's Middle Weight Semifinal"**

(CONTINUED)

The trading of blows, two women hell-bent on subduing one another, similar styles.

Each charging in on the other, the kind of fight where technique and precision take a backseat to will and courage --

Claressa is in her Zone, all fury and focus.

IN THE STANDS -- Jason, hyped. Nicole, more composed but equally excited.

JASON

Ressa! Ressa! Finish what you started! This all you. She ain't nobody! You show her how we do!

An occasional glance from surrounding spectators who don't understand the vested interest, but mostly they are drinking the cool-aid, enthusiasm palpable.

UP CUT TO:

CENTER RING -- Claressa and Volnova, head to head. Volnova swipes but Claressa slips her jab and returns a heavy cross.

Volnova pivots, rebounding with a cross of her own. And an uppercut. Brap Brap... forcing Claressa into the corner, against the ropes.

We've seen this before. Claressa's fury. Her defense. She lets her hands fly, wild and reckless, rocking Volnova out of the corner and into oblivion. It would be interesting if the outcome weren't so obvious. And thus...

INT. OLYMPIC ARENA, CATACOMBS (AUG '12) - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jason waiting as Claressa emerges from the fighters' quarters, drenched with sweat, wrists still taped.

JASON

How you feel?!

CLARESSA

(bashful smile)

Feel good.

JASON

Two down, one to go baby!

CLARESSA

I want her, coach. I'm ready.

JASON

Damn straight you is.

(CONTINUED)

As Jason and Claressa exit toward the locker room, they brush past Savannah Marshall and her team making their way to the arena. Jason looks to Claressa, curious if *she's* clocked the same thing.

Of course she has...

INT. OLYMPIC FACILITY, COMMON SPACE (AUG '12) - DAY

Jason and Claressa and Coach Parker stand among a few other spectators before a monitor. They gawk at the sight on the screen: Savannah Marshall tangled in battle.

Savannah Marshall... *losing?*

CLARESSA

Coach what's....

The words trail away from Claressa, eyes fixed in disbelief.

ON THE MONITOR --

Marshall shrinks from the action, a shorter, stouter fighter dashing in and out, like a jackal terrorizing a giraffe.

QUICK HITS:

*-The Jackal careening in with a jab.-Marshall flailing at air.*

*-Crisp hook from the Jackal, Marshall walloped into a daze.*

IN THE FACILITY --

Jason and Claressa stricken by the inevitability of the outcome, Jason's attention as much on the screen as on Claressa beside him.

It's subtle, but, on Claressa's face... if the woman who beat her is being beat... what does that say about *her*?

The Jackal is... embarrassing Marshall. Overwhelming and overpowering her.

COACH PARKER

She got those heavy hands, you see?

Coach Parker saying that to Jason as much as Claressa, a small truce in the offering.

JASON

Yeah you ain't lied about that, she swingin' sledgehammers.

He looks to Claressa. She's... quiet. As the group watches on a moment further...

(CONTINUED)

The final bell rings. Marshall's head hanging in anguish. Opposite her, the Jackal rocks her shoulders, smooth and easy, hardly broke a sweat.

CUT TO:

INT. LONDON RESTAURANT (AUG '12) - NIGHT

Ten stories up, overlooking the London Eye and a wash of Olympic Pride.

Coach and fighter half-way through a meal, picking at their plates. Claressa is in... a mood.

JASON

What's up with you?

A shrug from Claressa.

JASON

You scared?

CLARESSA

No.

Definitive, a Flint retort. Jason leans forward across the table, gets closer for this part:

JASON

It's okay to be scared. I'd be worried about you if you wasn't.

A nod from Claressa at that, a thawing. For a moment, she allows herself the space to be vulnerable.

JASON

Say it.  
Say it out loud.

A beat. The longest beat, then...

CLARESSA

I ain't scared of *her*, but... it wasn't supposed to go down like this. I been training and studying the reach advantage and now--

JASON

It ain't about Savannah Marshall. It never was. You ready *physically*. You better than this new girl. You better than all them girls. Mentally? *That's all the training you got to worry about.*

(CONTINUED)

Beat.

JASON (CONT'D)

Here's what I don't want you to do: you've already won the silver medal. Maybe there's a part of you that thinks that's enough, you've already done better than anybody expected, maybe if you don't win the gold then you could go back home, things could go back to normal, maybe you wouldn't have to live up to the challenge of what everybody think you can do. But you know what? That's bullshit. And you know how I know? 'Cause I've been there.

Claressa stares at him, some mixture of fear, confusion.

JASON

Do you *understand* me?

CLARESSA

Yes coach.

He reaches across, a hand on her shoulder.

JASON

Every time you step into the ring... it's way bigger than boxing. Everyone's looking at Flint like we some ghost town. Like we don't even exist.

A moment.

JASON

You ever wonder why they named it Flint?

Claressa shakes her head, why would she.

JASON

It's cause of the Indians. They used to go down to the river, find all these rocks, all this *flint*. It's hard stone. Dark, kind of glassy looking. Before metal came along, Indians used flint to make tools and arrows. Flint's a tough stone... strong as hell. Remind you of anybody?

(CONTINUED)

That said with a smile, a knowing nod.

As Claressa thinks on that a beat -- an affirmation, a challenge -- a SOUND overtakes us, steady and familiar; the roar of a crowd.

INT. OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA (AUG '12) - DAY

Claressa, Coach Parker and team entering the arena, proceeding through the tunnel.

OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER 1

Claressa Shields has been on a mission. Just seventeen years old, she starts her senior year of high school this fall... Will she show up to school with a gold medal or a silver medal?

OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER 2

She's got tough competition for the gold. Nadezda Torlopova, 33 years of age, representing Russia. Torlopova, 2010 AIBA world champion and Bronze medalist at the worlds earlier this year where Shields seeded last.

The group moving along ahead of Claressa, leading her into the spectacle. Moving lights give way to 17,000 fans. It is quite the scene to behold.

At the mouth of the tunnel, Claressa pauses, turns back. She scans the stands, finally locating Jason, standing in a sea of seated fans, donning a white "FLINT" visor with pride.

He waves and cheers.

JASON

T-REXXXX! We go all the way!

...Claressa's moving, entering the arena again. As she goes, the world settles itself, that roar now a soothing hum.

We cut to a series of locations around FLINT:

-- **TORCH BAR AND GRILL:** Beer sloshing out of the top of a pitcher in this neon-lit Flint bar, the match running on the countless flat screen TVs. American flags on display. Jackie, Clarence, a very pregnant Briana, Peanut, the whole family gathered wearing flea-market t-shirts with Claressa's face printed on them and the "T-Rex" moniker.

(CONTINUED)

-- **EXT. ATHERTON EAST APARTMENTS:** An extension cord snakes from inside to an outdoor TV. Kids on lawn chairs and stoops crowd around. Uncles, aunties, grandparents balance paper plates of food on their laps as they watch Claressa enter the ring.

-- **INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE:** Bean and Zay, flanked by some of kids we've seen around the gym riveted...

-- **INT. JASON'S HOUSE:** Mickey, Keisha, Corey and a few friends posture for the better view...

IN THE RING:

Claressa takes a knee, eyes closed, head bowed in reverence. To her grandma. To God. To all she has been through and all she can become.

The bell sounds for the start of round one. Claressa advances out of her corner, fists up.

DING! UP IN THE STANDS: Jason and Nicole watching from above as Claressa and Torlopova mix it up below.

Jason is cringing at what he sees, Torlopova, "The Jackal" the aggressor now, bounding in and out of firing range, dictating skirmishes at *her* pace and distance.

Jason... is screaming across the arena at Claressa.

JASON

'Ressa! Don't let her push you  
around, You got to *work!*

But it's no use -- too much noise in here, too far for his voice to carry.

IN THE RING: Claressa and the Jackal circle each other, toe to toe. The Jackal is small but swift. Claressa ducks and slips but can't seem to make contact herself.

IN THE STANDS: Jason is out of his seat, hands cupped to mouth, trying his best to project.

JASON

Come on 'Ressa! You better than  
that! Don't let her out on the  
right hand side!

A few people regard Jason with dismay.

JASON

You Got to cut her off! Watch the  
hook!

(CONTINUED)

Beat.

(to Nicole, exasperated,  
desperate to be closer)  
She can't hear me!

INSIDE THE RING: Up close with Claressa and the Jackal as they pivot one another, dodging and exchanging blows in close proximity.

The imagery is magnified, close, discomfoting: Torlopova's eyes through headgear, sweat, pounding hands.

And...a SOUND? The sound of Jason's voice, intermittently punctuating the ring... audible but indiscernible.

It's no use -- too much noise in here, too far for his voice to carry.

IN THE STANDS: Jason frustrated, yelling with all his might.

JASON  
Don't let her out on your right.  
THE RIGHT SIDE!

IN THE RING: Claressa ambles to her corner, sits on her stool with bugged, wide eyes. We HEAR the announcer keeping score.

OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER 1 (O.S.)  
Despite her aggression, Claressa  
Shields finds herself defending  
more than connecting as we are tied  
now at 3 a piece.

COACH PARKER  
How you feelin'?

Nothing from Claressa, just breathing and darting eyes.

COACH PARKER  
Hey -- keep your head, now.

CLARESSA  
What I gotta do?

COACH PARKER  
Take a breath, just-

CLARESSA  
(frustrated)  
What I GOTTA do?

As we CUT BACK TO...

(CONTINUED)

THE STANDS: Jason looks back to Nicole, watching him from their seats above. Both look helpless as we go...

SMASH CUT TO:

JASON AND NICOLE -- hauling ass down the escalator, and through the bowels off this arena.

INT. OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA, CATACOMBS (AUG '12) - DAY

Frantic, Nicole and Jason race through the catacombs, towards the mouth of the arena.

Nicole flashes her badge at a security entrance, doesn't wait for clearance, pulls Jason ahead and through with her to...

INT. OLYMPIC ARENA, VIP SECTION (AUG '12) - DAY - CONTINUOUS

And more importantly, thirty feet behind Claressa's corner. Jason wastes no time, cups his hands together as...

CLARESSA'S CORNER: Coach Parker and the water boy, a hurried mess of people. Coach Parker barking commands at Claressa, but... instead, we go close on...

JASON

Ressa! Ressa! You got to stay with her! Cut her off on the right hand side!

Beat.

Get outta yo head now! We worked too damn hard! You better than her! She ain't seen nothin like you! She ain't never seen nothin like you!

*DING DING DING!*

Claressa crossing the ring towards Torlopova with renewed purpose, with clarity.

OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

At the start of Round 2, we're tied at three points apiece here, still everything to box for to see who will go home with the first ever gold medal for women's middle-weight boxing.

WE'RE IN CLOSE -- the fighters testing one another, jabs to gage distance, Claressa and Torlopova equally cautious and aware of what's at stake.

Like a whisper, a voice overtakes us

(CONTINUED)

JASON

There we go! Keep them feet  
moving! Don't let her out on the  
right--  
Be patient now! Watch the right!  
Wait for it--

Torlopova pivots to Claressa's right and, on cue, Claressa pivots with her, an adjustment that leaves them standing open, face to face.

Claressa sets her hips, uncorks her left hook-- *BOP!* And then a massive right uppercut-- *WHAM!*

The blow is crisp and heavy, a sonic boom that sends Torlopova staggering.

OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER 1      OLYMPIC BROADCAST ANNOUNCER 2  
*Shields seems fired up now, a*      *What an astonishing blow that*  
*far cry from round one.*              *was!*

Claressa charges back in, a fire in her core, as we witness the years of hard work pay off... *Brap, brap, slip, brap brap...*

And as Claressa and Torlopova go toe-to-toe, exchanging blow after blow with fire and venom, we go back to Jason, to Jackie, to Flint; as every face fights along side her, dodging and punching and cheering in SLOW MOTION.

Until Finally --

IN THE RING: The bout is over. The Female Referee stands center ring between Claressa and Torlopova.

Everyone waiting with baited breath. This is the moment. It all comes down to this.

ARENA ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Gold medalist and Olympic champion!  
Representing the United States of  
America, Claressa Shields!

The ref raises Claressa's arm. Claressa grinning, bobbing her shoulders, pounding her chest.

Jason jumps up and down, hugs Nicole, punches the air, screaming as only he can-

JASON

T-Rex! T-Rex! We did it!!! Yeah!  
Yeah!

(CONTINUED)

FLINT: All the FLINT LOCATIONS in delirium. Jackie bursting with joy. Clarence yelling. Briana. Peanut. Zay.

The love and enthusiasm radiate through these images, all manner of age and race united here under a common theme: Flint Pride.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. OLYMPIC BOXING ARENA (AUG '12) - DAY - RESUMING

Claressa atop the podium receiving her medal, beaming. Beside her, Nadezda Torlopova (silver), Marina Volnova and Li Jinzi, tied for Bronze. The American flag lifted into the rafters as the *Star Spangled Banner* starts.

For a moment, lets her eyes drift away from here, out onto the floor.

As Claressa and Jason exchange the biggest, most joyous smiles...

A SERIES OF IMAGES: Around those Flint locales we see hands on hearts; proud of this country and all that is possible.

--Jackie raising her arms over her head, starting to cry.

--Clarence standing alone staring at the screen, his bloodshot eyes blotted with tears.

--Briana and Peanut with their arms around each other, cheering at the screen.

--In the Atherton East Apartments, we show the faces of the kids and grandmothers. A mix of awe and pride.

Jason choked up with emotion, wipes away a tear, the toil of all those years manifested in the relief of a dream fulfilled.

ON CLARESSA: Over and done with the decorum, a liberating, visceral yell of joy. As she plants a kiss on that gold medal, throws her arms in the air - as we --

CUT TO BLACK:

That's it, right? "Happily ever after?"

In a just world, it would be, but... when has the world ever been just?

(CONTINUED)

A TITLE CARD: "**FOUR MONTHS LATER**"

FADE IN:

EXT. FLINT (JAN '13) - DAY

Montage of establishing shots. Winter in Flint. A light snow descends upon...

-A faded MLK sign

-A boarded up storefront

-A makeshift altar by the side of the road

- An Arby's. Beneath the restaurant's stetson-shaped sign, in black marquee letters:

"CON RATS CLARESSA! FLI TS GO DEN GIRL"

EXT. COLLECTION AGENCY (JAN '13) - DAY

A nondescript brick building. A sign over the entrance:  
"RUSSELL COLLECTION AGENCY, INC."

CLARESSA (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

I'm here to pay off my Ma's bill,  
account number 2038602...

INT. COLLECTION AGENCY (JAN '13) - DAY

Claressa and Jackie stand at a window. In front of them, seated behind bullet proof glass, a fifty-something FEMALE CLERK with rust belt vibes.

FEMALE CLERK

I'll write a receipt for you, and  
then you'll take this letter down  
to City of Flint Water & Power.

JACKIE

Okay, thank you.

Claressa slides a wad of cash under the glass. As the clerk collects the money:

FEMALE CLERK

So... you're her, right? You're the  
boxer?

JACKIE

This Claressa Shields right here.  
It's her.

(CONTINUED)

FEMALE CLERK

Good for you!

JACKIE

She our golden girl.

FEMALE CLERK

Yeah, for sure. I watched it.  
Congratulations.

CLARESSA

Thank you.

JACKIE

I'm her mother.

FEMALE CLERK

Wow. You must be very proud.

JACKIE

Oh I am proud... overwhelmed.

Claressa with a hangdog expression. The irony of this.  
Discussing Olympic glory. In a collection agency.

FEMALE CLERK

So... What's next for you?

That question for Claressa. Jackie goes ahead and answers:

JACKIE

Take over the world. Right, baby?

Claressa smiles sheepishly. No comment. Then...

INT./ EXT. JASON'S VAN (JAN '13) - DAY

Jason Crutchfield the *agent* -- seated in his van,  
miscellaneous business cards lined up on the dash, loose  
papers, a notepad.

He selects one of those business cards. We might recognize it  
from Spokane. Punches the man's number into his cell --

JASON

Hi, yes, uh, hello -- how you  
doin'? This is Jason Crutchfield,  
is Daniel Turner available?

Out of the gate, it's painfully obvious: Jason's a  
crackerjack coach, but the agent thing ain't *his* thing.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

You tell him I called? Uh-huh.  
Well, I'm eager to talk to him. He  
told me to call *him*, that's what's  
funny.

(beat)

I appreciate that. Thank you.

Jason hangs up. Writes down Daniel's name followed by a question mark. A bunch of names already written down on that pad, and this isn't the first question mark either.

A series of JUMP CUTS -- Jason making calls, pacing outside the van. Sitting on the bumper, doors open:

JASON

Claressa Shields. *Shields*: S-H-I-E-  
L-D-S.

(jump cut)

She won the gold medal. Women's  
boxing. Yeah it's a female sport  
now.

(jump cut)

I *am* her agent. You want to talk  
business, you talk to me.

(jump cut)

L.A's a long way from Flint. Can't  
say when we might be out there.

(jump cut)

Fax number? They still doing that?

(jump cut)

Please tell him I called. I'm  
around anytime. Jason Crutchfield.

Jason ends that last call and dangles his head.

*PRE-LAP the bleat of a school bell...*

INT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH, HALLWAY (JAN '13) - DAY

Claressa strolls the halls of her high school, Beats headphones around her neck, a pile of books under her arm, toggling through her iphone.

As she passes the lockers, kids stare at her in awe.

STUDENT

Hey, T-Rex, got a G you can lend  
me?

Claressa pulls a face at that. Her vibe playful. She stops next to a Senior, DEEDRA. Gives her a fist bump.

(CONTINUED)

DEEDRA

When you gonna rep for Nike?

CLARESSA

Soon, bruh, soon.

Claressa continues on.

DEEDRA

Hook your girl up with some kicks,  
size eleven...

CLARESSA

You trippin, Dee.

A smile from Claressa. She represents what these kids can become one day. She's their hero. She's hope.

INT. LIL ZAY'S BASEMENT (JAN '13) - DAY

Down here, alone with Zay, Claressa is a different person. The levity, the swagger from the high school hallway shed like a skin suit. Claressa raw and exposed in front of her man.

CLARESSA

Does what I did even count?

ZAY

You really asking me that?

CLARESSA

It just ain't like I thought it  
would be.

Beat

I wanted to be somebody. I stuck  
with boxing because it made me feel  
important.

ZAY

Maybe it just take more time?

CLARESSA

(shrugs, dubious)  
Yeah, maybe.

Beat.

CLARESSA

I won an Olympic gold medal. I did  
what everyone said was impossible.

Claressa looks toward the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

What um I supposed to dream about  
now?

Rhetorical, that.

Zay stares at his shoes. Wishes he had the answer.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE (JAN '13) - NIGHT

Remnants of dinner. Mickey is clearing the table. Cranky from a day of dead ends, Jason has his notepad next to him and is scrutinizing names, trying to cook up a new strategy.

Claressa enters through the front door. Jason glowers at her.

JASON

Where you been?

CLARESSA

Oh come on, man, don't start  
with that.

JASON

You missed training.

CLARESSA

I texted Bean. I ain't feeling  
well.

This is the first time we have seen Jason and Claressa together since London, and it's quickly clear that their relationship has deteriorated.

MICKEY

You hungry, 'Ressa? Want me to make  
you a plate?

CLARESSA

Nah, I'm good thanks. Already ate.

JASON

Arby's? What I say about that  
junk? Just cause they givin' it to  
you free don't mean-

CLARESSA

You be eatin' it.

JASON

I ain't the one fightin'.

Claressa seethes.

JASON

You still out there runnin' around  
with Zay, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

(quoting him)

"You win a gold medal, you can date  
*who* you want, *when* you want, *how*  
you want." Did I or did I not win a  
gold medal?

Jason knows he has lost that argument. Claressa shucks off  
her coat and slings it on the armchair.

JASON

Don't be leavin' your coat there,  
hang it up.

CLARESSA

Whatever.

Claressa stalks out. Jason shouts after her:

JASON

My house, my rules!

Sound of Claressa's door slamming shut.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, CLARESSA'S ROOM (JAN '13) - NIGHT

If they gave awards for untidy rooms, Claressa would be a  
Nobel Laureate. She steps to the bed through a minefield of  
strewn clothes.

Her hand disappears under the pillow and removes:

Her gold medal. She sits in silence. Holding the medal on her  
lap. Runs her thumb along the engraving.

No matter what happens -- or *doesn't* happen -- she always has  
that medal. It's her anchor. Her totem. A reminder of what  
she achieved. A reminder that she isn't *crazy*.

INT. DIVE BAR (JAN '13) - DAY

Jason at the end of the bar by himself, nursing a brown  
liquid on the rocks. A text message pops up, from Mickey.

He toggles it off without reading just as...

VOICE (O.S.)

Jason Crutchfield, the man, the  
myth, the legend.

Jason looks up from his drink, sees the last person in the  
world he cares to see right now: Clarence, Claressa's father.

Instinctively Jason rises to go.

(CONTINUED)

CLARENCE

Hey hey now, what's the rush? Drink  
your drink man, ain't no rush here.

Jason looks at Clarence for the first time this encounter.  
Directly at him.

JASON

I'm good. Was just leaving.

Clarence places a hand on Jason's shoulder.

CLARENCE

Nah you gon' listen to me first,  
okay? You gon' pay me that respect.

Clarence motions the bartender over, gestures for two more  
pours of whatever it is Jason's drinking.

CLARENCE

Now look here, this a raw deal. It  
is, I know it is. I been locked up  
more years than I been free, far as  
Claressa goes. Other than being on  
her birth certificate, I really  
ain't got no say to her. So every  
time you give me that look, I can't  
feel no kind of way about it.

The drinks arrive. Jason takes a very big sip.

CLARENCE

Here's the thing though: You want  
to be her boss, her daddy, her  
*coach*? Okay then, show me  
somethin': what the hell is it you  
actually doing? Huh? We in January  
already and still ain't got a pot  
to piss in.

JASON

Who this we you talkin' about?  
'Ressa won that medal.

CLARENCE

Hell *she* ain't got no more than  
that dingy ass room in your house.  
You can run it however you like,  
Jason, still come out the same:  
ain't none of us got *shit*.

(and)

You tellin' me she ain't got a  
single endorsement yet? That on  
you, man. That on you.

(CONTINUED)

Jason slides his drink to the edge of the bar, digs through his pockets, drops a few bills.

JASON

See you around, Clarence.

Jason heads for the exit. Clarence's voice trails him out:

CLARENCE

The Olympics were last year! The window is closing!

*CUT TO the concrete cube that is Galaxy Lanes, as viewed from Jason's van...*

EXT. GALAXY LANES (FEB '13) - DAY

Establishing.

INT. GALAXY LANES (FEB '13) - DAY

A plastic foldout table has been set up beside the concession stand.

Bri, holding Fatdaddy with one arm, helps Peanut hang a banner: "MEET CLARESSA SHIELDS -- OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST!"

A small group of fans are starting to assemble.

Claressa, hair pressed, approaches with something like dread.

A series of short scenes:

--Jason pulling T-shirts from cardboard boxes. Various Claressa Shields inspired slogans: "T-Rex," "Team Shields" "Team Flint" etc.

--Claressa installed at the table holding Fatdaddy while signing T-shirts with a Sharpie.

--Fans taking selfies with Claressa. Claressa turning it on, all smiles, posing with raised fists.

--Claressa kisses Fatdaddy all over, makes faces trying to get him to smile.

--Jason all business. Selling T-shirts. Money changing hands.

EXT. GALAXY LANES, PARKING LOT (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

Wide on the outdoor lot under a patchy sky.

INT/EXT. JASON'S VAN (FEB '13) - SAME

Jason is counting cash, tallying up the day's earnings.  
Claressa eating Panda Express from a plastic container.

JASON

Eight hundred seventy five. Not  
bad.

Jason divides the cash into two piles. Hands one of these  
piles to Claressa. As she takes the money:

CLARESSA

What's this?

JASON

That's your share.

CLARESSA

Nah man. You my agent. Ten percent  
is what you get.

All in all, Claressa has found the day to be a humiliation.  
No better person to take it out on than Jason.

JASON

Ten percent?

CLARESSA

Yeah. Everyone knows that.

JASON

Let me tell you something,  
Hollywood, I'm a lot more than just  
an agent, okay? I'm your publicist,  
lawyer, life coach--

CLARESSA

Start acting like it then.

Jason stares at her in disgust.

CLARESSA

Start actin' like--

JASON

Who you think paid the  
printers? I'm *losing* money on  
yo' ass.

JASON

Whatever man.

(and)

That's all you're getting. Point  
blank period.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

Okay then. Take your ass to court.

JASON

(a mocking laugh)

Over eight hundred dollars? You better go on with that.

Claressa shrugs. Jason starts the engine and throws the van in gear. Going to be a long drive home.

INT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH, CAFETERIA (FEB '13) - DAY

Claressa in the lunch line with her tray, shoulders slumped, down in the dumps right now and doesn't care who knows it.

It just happens to be burger and fries day. That same Lunch Lady extends a plate of grilled chicken and broccoli to Claressa.

CLARESSA

Come on, bruh, not today.

Lunch Lady regards Claressa for a beat, then wordlessly trades out the chicken and broccoli for a burger and fries.

EXT. NORTHWESTERN SENIOR HIGH, HALLWAY (FEB '13) - DAY

Kids being kids. Claressa, Zay, other members of their clique goofing off after school.

Pre-lap the RUMBLE of FEET -- Jason's voice YELLING:

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (FEB '13) - NIGHT

Jason leads a group of KIDS through a cardio exercise, packed inside the ring, furiously running in place.

JASON

There you go, run. Faster, go.

The tempo picks up. Groans. Sweat flying. Jason grins.

We watch that grin dissolve as... Claressa enters the gym, eyes down, texting on her iphone.

JASON

You forty minutes late!

She ignores him, sits down on a bench against the wall.

JASON

(to his flock)

Crunches!

(CONTINUED)

The kids get down on the mat, feet tucked under the ropes.

JASON

1-2-3-4-5-

Jason watches Claressa tie her shoes. She sits forward, elbows on knees, staring into space.

JASON

Bean, take over.

Bean continues counting as Jason dips through the ropes and hops down.

He crosses to Claressa, looking right through him.

JASON

What you doin'?

CLARESSA

Waitin' on you.

JASON

You know what to do. Work the bag.

(and)

You got to get back to your routine. Start eating right, put the work in...

CLARESSA

What's the point?

JASON

Excuse me?

CLARESSA

What's the point? We already got the gold medal, what we workin' for then?

Claressa said that loud enough for the kids to hear. Jason glances back towards the ring, sees the audience there. Can't have his authority challenged, not *here*.

JASON

(a command)

When I tell you to do something, you do it. *Work the bag, 'Ressa.*

A tense beat.

Claressa begrudgingly complies. Starts jabbing at the bag. Flat-footed. No where near her usual ferocity.

(CONTINUED)

Jason gives a nod, satisfied *enough* for now, returns to the ring. He barks at Bean:

JASON  
You forget how to count?

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. SHINE MARKETING, PARKING LOT (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

Jason pulls in to an outdoor lot.

INT. JASON'S VAN, SHINE MARKETING (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

Jason pulls off his *cable company* shirt, a visible shiver as the cold bites into his bare torso, and awkwardly changes into the dress shirt, glancing around to make sure nobody notices.

INT. SHINE MARKETING (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

A FEMALE ADMIN ASSISTANT guides Jason, looking as smart as we've ever seen him, down a hallway. He has a VISITOR PASS pinned to his jacket lapel.

INT. SHINE, DONTE'S OFFICE (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

Jason meets with DONTE GREEN, 40s, one of Shine's marketing execs. Jason is seated on a couch. Donte in an armchair drinking what looks like pond scum in a glass flask.

JASON  
Claressa's only the second American boxer to bring home a gold medal since 1988. She's the only woman in America to have a gold medal in boxing, period. And only *17 years old...*

Jason's pitching hard, just this side of desperate.

JASON  
You put her out there in commercials, ads, people are going to love her, I know they will.  
(beat)  
I did my research, too, saw that you don't have many women in your portfolio. Well, who better than Claressa Shields, best there's ever been.

(CONTINUED)

Donte steeples his hands on his knee.

DONTE

Look, Jason, you don't to have to sell me on any of this. I watched Claressa in London. Watched every fight. You have a fan right here.

Jason grins, relieved. Wasn't sure which way this was going, but Donte has put him at ease.

DONTE

What Claressa has achieved is phenomenal. Kudos to you too, man, for finding her, training her, you deserve a lot of the credit.

JASON

Appreciate that.

DONTE

I would love to represent Claressa. I genuinely would.

Jason feels like there's an offer coming. But then... a shadow falls across Donte's face.

DONTE

I have to level with you, though -- it's just much harder with women athletes and then you amplify that when they excel at a sport people don't expect to see women in.

JASON

Like boxin'.

DONTE

Exactly.

EXT. SHINE, DONTE'S OFFICE (FEB '13) - LATE AFTERNOON

We cut outside the office, watching through the glass wall as Donte continues, his monologue fading to silence.

(CONTINUED)

DONTE (CONT'D)

Look it's difficult enough with soccer and basketball, but people just don't like seeing their sisters, their daughters, hell even some mothers getting punched in the face. They want to see beach volleyball. Women in bikini's diving in the sand... I really am sorry Jason. I want Claressa front and center just like you.

EXT. SHINE MARKETING, PARKING LOT (FEB '13) - DUSK

Jason plods back to his van, a light snow beginning to fall. Pulls himself in on the driver's side.

INT. JASON'S VAN, SHINE MARKETING (FEB '13) - DUSK

Jason seated behind the wheel, loosens a shirt button, utterly exhausted from this marathon day.

EXT. JASON'S VAN, SHINE MARKETING (FEB '13) - DUSK

The snow coming down hard now, settling on Jason's van and surrounding cars. Jason just sitting there, deflated, a 100 miles from home...

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN FLINT (MAR '13) - DAY

The famous "Flint - Vehicle City" arch straddling Saginaw Street. Over this and other Flint Establishers:

NICOLE (V.O.)

(pre-lap)

Before Jason gets here, there's something we wanted to discuss with you...

INT. BERSTON (MAR '13) - DAY

Claressa is speaking with Nicole Thompson and BOB COLEMAN, another USA Boxing cohort.

NICOLE

Claressa, how would you feel about coming out to Colorado after graduation? Work with the USA boxing team to train for 2016?

(CONTINUED)

BOB COLEMAN

All expenses paid. Full access to all the facilities. Our staff. We can talk about getting you your own apartment. Seems like a change of scene might do you good.

Claressa has gone quiet. Mulling it over.

CLARESSA

What about my family? Bri' just had a baby. And my ma on disability--

NICOLE

I'm sorry, the facilities are only for our Olympic athletes.

CLARESSA

I can't leave them. Peanut be gettin in trouble in school lately. Fatdaddy my nephew like mine so-

BOB COLEMAN

We can offer you a thousand dollar a month stipend? That would help, right?

Beat. Claressa lets that go for now.

CLARESSA

I can't leave Flint. My family need me here.

NICOLE

Why don't you at least take some time to think it over?

A moment. Then Jason enters with momentum.

NICOLE

Hey Jason.

JASON

Hey Nicole, you good? 'Preciate you driving up.

Nicole gives Jason a hug.

Bob, hand extended:

BOB COLEMAN

Hi Jason. Bob Coleman. Good to see you again.

(CONTINUED)

JASON  
(shaking Bob's hand)

Hey.

Jason unfolds a couple of plastic chairs and Bob joins him. The four settle into an informal collection of stools and chairs.

BOB COLEMAN  
I understand you guys have hit a few roadblocks --

JASON  
You could say that.

Everyone is sitting now.

JASON  
Thing is, I don't really have the uh, the connections, the contacts, you feel me? At first it was--

CLARESSA  
(right down to it)  
All these other people getting these big endorsements and sponsorships, meanwhile I can barely pay my ma' rent.

Jason flashes Claressa a look. Doesn't like being interrupted.

NICOLE  
When it comes to someone wanting to get behind Claressa, for somebody to say, you know, "I want this girl to represent my brand-

CLARESSA  
I been wearing lip gloss and girly clothes-

NICOLE  
That's helpful Claressa. It really is.

(an appeal)  
But for example, we would love you to stop saying that you like hitting people and making them cry.

CLARESSA  
Why?

(CONTINUED)

BOB COLEMAN

It makes you seem like a bully.

CLARESSA

I box. I *am* a bully.

(and)

Floyd a bully, Ward a bully. Hell, even Ali was a bully.

NICOLE

We understand that.

CLARESSA

So I can't be a bully cause I'm a girl-

JASON

I get what ya'll saying. It's like a perception thing.

BOB COLEMAN

Exactly.

CLARESSA

Oh, so this my fault now?

JASON

'Ressa, they trying to help us.

CLARESSA

Whatever happened to staying true to who you are? I won that gold medal by being me, and now to get endorsements and shit you saying I got to be somebody else?

NICOLE

I know you're disappointed. So are we. You deserve more recognition than this--

CLARESSA

I don't deserve it, I *earned* it. I *earned* that gold medal. There's a big difference.

Claressa in attack mode. Totally fed up. Jason tries to make light of it, states the obvious with a toothy grin:

JASON

She's a little wound up right now.

CLARESSA

I'm just keepin' it real.

(CONTINUED)

Awkward laughs from Nicole and Bob Coleman. Followed by an awkward pause.

BOB COLEMAN

What is it, Claressa? Is it the money or the recognition?

CLARESSA

Money *is* recognition.

(starts to leave, then...)

No offense, Mr. Coleman, but that thousand dollars ain't shit. Not when the men get three times that and none of them won a gold medal. Or *any* medal, hell.

Claressa, pissed... over it. Storms out.

EXT. JASON'S HOUSE (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Jason's van pulls up to the house. He exits alone.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Claressa ensconced on the couch, watching TV.

Jason storms in, simmering. His eyes bore into Claressa.

JASON

Where you get off talking like that?

Claressa turns off the tv and makes a beeline for the hallway.

JASON

Don't walk away from me...

MICKEY

*Jason.*

JASON

What? I'm just talkin', I can't talk in my own damn house now?

Jason grabs a beer.

JASON

You embarrassed me today. You know that?

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

You embarrassed me! It's  
embarrassin. I'm done askin for  
shit that should be mine anyhow.

JASON

So what, you gonna give up, now?  
That how it is?

CLARESSA

Give up what!? Ain't no money in  
pros for women. Ain't no money  
stayin' amateur.

JASON

What you gonna do? Get a job  
baggin' groceries? Flippin'  
burgers?

CLARESSA

(defiantly)  
Maybe.

JASON

Then what? You gonna move in with  
Zay cause y'all grown now. Help  
with Fatdaddy and Pea? Have some  
babies of your own? Here go Ressa  
with all dem babies-

CLARESSA

What's so bad about that? Better  
than bustin my ass when it don't  
mean shit anyhow-

JASON

Y'all think you know what it is but  
I'll tell you straight that ain't  
enough for you. You different then  
the rest of them.

CLARESSA

Maybe I'm done being different.

JASON

Man thats weak. You weak-

CLARESSA

I'm weak!?! I been training since I  
was eleven years old. Now I got the  
gold medal and--

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Gold Medal? I don't give a damn  
about that gold medal!

Claressa slams the fridge door.

CLARESSA

Oh really? 'Cause before  
London, that's all you wanted  
to talk about...

JASON

Gold medal -- shit, don't  
talk to me about no gold damn  
medal!

CLARESSA

Gold medal this, gold medal that. I  
did my part. You didn't do yours.

JASON

(incensed)

I didn't do my part? Who taught you  
how to box?

Mickey appears in the doorway.

MICKEY

'Ressa, please. Just go to your  
room.

Claressa brushes past Jason, heading towards the rear of the  
house. Jason goes after her.

JASON

Without me there would be no  
Claressa Shields!

CLARESSA

Without *me* there would be no Jason  
Crutchfield!

Claressa whirls around, right in Jason's face.

CLARESSA

You said you *had* this, Jason. You  
said you had it *all* figured out.

That line pierces Jason. But he keeps his resolve.

Claressa scoffs at that. Continues down the hall, just as  
Corey appears from his bedroom, in PJ's, looking scared.

COREY

Mom?

Mickey rushes forward, ushers Corey back to bed.

(CONTINUED)

Meanwhile Claressa heads into her room -- Jason stops her from shutting the door in his face --

CLARESSA

Maybe if I was still undefeated, things would be different-

JASON

Oh, we're back to China now?

CLARESSA

You wasn't there! You wasn't in the fight-

They face off in the center of the room. Going at it.

JASON

And why wasn't I there? Huh? You know why, 'cause we broke, cause I never made one penny from being your coach. I'm a volunteer. I do this shit for free! Matter a fact I lose money cuttin' back hours to coach your ungrateful ass. You got a gold medal, all I got is these damn bills and all y'all mouths to feed.

CLARESSA

I'm done here. Umma pack my shit and get the hell up outta here. Be one less *mouth*.

Mickey comes in, goes to stop Claressa from packing but Jason restrains her, physical but within the line.

CLARESSA

Nah nah, it's okay Mickey, I ain't mad at you. But I'm gone though.

JASON

Okay then, big time. You know the way out.

CLARESSA

(defiant)

Yeah. I *do*.

JASON

Leave my keys on the counter.

CLARESSA

No problem.

(CONTINUED)

Claressa shovels clothes into a duffel, Jason watching her.  
Is this really the end?

*Sound of a key in a lock, a door creaking open...*

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Claressa enters, duffles and bulging garbage bags at her feet, which she kicks through the front door.

One noticeable change since the last time we were here -- toys and other baby paraphernalia peppered about the place.

Claressa walks through, passes a crude mural on the living room wall. A shrine to Claressa: photos, newspaper clippings, flyers. She heads for her old bedroom.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Claressa peaking her head through the door, quiet.

Peanut on the bed there, Briana and Fatdaddy, asleep on a messy mattress placed directly onto the floor.

Claressa withdraws, closes the door.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Claressa slumps down on the far end of the couch. Emotionally depleted. Finally allows herself to let it all out.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAR '13) - DAY

Jackie is cooking Claressa a "welcome home" breakfast. Adds seasoning salt and garlic powder to the pan.

Crammed into this tiny kitchen are Claressa, Briana, and Peanut. Claressa holding Fatdaddy on her hip.

As Jackie swirls the chorizo and eggs around the pan with a gnarled hand:

JACKIE  
My secret recipe.

PEANUT  
Uh-huh. Salt and garlic. You the first to think of that.

The siblings chuckle. Ribbing their mom is something they've done since they were small.

(CONTINUED)

JACKIE

Go ahead and make jokes, this is how it's done right here. I'm gonna go to school for cooking. Starting next month.

BRIANA

Yeah, you need to go to cooking school -- 'cause you can't cook.

The siblings crack up. Jackie ignores them, heads over to the sink to wash her hands.

INT. BERSTON FIELD HOUSE, GYM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Jason slumped against a post with folded arms, watching a row of kids performing a punching drill.

JASON

Double Jab, Cross.  
(they punch)  
Add the hook. Go  
(they punch, hook, punch)  
Now Jumping Jacks. Go.

It is clear from Jason's voice, the attitude of his body, his heart isn't in this right now.

He glances across the gym at a punching bag, one we've seen Claressa destroying in previous scenes. No sign of Claressa now, the lonely punching bag suspended on its chain.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM/BATHROOM (MAR '13) - NIGHT

Claressa is on the mattress on the floor, making faces and giving "zerberts" to Fatdaddy's tummy. He squeals with delight, kicking his legs rigorously. A real bond developing between Claressa and her little nephew.

Across the hall but within line of sight, Briana is shaving her armpits in the sink.

BRIANA

'Ressa, watch Fatdaddy for me I gotta go grab somethin' from Ray and 'nem?

CLARESSA

Ok. When he go down?

BRIANA

(leaving, shrugs)  
8? 9? When he tired, fool.

(CONTINUED)

Claressa zerberts Fatdaddy's tummy again...

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (MAR '13) - DAY

The next morning. Freezing inside. Fatdaddy here howling, Briana nowhere to be found.

Claressa, winter coat on inside, talks into her phone while she wrestles Fatdaddy onto the changing table and out of his diaper.

CLARESSA

She didn't come home last night. I got Fatdaddy. If you see Bri, tell her I'm pissed.

Claressa hangs up. And then... realizing there's no more diapers in the plastic package--

CLARESSA

Damn!

Beat.

CLARESSA (CONT'D)

I ain't mad at you baby. Its yo' mom I'm mad at.

Claressa lifts Fatdaddy up and winds toilet paper around his legs and butt.

CLARESSA

(to Fatdaddy)

We need to buy you some diapers.

A squawk of protest from Fatdaddy.

CLARESSA

Tell me about it.

EXT. LANDMARK FOOD CENTER (MAR '13) - DAY

Fatdaddy wailing now. Claressa rounds corner and heads through the electric doors.

INT. LANDMARK FOOD CENTER (MAR '13) - DAY

Claressa scans the aisles for diapers, frantic but doing her best to keep it together.

CLARESSA

Shhhh, Shhhh, we here now.

Claressa lands at the diapers. Grabs a pack.

(CONTINUED)

Its one of those days where a line has formed while the person at the register fumbles to find a price. Of course.

Claressa settles at the back, still struggling to calm Fatdaddy. Just then, she sees something off screen that literally splits her in two.

She is standing before a wall of WHEATIES BOXES.

On those Wheaties Boxes? Decorated Olympians.

Michael Phelps. Gabby Douglas. Misty May-Treanor.

Each athlete with his/her own cereal box. All smiling and holding up their gold medals.

This is the moment where Claressa's heart officially breaks. The joy on those athletes' faces...

Off Claressa, eyes gleaming with rage -- *fuck this thing...*

CUT TO:

INT. MONEY BOX (MAR '13) - NIGHT

And while the word may not be in the shop name, only takes a second to recognize where we are: a pawn shop.

Claressa seems stunned too, looking about herself nervously, hoping like hell to be invisible. The proprietor (a good ole boy: rail thin, wranglers, we'll call him AJ) emerges from the back office.

AJ  
How can I help you?

CLARESSA  
I want to pawn something.

AJ  
Well alright, you came to the right place. Let's see what you got.

A deep breath from Claressa at that, a nod, a decision. Reaches into her back pack, retrieves... her gold medal.

It's nearly unnoticeable but the proprietor... winces. Extends his hand for the medal. Eye contact. *Trust*.

Claressa hands it over, watches as the man runs a careful eye over it.

(CONTINUED)

AJ

Pretty darn rare what you got there.

AJ retrieves his reading glasses from his chest pocket. He flips through an appraisal guide. Sets it down.

AJ

Don't have too many gold medals coming through that door. Gotta look it up on the internet, make sure we get you squared properly, okay?

CLARESSA

Yes sir.

AJ

Might take a minute. Feel free to poke around.

INT. JASON'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAR '13)- NIGHT

Mickey is cooking dinner, Jason hovering over her shoulder with a Faygo. Sound of Corey watching TV in the living room, some birdbrained reality show.

JASON

A little girl came by the gym tonight. Said she wanted to be the next Claressa Shields. Not much older than 'Ressa when she first came in. Looked like her, too.

MICKEY

She *fight* like her?

JASON

I wish.

A smile finds its way to Jason's face. Feeling sentimental. Mickey looks at him.

MICKEY

Call her.

Jason deflects.

MICKEY

You two peas in a pod. Only difference, you the adult here.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Mmmm...

MICKEY

Jason, she on her own.

JASON

(dismissive, as he exits)

She don't want to hear from me.

Too soon. Too stubborn.

INT. MONEY BOX (MAR '13) - NIGHT - LATER

Unclear how much later -- the light changed but similar, a quiet hum to the place.

AJ in the back room, studying his computer now. Claressa sitting in a chair, toggling through her phone.

O.S. We hear an electronic chime as someone enters the shop. Claressa with her head down.

After a beat:

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey, baby.

A familiar voice. Claressa looks up at:

Jackie. Her mom.

The last person she expected to see in here.

AJ approaches, hands the medal to Jackie, a small nod between the two. *They know each other?*

JACKIE

Thanks, honey.

Then, to Claressa--

JACKIE

Me'n AJ go back a ways.

AJ

I apologize for the betrayal,  
but... weren't no way I was gonna  
let you pawn that medal.

AJ smiles knowingly and retreats to back room.

Claressa completely crumbles now, tears welling in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

I just wanted to help.

JACKIE

I know baby, I know. But it's certain things we just can't be givin' away.

CLARESSA

Fuck this thing. I'm sicka lookin; at it. What good did it do? Ain't nothin' different. It ain't special.

JACKIE

No, it ain't special, but... you is. Ain't nobody from Flint ever did what you did. And I tell you what, you havin' that medal lets folks 'round here know that if Claressa Shields can do it, *they* can too, so... it ain't about the medal. It about *you*.

Beat.

JACKIE

Tell you somethin' else -- your grandma, lord rest her soul, I know she was smilin' down proud as hell when you won, and I was too. We all were. We still are.

It's the first time we've seen Claressa hug her mother. And based on the looks on their faces, it might be the first time for them too.

EXT. FLINT (MAY '13) - DAWN INTO DAY

A beautiful portrait of decay and promise. Sun rises over the water tower in the distance. A dog barks. Children play in the front yard...

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, (MAY '13) - DAY

Claressa standing center stage in a magnificent prom gown -- fuchsia, a metallic sheen, open at the shoulders.

The dress embraces Claressa's natural form. She looks... imposing. And *beautiful*.

Surrounding Claressa are Briana, Jackie, and Mickey, as well as several other women, we'll call them "AUNTIES" -- all of them gathered around making small talk.

(CONTINUED)

The oldest of these women, a SEAMSTRESS, circles Claressa, making adjustments to her gown.

JACKIE

I was worried you wouldn't have  
enough fabric for them big ol'  
thighs.

Laughter from the room -- but *kind* laughter, Claressa blushing, for once just a girl.

CLARESSA

Y'all hush.  
(and at Jackie)  
You made me, these yo' thighs.

The Seamstress, RHONDA runs a hand across Claressa's back.

RHONDA

What they say -- the apple don't  
fall far from the tree?

JACKIE

You got that right. Bet I coulda  
won the gold medal if they had  
boxing back then.

More laughs from the women.

JACKIE

What? Don't act like y'all ain't  
never seen Jackie throw hands!

That gets the biggest smile out of Claressa, that rogue baby tooth of hers showing. The seamstress steps aside, takes a look at her model.

RHONDA

Alright, that's my work done.

CLARESSA

How much this all cost?

Warm smiles from the Seamstress and those aunties:

RHONDA

For you, babygirl? On the house.  
You out there reppin' for us, so we  
gotta rep for you.

Mickey spins Claressa around, adjusts a strand of hair.

MICKEY

You look incredible.

(CONTINUED)

Claressa looks to Mickey a moment. Mickey smiles at her.

A SONG drifts over the soundtrack, something unabashedly black and beautiful, like The Impressions' *People Get Ready* as we CUT TO...

A MONTAGE

**UNDER SCORE**, a series of prom vignettes

EXT. JACKIE'S HOUSE (MAY '13) - DAY

*A suped up vintage car idling in front of Jackie's, Zay waiting in a Fuchsia tux and cummerbund that matches Claressa's to a tee.*

EXT. MARQUEE BALLROOM (MAY '13) - DAY

Friends and family line the entrance to an ornate building. They hold signs and cheer as if watching a parade. Kids of all shapes and sizes in burgundy, turquoise, matching bow ties and sunglasses. Prom in Flint is an event. Everyone applauds as *Zay and Claressa strut up the ramp and into the prom.*

INT. MARQUEE BALLROOM (MAY '13) - NIGHT

*- Dancing. All kinds. Intimate moments contrast with full blown teen energy let loose.*

Slow Motion, impressionistic. Freedom and style personified.

Claressa's smile beaming, like we haven't seen since she won the Olympics.

INT. MARQUEE BALLROOM, HALLWAY (MAY '13) - NIGHT

Claressa and Zay lean against a railing, hands entwined.

ZAY

I know it ain't turn out how you wanted but I'm happy you here with me now.

CLARESSA

I know. Me too.

ZAY

I been thinking maybe we should get a spot together? You can bring Fatdaddy. Peanut too if you want.

Claressa nods, contemplative...

(CONTINUED)

ZAY

Maybe this just what its meant to be.

Beat.

I love you.

A moment as Claressa absorbs the full impact of those words.

She doesn't say it back but... she doesn't have to, just lays her head on his shoulder. From the way he receives her it's clear, that gesture just enough.

INT. ZAY'S BASEMENT BEDROOM (MAY '13) - DAWN

Claressa lies in bed with Zay. She's in one of his tee shirts while his torso is bare, an arm resting across Claressa.

'Ressa... is wide awake, staring out. At once completely present and somewhere else entirely. The tide of last night's dream has ebbed revealing the first clarity she's had in a long time. THIS IS NOT ENOUGH FOR ME. IT CANNOT END HERE.

*Bleed in the sound of ragged breathing, feet pounding cement...*

EXT. FLINT STREET (MAY '13) - SUNRISE

Claressa, still in Zay's tee, running full-throttle down a street under a violet sky, throwing jabs in the air, ducking imaginary punches...

*PRE-LAP the sound of a ringing phone, then a voice picking up:*

CLARESSA (V.O.)

I wanna speak to Nicole Thompson.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, KITCHEN (MAY '13) - DAY - LATER

Claressa standing at the window, talking on phone.

We don't hear what's said on the other line but you can tell Claressa's in her zone.

CLARESSA

Nicole?

(listens a moment)

Yeah, I'm good. I'm fine, thanks.

(beat)

Hey, so I thought about what y'all said and I'm ready to come train in Colorado. But here's the thing- Is Coleman there?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA (CONT'D)

Can you put him on the phone too?

(anxious waiting... then-)

Hi Bob. Yeah I'm aight thanks. So I been thinking a lot about your offer. If I'm gonna stay amateur and come train for a second gold medal, I want 3000 a month, exactly what the men get.

(Beat.)

And one more thing - it ain't just me. Y'all need to boost the stipends for all the women, same as the men's.

(Beat. Bob's voice, muffled)

Ain't nothing to think about. I'm the first American to win a gold medal in Boxing in 15 years. And Marlen got a bronze. Y'all paying men more makes no kinda sense. And we sick of it. I can get that next gold, you know I can. But I won't put that flag on my back again until y'all do right by us. Understand?

Claressa breathing through it, through what she just did there -- power. The same but... different. Absent the physical and yet, *POWER*.

As she catches her reflection in some bit of glass here...

Before Nicole can answer WE CUT TO:

EXT. FLINT - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Montage of various summer moments in Flint. A water balloon fight. Kids on bikes.

INT. JACKIE'S HOUSE, BEDROOM (AUG '13) - DAY

Claressa is packing a suitcase. Boxing gear, mostly. Peanut watching from the bed, Fatdaddy in his lap. Briana comes in with a hair iron, the power cord dangling.

CLARESSA

Thanks.

Claressa shoves the hair iron down into her suitcase, alongside her gold medal.

BRIANA

Why it gonna be different this time?

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA

It might not be.

A beat.

PEANUT

Then why you gotta leave?

CLARESSA

I cant explain it. Boxing make me feel something I cant feel no other way. Its just something I gotta do right now.

Beat.

As long as I'm boxin' I know umma be OK.

INT. CLARENCE'S CUTLASS SEDAN - MOVING (AUG '13) - DAY

Clarence at the helm. Claressa in front along side her father, and Zay in the back seat.

CLARESSA

Dad, turn right up here. Need to make a quick stop.

(off Clarence's look)

Bus ain't leave till three. I got time.

EXT. ROADSIDE, EXTERIOR HOUSE (AUG '13) - DAY

Up on a roof with Jason on a cable job.

Jason peers down from his ladder, sees two things: his van parked there at the roadside and, standing next to it, Claressa, looking up at him.

EXT. ROADSIDE (AUG '13) - DAY

Jason and Claressa sit together on the curb.

JASON

Why you taking the bus? Take two hours to fly there.

CLARESSA

I got a gold medal for this country. Figure I might as well see some of it.

Jason nods at that, can't argue the truth in it.

(CONTINUED)

Up the road, a respectful distance away, the Cutlass is idling. Clarence leans against the driver's side door chewing on a skinny cigar. Zay still inside.

JASON

You sure about this?

CLARESSA

Yeah, drown out all the noise, like you say...

JASON

(with a grin)

Well stop the presses: Claressa Shields finally listened to me.

CLARESSA

I listened. How you think I won in the first place?

It is clear from Claressa's tone, she has come here to show her gratitude, to make peace.

CLARESSA

You were trying to protect me. Trouble is... you were over protective sometimes. But I get it. I ain't mad at you.

A pause as those words settle.

JASON

You remind me so damn much of myself. For somebody to be from where we from, to be where I was, it was all in front of me, and I just let it go. Just ended back here like everybody else. I couldn't have that happen to you.

Claressa gives a nod. Appreciates what he's saying.

JASON

That was something though wasn't it? What we did. It was kinda special.

Claressa nods, smiling.

JASON

Thing is, I thought winning was enough. I was out of my league with the rest of it. Boxing' what I know. It's what I do. But the rest of it--

(CONTINUED)

He puffs out a breath, shaking his head.

CLARESSA

Nah man, you don't have to apologize to me. You don't gotta apologize about a damn thing.

JASON

You go out there and show 'em you too dang good to be ignored.

CLARESSA

Mmm hmm.

JASON

That first gold medal was for Flint. The next one? It's for you, 'Ressa. You deserve it.

Claressa begins to cry. Jason is holding it together. Barely.

JASON

What you waitin' for? Go on, git out of here before you miss that bus.

Claressa wipes her eyes with her sleeve, stands up slowly and walks back to the Cutlass.

She turns back along the way, sees Jason up on his feet, trying to keep it together.

Claressa reaches the car and ducks in.

Clarence looking over at Jason. A nod between the two men.

As Jason watches the Sedan drive away, WE CUT TO:

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION (AUG '13) - DAY

A greyhound station is rough anywhere. But a Greyhound station in *Flint*? Next level.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS (AUG '13) - DAY

Claressa's face leaned to the seat-back, eyes cast down and away. Clarence and Zay standing on the asphalt outside.

The bus lurches to a start, crawling away.

Zay keeps pace, jogging alongside the bus, flailing his arms like a manic child. In fits, at the corners of Claressa's mouth, a smile takes hold, irrepressible.

(CONTINUED)

CLARESSA  
Boy you stupid.

That said mostly to herself.

The bus catches a yellow light, passes swiftly through an intersection. Zay does not pass with it.

Claressa strains her neck to watch him as long as she can -- *Two, three seconds, then...* He's gone.

She rights herself, eyes forward, shoulders squared, the look of someone very much aware that she's got fifty one hours and four transfers ahead of her.

We linger on Claressa's assured, resolute, face...

Cutting wide, we see the bus turn a corner and we begin to rise. Up, up, and higher still, we leave Flint and all that it means, in search of a new beginning.

SCORE begins -- energetic strings -- taking us to

BLACK.

The STRINGS continue, picking up momentum -- a frenetic rhythm that quickens the heart and stirs the blood...

NOW (AUG '16) , A TITLE CARD:

**"2016 Olympics Rio, Brazil"**

Documentary footage -- cut at a pace to match the score -- showing Claressa Shields dominating the Rio Olympics.

One fight after another. One *punch* after another.

Claressa fulfilling her promise, claiming a second gold medal.

As she takes the podium and receives her prize, a CHYRON:

**"Claressa Shields won her second Gold Medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics. She is the only American -- female or male -- to ever win two Olympic Boxing Gold Medals."**

**"This time, the world noticed."**

WE FADE TO BLACK.