

BATTLIN' BARBARA

Written by

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Based on the life of Barbara Buttrick-Smith

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FADE IN:

EXT. HORNSEA - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

A quaint seaside town unfolds below a clear blue sky. Gulls call out as waves lap the shore. A beautiful summer day.

SUPER: "Hornsea, Yorkshire - 1945"

The promenade stretches as far as the eye can see. Throngs of people enjoy their holidays. Children and courting couples enjoy rides on a boating lake.

A train WHISTLES in the distance.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Children play football. Two girls play on the same team, the rest are boys.

A boy shoves one of the girls, BARBARA (15) and she falls. She jumps back to her feet and shoves him back.

The train whistle changes to a boxing bell. It RINGS twice. An unseen crowd CHEERS. A radio ANNOUNCER provides commentary.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Buttrick gets back on her feet--

MOS - The game is abandoned. Jumpers used as goalposts, forgotten.

The children form a ring around Barbara and the boy.

The boy shoves Barbara again.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
--some jostling going on--

Barbara straight punches the boy in the face. He stumbles back.

The unseen crowd CHEERS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
--Buttrick lands a solid blow,
rocking her opponent--

The boy touches his face, shocked that he's been hit.

He rushes Barbara.

She side steps, a little awkwardly but manages to avoid him, and lands a right hook that floors the boy.

The unseen crowd goes wild. The surrounding children gesture in cheer along with the unseen crowd.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
--a cracking right hook, it's over.
It's all over--

The cheers of the unseen crowd fade and the children take over as sound returns to this scene.

Barbara pushes her way through the crowd and leaves, followed by the other girl, IVY (15).

EXT. STREET - DAY

Barbara and Ivy walk home through the quiet village streets. Their shoes and knee socks caked in mud, their dresses filthy. No one they pass seems to notice.

BARBARA
We should start a girl's football team.

IVY
Yeah, I reckon we could beat a boy's team no problem.

Barbara kicks a stone in her path.

BARBARA
I've asked around. No one's really interested. They don't wanna get dirty.

IVY
Boys like getting dirty.

Barbara picks mud off her dress.

BARBARA
It washes off, I don't see the big deal.

IVY
Most girls I know wanna have tea parties with dolls and cakes and pretty dresses.

BARBARA
Yeah, I don't like most of those girls anyway. Mum bought me a doll once. I put it in goal. Never bought me any more.

IVY
Yeah, I don't like dolls, they don't do anything.

They reach Ivy's house and enter the back yard.

INT. IVY'S KITCHEN - DAY

The door opens and the girls enter. IVY'S MUM (35) rushes in with a newspaper.

IVY'S MUM
You both hold it right there. This floor is clean and I don't want you tracking mud through it.

She hands the girls the newspaper.

IVY'S MUM (CONT'D)
Here, take those shoes off and clean them. Look at the state of you both.

Ivy takes the newspaper, takes the first page and cleans her shoes. Barbara removes her shoes, she notices the page Ivy has.

BARBARA
Wait!

Ivy stops

IVY
What?

BARBARA
Gis a look at that?

Ivy holds up the page.

IVY
This? Why?

Barbara holds out her hand.

BARBARA
Just gis it.

Ivy offers the paper. Barbara grabs it and reads. Ivy shrugs, takes another page and continues cleaning her shoes.

IVY
So, what is it?

Barbara abandons her shoes at the door step and sits at the kitchen table. She smooths the dirty, wrinkled paper onto the surface.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER

A minor article has a photo showing a woman in her early 30s wearing boxing gloves and in a fighter's stance.

BACK TO SCENE

BARBARA

It's about a lady prize fighter.

Barbara reads from the article.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Polly Burns, Prize Fighter.

Ivy joins Barbara at the table.

IVY

Really? Girls don't prize fight.

BARBARA

This one did, in 1914 it says here.

IVY

What kind of girl wants to be a prize fighter?

Barbara looks up from the newspaper. A huge grin on her face.

BARBARA

I could.

Ivy laughs.

IVY

You are pretty good at it.

Barbara keeps smiling. Ivy stops.

IVY (CONT'D)

Wait. Really?

BARBARA

You'll see.

EXT. BARBARA'S STREET - EVENING

Barbara runs down the street and enters her front yard. She turns the handle, opens the front door and enters.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Barbara enters. Her father, JACK (35), reads a newspaper at the table with a cup of tea. Her mother, RUBY (35), prepares dinner.

Jack looks up from his newspaper and notices the state of Barbara's clothes. He suppresses a smile and hides back behind the newspaper.

JACK
Just in time for dinner.

Ruby turns and sees Barbara.

RUBY
Good Lord! Look at you!

Barbara hangs her head.

BARBARA
We were playing football.

Ruby turns her back on Barbara and fusses with dinner.

RUBY
Really? Then why have I had Billy
Thornton's mum round here?

Barbara keeps her head down. Jack rustles the paper.

BARBARA
He pushed me.

Rudy whirls around to face Barbara.

RUBY
You can't solve all of your
problems with your fists. You're a
young lady and should behave like
one.

Barbara fiddles with her dress.

BARBARA
Yes mum.

RUBY
Fallen on deaf ears, I imagine. Go
and get ready for dinner, you're a
bloody mess.

Barbara turns to leave. Jack lowers his newspaper.

JACK
Did you win?

Barbara faces him and smiles.

BARBARA
I always win.

Jack smiles a little and nods. He returns behind his newspaper.

EXT. CARNIVAL - WEEKS LATER

Barbara and Ivy walk among crowds of people. They each have spots of toffee on their cheeks and chins from the toffee apples they are eating.

They stop to watch a man attempt the "Strong Man Machine" He steps up to the machine and lifts a large hammer.

BARBARA

Think he'll ring the bell?

Ivy is more interested in her toffee apple and answers through a mouthful.

IVY

Pwobabwy.

The man swings the hammer and hits the pressure pad. The counter weight shoots up to the "try harder" marker before falling back down. The man's friends JEER at his effort.

Barbara shrugs.

BARBARA

Guess not.

She looks around for the next activity and spots the hoopla. She tugs Ivy's sleeve and they make their way towards it.

Nearing the hoopla, Barbara hears CHEERS. She stops and listens. Ivy is still trying to get as much toffee apple in her mouth as she can.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

What's that?

Ivy shrugs.

Barbara leads her towards the CHEERING. They approach a marquee. The CHEERING is coming from inside. There's a sign outside "Last One Round with Mighty Marge and Win a Prize".

Barbara nudges Ivy and gestures at the sign.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Let's look in here.

Ivy rolls her eyes.

IVY

Fighting again? I wanna go on the carousel.

BARBARA

Just five minutes then? Promise.

IVY

Ok.

INT. MARQUEE - DAY

They both enter.

There's a boxing ring in the centre surrounded by drunk HOLLERING men and JEERING women seated on wooden tiered benches.

A fight in progress in the ring. A thin man jabs at a stocky woman, he misses every time. Each miss is met with a JEER from the crowd.

Ivy points.

IVY

Well look at that. She's fighting a bloke. That's not fair!

Barbara stares, transfixed.

BARBARA

I dunno, looks like she's winning.

The woman lands a quick combination of punches on the man and knocks him to the ground to the CHEERS of the crowd. The woman walks back to her corner, nonplussed by her victory.

Barbara closes her eyes and takes in the atmosphere.

She smiles.

IVY

Still looks odd. C'mon let's go to the carousel.

Ivy drags Barbara away. Barbara resists a little, unable to tear her gaze from the woman in the ring. The RINGMASTER steps into the ring.

RINGMASTER

And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. Once again Mighty Marge proves she will beat all comers...

The crowd CHEERS. The defeated man is carried from the ring.

Ivy tugs at Barbara's sleeve.

IVY

The carousel? You promised.

Barbara allows herself to be lead away, still watching the woman in the ring.

RINGMASTER (V.O.)
Roll up, roll up lads and lasses.
Surely someone among you has what
it takes to defeat Mighty Marge...

EXT. HIGH STREET - WEEKS LATER

Barbara walks down a small high street. She takes no notice of the shops as she strolls past.

She glances into the window of a second-hand store as she passes it, then stops, back tracks, and peers through the window again.

A battered pair of clearly used boxing gloves on display with a book entitled "The Noble Art of Self Defense".

Barbara touches the glass. She steps back and smiles.

INT. SHOP - DAY

The shop is full of old items. Racks of clothes line one wall, a bicycle is on display in the centre of the floor. A counter is opposite the entrance. The SHOPKEEPER stands behind it, busy making entries into an accounts book.

Barbara enters. A bell RINGS above the door. The shopkeeper looks up from his notes.

Barbara approaches the counter, a little hesitant.

BARBARA
Afternoon Sir.

SHOPKEEPER
Hello, young lady. What can I get you?

Barbara is a little shy.

BARBARA
May I please see the fighting gloves and book in the window?

The shopkeeper smiles.

SHOPKEEPER
Of course lass. Wait here, I'll get them for you.

He retrieves the items and places them on the counter.

Barbara opens the book, flicks through it and pauses at the illustrations.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
Shopping for your brother's
birthday?

Barbara pulls on one glove. Her confidence grows a little.

BARBARA
Nope.

SHOPKEEPER
Ya dad?

BARBARA
They're for me.

The shopkeeper bursts out laughing.

SHOPKEEPER
Don't be foolish girl. Women don't
fight.

Barbara stands a little straighter.

BARBARA
I will.

The shopkeeper stops laughing.

SHOPKEEPER
You're serious?

Barbara remains silent. Testing the glove by punching her
empty hand.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
Why you wanna do something like
that? Pretty girl like you should
be thinking of the future. Husbands
and babies and all that.

Barbara continues to test the glove, not looking at the shop
keeper.

BARBARA
Can't I do both?

The shopkeeper frowns.

SHOPKEEPER
Listen girl. Women that do this are
no better than drunks and
prostitutes. Do you understand?

Barbara raises an eyebrow.

BARBARA
Know a lot of prostitutes do you?

The shopkeeper is enraged. He storms around the counter, grabs Barbara's arm, tears the glove off her hand and drags her to the door.

SHOPKEEPER
You cheeky little bitch.

He pulls open the door, the little bell RINGS.

He pushes Barbara into the street.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
Don't ever come back.

He storms back inside.

Barbara stands outside for several seconds, her eyes are tearful but her face is determined. She turns and runs off.

INT. BARBARA'S STREET - DAY

Barbara runs down the street. Jack is in the front yard, repainting the fence.

Barbara throws the gate open and enters the yard. Jack sees how angry she is. He puts a hand on her shoulder.

JACK
What happened, love?

INT. SHOP - DAY

The shopkeeper is busy behind the counter with his back to the door. The little bell RINGS. He turns to see Jack but does not see Barbara who hides behind her father.

SHOPKEEPER
How do?

JACK
Fine thanks.

Jack stares at the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper becomes a little nervous after several seconds of silence.

SHOPKEEPER
Something I can help you with?

Jack spies the gloves and book in the window.

JACK
A girl asked about those earlier.

The shopkeeper laughs.

SHOPKEEPER
Yeah, can you imagine it? What are these parents thinking, eh? Letting a girl learn to fight.

Jack takes Barbara's hand and she steps out from behind him. The shopkeeper's smile disappears.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
Ah.

JACK
Did you call my girl a cheeky bitch?

The shopkeeper puffs up his chest.

SHOPKEEPER
She was a cheeky bitch.

Jack launches a straight right punch across the counter directly into the shopkeeper's jaw. The shopkeeper stumbles back. Jack remains firmly in place. The shopkeeper regains his wits.

Barbara is wide eyed, but not afraid.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)
You bastard.

He takes a step around the counter, Jack holds up his hand.

JACK
Now, you deserved that for calling my girl a bitch and putting your hands on her. You take another step and that's a whole different argument. With me.

The shopkeeper pauses. He returns slowly behind the counter.

SHOPKEEPER
What do you want?

JACK
The gloves and the book. Please.

The shopkeeper nods and retrieves the items. He throws them on the counter.

SHOPKEEPER
She'll never be any good at it.

Jack picks them up and inspects them.

JACK
That's not for you to decide.

He looks the shopkeeper directly in the eye.

JACK (CONT'D)

Is it?

SHOPKEEPER

You want them or not?

JACK

How much?

The shopkeeper sneers.

SHOPKEEPER

Tell you what. You can have them for two and six. When she gets that pretty face rearranged you bring them back here and I'll buy 'em back.

Jack takes some coins from his pocket and counts them onto the counter.

JACK

We'll see, won't we?

Jack takes the items and turns to leave. Barbara gives the shopkeeper a filthy look and follows.

SHOPKEEPER

I told you, girl. Women don't fight and those that do are not well regarded. You'll see.

Jack and Barbara ignore him and leave.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Jack and Barbara walk home. Barbara carries the gloves and book.

BARBARA

Why was he so mean, dad?

JACK

People can be, love, it's just the way they are.

BARBARA

Yeah but he could've kept it to himself.

Jack stops walking. Barbara takes a few more steps then stops and turns. Jack kneels to look her in the eye.

JACK

Listen love, people will always tell you that you can't do something. Mostly it's for your own good but there will be times like that bloke when they are just mean.

BARBARA

What should I do then?

Jack smiles.

JACK

Don't listen.

INT. BARBARA'S HOUSE - DAYS LATER

Jack and Ruby sit in the kitchen and drink tea. Jack reads the paper. The radio plays a TUNE.

There's a THUD from above. Jack ignores it. Ruby rolls her eyes and SIGHS. She sips her tea.

Another THUD. Ruby sighs, a little louder. Jack peers over his newspaper.

JACK

It makes her happy, love.

Ruby puts her tea cup on the table.

RUBY

Must you encourage her, love? She's just a girl.

Jack closes his paper, folds it and places it on the table.

JACK

I know that, but better she does it here than pounding kids on the street, right?

RUBY

Well, I admit she's been getting in a lot less trouble since you bought those bloody gloves for her.

JACK

There you go, then.

Jack picks up his newspaper and opens it.

RUBY

But must she practice in her room? The noise is driving me bloody mad.

Jack sighs and replaces the newspaper on the table.

JACK
Ok, ok. Give me half an hour.

Jack gets up and goes into the back yard.

Another THUD from upstairs. Ruby closes her eyes and massages her temples.

RUBY
Good Lord!

INT. BARBARA'S ROOM - DAY

Barbara wears her gloves and punches the air. She bounces around on her feet. The book is open on the bed. She stops, refers to it, nods, and continues practicing.

There's a KNOCK on the door. Barbara stops.

BARBARA
Come in.

Jack enters.

JACK
Come on, you're driving your mother batty.

BARBARA
Huh?

JACK
Just come with me, come on. Bring ya book.

Jack leaves, Barbara picks up the book awkwardly with the gloves on, and follows.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Jack leads Barbara into the yard. He has rolled an old mattress and tied it with rope to make a punching bag. It's been hung from a sturdy branch of a lone tree.

Barbara is ecstatic. She hugs Jack.

BARBARA
Thanks dad.

Jack hugs her back.

JACK
It's either this or ya mum kills us both.

Barbara lets go and laughs. She squares off with the bag and throws a few jabs.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well?

Barbara throws a few more jabs.

BARBARA

It's perfect.

She continues practicing. Jack smiles and leaves her to it.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Barbara lands blows on her punching bag.
- B) Her fists land some awkward punches.
- C) Same garden, different time - Barbara, a little older.
- D) Boxing gloves land more confident blows on the bags.
- E) Barbara, older again.
- F) A succession of powerful blows rain onto the bag.
- G) Barbara, now a young woman.

END SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. BOXING TENT - DAY

SUPER: 1948

BARBARA (18) stands near the ring with IVY (18). She's dressed in her fighting gear and her gloves. She sports a black eye. Mighty Marge is still the main attraction.

The bell RINGS, the crowd CHEERS as the current fight ends.

IVY

I mean, it's not that I don't enjoy watching you fight, but this is the third day in a row.

BARBARA

And I've lost twice, the show leaves soon and I won't get another chance 'til they come back next year.

The Ringmaster announces another victory for Marge.

Ivy shakes her head.

SAM MCKEOWEN approaches and stands next to them.

IVY
Who are you?

Sam ignores her.

SAM
Back again, hey?

Barbara ignores him.

SAM (CONT'D)
I've noticed the last two days that
you're the only person who has even
got close to lasting the round.

Barbara glances at him.

BARBARA
Lost by twelve seconds yesterday.

SAM
I saw.

Ivy remains silent but eyes Sam suspiciously.

The Ringmaster approaches from inside the ring.

RINGMASTER
Ready?

Barbara nods. She looks at Ivy.

IVY
Well, good luck.

Barbara nods again, too focused to reply. Sam remains silent.

RINGMASTER
And now ladies and gentlemen, those
of you who have frequented our fine
establishment for the last two days
will recognize this next lass.

He points to Barbara. She steps through the ropes to JEERS
from the crowd. Several onlookers roll their eyes and leave.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)
Twice attempted, twice thwarted.
Can this little lady finally last
the round?

Barbara glares at him as she takes her place in her corner.

He looks unimpressed.

Barbara moves her gaze to Marge.

Marge nods.

Barbara nods.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)
Without further ado... Two minutes
on the clock.

The bell RINGS. The Ringmaster rushes out of the way and out of the ring.

Barbara and Marge step forward. They circle each other in the centre of the ring.

Marge is a head taller than Barbara and easily half wider.

Marge sends two test jabs snapping out. Barbara quickly avoids them.

Barbara counters with her own jab. Marge blocks it with ease.

A large clock hung behind the ring shows fifteen seconds gone.

Barbara darts around the ring avoiding Marge's attack. She darts in and lands a one-two combination.

Marge counters and catches Barbara with a left hook that sends her stumbling into the ropes.

The crowd CHEERS.

Marge rushes forward.

Barbara covers up and defends herself. Marge lands several blows.

The Crowd BOO and JEER.

One minute twenty seconds gone.

Barbara ducks under a right hook and dances back to the centre of the ring.

Marge turns and is tagged by a straight right to the chin.

The crowd CHEERS.

Marge rocks back a little but keeps moving forward.

One minute forty five seconds gone.

Marge makes one final push. Barbara is on the back foot and covers up to defend herself.

Marge throws combination after combination. Barbara bobs and weaves and dances back to avoid them all.

The bell RINGS.

The crowd CHEERS.

Marge stops her advance and drops her guard. She nods in acknowledgment and returns to her corner.

Barbara remains in the centre of the ring, breathing heavily.

The ringmaster enters the ring.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)
Well, well, well ladies and gents.
What an upset. Finally, someone
manages to last a round. Who'd have
thought this wee lass would have
the skill?

Barbara is too stunned to acknowledge the remark.

The Ringmaster leans down to her ear.

RINGMASTER (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Good show lass, get ya winnings
from the boss. Now, off ya go.

Barbara takes one more look at Marge, who is preparing for the next fight and taking no notice, and exits the ring.

Ivy offers a beaming smile. Sam says nothing.

IVY
That was amazing.

She hands Barbara a towel. Barbara smiles and wipes her face.

BARBARA
I thought she had me again towards
the end.

Sam steps forward.

SAM
Well done. You actually have a bit
of skill.

Barbara ignores him.

SAM (CONT'D)
Congratulations.

He walks away.

IVY
Who is that?

BARBARA
No idea. C'mon let's go get my
prize.

They both exit the tent.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY

Barbara and Ivy approach a caravan sited a little way from
the main show ground.

IVY
Is this it?

BARBARA
Must be.

They approach and Barbara KNOCKS on the door.

The door is opened by a grizzled man, TOMMY COHEN (50) in a
white vest, braces holding up his slacks and a flat cap. He
looks at them expectantly.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Tommy Cohen?

He raises his eyebrows and keeps a hand rolled cigarette in
his mouth as he speaks.

TOMMY
Yeah?

Barbara and Ivy exchange glances.

BARBARA
I lasted the round in the boxing
tent.

Tommy looks her up and down.

TOMMY
You? Really? I was told you were a
slip of a lass but good Lord.

Barbara scowls.

BARBARA
I win a prize, right?

A man speaks from inside the caravan.

MAN (O.S.)
Let her in you miserable old
bastard.

Tommy sighs.

TOMMY

All right, all right. Come in lass.

He steps back inside. Barbara and Ivy enter.

INT. CARAVAN - DAY

The mid sized caravan is comfortable. A small living area and bed is at one end, and desk and makeshift office at the other.

Tommy takes a seat behind the desk. Sam McKeowen sits in a chair opposite.

Barbara looks at Sam then at Ivy.

Ivy shrugs, confused.

TOMMY

You're the first person to last the round this week you know?

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

Yeah.

TOMMY

Don't get too excited, lass. Marge had fought five fights before yours.

Barbara is a little crestfallen but says nothing.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Well, someone has to win eventually or the punters'll think it's rigged.

Tommy opens the desk drawer, takes out a few coins and places them on the table.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

There ya go. Two shillings.

Ivy looks at the money

IVY

Is that it?

Tommy turns his gaze to her.

TOMMY

You think this is the world championship or what?

Ivy looks down. Embarrassed.

IVY

Well, no.

Tommy looks back at Barbara. She picks up the money.

BARBARA

Thanks.

The girls turn to leave.

TOMMY

Hold on, hold on. There's one more thing to discuss.

The girls turn back to face him. Ivy looks a little afraid.

BARBARA

Oh yeah?

Tommy gestures to Sam.

TOMMY

Yep. This fine gentleman is Sam McKeowen.

Barbara looks at Sam.

BARBARA

We've met.

Sam smiles.

Tommy takes a bottle of whiskey from his desk and pours two glasses. He offers the bottle to Barbara.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

No thanks.

He offers the bottle to Ivy.

IVY

Yuk.

Tommy chuckles, replaces the bottle and gives a glass to Sam.

TOMMY

Mister McKeowen here, also has a traveling show. Not quite as grand or majestic as mine of course...

Sam raises his glass in a toast

SAM

Debatable Tommy, debatable.

TOMMY

But a show nonetheless.

Sam takes a sip of whiskey. He opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted.

BARBARA
That's lovely, but can we go?

Sam downs his drink and puts the empty glass on the desk.

SAM
Sorry, you're right. To business.

IVY
Business?

SAM
Yup. See, your friend here has quite a talent.

Barbara raises an eyebrow. Sam notices.

SAM (CONT'D)
Oh yes. As Tommy already said, you're the only person to last the round this week. No easy feat, let me tell you.

BARBARA
So?

Sam laughs a genuine laugh. He looks at Tommy. Tommy is rolling a cigarette and gestures for him to continue.

SAM
So, it just so happens I need a girl for my fights.

Barbara and Ivy look confused. But say nothing.

SAM (CONT'D)
I'd like you to come with us.

Both girls stare wide eyed.

SAM (CONT'D)
Well?

Barbara remains silent. Ivy nudges her, bringing her back to reality.

BARBARA
Me? Work for you?

SAM
Yep. We travel the West Country mainly. Leave next week.

Barbara looks at Tommy. He pours another drink, not really that interested.

Barbara looks at Ivy.

Ivy shrugs.

Sam takes a scrap of paper from his jacket pocket.

SAM (CONT'D)

Here's where we are camped until then. Drop by if you decide you want the job.

He offers the paper. Barbara takes it.

BARBARA

Erm... thanks.

Tommy slams back a shot of whiskey and SLAMS his glass on the table.

TOMMY

Ok good. Now off you go girls. This place ain't gonna run itself.

BARBARA

Right. Ok Erm... Thanks Mister McKeowen.

SAM

Sam. Please.

BARBARA

Ok, thanks Sam.

Barbara and Ivy leave.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY

They both stand outside the caravan. Barbara stares at the address on the paper.

BARBARA

Wow.

She looks at Ivy.

IVY

Wow.

INT. CARAVAN - DAY

Tommy pours Sam another drink.

TOMMY

You really think she'll draw a crowd? Looks like a strong wind would blow her over.

Sam downs his drink.

SAM
Lasted with your girl, didn't she?

Tommy laughs.

TOMMY
Aye, that she did.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: 1948

BARBARA enters from the yard after training. Jack and Ruby have tea at the table.

Barbara places her gloves on the table, takes a bottle of milk from the fridge and pours a glass. She joins them at the table and sits opposite Jack.

Ruby holds up a printed flyer. It says "Amazing Traveling Show".

RUBY
Are you really sure this is what you want?

Barbara takes a long swig of milk and places the glass on the table.

BARBARA
It's worth a try.

Jack takes a sip of tea and places his cup on the table.

JACK
Look love. Me and ya Mum are pleased you have an interest in something. But isn't joining a carnival a bit much?

BARBARA
Remember when you told me not to listen to people telling me I can't do something?

Jack smiles.

JACK
Of course I do, love. Just be sure that this is what you want.

Barbara touches the gloves.

BARBARA
It feels right, Dad.

RUBY
It's dangerous, Babs.

Barbara sits back in her chair and folds her arms.

BARBARA
Maybe, but I don't want to do
anything else.

Jack stands and moves to the seat next to Barbara.

JACK
You're eighteen now, love, so we
won't stop you.

He takes Barbara's hand.

JACK (CONT'D)
But you must promise, if it gets
too much you'll stop and come home.
Ok?

Barbara puts her other hand on his.

BARBARA
I will, Dad.

She looks to Ruby.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
I promise.

EXT. SAM MCKEOWEN'S CARNIVAL - DAYS LATER

Several caravans and trucks parked on an open field. People go about their daily lives. Laundry hangs on lines strung between trucks.

People cook over hot coals in half barrels. Children play with a scruffy dog.

Beyond the group of children, Barbara, with her luggage, approaches a woman washing some clothes in an iron tub. They exchange words and the woman points in a direction. Barbara follows that direction.

EXT. MAIN CARAVAN - DAY

Sam sits in a folding chair outside the caravan. He smokes a pipe and doesn't seem surprised to see Barbara.

SAM
Cutting a bit fine, we leave
tomorrow.

BARBARA
I made it, didn't I?

Sam smiles.

SAM
That you did.

He gestures to an empty chair next to him. She sits.

SAM (CONT'D)
Any idea how this works?

Barbara shakes her head.

BARBARA
Only what I've seen at Tommy's
show, really.

Sam laughs.

SAM
Thrown you in at the deep end a
bit, haven't I?

BARBARA
I can swim.

Sam laughs again.

SAM
Of that I have no doubt.

A small group of travelers approach. One of them, a huge bear
of a man.

SAM (CONT'D)
Ah, let me introduce you to some of
the family.

The group eyes Barbara suspiciously.

SAM (CONT'D)
Everyone, this is Barbara, our new
fighter.

The huge man, FRANK (35), laughs.

FRANK
You're joking, right?

SAM
Barbara, this is Frank our Strong
Man. His size only pales in
comparison to his attitude.

Franks stares nonplussed. Barbara eyes him back.

FRANK

I've taken bigger craps than her.

Barbara stands.

BARBARA

You've got a big mouth there, big man.

Sam says nothing. The crowd stir the situation.

CROWD

Ooooooooooh.

FRANK

Keep that up, you won't last long.

Barbara steps straight up to him. She stares directly at his chest. She cranes her neck to look him in the eye.

She smiles.

BARBARA

Gonna stop me?

Frank smiles back.

FRANK

Don't waste my time, lass.

Barbara punches him in the stomach and dances back. It doesn't affect him.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Ok then.

Frank circles Barbara. She matches him step for step.

The crowd has increased to almost all the workers. A WOMAN calls out.

WOMAN

Don't hurt her too much, Frank.

FRANK

It's ok, this won't take long.

Sam remains in his seat. He taps his pipe on the arm and refills it.

Frank lunges at Barbara. She side steps and darts behind him. She smacks him on the behind.

The crowd LAUGHS.

BARBARA

Big. But slow.

Frank turns and smiles.

FRANK
Small. But loud.

He feigns a move to her right. Barbara falls for it and he catches her with a shove when she moves left.

She flies back onto her behind.

The crowd LAUGHS.

Barbara jumps to her feet. Frank advances again and attempts to grab at her. She ducks under his arms and again maneuvers behind him.

Frank turns and makes several more attempts to grab her, but each time she dances away.

The crowd warms towards Barbara.

WOMAN
Go on girl. Give him a spanking.

Barbara doesn't react, she's completely focused on her adversary.

Frank tags her with a swipe and sends her to the ground again. She lies in the dirt.

FRANK
C'mon girl. You're far too fragile
for this.

Barbara pushes herself back up, enraged.

She runs at Frank. He swipes at her several times. Barbara bobs and weaves and avoids them all to the delight of the crowd.

She sees an opening and jumps up, landing a massive blow on Frank's jaw. Blood sprays.

The crowd goes silent.

Barbara stands her ground. Frank holds his jaw.

The crowd wait expectantly.

Frank spits out a tooth and looks at the blood on his hands. Then looks to Barbara.

He laughs.

The crowd laughs.

Barbara is unsure how to react.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Bloody hell, lass. I take it all
back.

He smiles a bloody smile.

Barbara relaxes and laughs.

Sam stands up.

SAM
Alright, alright. That's enough.
Let's get back to work. There's
plenty to do before we leave.

The crowd breaks up, several of them approach Barbara and
congratulate her.

Frank approaches her along with Sam.

FRANK
Good show, lass.

He puts a massive arm around her and gives her a hug.

BARBARA
Not too bad yourself, for a big
lad.

Franks laughs and leaves.

SAM
Well done. We're a suspicious folk
by nature. You did the right thing
there.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA
I think I'm gonna like it here.

INT. BOXING TENT - WEEKS LATER

Barbara sits in her corner of the ring. She swigs from a
bottle of water and spits into a bucket. A thin groggy man is
being helped out of the ring.

The Ringmaster approaches Barbara.

RINGMASTER
Ready for the next one?

Barbara takes another swig.

BARBARA
How many now?

RINGMASTER
Next one will be the eighth today.

Barbara nods.

BARBARA
What time is it?

RINGMASTER
Almost one o'clock. You want
another lad or a lass?

Barbara stands.

BARBARA
Either will do.

The Ringmaster smiles.

RINGMASTER
I dunno where you get the energy,
lass.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

The show is closed. The workers gather around a fire. One of them plays an accordion. Another cooks meat over the flames. Bottles of alcohol are passed around.

Sam sits in his folding chair and smokes his pipe.

Barbara enters the area.

One of the workers spots her.

WORKER
Here she is!

They all CHEER.

Barbara looks around, confused. Sam stands and joins her. He shushes the crowd then smiles.

SAM
Well, what can we say about this
young lady?

Barbara looks confused.

SAM (CONT'D)
In all my years dragging my arse up
and down this wonderful country of
ours, never have I seen one woman
fight fifteen fights in one day.

The crowd CHEER. Barbara is a little embarrassed. She gently slaps Sam on his arm.

BARBARA
Sam, stop it.

Sam ignores her and continues with his showmanship.

SAM
Mark my words, ladies and
gentlemen. Many will come from far
and wide to view, and pay--

The crowd LAUGHS.

SAM (CONT'D)
--to bear witness to The Mighty
Atom of the Ring!

The crowd CHEER.

The accordion player strikes an upbeat tune. A bottle is thrust into Barbara's hand. She takes a long drink. Sam makes his way back to his seat. Barbara follows and sits next to him.

BARBARA
Quite the speech.

She offers Sam the bottle. He takes it and drinks.

SAM
Quite the performance.

Barbara smiles, a little abashed.

BARBARA
It's no big deal really.

Sam raises an eyebrow.

SAM
You're wrong there lass. I meant it
when I said I've not seen that many
fights in one day.

Barbara shrugs.

BARBARA
They want to fight. So I fight.

Sam smiles.

SAM
That you do, lass.

Sam takes another drink and passes the bottle to Barbara.

BARBARA
The Mighty Atom of the Ring?

Sam smiles.

SAM

Show business Barbara. It's all about the show business.

Barbara LAUGHS and takes a drink.

EXT. LONDON - MONTHS LATER

SUPER: LONDON 1948

Sam and Barbara walk along the River Thames and take in the sights. Tower Bridge looms in the background. Tourists mill around gawking at the wonders the nation's capital has to offer.

BARBARA

Thanks for letting me come Sam. Always wanted to see London.

SAM

Well, if I can arrange a good spot of land we'll be able to bring the show down and see more of it.

BARBARA

I hope so.

They stop and look out over the river.

SAM

Are you sure you'll be ok while I'm in the meeting?

Barbara nods.

BARBARA

Yeah. As long as I don't get lost, I'll be ok.

SAM

Different world down here, ain't it?

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA

Exciting though.

Sam checks his watch.

SAM

Right. I'd better be off. Meet you back here in a few hours?

BARBARA
Ok, good luck.

Sam nods and leaves.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

Barbara walks along a street and marvels at the buildings and the hustle-bustle pace of London life. She passes an alleyway and glances down it.

She stops and retraces her steps.

She stares down the alley at a sign on the side of a building stating "Boxing Gym".

Barbara enters the alleyway and approaches the building.

She peers through the grimy window and spies on men training inside.

A MAN exits the building and sees her.

MAN
You lost, love?

Barbara steps back, surprised.

BARBARA
Oh. No, just looking.

The man lights a cigarette.

MAN
No place for a little thing like
you here, love.

Barbara opens her mouth to reply, but chooses not to. She turns back the way she came and leaves.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

Barbara sits by the river and browses a newspaper.

Sam arrives and sits next to her.

Barbara looks up from the newspaper.

BARBARA
How'd it go?

Sam sighs.

SAM

Nothing yet. As always, negotiating the price is ballsing it all up, but it's not over yet. How was your afternoon?

Barbara closes the newspaper.

BARBARA

Nice. I found a boxing gym.

Sam looks out to the river.

SAM

Yeah?

Barbara looks sheepish.

BARBARA

Yeah. Got me thinking.

SAM

About?

Barbara takes a deep breath.

BARBARA

I could move down here and train.

Sam nods.

SAM

Aye, you could.

Barbara eyes him suspiciously.

BARBARA

But?

Sam turns to look at her.

SAM

You need to understand, lass, people view us traveling folk differently to most other people.

BARBARA

I know that, Sam.

SAM

Then you know that no one will recognize a woman fighter, right?

BARBARA

You did.

Sam smiles.

SAM

Aye, but let's be real, our show caters to the fantastical. Outside of it, women fighters simply don't exist.

Barbara looks out over the river.

BARBARA

You think I can't do it?

Sam puts a hand on hers.

SAM

I know you've got the guts to try.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

But?

SAM

I just don't want you to be disappointed is all. Carnivals are one thing. But this--

He gestures around them.

SAM (CONT'D)

--This is something else.

Barbara holds up the paper.

BARBARA

There's work agencies around, I might see if one of 'em can give me some typing training. I have enough savings to see me through for a while 'til then.

Sam looks at her.

SAM

You really want to do this?

BARBARA

Yeah. I really do.

Sam puts his arm around her and gives her a hug.

SAM

Then you do it lass. While we're here let's find you somewhere to live then go home and get your things, eh?

Barbara leans into his hug.

BARBARA
Thanks, Sam.

EXT. LONDON - DAYS LATER

Barbara walks down the street with her luggage. She enters a building marked "Bloomsbury YMCA".

INT. BARBARA'S ROOM - DAY

The door opens and Barbara enters.

It's small and sparsely furnished.

She puts her bags on the bed, takes a newspaper from her handbag, places it on a small desk and sits in the chair.

She takes a pencil from her handbag, opens the paper to the classified section and starts to circle various employment agencies.

EXT. LONDON - DAYS LATER

Barbara approaches a building with her kit bag and handbag. The sign above the door reads "Mickey Wood's Gym".

Barbara enters.

INT. MICKEY WOOD'S GYM - DAY

It's a large, bland space. Two boxing rings are set adjacent to each other with space between them. Two men spar in one of them.

Heavy bags hang from chains attached to the ceiling and free weights line one wall. The opposite wall has three speed bags mounted to it. Men are training all around.

No women are to be seen.

Barbara looks around. No one pays her any mind.

She spies BILL (50), a wiry looking man sweeping the floor, and approaches him.

BARBARA
Excuse me?

Bill stops sweeping and looks up. He looks Barbara up and down, dismisses her and turns his attention back to his sweeping.

BILL
Women's Institute is two streets
over.

Barbara ignores the comment.

BARBARA
I'm looking for Mister Woods.

Bill pushes his broom across the floor away from Barbara. She shadows him.

BILL
Yeah?

Barbara waits for more. Bill props his broom against a wall and makes his way to the ring where the two men spar.

Barbara follows.

Bill picks up a metal bucket of spit and water from the corner of the ring. He turns and almost walks into Barbara. The contents of the bucket slosh over and onto his trousers.

BILL (CONT'D)
For fu... What do you want?

Barbara suppresses a smile.

BARBARA
To see Mister Woods.

Bill places the bucket on the floor, takes a handkerchief from his pocket and mops his trousers.

BILL
Over there, in the office.

He points to an office in the corner.

BILL (CONT'D)
Now get out the bloody way, will
ya?

Barbara leaves him to his task and goes to the office.

As she approaches, she sees MICKEY (45) sitting at a desk completing some paperwork.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Barbara knocks on the open door. Mickey looks up and raises an eyebrow.

BARBARA
Mister Woods?

Mickey looks back down at his paperwork.

MICKEY
Not hiring, sorry.

Barbara steps into the office.

BARBARA
Excuse me?

Mickey sighs and puts down his pen.

MICKEY
I said we're not hiring.

BARBARA
Not hiring what?

MICKEY
Whatever it is you're applying for.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA
Oh right. No I'm not here to apply
for a job.

Mickey leans back in his chair.

MICKEY
Then what do you want?

BARBARA
I want to train.

Mickey looks confused.

MICKEY
Train? For what?

BARBARA
For boxing.

Mickey waves her off and returns to his work.

MICKEY
Don't waste my time, love.

Barbara steps forward.

BARBARA
I'm not.

Mickey SLAMS his pen on the desk.

MICKEY

Look, I ain't got time for this. I dunno who put you up to this but I've got a lot to do and you're keeping me from it, right? Now, if you don't mind...

He gestures to the door, picks up his pen and goes back to work.

Barbara reaches into her handbag and takes out a roll of cash. She steps forward and sprinkles them onto Mickey's workbook.

BARBARA

Does this look like a wind up?

Mickey looks up. Then at the money. Then back at Barbara.

She raises an eyebrow.

Mickey looks to the heavens.

MICKEY

Give me strength. Will you leave me alone if I let you stay?

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

Of course.

Mickey rubs his face.

MICKEY

LEN!

The shout startles Barbara.

A lean young man LEN (21) enters the office. He ignores Barbara.

LEN

I'm busy, Mick, what's up?

MICKEY

Can you take this and sort her out?

Len looks at Barbara.

LEN

We hiring a cleaner?

Barbara scowls at him.

MICKEY

Just sort her out a locker and fill her in on membership dues and all that. She's driving me mental.

Len laughs.

LEN

She's gonna train?

Barbara looks at him.

BARBARA

Yes. She is.

Len stares back. Then at Mickey.

LEN

C'mon mate, I ain't got time for this.

Mickey pinches the bridge of his nose.

MICKEY

Just do it please mate. If she can pay, she can train.

Len shrugs his shoulders.

LEN

Righto, skipper. C'mon, love.

He exits the office, not waiting to see if Barbara follows.

EXT. GYM - DAY

Barbara follows Len. He walks to a row of lockers and opens one.

LEN

Here you go. Bring you're own padlock. Dues are two shillings a week, come as much as you like.

He turns to leave.

BARBARA

That's it?

Without breaking stride, nor looking back--

LEN

That's it.

Barbara reaches into her handbag and takes out a padlock.

BARBARA
(to herself)
Already got a padlock, you arse!

She puts her bags into the locker, shrugs off her overcoat to reveal she's already wearing her training gear and takes her gloves from her bag.

She steps to a heavy bag and begins her routine.

The gym goes quiet as all the men stop and stare at Barbara.

After watching several combos they appear unimpressed and return to training.

MONTAGE: BARBARA AT WORK AND TRAINING

-- Barbara slowly jabs the heavy bag.

-- Barbara slowly types on a typewriter with two fingers, each key stroke sounds like a punch on the heavy bag.

-- Barbara skips in the gym. Sidelong glances and smirks from the surrounding men.

-- Barbara types at work, each key stroke a skipping sound.

-- Barbara jabs the bag but watches Len train one of the men. As he demonstrates a technique Barbara copies it.

-- Barbara at work, her typing is faster but still clumsy.

-- Barbara punches the heavy bag, each punch sounds like a typewriter key stroke.

-- Barbara at work, fingers flying across the typewriter.

-- Barbara attacks the heavy bag with a flurry of punches, the machine gun sound of the typewriter punctuates each strike. She lands one final heavy blow to the sound of the typewriter return bell.

-- Barbara pulls the completed document from the typewriter. It's perfect.

END MONTAGE

INT. GYM - WEEKS LATER

Barbara is on the heavy bag.

Len leans against the office door frame, Mickey at his desk.

Mickey looks up.

MICKEY
She still here?

Len speaks over his shoulder.

LEN
Three hours every day.

Mickey returns to his work.

MICKEY
She's got moxy, I'll give her that.

Len shrugs.

LEN
Maybe, she's sloppy though. Speeds
not bad but footwork is bloody
awful.

MICKEY
Well, she pays in full, on time,
every week.

Len turns and steps into the office. He picks up a newspaper from the desk.

LEN
You read the article in here?

Mickey nods.

MICKEY
Yep.

LEN
Think she has?

Mickey sighs, stops working, and looks up.

MICKEY
You see me working right? Ask her
if she's bloody read it.

Len smiles and leaves with the newspaper.

INT. GYM - DAY

Len approaches Barbara. He grabs a folding chair along the way, unfolds it, places it near the wall and sits. He takes the paper from under his arm and makes a show of opening it.

Barbara ignores him and continues punching the heavy bag.

LEN
Read the paper lately?

Barbara snaps out a stiff jab.

BARBARA

Nope.

Len rustles the newspaper.

LEN

Renowned boxing expert Peter Wilson states, and I quote..

He reads the article out loud.

LEN (CONT'D)

Women in boxing? What a monstrous, degrading, disgusting idea--

He pauses and watches Barbara.

She pounds the bag, unable to hide her anger.

LEN (CONT'D)

--Would anyone like to go out with a girl sporting two lovely purple-black eyes?

Barbara ignores him. He stops reading, folds the newspaper and drops it on the floor.

LEN (CONT'D)

You're wasting your time, you know?

Barbara continues punching.

BARBARA

Yeah?

LEN

Yup. No one will ever take you seriously as a boxer.

Barbara snaps out a three punch combination.

BARBARA

Maybe. You agree with the paper?

LEN

Not too bothered either way really. Doesn't effect me at all.

Barbara stops.

BARBARA

Really?

LEN

Yup.

Barbara returns to training.

BARBARA
Wanna test the theory?

LEN
What theory?

BARBARA
That women can't box.

Len laughs.

LEN
Ha! How?

Barbara stops training.

BARBARA
Spar with me.

Len stops laughing.

LEN
You're joking, right?

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA
It don't bother you either way
right?

LEN
Not at all but you can't be
serious. You're like what, four
feet tall?

BARBARA
Four feet ten, actually.

Barbara walks towards the ring. Len stands up and follows.

LEN
Oh, well excuse me.

Barbara reaches the ring. Hops up and climbs through the ropes. She speaks a little too loud so the others can hear.

BARBARA
Well, you want to take me on or
what?

The other men stop what they're doing. They look at Len.

Len looks around.

LEN
What you think lads? She worth a
quick rumble?

The lads all LAUGH. Bill makes his presence known from the back of the room.

BILL
(shout)
I'll give her a rumble if you
won't.

The lads LAUGH, Barbara ignores them, focused only on Len.

BARBARA
Well?

Len strides to the ring and removes his shirt. Barbara points at his white vest with a gloved hand.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Sure you don't mind getting blood
on that?

The lads JEER.

Len CHUCKLES.

LEN
Oh, I reckon I'll be alright.

He pulls on some gloves and steps through the ropes.

Everyone has stopped training and gather around.

Mickey stands in his office doorway.

Barbara and Len face off.

LEN (CONT'D)
Ready?

Barbara nods.

LEN (CONT'D)
Bill? The bell if you please.

Bill laughs and strikes a bell near the ring.

Len and Barbara circle each other. Len smiles the whole time. Barbara is completely focused.

The crowd laugh and make jokes at Barbara's expense.

Barbara snaps out a stiff jab, Len avoids it with ease.

They circle each other. Len throws several jabs causing Barbara to cover up and defend herself.

She steps back.

BARBARA
You pulling those punches?

Len smiles.

LEN
Not if you don't want me too.

BARBARA
I don't.

Len sighs.

LEN
Well, if you're sure.

Len advances with several shots. Barbara bobs and weaves and manages to defend herself, although with difficulty.

LEN (CONT'D)
Not like the fairground, is it?

Barbara ignores him and presses her own attack. Len is driven back but defends himself with ease. Barbara manages to land a few body shots.

The crowd LAUGH and throw insults at Len.

After several exchanges Len puts up his hands. Barbara pauses.

LEN (CONT'D)
Look, love. I'll admit you have the basics and your technique isn't all bad but you have to face reality.

Barbara is still in a fighting stance.

BARBARA
What reality is that?

Len shakes his head.

LEN
No one will ever take a woman boxer seriously. You're wasting your time.

Barbara is overcome with fury. She snaps out a left jab followed by a right cross, directly into Len's unprotected face.

Len hits the mat.

The crowd goes silent.

BARBARA

That real enough for ya?

The crowd bursts into LAUGHTER.

Len sits up on the mat and touches his bloody nose. He looks down at his blood stained vest.

LEN

This'll never come out, you know?

Barbara smiles and relaxes. The fight's over.

Barbara leaves Len on the mat and exits the ring.

She looks over and sees Mickey watching her from the doorway of his office.

He nods once and goes back inside.

INT. GYM - LATER

The gym now empty and Len straightens up the last few things and makes his way to the door.

He passes Mickey's office and glances inside.

Mickey is at his desk.

LEN

Night, Mick.

Mickey looks up.

MICKEY

Hold up, Len.

Len stops and returns to the office.

INT. OFFICE - SAME

Len enters and sits opposite Mickey

LEN

What's up, mate?

Mickey leans back in his chair and folds his arms. He points to Len's nose.

MICKEY

She break it?

Len touches his nose gingerly and laughs.

LEN

Yep.

Mickey smiles and shakes his head a little.

MICKEY

Listen, you reckon that she'll be any good?

LEN

Barbara?

MICKEY

You see any other women coming in here?

Len smiles.

LEN

There's a reason for that, mate.

MICKEY

Maybe. But after she put you on your arse today I checked around. Seems there's a few women knocking about that might be worth taking a look at.

Len rolls his eyes.

LEN

Come on mate, no one's gonna give them the time of day. Women pro fighters is a ridiculous idea.

Mickey leans forward.

MICKEY

No one's saying pro, mate. But I reckon with the right spin there's money to be made in exhibitions.

LEN

I dunno, mate. Seems risky to me.

MICKEY

Let me worry about the risk. Do you think you can get her up to scratch or not?

Len sighs.

LEN

I can make her better for sure.

Mickey smiles.

MICKEY

Good enough.

EXT. STREET - WEEKS LATER

Len leaves the gym and walks down the alley. He turns onto the street and passes a pub. He notices Barbara through the window and stops. She's alone at a table reading a newspaper.

Len dismisses her and takes a few steps before stopping again.

He SIGHS, turns and enters the pub.

INT. PUB - DAY

Barbara sits at her table minding her own business.

Theres a THUD on the table.

Barbara looks up from the newspaper and sees a plate of steak and a pint of beer on the table. She looks up further and sees Len smiling.

She's not impressed and returns to her newspaper.

BARBARA

Can I help you?

Len remains standing.

LEN

You should eat this.

Barbara RUSTLES the newspaper.

BARBARA

Not hungry thanks. I'm in training.

Len sits opposite her. She tries unsuccessfully to hide her annoyance and the uninvited guest.

LEN

You're tiny. You need to bulk up.

Barbara turns in her seat trying to give Len the cold shoulder.

Len feels the chill.

He smiles.

LEN (CONT'D)

Look, I may have been a little unfair a few weeks ago.

Barbara raises an eyebrow.

Len feels a little uncomfortable.

LEN (CONT'D)
So, erm, y'know, maybe you're not
so bad after all.

Barbara focuses on her newspaper.

BARBARA
Knocked you flat didn't I?

Len winces at the memory.

LEN
Kinda my point. So, y'know, maybe--

Barbara SLAMS the newspaper onto the table and faces him.

He's started.

BARBARA
Maybe what? Maybe I'm not worth
your time. Is that it?

Len holds up his hands.

LEN
No, no, not at all. What I'm trying
to say is, well, I'm sorry I
misjudged you is all.

Barbara cools down, a little taken aback.

BARBARA
Oh. Right. Well, so you bloody well
should.

Len smiles.

LEN
Look, I'm sorry ok. Can we start
again?

He pushes the plate and pint closer to her.

She gives him the stink eye, but accepts the offering.

She picks up the pint and downs half of it.

BARBARA
Maybe.

She picks up the cutlery.

INT. GYM - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: 1949

Barbara and Len train together. Barbara follows Len's instructions while hitting the heavy bag.

Mickey enters, a newspaper under his arm, and approaches them. He holds up the newspaper.

MICKEY

Made the front page again.

Barbara stops training. Len faces Mickey.

LEN

Well?

Mickey unfolds the paper and reads.

MICKEY

Well. Bill McGowran says--

He clears his throat dramatically.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

--After five exhibition bouts, it is clear she certainly boxes well...

Barbara and Len exchange looks.

Barbara smiles.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

But, so what?

Barbara stops smiling.

Mickey notices and stops reading. He folds the paper and hands it to Barbara.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

It's the front page, kid.

Barbara holds up the front page.

BARBARA

But look what they're saying.

Mickey smiles.

MICKEY

Don't read it. Measure it.

He turns and leaves for his office.

Barbara turns to Len.

BARBARA

What the bloody hell did that mean?

Len smiles.

LEN

That a lot of people will be eating those words one day. Come on, keep at it.

Training resumes.

INT. GYM - DAYS LATER

Barbara and Len train.

Mickey enters and approaches. He takes Len to one side, away from Barbara.

MICKEY

Listen, I was thinking about what they've been saying in the papers.

LEN

And?

MICKEY

So I called Fleet Street and they've sent down a bloke to see Barbara first hand. He's outside.

Len shakes his head.

LEN

You're joking right?

Mickey smiles.

MICKEY

Nope. It's Bill McGowran himself, the bloke that wrote that last piece. They really need to see her, Len.

Len shakes his head again.

LEN

She won't like it, Mick.

Mickey ushers Len back towards Barbara.

MICKEY

Smooth it out, Len. This'll be good for us.

Mickey hangs back while Len and Barbara speak.

LEN

Listen, love. Some bloke from Fleet Street is here. Something about a story for the paper.

Barbara snaps out a combination on the bag.

BARBARA

I'm training, Len.

Len puts a hand on the bag, stopping the exercise.

LEN

It could help.

Barbara sighs.

BARBARA

Ok, but make it quick.

Len turns to Mickey and nods. Mickey goes outside and returns with BILL MCGOWRAN.

Len extends a hand.

LEN

Len Smith.

Bill looks around, clearly unimpressed, before shaking Len's hand.

BILL

Bill McGowran, Evening News.

LEN

We weren't expecting you.

Bill takes up a notebook from his pocket and places a camera on a chair.

BILL

It's a slow news day. Thought I'd come down and see what this sideshow is all about.

Len raises an eyebrow.

LEN

Sideshow? All we have going on today is training champions.

Len gestures towards Barbara.

Bill LAUGHS as he looks Barbara up and down.

BILL

What? Her? Pull the other one, mate.

Len steps towards Bill.

LEN
Now, look here mate--

Barbara places a hand on Len's shoulder and steps in front of him.

BARBARA
Fancy a quick spar and we'll see,
shall we?

Bill LAUGHS again.

BILL
Me? Fight you? Come off it, love.
What would I tell the lads in the
office? That I gave some mouthy
bird a backhander?

Barbara stands stoney faced before him.

BARBARA
Give a lot of birds backhanders?

Bill picks up his camera and loads some film. He pays no real attention to Barbara.

BILL
If they step out of line, yeah.

He turns to Len.

BILL (CONT'D)
You know what I mean right?
Sometimes ya gotta keep a woman in
line yeah? I mean, let's be
realistic. Women belong knitting
jumpers, not in a boxing ring,
right?

Len takes a step back.

LEN
You just said the wrong thing,
sunshine.

Len nods towards Barbara.

BILL
What now, love--

Bill turns to see --

A glove fills the frame.

Bill crashes to the floor.

Barbara stands over him.

BARBARA
Tell that to the lads in the
office.

Len kneels next to Bill. He gently slaps Bill's face a few times.

LEN
He's out cold.

Barbara shrugs.

Len LAUGHS.

He gestures to a YOUNG FIGHTER who looks on.

LEN (CONT'D)
Help me up with him, will ya.

The Young Man helps Len lift Bill into a chair.

Bill murmurs and begins to come around.

Len slaps him twice more.

LEN (CONT'D)
C'mon, asshole. Wake up!

Bill startles awake.

BILL
What?

He looks at Len, then to Barbara.

BILL (CONT'D)
What the bloody hell was that?
She's a bloody menace.

Len smiles.

LEN
Maybe you should learn to watch ya
mouth then.

Bill looks at Len with disdain but remains silent.

LEN (CONT'D)
So, you gonna do this interview or
not.

Bill touches his jaw.

BILL
You're joking right?

Len shakes his head.

LEN

Or you can go back empty handed and
I'll make sure the lads in the
office find out some mouthy bird
laid you out.

Bill looks at the floor.

BILL

Fine. It won't do much good, but
fine.

Barbara steps forward.

BARBARA

Where do you want me?

BILL

As far away from me as bloody
possible.

Barbara raises an eyebrow.

Bill sighs and takes up his notebook.

BILL (CONT'D)

Just sit down, will ya?

INT. MICKEY'S OFFICE - WEEKS LATER

Mickey sits at his desk, he's on the phone. A man, NAT
TENNENS (40), sits opposite.

MICKEY

Yep.

He nods.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Ok, no problem. It'll be fine don't
worry.

He smiles.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Yeah, see you then.

He hangs up the phone and writes down some details. He looks
up at Nat.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

They're up for it.

Nat smiles.

NAT

I knew they would mate. If we sell it right we could make a nice few quid.

Mickey leans back in his chair.

MICKEY

(shouts)
LEN!

Len walks in.

LEN

You hollered?

MICKEY

Len, this is Nat Tennens, he's the licensee at the Kilburn Empire.

Len and Nat shake hands.

LEN

Nice to meet you, mate.

NAT

Likewise.

Len sits in an empty chair next to Nat.

LEN

So, what's up?

MICKEY

Listen to this. It seems that the interview Babs gave to that fool Bill McGowran might have paid off.

LEN

How so?

MICKEY

I just got off the phone with Bert Saunders' manager. You know Bert, right?

Len nods.

LEN

Seen him fight a couple times. He ain't great but yeah, I know him.

Mickey leans forward and clasps his hands together on the desk.

MICKEY

Maybe, but they've agreed to an exhibition bout against Barbara.

Len sits wide eyed.

LEN

Shut up!

Mickey smiles.

MICKEY

It's true, mate. At the Kilburn
Empire on seventh March.

LEN

Well, bloody hell.

He looks at Nat.

Nat smiles.

NAT

Should be quite a show.

Mickey nods towards the training area.

MICKEY

She out there?

LEN

She's always out there.

MICKEY

Go give her the good news, will ya?

Len smiles, stands and leaves.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: FEBRUARY 1949

A receptionist sits at the desk and types. A plaque outside
the office door reads "Variety Artist's Federation".

Two men are heard SHOUTING inside the office.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Nat sits opposite GEORGE LEE (55). George sits behind a desk
with several newspapers laid out on it. Mickey paces the
room.

GEORGE

How many times do you have to be
told, this farce won't be allowed.

Mickey stops pacing.

MICKEY

Who are you to tell us we can't do it?

George is red faced.

GEORGE

This is the Variety Artist's Federation. You'll do as you're bloody told.

Mickey SLAMS his hands on the desk.

MICKEY

Yeah? You think you have that much pull, do ya?

Nat puts a hand on Mickey's arm.

NAT

Sit down, Mick.

Mickey looks at him.

MICKEY

You ain't going along with this?

NAT

Of course not. But you're giving me a bloody headache.

Mickey resumes pacing the room.

NAT (CONT'D)

Now look George. All we are proposing is a simple exhibition.

George gestures to the newspapers.

GEORGE

Read the bloody papers. No one wants this.

He holds up the Daily Mail newspaper.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ban this girl boxer, this one says.

He throws it down and picks up the Evening News.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Move to ban girl boxer from stage, it says here. Why would anyone want to watch women fight?

MICKEY

Because they can, you bloody idiot.
She's fought men, for Christ's
sake.

George LAUGHS.

GEORGE

She's fought half pissed idiots at
the fairground.

MICKEY

She'd knock you into next week,
that's for bloody sure.

George SLAMS his fist on the desk.

GEORGE

Who do you think you're talking to?

Nat holds up his hands to calm them both.

NAT

This isn't getting us anywhere.

GEORGE

An act like this is degrading to
the best interests of variety,
public entertainment, the boxing
profession and womanhood.

Mickey LAUGHS.

MICKEY

What the bloody hell do you know
about womanhood?

George ignores him.

GEORGE

To stop this we will, if necessary,
enlist the aid of manager's
organizations and Trade Unions.

Nat leans forward.

NAT

Before you carry on hollering about
degrading womanhood, how about you
clean up your own stable and stop
your members engaging in strip
tease and nude acts in your clubs?

George stands up, enraged.

GEORGE

Get out. You both get out of here
right now.

Mickey steps forward. Nat stands and puts a hand on Mickey's chest.

NAT
Leave it, mate.

They both turn and leave.

GEORGE
We have six thousand members that will boycott this farce.

Nat and Mickey ignore him and continue on.

EXT. KILBURN EMPIRE - NIGHT

SUPER: THE KILBURN EMPIRE - MARCH 7th 1949

People enter the building. A poster advertises the event. It reads "Boxing Exhibition: Barbara Buttrick vs Bert Saunders"

INT. KILBURN EMPIRE - SAME

The crowd take their seats. It's not a huge gathering.

INT. BACKSTAGE - SAME

Barbara warms up. Shadow boxes around Len. Len gives advice and throws a few punches at her.

Mickey and Nat enter. Their faces grim.

LEN
How's it look out there?

MICKEY
Not quite a full house, mate.

Barbara dances around the room. Len focuses on her.

BARBARA
At least they came, right?

Mickey hangs his head, a little awkward.

MICKEY
Yeah. Listen. There's been a set back.

Barbara stops.

Len turns to face Mickey.

BARBARA
A setback?

MICKEY

Yeah. It's like this, see--

He hesitates, unsure how to proceed.

BARBARA

It's like what?

LEN

Come on mate, out with it.

Mickey sighs.

MICKEY

Bert isn't coming.

Barbara hangs her head.

Nat puts a hand on her shoulder.

BARBARA

I should've known.

Len looks to the ceiling, trying to remain calm.

LEN

Why not?

NAT

It's the Variety Artist's
Federation.

LEN

What about them?

NAT

They've been pressuring for weeks
to cancel the bout and it seems
they finally convinced Bert and his
manager that even an exhibition
with a woman would look bad on Bert
as a professional.

BARBARA

But we're here, the crowd is here.

NAT

I'm sorry love, Bert just won't
risk his career.

Len explodes with anger.

LEN

What bloody career? He's a half
decent sparring partner at best.

Mickey raises his hands in an effort to placate Len.

MICKEY

There's nothing we can do, Len. All we can offer now is an exhibition of shadow boxing and bag work. Show them she has some skill.

Nat looks at Len.

NAT

I held on for as long as I could mate but the V.A.F said they'll take my license and shut me down if we carry on. I was willing to risk it, but they got to Bert instead.

He looks at Barbara.

NAT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Len turns and paces the room. Barbara stands silent.

LEN

This is a joke.

He turns to Barbara.

LEN (CONT'D)

What do you think?

Barbara sighs.

BARBARA

Well, they've paid to see me, right?

INT. KILBURN EMPIRE - NIGHT

The stage is set up with a boxing ring in the centre. The crowd mumble as the ANNOUNCER walks on stage.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen. Due to unforeseen circumstances the advertised exhibition will not be taking place.

The crowd BOO and JEER.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Instead, we have young Barbara Buttrick offering an example of training and technique.

The crowd gets louder.

The announcer leaves. Barbara enters the stage and begins shadow boxing.

The crowd continues to BOO.

Barbara continues her set.

Several of the crowd stand and throw crumpled flyers at the stage.

People begin to leave amid shouts for refunds.

Barbara looks impassive as they leave, focused only on the task at hand.

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Barbara sits on a bench.

Len kneels before her and unwraps bandages from her hands.

He glances up at her from time to time. She stares off into space.

Moments later Barbara looks at Len, tears in her eyes.

Len offers a reassuring smile.

BARBARA

What's the point, Len?

She leans forward, rests her head on Len's shoulder and bursts into tears. Len holds her for a time, letting her get it all out.

Barbara stops crying and takes a deep breath, composing herself, before sitting back upright.

Len wipes the tears from her face.

LEN

They're never gonna acknowledge us,
love.

BARBARA

Us?

Len smiles and touches her face.

LEN

Of course. It's always gonna be me
and you, love.

He leans forward and kisses her. She kisses him back.

EXT. BARBARAS CHILDHOOD HOME - MONTHS LATER

The street is quiet as usual.

A car pulls up. Len and Barbara get out. They walk up the garden path. Before they get to the door it opens and Ruby comes out to greet them.

Ruby hugs Barbara and they all enter.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The whole family sit around the table having finished a meal.

BARBARA
That was lovely mum.

LEN
Yeah, that was delicious Ruby,
thank you.

Ruby waves a hand to dismiss the compliment, a little embarrassed.

RUBY
Oh, stop it. It was just roast
beef.

Len smiles

LEN
But home cooked roast beef. Can't
remember the last time I had any.

Jack smiles.

JACK
It's good to be able to feed you
both.

Barbara smiles back.

BARBARA
Yeah, sorry it's been so long since
we were last here. It's been a bit
busy lately.

Jack leans forward.

JACK
So I've heard. But how's it going
really?

Barbara SIGHS.

BARBARA

It's hard work dad. I type in the daytime, train at night and fight on the weekends.

Ruby looks worried.

RUBY

You're not taking on to much I hope. Len are you keeping an eye on her?

Len holds his hands up in mock defence.

LEN

I do my best Ruby but you know how determined she is.

Barbara hits his arm playfully.

BARBARA

Stop it, you'll make them worry.

JACK

We're always gonna worry love.

Barbara stands and walks to Len. She sits on his lap and gives him a hug.

BARBARA

It's ok Daddy, I can handle it.

Len hugs her back.

LEN

I know you can love.

Ruby stands up and begins clearing the table.

RUBY

Right, off with you all, I need to clear al this up. Everyone into the living rom, i'll bring tea in shortly.

The all stand up.

BARBARA

I'l help you mum.

RUBY

Thanks love.

The men leave.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Jack and Len enter and sit. Jack in his armchair, Len on the sofa.

LEN
That was some good grub eh?

JACK
Aye lad.

They are silent for several seconds.

JACK (CONT'D)
So, how's she really doing Len?

Len smiles in the way only someone truly proud of someone else can.

LEN
She's really got the goods Jack--

His silence speaks volumes.

JACK
But?

LEN
They just won't take her seriously.
She has so much passion and talent
but they just refuse to see it.

JACK
That won't stop her.

Len laughs

LEN
Nope. Me neither. I'll do whatever
it takes to give her what she
needs.

JACK
You're a good lad Len.

Len smiles nervously.

LEN
Glad you think so--

He shifts in his seat a little.

LEN (CONT'D)
-- so while I've got you on side.
Theres something I'd like to ask
you.

Jack raises an eyebrow and smiles knowingly.

INT. BARBARA AND LEN'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - DAY

SUPER: 1952

Len enters and places a magazine on the hallway table while he takes off and hangs his jacket. A photo of Barbara and Len's wedding day sits on the table.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Barbara washes up at the sink. Len enters holding the magazine. He hugs her from behind.

LEN

I have something to show you.

Barbara grins mischievously.

BARBARA

Again? Wasn't this morning enough?

Len laughs and disengages from the hug.

LEN

You're insatiable, you know that?

He sits at the table.

LEN (CONT'D)

Leave that, love. Look at this.

He holds up the magazine. The title reads "Boxing Weekly".

Barbara dries her hands and joins him at the table.

BARBARA

What's this?

She takes the magazine.

LEN

It's an American magazine.

Barbara flicks through it.

BARBARA

Ok?

LEN

There's an article in there about women fighters.

Barbara raises an eyebrow.

BARBARA

Really?

LEN

Yep. Women are taken much more seriously over there.

Barbara closes the magazine and places it on the table.

BARBARA

So what are you saying?

Len smiles.

LEN

Let's go?

BARBARA

Where?

Len takes her hand.

LEN

America.

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA

You're bloody nuts.

LEN

Why? Let's go, Babs. We won't ever be taken seriously here.

Barbara stops laughing.

BARBARA

You're serious?

LEN

Yep. There's nothing stopping us. We can be there in a few months. We have enough savings to keep us going for a while.

Barbara picks up the magazine again.

BARBARA

And you really think they'll take us seriously.

LEN

Absolutely.

Barbara takes a deep breath.

BARBARA

Let's do it.

Len smiles.

LEN

Yeah?

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA

Yeah.

She kisses and hugs him.

EXT. CARNIVAL - DAY - MONTHS LATER

SUPER: TEXAS - 1953

Barbara and Len are seated outside their caravan. Barbara has a black eye.

The carnival can be heard in the distance. The music and sounds of the crowds drift towards them both.

Barbara looks out towards the carnival grounds.

BARBARA

I didn't see it like this, Len.

Len sighs.

LEN

Neither did I, love. I'm sorry.

Barbara looks at him.

BARBARA

It's not your fault. I just didn't think I'd have to go back to this.

She gestures at their surroundings.

LEN

It's the only way to get noticed, love. These boxing booths are notorious for bringing around the talent scouts.

Barbara laughs.

BARBARA

These people are notorious. Did you see they arrested another one last week. Apparently he was on the run for murder.

LEN

Yeah. Not the traveling folk you're used to, huh?

BARBARA

Nope. I mean, we were no saints back then but this is something else.

Len looks out towards the main carnival.

LEN

It won't be for long, love. Every town we get to is more exposure.

Barbara looks away.

BARBARA

It's just, how long do we have to go through this, y'know?

Len remains silent.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

We left everything and everyone we know, to come out here and still nothing. If this don't work, what then? Do we bounce around country to country hoping to find a place where we'll be accepted professionally?

Len sighs.

LEN

I'm doing my best, love.

Barbara stands up and begins pacing.

BARBARA

Your best? What about my best? I'm out there day in, day out literally fighting to get ahead.

Len stands and tries to calm her. He places a hand on her shoulder.

LEN

I know, love, but--

Barbara pushes his hand away.

BARBARA

But what Len? What exactly? Almost a year we've been here and it's exactly the same as England. The only bloody difference is after I fight all day, I get to fight the workers that think we don't belong here.

Len hangs his head.

LEN

I know it's different.

BARBARA

Different? How many scraps have you had since we've been here? A couple a month? So many drifters come through here it's a constant battle with them. At least at home we were accepted among our own circle.

Len sits back down, defeated.

LEN

I don't know what you want me to say.

BARBARA

You can start by saying if this is gonna work or not.

Len says nothing.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Barbara walks away.

Len looks out over the carnival.

LEN

The Wild bloody West.

INT. BOXING TENT - DAYS LATER

Barbara sits in her corner of the ring. The crowd is bigger than those in the UK and a lot rowdier.

Len climbs through the ropes and kneels in front of Barbara.

LEN

How you feeling?

BARBARA

Not bad. Mostly drunks today, hardly broke a sweat at all.

Len smiles.

LEN

You will in a minute.

BARBARA

How so?

Len nods in the direction of the crowd.

LEN
See that girl there?

Barbara looks and sees a wiry looking woman preparing to enter the ring.

BARBARA
What about her?

LEN
That is the current U.S Female
Bantamweight Champion.

Barbara looks at Len.

BARBARA
You're winding me up!

Len smiles.

LEN
It's true. She often comes to
carnivals just to keep her hand in
during her down time, so they say.
Not many people recognize her but
still--

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA
--if I beat her--

LEN
--Someone will notice.

Barbara focuses.

BARBARA
Let's go then.

She stands up.

Len climbs out of the ring.

Barbara dances on the spot, warming up. Her opponent does the same.

The bell RINGS.

Both fighters move to the centre of the ring.

Barbara wastes no time. She snaps out several combinations and drives her opponent into the corner.

The crowd CHEER.

Her opponent blocks several punches before Barbara lands a straight right snapping back her opponent's head.

The crowd is on its feet.

Her opponent bobs and weaves and manages to duck under a left cross and brings the fight back into the centre of the ring.

Barbara receives a one/two combination that sends her back a few steps.

Her opponent advances.

Barbara dodges another combination before tagging her opponent with an uppercut.

The crowd CHEERS.

Barbara presses the advantage, throwing out a flurry of jabs followed by a straight right to the jaw, flooring her opponent.

The referee intervenes and sends Barbara to her corner.

Barbara waits as the referee counts.

He reaches ten and waves his arms. It's all over. Win by knockout.

Len jumps through the ropes and picks Barbara up in a bear hug.

LEN
Bloody hell, love!

Barbara kisses him.

LEN (CONT'D)
Good job. But what took you so long.

BARBARA
Didn't wanna disappoint the crowd did I?

Len laughs and kisses her again.

INT. BARBARA'S/LEN'S CARAVAN - DAY

SUPER: 1954

Barbara sits at the small dining table re-lacing her boxing gloves.

The door opens and Len enters.

He sits opposite and stares at Barbara.

He smiles.

Barbara glances up then back to her task.

BARBARA
What?

LEN
Oh, nothing.

Barbara glances up again.

BARBARA
Noting huh? So, what's with the
Cheshire cat grin?

Len points to his face.

LEN
This grin?

Barbara doesn't look up.

BARBARA
That grin.

LEN
Just a little good news is all.

Barbara looks up.

BARBARA
And?

Len continues to smile.

Barbara throws a glove at him. Len narrowly avoids it.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Then spit it out, lad!

LEN
I've just got off the phone with a
promoter in Canada.

Barbara's eyes widen.

LEN (CONT'D)
You've been offered a fight up
there.

Barbara scowls.

BARBARA
Which carnival?

LEN
No carnivals love.

BARBARA
Where then?

LEN
It's a pro fight love, and will be
the first women's fight ever shown
on TV.

Barbara sits in stunned silence.

LEN (CONT'D)
They're offering twenty-five
percent up front for training and
living expenses.

Barbara snaps out of the stupor.

BARBARA
You're kidding, right?

LEN
Nope. You're a professional fighter
now, love.

BARBARA
Is it sanctioned by the federation?

Len's smile fades. He shakes his head.

LEN
No.

Barbara deflates a little.

BARBARA
Then I'm still a sideshow
attraction.

Len touches her face tenderly.

LEN
Look at me, love. This is a paid
professional fight. On the TV. Take
the victories where you can get
them. These things take time.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA
You're right. I'm sorry.

She hugs him.

INT. HOTEL - MONTHS LATER

Barbara lies on the bed, surrounded by documents and photos.
Len at the table perusing paperwork.

LEN

So, Joann Hagen. She's pretty well established. U.S Golden Glove Champion. She's thirty-three pounds heavier and eight inches taller than you.

Barbara shrugs.

BARBARA

Beat men that size.

Len laughs.

LEN

True.

Barbara holds up one of the photos of Joann.

BARBARA

Pretty huh?

Len glances over.

LEN

Yep. I got into boxing for all the pretty fighters you know?

BARBARA

Remember that time I broke your nose?

Len smiles and rolls his eyes.

LEN

Will you ever let me forget?

Barbara smiles wickedly.

BARBARA

Nope.

Len laughs.

LEN

Ok, so they will pick us up at six o'clock tomorrow night and take us to the venue. How you feeling?

Barbara sits up.

BARBARA

Not bad. Not even nervous really. I guess I just wanna get on with it.

LEN

You can do it, love.

INT. ARENA - NIGHT

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 10th 1954 - BUTTRICK VS HAGAN

SUPER: BARBARA'S PROFESSIONAL DEBUT

A boxing ring is centered among a sea of spectators. Flash bulbs pop among the masses. People mill about and take their seats.

INT. ARENA TUNNEL - SAME

Barbara and Len are with their team waiting to enter the arena.

LEN

You ready? No nerves?

Barbara shakes her head. Completely focused.

The crowd ROARS.

BARBARA

How many out there you think?

LEN

In the crowd? Twelve hundred. On TV? Who knows.

Barbara shakes her head in disbelief.

BARBARA

Maybe some nerves now.

Len smiles at her.

LEN

Really?

She smiles back.

BARBARA

Nah!

A BOXING OFFICIAL gives them the go ahead to enter the arena.

INT. ARENA - SAME

Barbara leads the way.

The crowd don't notice them at first. The closer they get, the more attention they receive.

People SHOUT and LAUGH when they notice Barbara's petite size.

VOICE IN THE CROWD (O.S.)
Is this a kid's fight?

The team keep moving.

RANDOM VOICE (O.S.)
Is the circus in town?

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)
When do the fighters arrive?

Len puts a hand on Barbara's shoulder.

LEN
It's all fuel for the fire, love.

Barbara says nothing.

They approach the ring and step through the ropes.

JOANN HAGEN stands in her corner. Her size is intimidating.

Barbara and Len prepare.

ANNOUNCER
And in the blue corner, standing at
four feet eleven inches and
weighing in at ninety eight pounds--

LAUGHTER from the crowd.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
From Yorkshire, England. The Mighty
Atom of The Ring--

Barbara looks at Len. He shrugs and smiles.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
--Battlin Barbara Buttrick!

The crowd APPLAUDS, some JEER and MOCK.

Barbara acknowledges the crowd before taking her place back
in her corner.

BARBARA
Guess that name's stuck now.

Len smiles.

LEN
Looks like it.

Barbara dances on the spot.

LEN (CONT'D)
Don't let her reach bother you.
She's big, but slow. Keep her on
the run and wear her down, ok?

Barbara nods.

A single bell RINGS out.

LEN (CONT'D)
Good luck.

Barbara nods again, Len exits the ring.

The bell RINGS for round one.

The crowd CHEERS.

Barbara strides forward.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

The bell RINGS.

Barbara comes back to her corner and sits on a stool Len has waiting for her.

She is bloodied and tired.

Len wipes her face with a damp sponge while talking.

LEN (CONT'D)
Good job love, you had her on the
run for five rounds. This is the
last one now, don't hold back.

Barbara takes some deep breaths.

BARBARA
Her extra reach didn't do her too
many favours.

Joann is in her corner just as bloodied as Barbara.

LEN
That's right, love. You have speed
on your side, keep at it. One more
round to go.

The ten second warning is given.

Len exits the ring with the equipment.

The bell RINGS for the sixth and final round.

Barbara is tired but ready. She moves forward with caution.

Joann leaves her corner and meets Barbara in the centre of the ring.

Joann fires out two jabs in quick succession. Barbara avoids them both.

Barbara moves back from the long reach of Joann. Joann presses forward.

Barbara sends out her own jab but Joann keeps her at bay.

Joann continues forward, driving Barbara back into a corner. Joann attempts an one/two combination and Barbara ducks under the second punch, reversing their positions and leaving Joann in the corner.

The crowd ROARS.

Barbara steps inside Joann's reach and lands several body shots before a combination to the head.

The crowd jumps to their feet.

Barbara continues to pummel Joann's body. Joann defends the best she can.

The bell RINGS and the referee separates them.

It's over.

Barbara is met in her corner by Len. She sits on the stool again.

LEN (CONT'D)

Well done, love, that was bloody brilliant.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

She was bloody tough is what she was.

Len wipes her face before helping her take her gloves off.

The referee beckons for both fighters to come to the center of the ring.

They both flank the referee while the announcer reads the judges scorecards.

ANNOUNCER

And the winner by unanimous decision... Joann Hagan.

The crowd CHEERS.

The referee lifts Joann's hand in victory.

Barbara hides her disappointment.

Barbara and Joann shake hands and pose for a photo.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NEXT DAY

Barbara lies on the bed. The bruising on her face is more pronounced.

Len enters and sits on the bed. He has a newspaper and reads it in silence for a few seconds.

BARBARA

Well?

Len looks up from the newspaper.

He smiles and reads the article aloud.

LEN

The fight between Buttrick and Hagan appeared to be grossly mismatched at first--

Barbara CHUCKLES.

LEN (CONT'D)

But from the first round it was clear that not only can both women box, they box well.

Barbara smiles.

LEN (CONT'D)

Buttrick, smaller in both height and weight, gave a performance of determination, skill and resilience.

Len looks up and raises an eyebrow.

LEN (CONT'D)

Resilience.

Barbara LAUGHS. Len continues to read.

LEN (CONT'D)

In a post fight interview, Hagan praised Buttrick, saying she is truly the toughest fighter she has ever come up against. Although Hagan won by unanimous decision Buttrick's outstanding performance against a much larger opponent proves she is a rising star in women's boxing.

Len folds the newspaper and puts it on the bed.

Barbara smiles and winces as her bruised face complains. She touches her cheek and LAUGHS.

LEN (CONT'D)
Only hurts when you laugh, huh?

BARBARA
Yeah.

LEN
I'm proud of you, love.

He takes Barbara's hand.

BARBARA
Not a bad review for a loss, huh?

LEN
This wasn't a loss, love, not where it matters.

BARBARA
So what now?

LEN
Now we go home.

BARBARA
Think there'll be other offers now?

LEN
It's too early to tell.

INT. BARBARA'S/LEN'S HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: AUGUST 1957, TEXAS

SUPER: Pro Career 28 WINS, 1 LOSS, 1 DRAW

Barbara sits at the kitchen table nervously folding laundry. She's not paying much attention and doing a bad job. She's focused on Len who is on the phone.

Len has a poker face while he speaks.

LEN
Ok, so when?

He nods.

LEN (CONT'D)
Uh huh. Yeah, I see.

He checks his diary that is on the kitchen counter next to him.

LEN (CONT'D)

Sure. Ok. Thanks for calling.

He hangs up.

Barbara has stopped attempting to fold laundry and clutches one of Len's shirts in a white knuckled grasp.

She looks at him expectantly.

Len takes a deep breath and shakes his head.

Barbara drops the shirt onto the table.

Len sits opposite and pours himself some tea in silence.

Barbara can't stand the silence any more.

BARBARA

Well?

Len shakes his head again as he adds sugar to his tea.

Barbara deflates and SIGHS.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Bloody hell.

Len stifles a grin.

LEN

What's the matter?

BARBARA

What do you mean?

LEN

Why so upset? You got the license.

Barbara sits up straight.

BARBARA

What?

Len takes a sip of tea.

LEN

Yep. You and Phyllis Kugler.

BARBARA

Again? But we drew last time.

LEN

But she beat Joann Hagan and you are the only contender good enough to beat her. Plus, you're British.

(MORE)

LEN (CONT'D)
Can't have a world title fight
without two international
contenders.

Barbara's jaw drops.

BARBARA
A world title?

Len smiles.

LEN
Yeah. You are the first female
boxer licensed in the great state
of Texas and will be fighting for
the first Female World Bantamweight
Championship on October Eighth in
San Antonio.

Barbara throws the laundry in the air and flings herself at
Len.

He scoops her up in an embrace.

BARBARA
We did it Len, we bloody did it!

LEN
You did it love.

Barbara GASPS.

BARBARA
I have to call Mum and Dad.

INT. RESTAURANT - WEEKS LATER

Barbara sits at a table. She wears a simple cotton sun dress.
Perfect hair and make up.

A WAITER approaches.

WAITER
May I take your order ma'am?

BARBARA
Just water for now please. I'm
waiting for my friend.

The waiter nods and leaves.

INT. RESTAURANT ENTRANCE - DAY

The door opens and a stunning blonde woman, PHYLLIS KUGLER
(27), walks in.

She is dressed in a form fitting red dress with matching hat. She looks like she stepped straight from a Hollywood movie.

Phyllis approaches Barbara's table. Barbara stands to greet her.

She kisses her on the cheek and gives her a gentle hug.

BARBARA

Hi Phyllis, glad you could make it.

Phyllis smiles warmly at her friend.

PHYLLIS

No problem, honey. I'm glad we could finally do this for real.

They both sit. The waiter comes over and takes Phyllis' order.

BARBARA

Last time wasn't real enough?

Phyllis laughs.

PHYLLIS

A four round exhibition that ended in a draw? C'mon honey, we can't compare that to a world title fight.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

No, I guess not. Congratulations on beating Joann, by the way.

PHYLLIS

She's no pushover, let me tell ya.

BARBARA

Try her with an eight inch height disadvantage.

Phyllis laughs.

PHYLLIS

That was a damn great show.

BARBARA

I don't think I'd be here without it.

PHYLLIS

Don't sell yourself short, honey. With skill like yours you would have been noticed eventually.

Barbara smiles.

BARBARA

It is nice to finally get some recognition.

Phyllis nods.

PHYLLIS

Yeah. It may have taken way too long but we got here in the end huh?

BARBARA

That we did. I guess whatever happens now we both win in the end, right?

PHYLLIS

For sure--

Phyllis leans forward a little and flashes a mischievous grin.

PHYLLIS (CONT'D)

--But one of us has to win this time.

Barbara leans forward, mimicking her friend's action.

BARBARA

One of us will!

They both laugh.

They both relax and continue their conversation MOS. Two friends enjoying lunch.

INT. ARENA - WEEKS LATER

SUPER: OCTOBER 8th 1957, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

SUPER: BUTTRICK VS KUGLER

SUPER: WORLD FEMALE BANTAMWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP - ROUND SEVEN

The arena is packed. The crowd ROARS and CHEERS as Barbara and Phyllis battle it out in the centre of the ring.

The bell RINGS.

Both fighters return to their corners.

Len meets Barbara and she sits on a stool.

She accepts water from a team mate while Len speaks.

LEN

This is it love. One more round to go.

Barbara breaths deeply.

BARBARA

Only took eleven bloody years.

LEN

What matters is you're here now. Keep at her and you have this in the bag.

Barbara nods.

LEN (CONT'D)

You're making history right now, ok? Finish it off, love. Go out there and go through her like she don't exist, yeah?

The ten second warning is heard. Len exits the ring. Barbara dances in the corner, ready to go.

Len calls up from ringside.

LEN (CONT'D)

Remember, all those carnivals, all those bastards that said you couldn't do it, all those black eyes you got and broken noses you gave. Everything led you here. Everything was about this, right here.

Barbara looks down at him and smiles.

BARBARA

Yours was the best nose I ever broke.

Len winks at her.

The bell RINGS.

Round Eight begins. The final round.

Barbara surges forward.

Phyllis meets her head on.

Each fighter tests the other with a series of jabs.

Phyllis tags Barbara with a straight right sending Barbara back a step.

Barbara recovers at once and defends herself before mounting her own attack.

Barbara drives Phyllis back to the centre of the ring with a flurry of punches.

The crowd CHEERS.

Len SHOUTS advice from ringside.

PHYLLIS' TRAINER SHOUTS advice from ringside.

Both women stand toe to toe at the center of the ring and trade blows.

The crowd is on its feet ROARING encouragement at both fighters.

The fighters don't hear them. Each is focused only on her adversary.

Blow after blow lands to the head and the body of each fighter.

Defense forgotten, both fighters brawl for the final decisive blow.

The bell RINGS.

The fight's over.

The referee intervenes and sends both fighters to their respective corners.

Len rushes through the ropes and helps Barbara to sit.

The announcer enters the ring and addresses the crowd while Len attends to Barbara.

LEN

Well done love. I knew you could do it. Couldn't have given a better performance than that.

Barbara is exhausted.

BARBARA

We'll find out in a minute.

She nods at the announcer.

The announcer gestures for both women to join him in the centre of the ring.

They flank the referee.

Silence falls over the crowd.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen. We have witnessed history in the making this evening. The results are in and we have a winner by unanimous decision.

Len holds his breath in anticipation.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The winner, and first Female Bantamweight Champion of the World is--

Barbara closes her eyes and breathes deeply.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

The Mighty Atom--

The crowd goes wild. The announcer is drowned out in the noise.

Camera flash bulbs pop all around.

Barbara covers her face in disbelief.

Len climbs through the ropes and rushes to her. He picks her up in a bear hug.

An official brings the championship belt and drapes it over Barbara's shoulder.

Len lets her go and holds up her hand in victory.

FADE OUT:

SUPER: BARBARA RETIRED IN 1960 AS UNDEFEATED CHAMPION OF THE WORLD. SHE FOUGHT 30 PROFESSIONAL FIGHTS WITH ONE LOSS AND ONE DRAW. IN 12 YEARS BARBARA FOUGHT OVER 1000 EXHIBITION FIGHTS AND 50 PRO WRESTLING MATCHES.

SUPER: IN 1990 BARBARA WAS INDUCTED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL BOXING AND WRESTLING HALL OF FAME AND IN 1994 SHE FOUNDED THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL BOXING FEDERATION OF WHICH SHE IS STILL PRESIDENT TODAY AT 90 YEARS OF AGE.

SUPER: BARBARA AND LEN DIVORCED BUT REMAINED CLOSE FRIENDS UNTIL LEN'S DEATH IN 2016. BARBARA STILL LIVES IN MIAMI, FLORIDA AND CONTINUES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S BOXING.

FADE OUT:

INSERT: ARCHIVE FOOTAGE INTERVIEW OF BARBARA

INSERT: PHOTOS OF BARBARAS' CAREER AS CREDITS ROLL.

-END-