

**THE BRUISING FIELD**

Written by

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Martin

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FADE IN:

EXT. BRIGHTON BEACH, 1832 - DAY

STRAP LINE: BRIGHTON, ENGLAND - 1832

Wealthy HOLIDAYMAKERS walk arm-in-arm along a beach peppered with bathing machines. Fishermen's hog boats and pleasure rowing boats bob in the tide.

Some CHILDREN in the distance push a rowing boat with a well-to-do COUPLE in it out to sea.

Waves gently break on the shoreline and seagulls SQUAWK, but a heated ARGUMENT can be heard over the soothing sound of the sea.

Two brothers - TOM & CHARLIE SAYERS (aged 6 & 8) - are standing among the hog boats and rowing boats. Their voices are raised and they square up.

YOUNG CHARLIE

It's my turn, you hear me? Mine.

YOUNG TOM

I spoke to the gentleman first. I pushed him out before, proper-like.

YOUNG CHARLIE

He's mine. Push off.

YOUNG TOM

You push off.

Tom goes to push Charlie.

YOUNG CHARLIE

Or what?

YOUNG TOM

Or I'll fix you good.

YOUNG CHARLIE

A littl'un like you?

Charlie throws a PUNCH at Tom's face, but misses as his brother side-steps. As Charlie's hand swings, Tom lands a blow into his sibling's stomach. The two then GRAPPLE each other to the ground and roll around locked together.

A huge shadow of a MAN appears over the melee, blocking the sunlight that falls on the brawlers.

A RASPING LAUGH grabs the boys' attention and they stop fighting.

CAPTAIN BARCLAY (50s) - lean, stylishly-dressed but shabby: lined jacket, knee breeches, top boots, worsted stockings with a patched knee - pulls the boys apart.

CAPT. BARCLAY

What a fine morning, young sirs.

(laughs)

I'd really like to see the beauty of this hometown of yours. From the water. One shiny ha'penny each says you'll both oblige in pushing me out in one of these here rowing boats.

The boys look at each other, then Barclay, then each thrust a hand out.

CAPT. BARCLAY (CONT'D)

This one will do nicely.

Barclay points to a rowing boat next to them grounded in the sand.

He clambers in.

CAPT. BARCLAY (CONT'D)

Why the fists?

YOUNG CHARLIE

It were nothing, sir.

CAPT. BARCLAY

Never seen men or boys fight over nothing.

YOUNG TOM

Money, sir. We were fighting over money.

CAPT. BARCLAY

Ah, there it is. As ever.

Barclay takes out the half-penny coins he promised the brothers and stares at them in his palm. He returns them to his jacket pocket as he speaks.

CAPT. BARCLAY (CONT'D)

Indeed, I've made money a time or two over fighting. And walked many a mile to line a pocket.

The boys look up.

CAPT. BARCLAY (CONT'D)

One time I walked 1,000 miles in 1,000 hours for 1,000 guineas.

The boys eyes widen.

YOUNG TOM

Yeah?

CAPT. BARCLAY

Aye. For bets. I made the most  
though out of prize-fighting Tom  
Cribb.

Tom, interested, leans forward almost into the rowing boat.

YOUNG TOM

When?

CAPT. BARCLAY

Afore your time, lad. Cribb was the  
finest in England - with my help.  
Trained him up proper.

YOUNG TOM

Prize-fighting?

Barclay looks out to the distant horizon.

CAPT. BARCLAY

Prize-fighting is a sport of men,  
lad. Real men. Allows men to stand  
in their own defence - and that of  
their property. Tom Cribb was  
Champion of England.

YOUNG TOM

My name's Tom.

CAPT. BARCLAY

Well, Tom, who knows? If you train  
up properly and have the desire,  
maybe one day you'll be champion.

Barclay dips his hand into his jacket again and produces the  
two shiny coins, handing one to each.

Young Tom and Charlie take the coins and start pushing  
Barclay's rowing boat out to sea.

Barclay starts vigorously pulling on both oars thrusting his  
boat out to sea.

CAPT. BARCLAY (CONT'D)

If you have pluck and a hard head,  
Tom, why not? But remember: train  
hard, be hard.

CU: YOUNG TOM WATCHES HIM ROW OUT.

OPENING TITLE SEQUENCE:

MONTAGE: OF ILLUSTRATIONS, DRAWINGS, CARTOONS, NEWSPAPER HEADLINES OF FAMOUS BOXERS AND THE BOUTS THAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE 1853 (TOM SPRING, JEM WARD, JAMES BURKE, BEN CAUNT) INCLUDING IMAGES OF: LORD BYRON'S FOUR-PANEL COLLAGED SCREEN, THEODORE GERICAULT'S "LES BOXEURS", "BOXIANA", THE "POLICE BUDGET", "SPORTING LIFE" AND "BELL'S LIFE IN LONDON".

EXT. FIELD, LONG REACH, THAMES ESTUARY - DAY

STRAPLINE: JANUARY 1853

A large crowd, BAYING for blood are pressing in on a ring staked out for a prize fight.

Two boxers in their respective corners are badly damaged. Tom (now 26) is been spoken to by his second (ALEC KEENE) and trainer (BOB FULLER).

Tom's older brother (now 28) is watching on.

CHARLIE SAYERS

Go on, Tom. Finish 'im.

Tom's face is badly bruised and has a large cut over his right eye. He also has a deep gash on his left hand. His opponent, JACK MARTIN, is in a more grisly state with a deep cut across his forehead and with lips puffed to twice their normal size.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Tom approaches the scratch, despite his injuries, with calm purpose.

Martin is in a bad way: staggering, nearly blind.

Tom sends him reeling with a series of blows to the head. Martin visibly winces from the searing pain as the THUDS go in.

Tom follows up with another devastating CRUNCH to Martin's nose, which explodes in blood and whose force sends him down in a crumpled heap to the ground.

He lays insensible.

A HUGE ROAR goes up from the crowd followed by shouts.

SPECTATORS (O.S.)

Crushers! Bobbies!

The CLATTER of police rattles in the distance rise above the NOISE of the crowd.

A stampede of spectators scatter in all directions.

Tom is lost in a swarm of fleeing people, as he, Charlie, Keene and Fuller scarper.

Charlie places a coat over Tom and helps to guide and smuggle him through the throng, as the POLICE in uniform vainly attempt to grab hold of anyone and arrest them.

In all this melee, Martin continues to lie still and senseless, as all about him skirmishes in chaos and confusion.

EXT. ANOTHER FIELD, LONG REACH, THAMES ESTUARY - CONTINUOUS

Tom and his party are racing through a field pursued by a couple of burly POLICEMEN who've spotted the fighter.

Tom reaches a river, where a waiting rowing boat is sitting in readiness containing TWO PEOPLE.

TOM

Come on, Charlie, the boat.

He and Charlie plunge waist-deep into the water and wade out to the boat, Tom discarding the heavy coat.

The police officers halt on the bank, as Tom and Charlie are hauled on board, whereby they are vigorously rode out of reach and sight by the oarsman.

One of policemen takes off his stovepipe hat and scratches his head.

INT. BEDROOM, LODGING HOUSE, CAMDEN, LONDON - LATER, NIGHT

Tom is sitting on the bed in his nightshirt.

Sitting on a stool in front of him and dressed in a long nightdress is his girlfriend, SARAH HENDERSON (aged 20), tending to Tom's bruised and cut face with a cloth and bowl of water.

Their two children, SARAH JNR (aged 3) and TOM JNR (aged 1), sleep soundly in their cribs in the corner.

SARAH

Next time, try not to get hurt so badly.

TOM

I did try.

SARAH

I suppose no prize-ring, no big money.

She plants a kiss on his forehead.

TOM

Money enough. Or maybe you'd prefer me back on the hod?

She shakes her head.

Tom smiles. He gazes at Sarah.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's time. We can afford it now - marriage-like. Yeah, and our very own crib. Nothing grand, but ours.

SARAH

Away from him. And I'll soon be twenty-one. Free from his will, his beatings.

Tom strokes Sarah's face.

TOM

He can't lay a finger on you no more. I'll protect you.

SARAH

He can still hit her though.

She dabs Tom's face gently.

TOM

But we'll be right. Different. Not like your pa. Proper.

Sarah looks out of the window at the night sky.

SARAH

(sighs)

Yeah. But who cares 'bout what's proper.

EXT. LONDON SKYLINE - DAY

INT. ST PETER'S CHURCH, ISLINGTON, LONDON - DAY

Tom and Sarah stand next to each other in a virtually empty marriage ceremony. Tom, suited, with plastered hair, smiles nervously.

Sarah, pretty in a bright dress, is far more composed with a determined air.

She turns around to smile at the other attendees: Tom's much older sister, ELIZA (holding Tom Jnr) and his brother, Charlie (holding Sarah Jnr's hand) - the witnesses.

Charlie nods, Eliza stares straight-faced - then forces a smile.

In the church's marriage register, Tom marks his name with a cross. Charlie and Eliza look on still not smiling.

EXT. THE BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - LATER

Tom leads his new wife - her eyes closed - along a red-bricked street to the front of a seedy, tatty public house with paint peeling from the front door.

TOM

Okay. Open them.

Sarah blinks, then opens her eyes wide.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's home, Sarah. Our home.

Sarah turns and plants a big kiss on Tom's lips.

SARAH

My own place, Tom. My very own.  
Who'd a thought it.

Tom produces a key from his pocket and unlocks the front door. The hinge SQUEALS.

TOM

And it's round the corner from  
Eliza's place.

Sarah's face drops.

He sweeps her off her feet in a grand gesture and carries her over the threshold.

INT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

STRAPLINE: FIVE YEARS LATER

The pub bustles with activity.

Sarah is acting as 'pot girl', collecting empty tankards and broth bowls. There's a HUBBUB of patrons through the smog of smoke.

In the corner, sitting on his own, is JAMES ALDRIDGE, a slight, shifty-looking character dressed in a black, three-quarter length overcoat and dark hat.



He eyes Sarah hungrily, as she bends over in front of him exposing her cleavage, reaching for another empty tankard.

Tom, scanning the pub, is standing behind the bar listening to his seconds: Fuller and Keene.

FULLER

He's a proper boxer that Langham.

KEENE

That he may be, but he can't talk proper.

FULLER

That's nothing. He don't mill with his mouth, does he?

KEENE

I hear, as a kid, he was a thief, pinching hot potatoes and the like. A cove caught him and shoved the spud in his trap. Burnt his mouth so bad he never spoke right again.

Fuller flicks Keane a cursory glance as Tom takes a long draught of ale from his tankard.

Fuller turns to Tom.

FULLER

He's got tactics, Tom. He'll give you a left smack, then shift.

KEENE

He'll be back in his corner before you can raise your mauleys.

FULLER

Same way he beat Ellis and Guttridge.

Sayers is distracted: Sarah is taking way too long to collect the vessels from Aldridge's table.

FULLER (CONT'D)

Tactics. All tactics.

KEENE

Like Barclay.

FULLER

Ah, Capt. Barclay.

KEENE

He was the first.

Tom turns back and joins in again.

TOM

Barclay, I met him once. When I was a lad. Told me he trained Cribb.

KEENE

Too right. Trimmed Cribb down three stone in eleven weeks. Cribb then finished the black - Molineaux - in less than twenty minutes. Broke his jaw.

FULLER

Tom, were you listening? You sure you're okay? You don't seem yourself. And you've got Langham coming up.

TOM

I'm okay, Bob. It's others.

Sarah - laden with empty tankards - returns to the bar, smiling as she passes Tom.

INT. BEDROOM, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - NIGHT

Tom sits half-dressed, pensive, on the edge of the bed. Sarah's sitting in front of the mirror, brushing her hair.

SARAH

I thought you'd be resting by now.

He shakes his head.

TOM

I'm thinking.

SARAH

On what?

TOM

On how friendly you are with the patrons.

SARAH

You think I do a good job?

Tom stares at her.

TOM

Who's the feller who sits by the window?

SARAH

You mean James.

TOM

He seems fond of you.

SARAH  
He's just friendly. Drives a  
hansom.

TOM  
Handsome, is he?

SARAH  
I do believe you're jealous, Thomas  
Sayers.

TOM  
No.

Sarah LAUGHS, then moves towards him and plants herself on  
his lap.

SARAH  
You think 'cos I laugh at his jokes  
I'm looking for his love?

She begins to kiss his neck but Tom remains firm.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I need love.

She continues to kiss her husband.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Lots of love.

TOM  
I've got Langham coming up, Sarah.  
And I'm not in the top condition.  
I've been - distracted like.

Sarah starts to dance in front of him and starts taking her  
nightdress off.

SARAH  
Well, let's see if I can distract  
you some more with a bit of hard  
conditioning.

Tom succumbs, as his wife pushes him back onto the bed and  
sits astride of him.

EXT. PRIZE-RING, FIELD IN SUFFOLK, ENGLAND - DAY

Tom takes a massive blow to the face from NAT LANGHAM's left  
fist. The crowd go wild as Tom's floored.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND FIVE

Tom isn't in good condition: distracted and slow, with  
lesions on his face and neck.

Snot covers his top lip, his eyes have started to close up from multiple blows. Continuing his onslaught, Langham once again WALLOPS Tom in the face.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND TEN:

Round ten comes to an end with Langham again throwing his hefty left, then retreating before Tom can reply.

Both fighters return to their respective corners. Keene and Fuller wait with dripping wet sponges as Tom staggers to his tethered post.

Tom PANTS and SNEEZES.

TOM  
I can't dodge his facers.

Fuller sponges Tom down.

FULLER  
I told you he'd do that. Where's yer guard? You've got no guard.

TOM  
He's fast - he fibs - then he goes.  
I can't get in.

KEENE  
Try throwing him.

Keene pushes a hip-flask to Tom's lips.

KEENE (CONT'D)  
Here, take this.

Tom SWIGS, then SPITS it out.

A lightly-damaged Langham - assisted by his seconds - looks over to Tom's corner.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)  
Time.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND THIRTY:

Tom immediately crouches, then lunges at Langham's midriff. The two fighters wrestle, with Tom winning the round by grappling his opponent down into the muddy quagmire of the prize-ring.

Langham continues to use his hit-and-retreat tactic. The constant impact of Langham's left hammer on Tom's face takes its bloody toll.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND FORTY:

Tom, seized by his burly opponent in a bear-hug, is then thrown across the ring and slides on his chest, skimming along the surface.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND FIFTY:

Tom manages to remain strong on his legs, but his eyes are now virtually closed as he throws punches into thin air.

DISSOLVE TO:  
ROUND SIXTY-ONE:

The swelling around both of Tom's eyes have now completely blinded him.

Langham's appearance is less damaged, but he still displays minor lacerations, gashes and wounds.

Once again, the referee calls the boxers to fight.

Tom has to be led to the scratch by Fuller, Langham strides to the centre in readiness.

TIME KEEPER (CONT'D)

Time.

Langham's left hand connects with Tom's face. Tom lands on his back, but quickly rises to his feet and throws punches aimlessly. Langham remains poised, coiled and watchful.

To save Tom from further punishment, Keene throws up the sponge. The crowd are delirious and break into the ring, cutting the ropes to celebrate Langham's victory.

Tom slumps down sitting on Fuller's knee with his back against his post. The dejection visible in the droop of his shoulders.

Langham is hoisted up shoulder-high and paraded by his fans.

JOHN GIDEON's face can be seen amongst the crowd.

INT. BEDROOM, HOUSE, CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON - DAY

Tom is bent over a bowl of water.

He looks up to reveal his hideously battered face: bruised, cut, misshapen.

He dabs his face with a cloth, winces.

Coughs - and winces again.

Looks at himself in the bowl's water reflection.

TOM  
(whispers)  
Sarah?

He flicks the water's surface. His reflection disappears.

INT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAYS LATER

Charlie's in the corner sweeping the floor.

The pub is nearly empty, apart from Aldridge who sits in a far corner - now a permanent fixture - and Tom, Keene and Fuller, who are sitting at a separate table nursing their ales. In silence, a sullen Tom is slowly counting columns of coins into three separate piles. There's a scatter of notes.

His face and eyes are marked but he's starting to repair. He doesn't look at either man as he passes Fuller his cut of the cash.

TOM  
Five guineas, as agreed.

FULLER  
You know, Tom, the whip-round the Fancy had for you was the most -

TOM  
Charity's no good, Bob. This prize-fighting's a game for mugs. And look at me. I'm thinking of throwing the whole thing in and going back on the hod.

FULLER  
But there's tin to be had, Tom.

TOM  
Only if you win, Bob. And only for the betting men. I'm not right for the boxing game. I don't even enjoy it much. Hitting people - like. I'd rather not.

FULLER  
You once told me a Captain Barclay said you need pluck and a hard head for this game.

Tom looks at him.

FULLER (CONT'D)  
You got them, Tom, in the ring. But out the ring, your head goes soft.

TOM

You saying I don't want it, Bob?

Fuller looks Tom full in the face.

FULLER

I'm saying I'm not sure you want it  
- enough.

Tom turns to Keene and gives him his share.

TOM

And your five, Alec.

KEENE

Thanks.

Tom stares at the notes that are left on the table. Sarah appears with a bottle in hand - tipsy - and staggers over to the three men.

SARAH

(to Fuller)

Bob.

Sarah turns to Keene.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Alec.

The men nod their heads.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I would like to speak with my old  
man.

Keene and Fuller don't move.

SARAH (CONT'D)

In private, if you don't mind.

Tom's seconds finish their drinks, take their wages and slowly get up.

Fuller looks at Sarah, then long at Tom.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)

Goodbye gentlemen, thank you for  
your custom. Do come again.

Fuller and Keene leave - slowly.

She squints at Tom, then takes a swig from her bottle.

TOM

You're drunk.

SARAH

How can you tell? You can barely see.

TOM

You should be upstairs, sober, tending to the kids.

SARAH

And you, Brighton Boy, should be out winning fights, so we can afford this dead end of a place.

TOM

Sarah, please.

Sarah points to the money.

SARAH

Think I'd better take care of these.

She takes the notes from the table and stuffs them between her breasts.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Try winning next time. I might let you keep some.

Without another word, she sways over to Aldridge and sits opposite him at his table.

Aldridge says something that makes her laugh out loud. She looks back at Tom with disdain and then continues to listen to Aldridge.

Tom simply stares ahead.

EXT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - EARLY MORNING, THE FOLLOWING DAY

A brougham pulls up outside the pub.

A COACHMAN opens the carriage door. A pair of shining, calf-high cavalry boots emerge.

As the owner of the boots descends from the carriage, he instantly dirties them by stepping into a filthy puddle.

John Gideon - smart, businessman and boxing entrepreneur - looks the pub up-and-down and grimaces.

He RAPS LOUDLY on the pub's door with his walking stick.



INT/EXT. BEDROOM, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - MOMENTS LATER

Tom wakes with a start. Sarah is in a drunken sleep and continues to SNORE. The children are also awoken, Sarah Jnr (now aged 8) sits up rubbing her eyes.

Tom goes to the window and opens it.

TOM

Yeah?

GIDEON

Mr Sayers?

TOM

What is it?

GIDEON

Gideon. John Gideon. In bed at this hour, Mr Sayers? You should be out training.

TOM

What can I do for you, Mr Gideon?

GIDEON

Well, my good man, you can start by opening the door. I have a proposal for you.

Tom pulls his head in and closes the window.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - MOMENTS LATER

Gideon sits opposite Tom at a corner table.

GIDEON

At worst, Mr Sayers -

TOM

Just Tom.

GIDEON

Of course. At worst, Tom, you've lost a little pride. It's true, you did not make as much money as hoped, and the collection made after the fight will not last forever.

TOM

You were there?

GIDEON

(nods)

As a not inconsiderable contributor  
to your runner's-up fund.

TOM

Well, you can have your money back -

GIDEON

Tom, please. If you hear me out.

TOM

I don't need charity.

GIDEON

It is not charity: it is a gift. A  
gift from one who admires you. I  
feel your reputation is far from  
damaged and nobody suggests that  
your career is in any danger.

TOM

So where's this leading?

GIDEON

You need a manager. It is all well  
and good having old fighter friends  
as your seconds, but to get you to  
peak performance - I suggest my  
services could be of value to you.

Tom looks askance at Gideon.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You lacked conditioning. You lacked  
focus. You lacked professionalism.  
It was evident as you fought  
Langham.

TOM

(nodding)

Yeah, something was missing.

Gideon smiles and taps his walking-stick on the floor.

GIDEON

Then we need to find it, Mr Sayers.  
I propose some exhibition bouts to  
return you to full fitness.

TOM

But this place?

GIDEON

Mr Sayers, are you a prize-fighter  
or a publican? Anyone can run a  
place like this.

(MORE)

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 Not anyone can fight like you. But  
 you need proper training

Tom turns and looks around him. Then looks back at Gideon.

TOM  
 (nods again)  
 Okay. Maybe -

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - NIGHT

A storm RAGES outside. Tom enters the pub, his hair wet and matted, his overcoat drenched through.

Sarah is drunk and entertaining a table of equally pissed-up men, including Aldridge. Together, the motley pack listen to her SLURRED SINGING before joining in with the chorus.

Tom darts for the stairs.

INT. BEDROOM, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - MOMENTS LATER

Throwing the bedroom door open, Tom finds Tom Jnr and Sarah Jnr CRYING in their beds, frightened by the storm outside.

He tosses his coat to the floor, grabs the children in his arms and starts to soothe them.

TOM  
 Don't cry, it's only a storm.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah and the RAUCOUS rabble she's SINGING with continue to make merry. As the men swig and spill beer onto the saw-dusted floor, Sarah empties the rest of her gin bottle into a tankard. As she puts the cup to her lips, it is SLAPPED from her grasp and SMASHES onto the floor

Singing ends abruptly.

Silence. Tom scowls at each man, especially Aldridge. None of them dare look back.

Sarah stands, eyes half-closed, with a grin across her face.

TOM  
 Home's best for you, gentlemen.  
 You've had your last orders.

Each man skulks away, all unsteady on their feet.

Aldridge - last to leave - slinks away, oily grin.

TOM (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you? The kids were crying upstairs

SARAH

You were off with your new friend - training - and I was with mine.

He pulls her aggressively towards him.

TOM

Were you plying those bastards with ale for nothing? The place looks like a cesspit and there's no money in the pot.

SARAH

Yeah, no money.

TOM

Why must you bring shame on us? And the kids? Haven't I provided for you?

SARAH

Did you win? How much money did you get? Oh sorry, you were only training.

TOM

You don't give a damn, do you? As long as you've got gin and can behave shameful-like in front of your friends.

She SPITS into his face and her head rolls back.

Tom wipes the saliva off his cheek with slow deliberation.

He places her in a chair, making sure her head is positioned forwards.

He leaves the bar and returns with a bucket, which he places in front of her so her head is leaning over it. He then goes over to the gas lamp and turns down its flames to semi-light before deliberately glancing back and wearily leaving the room.

INT. HALL, MARKET TOWN, MIDLANDS - DAY

In a 'made-for-the-stage' prize-ring, Tom is coming to the end of a re-enactment of a fight. A small crowd is gathered around the ring.

It's an exhibition match with Fuller, his mock adversary. Keene is taking the part of the referee.

Gideon enters the auditorium with a bull-necked, stocky companion (HARRY BRUNTON). They stand at the back, awaiting the end of the exhibition.

Tom swings a fist at Fuller and Fuller collapses in a comical heap.

Tom climbs out of the ring to cheers and notices Gideon and his companion are waiting for him.

Tom nods at the companion in recognition.

Gideon points Tom towards an ante-room at the side of the main hall.

They all slip into the small room.

INT. ANTE-ROOM, MARKET TOWN, MIDLANDS - DAY

The three of them face each other.

GIDEON

Tom, I believe you know Mr Brunton.

Tom shakes Brunton's hand.

TOM

(smiles)

We go back awhile. How are you doing, Harry?

GIDEON

As you know, Tom, Harry was one of the best in the business. And he knows how to train tough and perform.

Brunton smiles back at Tom.

BRUNTON

Good to see you again, Tom.

GIDEON

We need a fresh approach, Tom. With correct diets and discipline.

Tom looks at Gideon.

TOM

But what about Alec and Bob?

GIDEON

Fine fellows, Tom. But a little set in their ways.

(MORE)

GIDEON (CONT'D)

If we are going to be serious about our endeavour, we need to pay proper attention to detail. Harry will help us to provide it.

Tom looks reluctant.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Besides, I have something to tell you. Langham has retired. Punishment has taken its toll.

TOM

Retired?

GIDEON

Congratulation, Tom. That makes you Middleweight Champion.

TOM

(surprised)  
Oh? Really?

GIDEON

Satisfied?

TOM

Well, yeah.

GIDEON

Well, you should not be. It is not enough. I believe you are good enough to take on the big men. I am thinking of William Perry?

TOM

Tipton Slasher?

GIDEON

Yes.

TOM

Why?

GIDEON

Because you are fighting him next. For the championship.

Gideon smiles; Tom doesn't.

EXT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - MIDDAY

Charlie walks up to the pub to find the front door wide open. There's a LOUD HAMMERING from the bar.

Charlie slowly enters.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

The only person in the pub, a red-faced OLD MAN, is KNOCKING his pewter tankard against the bar.

OLD MAN  
Where are yer, woman?

Charlie can see that no one is serving behind the bar. He walks up to the customer.

CHARLIE  
Can I - ?

OLD MAN  
Sarah? Sarah!

The Old Man turns, pushes Charlie aside and storms out.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Ah, sod yer.

Charlie's attention is drawn to the staircase at the back of the bar. He can hear a SOFT KNOCKING coming from the landing. He creeps behind the bar and picks up a cosh from underneath it.

As he approaches the staircase, the KNOCKING becomes LOUDER. He slowly creeps up the stairs. The NOISE gets LOUDER, now more THUMPING.

INT. LANDING, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

He ascends gradually up to the landing.

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! - now twinned with HEAVY BREATHING.

At the end of the landing, Aldridge has Sarah pinned up against the bedroom door, his breeches around his ankles. Her breasts are exposed and her skirt's pulled above her waist.

CHARLIE  
Aldridge. You bastard.

Sarah SCREAMS in shock as Charlie runs up the stairs.

Aldridge just has time to yank his breeches up before Charlie brings the cosh CRASHING down on the side of Aldridge's head. He falls to the ground.

Charlie then turns to the dishevelled Sarah, still re-adjusting her clothing. He half-raises the cosh back up - tempted, tempted - then lowers it again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Get out of my sight. Tom'll be hearing 'bout this.

EXT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

The front door opens and a bleeding and barely conscious Aldridge is thrown into the street by Charlie, who then SLAMS the door shut.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

Tom and Sarah are sitting opposite each other at a table. The pub is closed and there's a deathly silence.

Tom stares intently at his wife.

She looks away.

TOM

What do you think you're playing at?

Silence.

TOM (CONT'D)

What sort of person are you, Sarah?  
What sort of wife? What sort of mother?

SARAH

(defiant)

And what sort of husband are you?  
Well, let's just say - not enough of one.

TOM

You're a cow.

SARAH

And you're certainly no bull.

Tom springs to his feet in anger, snatching up his tankard and hurls it at the wall.

He stomps over to the bar.

TOM

I'm going away soon. For a fight.  
Charlie'll be in charge.

Sarah looks over at him.

SARAH

What?

TOM

You heard. He'll be landlord while I'm gone.

Sarah reacts - now she's angry.



SARAH

This is my home, my place and I'll do what I like. I'll not have your brother here every day blowing on me.

She rises to her feet - aggressive.

SARAH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

If you're away, what I do, and when I do it, is no business of yours.

TOM

You will do as I say -

Sarah juts her face towards Tom.

SARAH

Or what?

Tom, goaded again, SMASHES a fist on the bar.

TOM

Or I'll fix you.

SARAH

As if you'd dare. You're not man enough.

TOM

And I suppose Aldridge is?

Sarah juts her face towards Tom.

SARAH

Prize-fighter you may be, Tom Sayers, but you're no prize for me.

Tom bristles.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Your boxing mates might think you're big, but to me you're weak and gutless. No spunk. Afraid of being shown up for the little man you really are.

Tom raises his arm and clenches a fist at her but holds it back. Instead, he CRASHES it down on the bar again.

The children upstairs, start CRYING.

Sarah laughs and flounces towards the front door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Look at you, with nothing to offer. Hiding behind your fists.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

You're not even big enough to stand up for yourself against what folk think. Huh.

She pauses at the door.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And your kids are crying upstairs. I'm going out.

EXT/INT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - EARLY MORNING.

The pub's not open yet. Charlie is behind the bar. Tom and Eliza are standing by the front door.

Tom turns and kisses his sister on the cheek.

TOM

Thanks, Eliza. The children will be no problem. They're good kids.

ELIZA

Tom, are you sure about this? That you're doing right?

TOM

Eliza, we need money. Sarah's -

Tom shrugs.

TOM (CONT'D)

Sarah's -

ELIZA

She's a good-for-nothing trollop, Tom. And the sooner you throw her out the better.

TOM

She's the littl'uns mother, Eliza. And I don't like to -

Eliza looks at Tom angrily.

ELIZA

You're too soft, Tom. She's laying down God knows where, and who knows who with? No wonder you've got no extra ready.

CHARLIE

If I catch her shifting again while you're away, Tom, I shall be doing something you should've done a long time ago.

Tom walks back over to the bar.

TOM

Leave it Charlie. Don't. I trust you not to. I don't like a turn-up. She'll be back.

CHARLIE

I've agreed to help you out while the brick work's quiet, Tom. You might mill for others, but leave us to larrup for you.

Tom returns to the front door, nods to them both, exits and strides towards Gideon's waiting brougham.

EXT. PRIZE-RING, ISLE OF GRAIN, KENT - DAY

A huge crowd bristle with expectation as Tom and WILLIAM PERRY prepare to do battle in their respective corners. The crowd clamour for a suitable vantage point, while the Fancy occupy the roped-off foreground.

Tom's new trainer and second, Brunton, is in Tom's corner along with Gideon.

Six-foot, 200lb man-mountain Perry begins shadow boxing, attempting to intimidate Tom. He stares over at his adversary: nodding, self-assured, over-confident.

The fighters come to scratch and shake hands.

Perry looks at Tom.

PERRY

I'll make you wish you didn't rise from your bed this morning.

Tom doesn't react, he just stares at Perry as he takes a stride backwards.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

In a flash, Tom employs the tactic that Langham used: a SMASHING right into Perry's mouth and then a retreat to his corner. Perry looks confused, then peeved as he wipes the blood from his instant fat lip.

DISSOLVE TO:

ROUND EIGHT.

A battered and bloodied Perry pursues Tom in a rage, hitting out wildly but to little effect. Tom - the shorter, lighter, sharper - returns to using the hit-and-retreat ploy.

DISSOLVE TO:

ROUND TEN.

With his seconds in close attendance, Perry's face is cleaned and dried of blood, sweat and dirt. In Tom's corner, Gideon motivates his man.

GIDEON

He is yours for the taking, Tom.

A worn-out Perry struggles to his feet from his second's knee. Tom is standing, ready.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Perry advances, cautious, while Tom - with confident strides - closes the divide rapidly, striking first with two ramrod jabs. Perry's head jerks backwards with each blow and Tom finishes with a swinging overhead right to his face.

Perry sits in the dirt by his corner post, worn out, dejected, beaten up.

A GUSTY CHEER goes up from the crowd. Tom is lifted triumphantly onto the shoulders of his fans.

Gideon smiles.

EXT/INT. BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

Sunny day. Street busy.

Tom and Charlie stroll around the corner. Charlie's arm is around Tom. They're both smiling and laughing together.

Tom's face is only lightly bruised.

CHARLIE SAYERS

- and Perry never knew what hit him  
with that swinging tie up.

They walk up the path to the pub's front door.

CHARLIE SAYERS (CONT'D)

Time for well-earned ale, champ.

They walk into the bar.

It's quiet. A customer in the corner, another at the bar.

Eliza is behind the counter.

Tom, smiling, looks at her, then looks around the room.

TOM

Sarah?

Eliza looks up and slowly shakes her head.

Tom's smile drops.

INT. DRAWING ROOM, GIDEON'S HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY, LONDON

STRAPLINE: SIX MONTHS LATER

Gideon sits at a bureau writing figures in a ledger.

A KNOCK at the door and Gideon's housekeeper, MRS FRASER, enters.

MRS FRASER

Mr Sayers is here to see you, Mr Gideon.

GIDEON

Thank you, Mrs Fraser, please show him in.

Tom enters; Gideon stands.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Good to see you, champion.

TOM

Likewise, Mr Gideon.

GIDEON

Please, take a seat.

Mrs Fraser leaves the room as Gideon walks over to his drinks cabinet.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Thank you for being so prompt, Tom. I have much to tell you about my trip to America after your fight with Perry.

TOM

I've something to say as well.

Gideon takes out two crystal tumblers and pours a large whisky from one of the two decanters in the cabinet.

GIDEON

Whisky or cognac? No ale, I am afraid.

TOM

Er - whisky, please.

He pours another drink and passes it to Tom.

Gideon sits in his high-backed leather armchair.

GIDEON

America's prize-ring is in rude health, Tom, unlike here. But, unfortunately, their authorities seem just as keen to stop the prize-ring as our police do.

TOM

Did you see a mill?

GIDEON

I did, but I had to journey up the Hudson River to Canada to watch two Irishmen of New York indulge in their own personal grudge match. A rather rough-house individual named Morrissey won the fight, but has since decided he will swap his gangland image for the equally reprehensible profession of politics.

Tom looks out the window.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

As a consequence, he has decided he has had enough of beating people up in public and has decided he will conduct his nefarious activities in the private confines of backroom deals. America's new champion is a man named Heenan.

Gideon realises Tom's mind has wandered: Tom is deep in thought.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Tom?

TOM

Hmm.

He turns to Gideon.

TOM (CONT'D)

Yes?

GIDEON

Is there something troubling you?

TOM

(sighs)

Er - yeah.

GIDEON  
May I enquire?

TOM  
It would only be fair to tell you.

Tom gets to his feet and walks over to the window.

TOM (CONT'D)  
I'm having problems with Sarah. We need to shift away. A new start with the kids.

GIDEON  
And you are thinking of America.

TOM  
Australia.

GIDEON  
Australia?

TOM  
(nods)  
I need to get away. What more can I do here?

Gideon rises and looks to Tom.

GIDEON  
Tom, you are Champion of England. Why not aim higher?

TOM  
(frowns)  
Higher?

GIDEON  
Watching Heenan and Morrissey got me thinking: a challenge from across the Atlantic.

TOM  
And I've been thinking, Mr Gideon. Thinking to get out.

GIDEON  
It is your decision, Tom. But I warn you. You will be walking away from your destiny. You are the finest boxer in the world, Tom. Why not prove it?

Tom downs his drink in one.

TOM

I'm sorry, Mr Gideon, but my head's made up. My kids mean everything to me. And Sarah.

Tom moves towards the door.

TOM (CONT'D)

Okay, milling's rich for some well-breeched. But I'm fighting to keep my family together.

GIDEON

Tom, you are making a big mistake. A challenge might well come in from over the waves soon.

Tom opens the door.

TOM

Thanks for your help, Mr Gideon. But I'm plain done.

INT. BEDROOM, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

Tom walks in through the door.

Sarah is still in bed.

TOM

The kids?

SARAH

Your sister's. She came and took them to her place.

She LAUGHS.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(sarcastic)

She's such an angel.

TOM

Sarah, we need to chat.

SARAH

Don't think so.

TOM

I've been thinking. Let's get rid of this place and go away. Just me, you and the kids.

SARAH

I'm quite happy where I am, ta.



TOM

I thought a new start for us would be good. Maybe go to Australia?

SARAH

Living with thousands of filchers and funkies. If I want that, I'd live in Newgate.

TOM

Folk talk, you know, 'bout you and Aldridge.

Sarah sits up.

SARAH

So?

TOM

But -

SARAH

But what? You think you're so special now. 'Cos you flounce around with your fancy friends. But they're all as big a bastards as your own two are.

She sits up and grabs a candle holder and flings it at Tom. He ducks.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Just leave me alone. Get out. You're all a bunch of bastards.

CU: ON SARAH'S SCREAMING FACE.

CUT TO:

INT. PORTER'S SPIRIT OF THE TIMES OFFICE, NEW YORK - DAY

CU: ON ADAH'S SCREAMING FACE.

ADAH

- Bastards. You're all philistine bastards.

Adah stands at the open doorway.

ADAH ISAACS MENKEN - petite, low-rent actress, poet, seducer minx - is furiously brandishing that day's copy of *Porter's Spirit of the Times*.

In the window, an axe is prominently positioned in a display case.

Adah confronts the *Times'* editor - GEORGE WILKES, side-burns, moustache, formal, dark-suited.

ADAH (CONT'D)

That's right Mr Wilkes, come and answer for what you've printed in your worthless rag.

Behind Wilkes, three MEN - dressed formally for an appointment - stand up to see what the commotion is.

JOHN CAMEL HEENAN - fashionably dressed with long overcoat, leather boots, silk top hat, gloves and swagger cane.

JIM CUSICK - slightly built, chequered suit, bowler-hatted, with prominent bow tie and nervous manner, and a clipped English accent.

FREDERICK FALKLAND - soberly dressed, bespectacled, austere, cold.

Desperate to defuse an embarrassing situation, Wilkes ushers the furious artiste into his office.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right. Get me in off the street, so the whole of New York won't hear of the shabby establishment you run here.

She STOMPS further into the front office, glaring wildly.

Once Wilkes has smiled and nodded at a passers-by, he SLAMS the door shut and puts up a 'Closed' sign.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Never have I been so humiliated -

WILKES

Miss Menken.

ADAH

- so, so distressed by a - dare I call it - a review.

Heenan smiles, impressed by Adah.

Cusick and Falkland are not amused and look away embarrassed.

WILKES

Miss Menken, please.

Wilkes' attempt at calming her fails.

ADAH

I doubt you even had the grace to come and see the play.

WILKES

Miss Menken!

She stops, halted by Wilkes' tone.

WILKES (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now, I don't know what difficulty you're having -

She lunges at him.

ADAH

I'll give you difficulty.

Before she can land her attack, Heenan picks her up by her waist, his huge hands lifting her inches from the floor.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Let go of me, you oaf.

Adah, struggle as she might, can only kick in mid-air and beat his arms with little impact.

She struggles to get free.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Goddam brute. Get offa me.

She struggles for a few minutes more, then realises she's getting nowhere.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Alright, alright, put me down.

Heenan obliges.

Adah brushes herself down and adjusts herself.

WILKES

Good. Now we can discuss the issue about my review with some civility.

Picking the newspaper up from a desk, Adah FLICKS to the theatre reviews page.

ADAH

Well, how about if I start by reading verbatim, Mr Wilkes?

In a theatrical manner, she clears her throat.

ADAH (CONT'D)

And I quote, "The play's leading lady, Miss Adah Isaacs Menken is so mis-cast as Mazeppa the Tartar princess, that even I would venture to play the part and appear more convincing. When, in the second act, a wooden stool was placed centre-stage, I mistook it for the ineffectual actress."

Wilkes nods; Heenan smiles.

Adah ignores them.

ADAH (CONT'D)

"Miss Menken appeared at her best in silk fleshings and tied spread-eagled across the back of a mare, where she caused a sensation among the audience as the Naked Lady."

Heenan raises an eyebrow and looks over at Wilkes.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Were you implying I was in my best position, Mr Wilkes?

WILKES

Writing for effect, Miss Menken. We all need the publicity.

ADAH

Your competitors at the Clipper gave a favourable review without a single salacious comment. Maybe sir, your publication is more befitting of those who frequent the bordellos of the Bowery.

WILKES

(sighs)

Okay, Miss Menken, maybe I was little - unkind. I'll temper my next review if you promise not to return to this office again screaming like a she-cat that's just been thrown out of a top floor window.

Adah turns and starts to make her way to the front door.

She starts to calm down.

ADAH

Very well Mr Wilkes, I accept your apology and I shall look forward to reading a more considered appraisal in your next review.

Falkland, nearest the door, opens it for her.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Then, and only then, will I encourage my immense circle of friends and supporters to resume buying your newspaper.

She nods to the other three.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Gentlemen.

WILKES

Thank you, Miss Menken. Please close the door quietly after you.

Adah smiles sweetly at Wilkes and SLAMS the door with all her might.

Heenan turns to follow her.

HEENAN

Listen, I gotta talk to this filly.

Cusick becomes agitated, nervous.

CUSICK

But Jack, you need to sign the papers for the challenge to England.

HEENAN

You guys draw up the papers and I'll be back to sign. This could be fun.

Heenan strides towards the door.

EXT. A STREET, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Adah flounces along the sidewalk swaying her arse. Heenan appears in the background after her, holding onto his top hat. He eventually catches up with her and walks kerbside.

He takes off his hat.

HEENAN

Ma'am?

ADAH

Miss.

HEENAN

That was quite a performance.

ADAH

And no rehearsals.

HEENAN

I'd like to make your acquaintance,  
ma'am.

ADAH

Miss.

HEENAN

Miss. I'm Heenan. My friends call  
me Jack.

ADAH

How do you do, Mr Heenan? And what  
do you do?

HEENAN

Well, actually, I'm a boxer.  
Champion of America.

Adah stops dead in her tracks and looks up at Heenan.

ADAH

Really?

HEENAN

Yes, ma'am. I mean, Miss.

ADAH

Pleased to meet you - Jack.

HEENAN

The pleasure's all mine, Miss  
Menken.

ADAH

You can call me Adah.

HEENAN

Well, Adah. After what happened  
back there, you seem to be  
something of a fighter yourself.

ADAH

A product of growing up in New  
Orleans.

HEENAN

Is that so?

The two of them stare at each other.

HEENAN (CONT'D)  
 Hey, no matter what Wilkes says,  
 I'd like to see your play.

ADAH  
 Yes Jack, I think you would like to  
 see it.

She winks.

Heenan smiles.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 The Albany, tomorrow, eight  
 o'clock.

Turning on her heels, she struts off down the street with a  
 knowing smile.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 (looking back)  
 And I'll look forward to your  
 review, Jack Heenan.

Heenan looks on eagerly, mouth open.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - EVENING

The pub has only two customers: OLD MEN who have drunk their  
 fill and are now sitting and sleeping near the fireplace.

Tom wipes tankards and looks around at the empty pub.

The latch on the front door unfastens and Gideon enters.

Gideon removes his hat and walks to the bar. He sits on a  
 high stool. Tom puts a glass tumbler in front of him.

GIDEON  
 Good evening, Tom.

Tom pours Gideon a whisky.

TOM  
 Evening, Mr Gideon.

GIDEON  
 I received a message today from  
 America. Let me read it to you.

Gideon takes a note out of his pocket.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 "From Mr Frederick Falkland  
 (solicitor), stop.  
 (MORE)

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 Sir, a challenge, stop. Mr John Camel Heenan requests Mr Thomas Sayers to fight him in England, stop. The victor to be proclaimed World Champion, stop."

Tom remains silent.

Gideon carefully folds the note and puts it back in his coat.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 Well?

TOM  
 I told you before, I'm going away.

GIDEON  
 When Tom? You're still here.

TOM  
 When Sarah agrees. I don't even know if I want to mill again.

Taking his tumbler, Gideon SIGHS, then swallows his shot of whisky. He replaces the glass on the bar and takes out a coin from his waistcoat.

TOM (CONT'D)  
 Put your money away. It's on the house.

Gideon places the coin - a sovereign - on the bar.

And another - a crown.

And another - a penny.

GIDEON  
 Tom, see these.

Tom looks down.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 These are what makes the world go round. People talk about love, but love is for romantics - for dreamers.

Tom picks one up - the sovereign - and looks at it.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 These are what oils the cogs of the world. And helps drag people out of the pit. Without them, we sink and drown.

Tom puts down the sovereign and picks up the crown.



GIDEON (CONT'D)

A few are lucky and are born with lots of them in their feathered cribs. Most are born scrambling around in the gutter for pennies.

Tom puts down the crown and picks up the penny.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Some of us in the middle place bets on life, Tom, and help generate more coins.

Tom puts the penny down.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You see, Tom, people are like these coins. Some are sovereigns, some are crowns, most are pennies. Some are even farthings, the unfortunates, and fall through the cracks.

Tom picks up the penny again.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

You, Tom, have the intangible quality of a fighting guinea, but you are thinking like a penny. I place bets on life, Tom, and I place bets on people.

Gideon looks directly at Tom.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

And I bet on you.

Tom puts the penny back down on the bar again.

TOM

Thanks, Mr Gideon. But your bet is best put on others.

Gideon looks at the row of coins - and stands and looks around the empty room.

GIDEON

Keep them. It looks like you need them here, Tom.

He makes for the front door.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Let me know if you change your mind.

Gideon closes the door.

Tom looks down at the coins.

INT. AUDITORIUM, ALBANY'S GREEN STREET THEATER, NEW YORK -  
EVENING

Heenan and Cusick occupy a box that overlooks stage-left. Heenan is wide-eyed, Cusick is nodding asleep, barely interested.

The theatre is three-quarters full (mostly men) and the burlesque play, *Mazeppa*, is nearing its end.

Adah makes her grand entrance dressed only in a translucent body stocking and is tied to the back of an ageing horse. The animal perform a piaffe on stage, but the tumultuous applause from the lecherous, CAT-CALLING audience is only for Adah.

Heenan jumps to his feet, joining in with the ovation. Cusick doesn't stir from his nap.

INT. ADAH'S DRESSING ROOM, ALBANY'S GREEN STREET THEATER -  
LATER

Adah sits at her dressing table wearing a silk dressing gown. She's removing her make-up.

A KNOCK at the dressing room door.

ADAH

Come.

The door opens slowly. Filling the frame is Heenan holding a colourful spray of exotic flowers.

HEENAN

May I?

ADAH

Mr Heenan.

She stands up and sways over to him.

HEENAN

Adah.

Heenan hands her the flowers.

She speaks in an exaggerated southern drawl.

ADAH

Why, thank you, Jack.

HEENAN

You said I'd like to see your play.

Adah pouts a little.

ADAH  
 (whispers)  
 And did you?

Heenan leans down towards her.

HEENAN  
 (whispers)  
 Do you want my review?

They kiss.

ADAH  
 Print and be damned.

EXT. STREET LEADING TO BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON -  
 MORNING

Walking along the street towards the Bricklayer's Arms, Tom carries a small wooden crate filled with produce he has just bought at market. He turns the corner.

As he approaches the pub, he notices Aldridge's hansom parked outside the pub. Aldridge is at the rear of the cab, packing two carpet-bags and a vanity case onto the luggage rack.

In the pub's doorway, Tom can see Eliza standing holding hands with Tom Jnr and Sarah Jnr either side. Both children stand stony-faced.

Sarah is bending over talking to them.

Charlie watches on.

Tom drops his crate to the floor and anxiously runs up to them.

Aldridge, noticing Tom's advance, scurries up onto the cab's driver's seat and grabs his stock whip. He holds the whip ready to protect himself.

TOM  
 What's happening?

As he reaches the pub doorway, Sarah rises up to face Tom.

SARAH  
 I'm just saying goodbye to the  
 kids.

Tom gestures at Aldridge.

TOM  
 You're leaving the kids and me? For  
 him? A buck cabbie?

Tom points to Aldridge still skulking on his cab.

SARAH

(nods)

I know what I'm doing. I should've done it years ago. He's twice the man you are.

Tom LAUGHS contemptuously.

TOM

Looks like it. Well, good luck. I'll look after the kids.

SARAH

You just do that. I've got better things to do.

Sarah walks away.

TOM

Your pa was right about you.

She stops. She speak slowly, deliberately - icily.

SARAH

You'll pay for that comment one day, Tom. You mark my words.

With an exaggerated flourish, she climbs into Aldridge's hansom and turns her face away from both Tom and her children.

With a CRACK of his whip, Aldridge steers his horse away down the street.

Tom's children dash away from Eliza to their father's side and he bends down to comfort them both.

The SOBBING children bury their heads on either side of his neck.

Tom watches the cab turn the corner and disappear.

ELIZA (O.S.)

Good riddance.

INT. GIDEON'S HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY, LONDON - DAY

A LOUD, REPEATED RAP on Gideon's front door.

Mrs Fraser ascends from the scullery.

MRS FRASER

Alright, alright, hold your water.

Again, determined KNOCKING on the door.

Mrs Fraser opens it.

A serious Tom looks at Mrs Fraser and doffs his bowler hat.  
Mrs Fraser looks surprised and smiles.

MRS FRASER (CONT'D)  
Oh, Mr Sayers. How nice to see you  
again. Please, wait one second.

She rushes back indoors.

MRS FRASER (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
Mr Gideon! Mr Gideon! Please come  
quickly. Mr Sayers is here, Mr  
Gideon?

Adjoining door to the hall opens.

Gideon steps into the hall. Spots Tom.

Walks to the front door.

The men stare at each other momentarily, then Tom smiles and  
offers his hand.

Gideon smiles back and shakes Tom's hand firmly.

GIDEON  
(looking at Tom)  
Mrs Fraser, my hat and coat please.  
We have not a moment to lose. A  
visit to *Bell's Life* and Mr Dowling  
is called for.

INT. DOWLING'S BELL'S LIFE OFFICE, LONDON - DAY

Gideon and Tom stand around the office desk belonging to  
Dowling, newspaper editor of *Bell's Life* in London.

FRANK DOWLING - monocled, side-whiskers - sits behind his  
large, impressive desk scattered with papers. His name sign  
'**FRANK DOWLING - Editor**' is proudly displayed.

Tom marks an 'X' with a pen and passes it to Gideon. Gideon  
signs with a flourish. He passes the pen on to Dowling, who  
signs with an extra flourish.

The three men take it in turns to shake hands.

DOWLING  
Congratulations, gentlemen.

GIDEON  
This is going to be big, Tom. Very  
big indeed. Mr Dowling will help  
promote it, be the stakeholder and  
referee the contest.

Dowling nods with solemn satisfaction.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

The whole country will be aroused  
with expectation and pride.

TOM

The country might, Mr Gideon. But  
I've no choice. With Sarah gone,  
and a place and kids to keep.

GIDEON

You will make enough money, Tom, to  
choose whether you need to run your  
establishment - or even fight  
again.

Tom looks at Gideon.

TOM

Yes, Mr Gideon. It's about money  
all right -

He looks away.

TOM (CONT'D)

- and more.

INT. LANGHAM'S CAMBRIAN STORES PUB, LONDON - DAY

Langham's pub is packed to the rafters with fight fans.

The place is full of smoke, NOISE and COMMOTION.

At the top of his voice, Langham tries to keep order, while  
dishing out copies of *Bell's Life* and trying to keep track of  
those who haven't paid for their issue.

LANGHAM

(shouting)

Don't kick up a shine. Plenty to go  
round.

A MEMBER of the crowd fights his way through the swarm  
brandishing the paper showing -

CU: small ad in the corner of the paper.

**CHALLENGE TO THE CHAMPION OF ENGLAND.**

*- John Heenan, otherwise known as the Benicia Boy, who  
recently fought John Morrissey at Long Point, Canada, being  
unsuccessful in getting a re-match desires us to announce for  
him that he will fight Tom Sayers, the present Champion of  
England, for £200 and the champion's belt".*

EXT. ROCKAWAY COTTAGE, BLOOMINGDALE ROAD, NEW YORK - DAY

Outside the cottage, Cusick nervously smokes a cheroot as he reads the banner headline in the Porter's '*Spirit Of The Times*.'

CU: **BENICIA BOY TO DO BATTLE IN BRITAIN FOR WORLD BELT.**

Heenan pokes his head out of the doorway and WHISTLES. Cusick looks up from the paper.

HEENAN

You ready? It's about to start.

Cusick grimaces, folds the paper and flicks the cigar into the gutter, then turns on his heels.

CUSICK

Jack, I really don't think -

Heenan looks - then smiles.

INT. ROCKAWAY COTTAGE, BLOOMINGDALE ROAD, NEW YORK - DAY

Inside the empty room, Cusick finds Heenan, Adah and a WHISKEY PRIEST (Irish accent) standing in a triangle. In the background hovers two witnesses - a cleaner asked to stay behind and a gardener.

She holds a cloth; he holds a spade.

Adah's only article of white clothing is the lace veil she wears over her hair. Heenan's garb is a smart/sober brown tweed three-piece suit. The lovers hold hands.

WHISKEY PRIEST

Brothers and, er, sisters. We are gathered here today to witness the rite of matrimony between Adah Isaacs Menken and John Camel Heenan.

Cusick takes his place next to Heenan as, once again, the betrothed look deeply into one another's eyes.

Cusick looks up to the ceiling.

INT. OSBORNE'S HOTEL LOUNGE, ADAM STREET, LONDON - AFTERNOON

Gideon sits restively waiting.

Soon Dowling enters with Heenan's representative from New York, Falkland.

DOWLING

Good day, John.

Dowling and Gideon shake hands.

GIDEON  
Good afternoon, Frank.

DOWLING  
Mr Frederick Falkland, may I  
present Mr John Gideon.

GIDEON  
How do you do, Mr Falkland.

Gideon and Falkland shake hands.

FALKLAND  
Fine, sir. And yourself?

Gideon glances quickly to Dowling, then to Falkland.

GIDEON  
Very well.

All three take a seat.

Gideon gestures to a hovering WAITER, who then takes an order  
for three whiskeys.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
I trust you had a pleasant  
crossing?

FALKLAND  
The Atlantic is never pleasant, but  
as an ocean I think it is  
necessary: it keeps us apart. If  
you get my drift, Mr Gideon? But it  
was bearable - thank you.

Falkland smiles - weakly; Gideon doesn't.

Dowling clears his throat.

DOWLING  
Gentlemen, shall we get down to  
business.

GIDEON  
Please do.

DOWLING  
Mr Falkland, please repeat your  
terms and conditions for Mr  
Gideon's benefit in regard to the  
fight between Messrs. Sayers and  
Heenan.

Gideon opens his notepad and takes out his pen.



FALKLAND

Sure.

Gideon begins to scribble, as Falkland speaks.

FALKLAND (CONT'D)

First, Mr Heenan kindly requests that he and his manager, Mr Cusick, are compensated for their passage to and from America whatever the outcome of the fight.

Gideon flicks Falkland a look.

FALKLAND (CONT'D)

Second, Mr Cusick and I request that a new belt be forged for the winner that will become the future belt of all world champions.

Dowling's eyes flit between Falkland and Gideon.

Gideon, poker-faced, gives little away.

FALKLAND (CONT'D)

Also, Mr Heenan has kindly refused your offer to raise the stakes. His sponsors will offer no more than £200 and wish to reserve the right to put their money into side bets.

The waiter returns with the drinks and places them on a table in front of each man.

FALKLAND (CONT'D)

We all know, gentlemen, that boxers are equivalent to race horses. And some have more pedigree than others. And they're the ones we put our money on.

GIDEON

Mr Falkland, I must object -

FALKLAND

To the truth, Mr Gideon. We all know the true value of a prize-fighter, do we not? That is why the three of us are sitting here.

Dowling drinks quickly.

Gideon picks his drink up deliberately and sips slowly.

GIDEON

Please continue, Mr Falkland.

FALKLAND

And lastly, Mr Heenan objects to fighting during February and would prefer the bout to take place during the spring of 1860.

As the waiter leaves, Gideon slowly finishes his note taking.

GIDEON

Notwithstanding the standard articles set out in our challenge agreements, your demands appear acceptable to me, Mr Falkland.

Gideon looks at Falkland.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Except for one.

Dowling frowns.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Surely it is the man fighting on home soil that chooses when the mill should take place?

FALKLAND

That may be the tradition here in England, sir, but Mr Heenan has expressed no desire to train during England's rather inclement winter.

GIDEON

Mr Sayers is quite happy to train come rain or shine.

Falkland smiles at Gideon.

FALKLAND

Sir, Mr Heenan isn't a native of this rather dank little island. In fact, he spent many years in California with the sun on his back.

DOWLING

Gentlemen, please do not allow such minutiae to jeopardise what will be the world's greatest sporting event.

Falkland and Gideon eyeball each other.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

May I suggest March?

FALKLAND

May?

GIDEON

April.

Gideon looks at his notes.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

The 17th day. My only offer.

Falkland ponders.

Dowling holds his breath.

FALKLAND

Okay, if our Congress can proclaim victory in the War of Independence in April, I'm sure Mr Heenan will appreciate the symbolism. I accept the offer.

GIDEON

The month of the ram and the bull. The fight will be fierce.

Dowling smiles, relieved.

FALKLAND

I'll write to Mr Cusick. I'm sure he will concur.

DOWLING

Excellent. May I suggest, before we take luncheon, that we raise our glasses?

Each man takes his glass.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

To the new Championship of the World and may the best man win.

EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE - DAY

INT. BEDROOM, APARTMENT, TENEMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK - DAY

Adah is straddling Heenan who, with his eyes closed, gently moves his head from side-to-side.

INT. TOP FLOOR LANDING, TENEMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK - SAME TIME

Cusick reaches the summit of the tenement block and walks along the corridor.

INT. BEDROOM, APARTMENT, TENEMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK -  
MOMENTS LATER

A LOUD DOUBLE KNOCK at the front door. Adah and Heenan  
continue lovemaking.

INT. CORRIDOR, TENEMENT BLOCK, NEW YORK - MOMENTS LATER

Cusick waits in the corridor - all bustle and agitation. Once  
again, he THUMPS the front door.

INT. BEDROOM, APARTMENT, TENEMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK -  
MOMENTS LATER

Heenan opens his eyes and lays still. Adah tries to continue  
riding.

CUSICK (O.S.)

Jack? Open up. Jack, open the door.  
I've got news from London.

Dismounting, Adah - mightily pissed off - puts on a silk  
robe.

Heenan grabs his long-johns.

INT. CORRIDOR, TOP FLOOR LANDING, TENEMENT BLOCK, NEW YORK -  
MOMENTS LATER

The front door opens. Adah gives Cusick a derisive look up  
and down.

ADAH

Can't you leave us alone for just  
one day.

CUSICK

Where's Jack?

ADAH

He's busy.

CUSICK

Not too busy to see me.

HEENAN (O.S.)

Hey Jim, is that you?

Adah reluctantly stands aside allowing Cusick to walk into  
the apartment.

INT. BEDROOM, APARTMENT, TENEMENT BUILDING, NEW YORK - DAY

Heenan is, by now, sitting in a chair pulling his boots on.

HEENAN

Thought the landlord was coming round sniffing for more rent.

CUSICK

Well, the way things are looking, you won't be staying here much longer.

Adah walks over and stands behind her husband.

HEENAN

So what've your fellow lobster-backs agreed to?

Cusick speaks quickly.

CUSICK

I've received word from Falkland. He said to tell you and Wilkes that Sayers' man, Gideon has approved our terms -

Heenan jumps up ready to congratulate Cusick.

CUSICK (CONT'D)

- and that the fight is set for April 17th.

HEENAN

April?

CUSICK

He said Gideon wouldn't budge on the date.

HEENAN

Ah, what the hell, I suppose it's better than February.

The two men shake hands.

Cusick BUSTLES to the front door.

HEENAN (CONT'D)

So there it is. The Benicia Boy will become world champion in the very country of your birth, Jim.

CUSICK

Once I have finished with Wilkes, I'll visit the steamship office and enquire after passenger tickets.

Adah looks over at Cusick.

ADAH

So when do we leave for England?

Cusick looks at her - and frowns.

INT. BAR, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - EVENING

The pub is shut for the night: trade is dead.

Charlie is in the background locking the doors, tidying behind the counter.

Tom sits nursing a tankard of ale.

Eliza, collecting empty tankards, sits down with him.

ELIZA

It's late, Tom.

TOM

Finishing my nightcap.

Tom drains his tankard.

TOM (CONT'D)

I've decided, Liza. I'm selling this crib. I've never really been cut out for it.

Tom sighs.

TOM (CONT'D)

I bought this place blind. Thinking it'd be right for all of us.

Eliza puts her hand on his shoulder.

TOM (CONT'D)

I thought Sarah would like it here. I thought she'd cope even if I was away. She got lonely. I was away a lot.

ELIZA

Tom, what happened with Sarah would've happened whether you were here or not.

TOM

You reckon?

ELIZA

She's a wrong'un. You're too loyal.

TOM

When I got with her, you never said she was doxy-like.

ELIZA

You were happy then, Tom. Not for me to interfere. I lost my Rob - young-like. But life moves on. Things change.

Tom goes to the bar and pours himself another ale.

TOM

I can't understand why she'd want to bring disgrace. It's plain embarrassing. Aldridge's a shirkster.

ELIZA

Stop hurting yourself. Think of what you've got ahead. Watching the young'uns grow up. Winning the big fight against the American.

Eliza smiles.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Maybe find yourself a decent woman -

TOM

Women and me is finished.

ELIZA

You're a good man and your flesh and blood love you dearly. Never forget you'll always have the children, me and Charlie. She can't come between us. She can't do no more damage.

Eliza gets to her feet and kisses the top of Tom's head.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

I'll stay over tonight and let the kids sleep in their own beds - while they've still got them here.

Eliza bends down and whispers.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Night. Tom. Don't be late.

She goes over to the gas lamp and turns it down.

Tom sups his fresh pint quietly.

INT. SAYERS' BEDROOM, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN - NIGHT LATER

Tom's sleep is disturbed by a CACOPHONY of SHOUTING and glass being SMASHED. He jumps out of bed and looks out of his window onto the foggy street.

EXT. STREET, BRICKLAYERS ARMS, CAMDEN - NIGHT

Outside and intoxicated, Sarah SHOUTS at the pub's front door and starts to pick up stones to throw at the pub's windows. One SMASHES.

SARAH

Too scared to hear the truth? Come out here, you fucking coward.

In neighbouring homes, candlelight and shadows appear against the windows.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Hiding behind your worthless family.

INT. LANDING/STAIRS, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - NIGHT

Tom - dressed in his nightshirt - makes his way towards the top of the stairs.

Eliza, also awoken, emerges dazed onto the landing.

TOM

It's Sarah. She's corned again.

Tom starts down the stairs.

ELIZA

I'll deal with the kids.

EXT. STREET, BRICKLAYER'S ARMS, CAMDEN, LONDON - NIGHT

Some of Tom's NEIGHBOURS are trying to quieten Sarah.

Sarah, ignoring them, picks up another stone, and SMASHES another window.

NEIGHBOUR #1

Let's have no more of your gum. Get yerself 'ome, Sarah.

SARAH

Why don't you fuck off?

NEIGHBOUR #2

Charmin'. Who wants to hear your nonsense? Hook it.

Tom opens the pub's front door and strides out into the street.

Another window SMASHES.



SARAH  
You're all gonna hear what I have -

She notices Tom.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Ah, there you are.

TOM  
What you doing?

SARAH  
I've something to tell you.

TOM  
Come inside and tell me.

SARAH  
I will not.

She turns about on her heels as she raises her voice.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
I want you all to be the first to  
know I'm having a baby.

Tom grabs Sarah by the arm.

TOM  
Come inside now. You're making a  
rumpus.

She tries to wriggle free.

SARAH  
Take your filthy hands off me.

Tom, noticing the neighbours, lets go of her.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
That's right, dear friends. A baby  
by a real man. None other than  
James Aldridge, Esquire.

With that, Sarah is grabbed from behind - by Eliza.

ELIZA  
Leave my brother alone.

The women struggle.

Sarah wrestles free.

SARAH  
You can fuck off as well. This is  
me and Tom's to-do.

ELIZA

I've had enough of your to-do's.  
And so's Tom. So you can sling your  
hook before I cuff you.

SARAH

What, you and that big, tough  
brother of yours. He might be your  
champion, but he ain't mine.

ELIZA

Go off, before I might do something  
I'll regret.

SARAH

Well, here's something I don't  
regret.

Sarah takes a swing at Eliza, catching her on the side of the  
head.

Eliza staggers back. Then races forward, grabs Sarah's hair  
in retaliation. She yanks Sarah's head back - sharply.

Sarah CRIES out.

Tom steps in to part them.

TOM

Please! No!

He drags them apart.

TOM (CONT'D)

Stop! No rowing! I'll not have it.  
In public-like.

The neighbours CAT-CALL.

NEIGHBOUR #1

Now they're all joining in.

NEIGHBOUR #2

Go on, girls. Me money's on the  
queer hen.

Tom pushes Eliza away and holds Sarah, restraining her.

TOM

Now, I've told you. Go back to your  
fancy man. Sober up and we can talk  
later. Take yourself off.

Sarah pulls herself free.

SARAH

Okay, big man. Just thought I'd tell you the good news. Good to see one of us producing.

She turns round and staggers off.

Eliza joins Tom and they watch her go.

ELIZA

She's a wild one, Tom. What were you thinking?

Tom watches Sarah stumble down the street.

INT. BOWERY THEATER, NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Heenan is in the ring with Morrissey. This time it's an exhibition bout re-enacting the earlier clash at Long Point, Canada. Playing to a packed house, it's all powder puff with pulled punches and feigned impacts.

The exhibition fight has been condensed into three rounds. The second of which is coming to an end.

Sitting in the front row is Adah. She beams from ear-to-ear relishing the reflective glory, as she soaks in admiring glances.

Heenan returns to his corner. He scans the audience eventually catching the eye of Adah. He smiles at her; she smiles back. He winks at her. She blows him a kiss.

Cusick - begrudging - plays the role of referee in this charade.

CUSICK

Round Three

The adversaries come to scratch.

CUSICK (CONT'D)

Time.

More exaggerated feigning before Heenan allows Morrissey to hit him lightly before sprawling to defeat.

Recovering quickly, Heenan steals away as Morrissey soaks up CALLS for an encore.

Away from the audience, Adah stands waiting for Heenan with a canteen of water and a fresh towel.

He kisses her as they meet.

ADAH

You should be on stage with me.

HEENAN

It's a payday. That's all. There's no love lost between me and Morrissey. We've history.

ADAH

So you didn't really lose to him?

HEENAN

Morrissey cheated. To end the fight he had a musket ball in his hand and socked me with it.

She mock grimaces.

ADAH

The scoundrel.

MORRISSEY (O.S.)

Not a bad show, huh, Heenan?

Heenan turns to see Morrissey approaching with three HENCHMEN in tow.

HEENAN

Yeah, great if your memory's failed you.

MORRISSEY

Oh? And has it?

HEENAN

No, it's quite fresh in my head. I don't easily forget the use of heavy artillery.

Morrissey looks over to Adah.

MORRISSEY

Well, they reckon my fists are like a couple o' big guns.

The henchmen smile.

MORRISSEY (CONT'D)

Jack, I don't remember you ever introducing me to your truly fine-looking companion.

HEENAN

My wife.

Morrissey takes Adah's pre-offered gloved right hand.

She exudes flirty femininity.

HEENAN (CONT'D)

Mrs Adah Heenan. John Morrissey.

Morrissey kisses her hand.

MORRISSEY

Ma'am.

Adah withdraws her hand.

ADAH

Pleased to meet you, Mr Morrissey.

Cusick shuffles over to them.

MORRISSEY

Dispense with the formality, Mrs Heenan. Jack and I go back a long way, so I'd be happy for you to call me John.

Adah pulls a demure face.

Morrissey looks at Heenan.

MORRISSEY (CONT'D)

I have to say Jack, I wasn't too pleased to hear that you sent a challenge to fight over in England.

HEENAN

You retired. I became champion. I have every right.

MORRISSEY

Technically you do, Jack, but you've over-reached.

HEENAN

You're a fine one to talk, Morrissey. You've been over-reaching ever since you boarded the boat from Ireland.

MORRISSEY

You never became champion in the ring, so really you shouldn't be touting yourself overseas. Maybe cut me in?

HEENAN

No chance, Morrissey. You've already had your cut robbing me in the first place with your crooked ways.

Cusick turns to Morrissey.

CUSICK

And the rules allowed for the challenge, the fight's confirmed and we sail next Friday. Anyway, Mr Morrissey, I hear you've gone into politics?

Morrissey addresses Cusick but looks at Heenan.

MORRISSEY

Forgive me, Mr Cusick, but I do believe I was in dialogue with my old buddy Jack here. And everything's political, didn't you know that, little man?

Cusick unnerved, glances away.

HEENAN

Look here, Morrissey, if you've got an issue, go talk to Wilkes, my agent. I'm going to England and I'm coming back World Champion.

Morrissey tries to stare Heenan down.

Heenan holds his gaze.

Adah COUGHS, the deadlock is broken.

MORRISSEY

It was delightful to meet you, Mrs Heenan. I wish you a safe journey, Jack. No mishaps on the way.

Morrissey swaggers away with his men following.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING, MANHATTAN - NEW YORK - NIGHT

Black street. The dark of the tenement building blocks out half the night sky.

Only a single gas lamp flickers.

There's movement in the shadow of the building.

Cusick's face ducks into the light. He checks his fob-watch. Another movement in the stairwell.

SCAMPING.

Heenan, carrying a large rucksack, appears in the lamp's light.

CUSICK

(whispering)

Hurry, Jack. Or we'll be late.

Heenan rushes up to him.

HEENAN  
 (whispering back)  
 Jim, this ain't right. Leaving Adah  
 like this.

Cusick snatches up his light case.

CUSICK  
 Jack, we're doing what's right.  
 She'll get over it, she's a woman.  
 She'll find someone else.

HEENAN  
 She's a woman alright. But she  
 won't take this lying down.

CUSICK  
 She takes everything else lying  
 down, so why change the habit of a  
 lifetime?

Heenan drops his bag and grabs hold of Cusick's lapel.

Cusick drops his case.

HEENAN  
 (hissing)  
 Jim, that ain't funny. Cool it,  
 right? She means a lot to me.

Cusick shakes himself free.

HEENAN (CONT'D)  
 Just maybe not enough to stop me  
 proving a point to Morrissey. That  
 goes a lot deeper.

Cusick straightens himself.

CUSICK  
 Okay, sorry, Jack. That was unfair.  
 But come on. Quick. Before we're  
 too late. The ship sails in an  
 hour.

The two men grab their case and bag and dash into the gloom  
 of the street.

EXT. DOCKSIDE, NEW YORK HARBOUR - NIGHT

The moon clears scudding clouds and spotlights the docks in a  
 luminous sheen.

Cusick - with his case, Heenan carrying his bag - make their  
 way along the quayside.

In silence, they make for the Cunard steam paddle-ship, the S.S. ASIA. Floating in silent readiness, she is docked one hundred meters away.

Heenan and Cusick are no more than twenty meters from the gangplanks, when, from out of the shadows, behind crates and under canvas, the silhouettes of Morrissey's three henchmen appear.

Heenan drops his bag in readiness; Cusick drops his case out of fear.

The henchmen move to corner Heenan.

Heenan's height advantage is soon apparent, as he leans back slightly, causing Henchman #1's blow to miss wildly. Heenan counters, launching a straight right hand to Henchman #1's face, followed by two swift lefts to his jaw. Henchman #1 stumbles sideways, several steps, before dropping to his knees.

Henchman #2 surges forward carrying a blackjack. Heenan feigns a left jab, pulling it short. Henchman #2 bobs his head instinctively, which is exactly what Heenan wants. He unleashes a curving right uppercut, which ploughs into Henchman #2's face, sending him reeling, forcing the Henchman to drop the blackjack.

Cusick looks on terrified.

From behind, grabbing Heenan in a headlock, Henchman #3 uses the blackjack he's picked up to CLUB the boxer over the head. Heenan throws the man and composes himself. Blood begins to trickle down his face, as Henchman #3 goes at him again. Heenan lets loose his left hook, rocking the last man sideways.

The boxer strikes with two straight right hands - one after another- and Henchman #3 SLAMS backwards into a wide upright stack of crates, against which Heenan pounds him.

Heenan's head wound bleeds profusely, so he tears himself a piece of loose canvas and begins to wrap it around his head.

Cusick grabs his case, and goes to lift Heenan's bag. He can't lift it.

Heenan grabs it.

HEENAN  
(whispers)  
Morrissey's a bastard.

In the background Cusick dashes up the gangplank and boards the ship, as Heenan swings around.

CU: HEENAN'S FIST SLAMS INTO ONRUSHING HENCHMAN #1.



EXT. STREET OFF SMITHFIELD, LONDON - DAY

CU: A PUNCH SLAMS INTO THE FACE OF A DRUNK MAN.

A sudden COMMOTION erupts.

Outside a gin shop. It's clad in shining plate-glass windows with stucco rosettes and gilt cornices, festooned in adverts, lit by gas-lamps.

In the scuffle, the drunk can be seen struggling between two BURLY MEN, who manhandle him through one of the doors.

Sarah's walking by and stands to one side as he's thrown into the gutter.

SARAH  
Men. Fucking shits.

Bystanders, pedestrians look up, over, and move on. In the general NOISE and bustle, a SWAZZLE can be heard - and LAUGHTER from children's voices.

Sarah continues down the street.

SARAH'S POV.

Across the street a barrow is being pushed by a street-seller.

AUDIO: IN THE DISTANCE THE SWAZZLE'S VOICE RISES ABOVE THE HUBBUB.

On the barrow are baskets, weights and scales, knives and a blackstone. The BARROWMAN is dressed in a shiny hat, waistcoat, blue apron, corduroy trousers and a white, spotted neckerchief.

Sarah continues to walk along the street, she's carrying bunches of flowers.

As she reaches a busy junction, the source of the swazzle comes into view: a Punch and Judy booth.

Next to the booth is an ASSISTANT dressed in semi-livery and with a large drum strapped to him. One hand has a drumstick, the other's extended to collect money.

A small crowd - especially BOYS - has gathered in front, enjoying the show with HOOTS and JEERS.

Sarah pushes her way through the crowd, ignoring the entertainment.

PUNCH (O.S.)  
 What a sweet creature? What a  
 handsome nose and chin.

The Punch and Judy Show is being re-enacted.

Judy SLAPS Punch.

JUDY  
 Keep quiet, do!

PUNCH  
 Don't be cross, my dear, give me a  
 kiss.

Sarah continues to thread her way through the crowd, leaving  
 the show behind.

JUDY (O.S.)  
 Take yourself away. There's things  
 to be done.

PUNCH (O.S.)  
 Just a kiss.  
 WHACKS as the puppets fight.

The Punch and Judy show continues. Punch picks up a cudgel.

The boys in the crowd CHEER.

PUNCH (CONT'D)  
 Away, shrew, away!

Sarah turns the corner.

Sounds of MORE WHACKS - LOUDER.

PUNCH (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 That's the way to do it!

Sarah looks across the street again.

The man with the barrow walks by.

BARROWMAN  
 Meee-at! Meee-at!

PUNCH (O.S.)  
 That's the way to do it!

Sarah watches the barrowman.

CUT TO  
 FLASHBACK:

INT. LODGINGS, CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON - DAY

HENDERSON - similar in build to the barrowman and dressed in similar clothes - jumps up from his large, red Morocco leather chair. Menacing.

The room's sparsely furnished: wooden table with two old, three-legged wooden stalls.

The chair's the only object of value.

MRS HENDERSON, skinny, drab dress, dishevelled hair, stands at a doorway.

HENDERSON

Get back in there now and make it quick. The round was long today and I'm starving.

Sarah (now a girl of 12), watching from a corner, looks up.

SARAH

Pa, leave her alone. She's doing her best. She didn't know you'd be home early.

HENDERSON

Well, she don't know a lot. And neither do you. So shut your traps both of you and get out of my sight.

SARAH

(defiant)

You're drunk - again. Leave us alone.

Henderson squares up over her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

You've been down the donkey market again. Like every Friday. Drinking with your mates.

HENDERSON

Yeah, bringing food to your table. More than any other feller would. Putting up with a nag of a woman like your mother.

Mrs Henderson rushes forward.

Henderson brushes her aside.

She falls to the floor.

SARAH

I hate you! I hate you! You're a bully and a failure. You've done nothing with your life. And look at you. All dressed up like you're important.

Henderson bristles and glowers down at his daughter - threatening.

SARAH (CONT'D)

And what do you do? Sell cat's meat for farthings 'cos you've failed at everything else. You're no good.

Henderson SLAPS Sarah hard around the face.

Mrs Henderson tries to grab her husband's arm but he swings round and STRIKES her across the face too. She sprawls back.

Sarah gets up.

SARAH (CONT'D)

That's it. Hit us. You come home stinking of horse meat and drink and take your misery out on us.

Sarah stands before her father - more defiant.

He STRIKES her again - harder.

She wheels back under the force.

He stands and sways.

She slowly stands again, her face already livid with red marks and a swelling has started over an eye.

Sarah looks her father straight in the eye.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Go on! Carry on! Hit us again. Like you always do. You can beat me as much as you like. But I won't forget you and what you do. What men do. I'll never forget.

FLASHBACK ENDS:

EXT. STREET, LONDON - DAY

CU: SARAH'S FACE - PAINED, HARD.

The barrowman continues to push his barrow down the street.

BARROWMAN

Meee-at! Meee-at!

EXT. S.S. ASIA, LIVERPOOL DOCKS, ENGLAND - DAY

A large crowd have gathered on the quayside.

Cusick descends the gangplank alone. As he reaches the quay, a SCOUSE MAN next to him SHOUTS and points to the top of the gangplank.

SCOUSE MAN (O.S.)  
That must be him, up there.

The many well-wishers SCREAM and SHOUT with delight. The majority of the crowd surround an unfortunate PASSENGER - who is similar height and weight to Heenan - as he steps onto dry land. The big man is mystified at all the fuss.

At the stern of the ship - and only visible from the top of the funnel - Heenan can be spotted laying among the mailbags that are being craned ashore to waiting Post Office train carriages.

INT. HACKNEY CARRIAGE, LIVERPOOL DOCKS - DAY

Falkland and Heenan's appointed trainer, STAN MACDONALD, are waiting inside a hackney. The carriage door opens and in jumps Cusick.

CUSICK  
Good day.

The men shake hands.

FALKLAND  
Welcome, Jim. Back home.

Falkland looks around.

FALKLAND (CONT'D)  
All a little cramped. Like the country.

The carriage door swings open again. In bundles Heenan.

HEENAN  
Phew, that was close. Hey, Frederick.

Heenan shakes Falkland's hand.

FALKLAND  
Jack, good, you have made it. Let me introduce you. Your trainer, Mr MacDonald.

MACDONALD  
Pleased to -

Just as MacDonald offers his hand, an instant tornado of BANGING and ROCKING hits the cab: it's engulfed by the mob who were waiting dockside.

HEENAN

Time to go.

Falkland BANGS his walking cane on the cab's ceiling and SHOUTS out.

FALKLAND

Driver. Move on.

(addressing Cusick)

I understand why you left these shores, Jim. This behaviour explains The Mayflower.

The cab pulls away just as TWO PEOPLE open the carriage doors and try to climb in.

Falkland CONKS one on the head with his cane, while Heenan gently pushes the other back out.

EXT. WHARF, LIVERPOOL DOCKS - DAY

The cab picks up speed, losing the desperate crowd that give chase in vain.

INT. HACKNEY CARRIAGE, LIVERPOOL DOCKS - DAY

HEENAN

England's heard of us, then?

EXT. ELIZA SAYERS' HOUSE, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

Gideon stands by his waiting brougham, as Tom bids farewell. Charlie and Eliza are standing next to the children.

GIDEON

Come along, Tom. Harry is waiting for you. It is time we left.

Tom walks over to Charlie.

TOM

Well, Charlie, wish me luck.

CHARLIE

You don't need luck, Tom boy. See you on the big day, aye?

TOM

I owe you both so much.

CHARLIE

You don't owe us anything. Just make sure you come back as world champ, okay?

Tom nods.

Eliza smiles and kisses his cheek.

Two pensive faces - Sarah Jnr and Tom Jnr look at their father.

TOM

Don't worry. Not be gone long to the countryside. Promise. You know I need to go to train proper.

Tom kisses them.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now, make sure you're good and look after your Uncle and Auntie, alright?

SARAH JNR

Good luck, Dad.

Tom Jnr mock spars with him.

TOM JNR

Clout him good and proper, Dad.

The kids give a hint of a smile and nod.

Tom picks up his bag and gets into the brougham after Gideon.

The brougham pulls away and Tom takes a look back at his family waving him off.

INT/EXT. STREET, LONDON - DAY

Heenan and Cusick take a ride to their hotel in a hansom cab. They take in the sights: Trafalgar Square, Fleet Street, St Paul's Cathedral.

Heenan looks out the window.

HEENAN

Busy enough, Jim. But what's London got that New York hasn't?

CUSICK

History - and fog. But the place is certainly buzzing.

Heenan turns back and looks at Cusick.

HEENAN

Sure wish Adah was able to come.  
Still miss her.

CUSICK

Jack, this is no time to be  
thinking about her. Business is at  
hand.

HEENAN

Yeah, I know. Still - leaving her  
like that, wasn't right.

CUSICK

She'll get in the way of your  
training.

HEENAN

That's my wife you're talking  
about.

CUSICK

Jack, she's not a good influence.  
Marriage to her - was just another  
roll, which she'll swap when  
another better part comes along.

HEENAN

I warned you before, Jim, tread  
careful. I know the fight's here  
and everything. But she is a bit  
special.

Cusick looks at Heenan.

CUSICK

But you're special too, Jack -  
(suddenly flustered)  
- your - your talent is special.

Cusick quickly looks away.

CUSICK (CONT'D)

And we're here to prove it.

The men alight at the Saracen's Head Hotel in the City of  
London.

INT. RAILWAY OFFICE, LONDON - DAY

With steam locomotives running in the background, Gideon and  
a RAILWAY OFFICIAL study a map of the mainline route to the  
big fight's venue.

RAILWAY OFFICIAL

And the destination?



GIDEON  
 (pointing at map)  
 We'll make it - there.

Gideon smiles at the official.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 But we'll put on the ticket "To  
 Nowhere".

EXT. FIELD, FARNBOROUGH, HAMPSHIRE - DAY

Gideon, in the distance with a LANDOWNER, is inspecting a prospective piece of pasture land for a fight location.

Gideon waves his arms about; the landowner nods in agreement.

INT. LIVING ROOM, ELIZA'S HOUSE, CAMDEN, LONDON - DAY

Sarah Jnr and Tom Jnr both sit on two wooden stools at a wooden table.

Eliza hastens in and places two bowls of broth in front of them.

ELIZA  
 Here you are. Eat this down you.

SARAH JNR  
 Auntie Liz. When's Dad's fight over?

ELIZA  
 Over? He's just gone.

SARAH JNR  
 'Cos, just thinking.

ELIZA  
 Thinking what, my dear?

Sarah Jnr is embarrassed.

SARAH JNR  
 Just thinking 'bout home.

Eliza sits on another stool at the table and looks her in the eye.

ELIZA  
 My dear. It'll be a while yet. When your dad's won his fight, he'll need to find a new home. A place with ale's no home for littl'uns.

SARAH JNR

And Mum?

Eliza looks away.

ELIZA

Mum's gone, my sweet.

SARAH JNR

Where to?

Eliza turns back to her.

ELIZA

Another place, dear. Your mum's -

Sarah Jnr stares back earnestly.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

- your mum's - not well - ill-like.

Eliza gets up and paces the floor.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

But you can stay awhile with me and your Uncle Charlie. It'll be nice to have some family round the place since -

She goes to the window.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

- since your Uncle Bob died.

Tom Jnr accidentally knocks his soup bowl onto the floor.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Spills and ills.

Eliza snatches up a cloth.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Life's full o' spills and ills.

INT. BELL'S LIFE FRONT OFFICE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - DAY

The bell above the front door CHIMES.

Wilkes, Dowling's American counterpart, enters the office.

DOWLING

Good day, sir.

WILKES

Mr Dowling?

DOWLING

Yes.

WILKES

George Wilkes. Of *'Porter's Spirit of the Times'*.

Dowling gets up from his desk and strides across the room to greet him.

DOWLING

Welcome, Mr Wilkes, how nice to meet you in person. I believe you came over with Heenan on the *'Asia'*.

WILKES

No, sir. Her sister ship, the *'Africa'*, two days later.

DOWLING

Please, be seated.

Wilkes takes a seat; Dowling's returns to his.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

(hesitant)

By the way, Mr Wilkes, is it true that you have an axe proudly displayed in your office window?

WILKES

Yes, Mr Dowling. My paper covers all aspects of human nature, especially those that indulge in the darker, more salacious improprieties.

DOWLING

The axe has a history?

WILKES

Certainly, Mr Dowling. It was found buried in the remains of a prostitute that lived round the corner to my office.

DOWLING

(flustered)

Oh!

WILKES

It reminds me each day of how the more extreme aspects of human nature are always of sensational interest to people -

Wilkes smiles and winks.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
- and makes sensational profits for  
those of us who purvey them.

DOWLING  
(embarrassed)  
Yes, yes, indeed. Mentioning  
profits, what an exciting time for  
the prize-ring?

WILKES  
That it is, sir, for sure. There  
was a time in America where the art  
of boxing was only indulged by the  
few.

Wilkes looks around approvingly at Dowling's office.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
But fortunately I see the spoils of  
the science of bruising are paying  
off most gainfully for those of us  
on both sides of the Atlantic who  
choose to report on and promote  
such events.

A large shadow is cast across the office's glass door.

Followed by a smaller one.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
Interest continues to proliferate  
evinced by a couple of associates  
with me -

Wilkes turns his head.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
- ah, here they are.

LOUD KNOCK.

Dowling nods.

Enter Morrissey, and then Adah.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
Mr Dowling, this is Mr John  
Morrissey. Recently retired  
Champion of America.

Morrissey offers his hand.

Dowling accepts it - reluctantly.

DOWLING  
Mr Morrissey.

MORRISSEY

Great to meet you. Avid reader of your newspaper.

DOWLING

You are?

MORRISSEY

Hell, yeah. Three weeks late, but I read it. You're a mighty fine writer.

DOWLING

Thank you.

Adah steps around, and forward of, Morrissey.

WILKES

And Miss Adah Isaacs Menken. The brightest star in the New York firmament - and also a writer.

Adah glances at Wilkes.

ADAH

Actually a poet. How do you do, Mr Dowling.

Adah gives a trivial curtsy and offers her hand.

Dowling doesn't kiss her hand, but awkwardly nods and bows.

DOWLING

How do you do, madam.

Dowling's flustered again.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

Please, do take a seat.

Dowling and his guests sit down.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

Now I know why Mr Wilkes is here. So how can I be of assistance to you, Mr Morrissey and you Miss -

MORRISSEY

- Well, sir, I've only ever pledged my allegiance to the United States of America, but I'm willing to spread a little diplomacy in the name of international relations by showing my commitment to Mr Tom Sayers. I consider him the favourite and I vow to help him in any way I can.

DOWLING

How very, er, helpful. Very sporting.

MORRISSEY

Besides, Mr Heenan isn't America's real champion. As I think we are both aware, Mr Dowling.

Morrissey winks and beams a huge, intimidating smile.

MORRISSEY (CONT'D)

And if you don't mind, Mr Dowling, the little lady here is in a bit of a - how d'you say - quandary.

DOWLING

Quandary?

ADAH

Yes, Mr Dowling, would you happen to know the whereabouts of my husband?

DOWLING

Your husband, madam?

ADAH

John Camel Heenan.

Dowling looks shocked.

ADAH (CONT'D)

You see, he left in such a hurry from New York that we never really had time to kiss goodbye. He failed to provide me with a forwarding address and -

She makes a dramatic gesture.

ADAH (CONT'D)

- I am with child.

Dowling looks mortified.

DOWLING

Well - erm, Miss. The fight, as you are no doubt aware, is a little delicate - politically. And so he is in hiding at present.

ADAH

Not just from me then?

MORRISSEY

Well, Miss Menken here, was just wondering whether you happen to know -

DOWLING

I couldn't possibly divulge -

Morrissey starts to rummage a hand in his coat pocket. He produces a wad of notes.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

- the whereabouts of -

Dowling stops and looks at the money.

EXT. SARACEN'S HEAD HOTEL, SNOW HILL, LONDON - DAY

Heenan walks out of his hotel and onto the street. In the background, a figure begins to follow him. The person paces nimbly and at speed until she is in earshot of him.

Adah speaks in an English accent.

ADAH

Excuse me, sir.

Heenan stops and turns around. Look of shock.

HEENAN

Adah.

ADAH

Surprised, huh?

HEENAN

What are you doing here?

ADAH

Well, you know, I thought I'd travel to London to brush up on my accent -

HEENAN

Adah, let me explain.

ADAH

- and search for my missing husband, with only Mr Wilkes, my new agent, and Mr Morrissey as my trusty companions.

Heenan scans the street.

HEENAN

Morrissey's here?

Adah speaks normally.

ADAH

And I've done all this to find you,  
Jack. All the while risking the  
life of my - our - unborn baby.

HEENAN

What?!

Adah takes a handkerchief from her sleeve and starts to dab  
an eye.

Heenan notices a passer-by showing an interest and ushers her  
into a street doorway.

ADAH

So, why did you run away from me?

HEENAN

I didn't run away, if you let me  
explain.

ADAH

Go ahead.

HEENAN

Well, Jim and I talked about you  
coming to England and he said it  
would be better for us all if you  
stayed in New York.

ADAH

I bet he did.

HEENAN

So I could train without  
distraction.

ADAH

What! Me? A distraction?

HEENAN

No. Yeah, you know, concentrate.

Adah SLAPS his face.

ADAH

You bastard. You cozened and  
plotted behind my back. You left me  
without even a by-your-leave. Well,  
you can have Jim Cusick all you  
want. I hope you two will be very  
happy together.

As passers-by stop and stare, Heenan tries to edge away.



ADAH (CONT'D)

Oh, and also, I haven't come all this way to London just for you. Mr Wilkes has seen the error of his original judgement and has reflected on the quality of my ability.

She stands proud and sticks her chest out.

ADAH (CONT'D)

I'm appearing at Astley's Royal Ampitheatre very soon. Mr Wilkes considers an actress and a pugilist as equals. And, no doubt, equally as lucrative.

Heenan's jaw drops.

ADAH (CONT'D)

And we'll see who's - how do you say it - up to scratch, eh, Jack?

Adah turns her back on Heenan and stalks away.

ADAH (CONT'D)

And I hope you lose.

EXT. COTTAGE, STABLES, NEWMARKET - DAY

A horse-drawn coach, with luggage strapped to the top, draws up. Tom and Brunton emerge.

A COACHMAN unstraps their bags, climbs back up onto the coach and CRACKS his whip.

BRUNTON

Well, Tom. We're here. Mr Gideon's found us a tidy crib alright. Quiet. Barn's up the lane to train.

They make their way up the path carrying their luggage.

TOM

He's a rum'un, Harry. He'll back us all the way alright.

BRUNTON

He's a sharp blade, Tom. He knows he's backing a winner and wants a return for his ready.

TOM

He's a rightun', Harry, knows the ropes.

BRUNTON

Well, that may be so, but he knows  
where his bread's buttered. And  
he's wanting jam too.

Brunton takes an iron key from his pocket and inserts it in  
the lock.

INT. HEENAN'S ROOM, SARACEN'S HEAD HOTEL, LONDON - DAY

Cusick lies on a bed, reading a copy of '*Punch*'.

Breaking his peaceful read, the door flies open and a  
flustered Heenan STOMPS in and makes his way to his empty  
bag.

HEENAN

Get up, we gotta get outta here.

Heenan begins to pack his bag with clothes and personal  
effects.

Cusick springs up, agitated.

CUSICK

Whatever do you mean?

HEENAN

I mean, we gotta go, leave.  
Morrissey's in town. He came over  
with Wilkes.

Cusick starts pacing.

CUSICK

How do you know?

HEENAN

Because I've just seen my goddam  
wife a block away not more than  
five minutes ago.

CUSICK

It can't be.

HEENAN

Well, it is.

CUSICK

Where do you expect us to go?

HEENAN

I'm gonna start training proper. A  
week early. MacDonald said he knew  
somewhere in Derbyborough.

CUSICK  
Derbyshire.

HEENAN  
Yeah, whatever.

He ties a knot at the top of his bag and slings it over his shoulder.

HEENAN (CONT'D)  
She said something about a baby.

Cusick shakes his head.

CUSICK  
A baby. The woman's a complete fantasist. She'll make anything up for effect.

HEENAN  
Well, it's had an effect on me. And I'm getting out - to Derbyborough.

Heenan strides out of the room SLAMMING the door.

Cusick shakes his head again.

EXT. STREET LEADING ONTO THE MALL, LONDON - DAY

In the distance, on a street corner, Sarah is standing selling flowers.

A smart GENTLEMAN stops. There is an exchange. She smiles. He hands her some coins. She goes to hand him a bunch of flowers, then withdraws them - teasingly.

An opened-topped landau sweeps past them down a fashionable street. Seated side-by-side are Wilkes and Adah.

She is brandishing an open parasol.

Pedestrian well-wishers wave.

Adah waves back.

A DRIVER sits on the seat at the front, steering two horses with reins and a whip. A FOOTMAN stands at the back, both in full livery.

WILKES  
You appear popular. Truly the Menken is riding a high horse -

Wilkes smiles.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
 - beside the one she rides in  
 Mazeppa. Lord Byron would be proud.

Adah looks at him playfully.

ADAH  
 Indeed. The Menken waxeth forth in  
 the land of Dukes and Duchesses.  
 Rather more popular than my so-  
 called husband.

WILKES  
 Are you in competition?

ADAH  
 Fighting over who's the better  
 catch? No. I didn't marry him  
 because he's famous. I married him  
 because I fell in love.

WILKES  
 A charm no doubt polished by his  
 fame.

ADAH  
 Initially. But then the fuse lit.  
 It proved combustible.

Adah starts to rummage in a purple velvet bag, where she  
 removes some sovereign coins.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 Driver, stop please.

She glances over to a BEGGAR lying by the kerbside.

The carriage pulls up.

Adah reaches out and flings the coins at the beggar.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 Here you are my good man. To help  
 ease your daily suffering. A place  
 I have dwelt in myself.

WILKES  
 What on earth are you doing?

ADAH  
 What does it look like?

WILKES  
 A wretched soul, bruised with  
 adversity.

Adah looks at the beggar.

WILKES (CONT'D)  
The Comedy of Errors - a farce.

Adah turns back and addresses the driver.

ADAH  
Move on.

Adah sits back and turns to Wilkes.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
The show is a resounding success. I  
have more money than I need.

The carriage swings into The Mall.

Other coaches and cabs pass, their occupants all keen to get  
a glimpse of Adah.

They try and catch her eye. Some wave.

She steadfastly looks ahead. Imperious. Drinks in the  
attention and acclaim.

WILKES  
As your agent, I feel we need to  
tread a fine line between the  
tawdry and the refined.

Adah looks at Wilkes

ADAH  
Mr Wilkes, my role as Mazeppa and  
my poetry might appear to be in  
conflict, but my fun is playing one  
off against the other. If you are  
suggesting anything indelicate, I  
refer you to figures of classical  
sculpture.

She turns back to the crowds but still continues to ignore  
their gestures of attention.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
And I believe the ladies of the  
ballet dance for the satisfaction  
of their art.

WILKES  
Your natural charms are a great  
asset, Miss Menkin.

ADAH  
Mr Wilkes, a girl has to live. And  
sometimes do things -

She glances back at Wilkes.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 - to enhance her station in life.

The carriage turns into Hyde Park.

More people turn and cheer.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 Where's Mr Morrissey taken himself?

WILKES  
 Gone to join Sayers' camp. He has some knowledge to impart to enhance the Englishman's cause. I can't say I approve, but he's protecting his wager.

ADAH  
 I see patriotism doesn't feature highly in Mr Morrissey's valuation.

WILKES  
 Morrissey's valuation is built entirely around himself and the empire he's building. There's always been bad blood between the Heenans and the Morrisseys. It goes back to their fathers. Started as a dispute over a cockfight, apparently.

ADAH  
 Men will fight over anything -

The carriage turns a corner.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 - especially their cocks.

She smiles - teasingly.

Crowds applaud as she sweeps by.

AUDIO: APPLAUSE BLEEDS INTO...

INT. AUDITORIUM, ASTLEY'S ROYAL AMPITHEATRE, LONDON - EVENING

The theatre is packed, a wildly enthusiastic audience: CAT-CALLS, CHEERS, smiles.

Adah makes a theatrical bow on stage, arms outstretched, all smiles.

All the boxes are full of standing, well-to-do occupants.

A particular dandified, middle-aged, bearded man (CHARLES DICKENS) is also APPLAUDING and smiling.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, ASTLEY'S ROYAL AMPITHEATRE, LONDON - EVENING

The room is festooned in bunches of flowers from wealthy admirers. Bottles of champagne and brandy are lined up. Adah sits in front of a large mirror removing make-up.

A sharp RAP on the door.

ADAH

Come.

Door opens. Dickens hovers at the threshold.

DICKENS

I hope I'm not intruding -

Adah looks up and recognises him immediately and rises, slightly flustered.

ADAH

No, no, please come in.

DICKENS

I've come to thank you for offering me your personal box for the performance this evening.

Adah offers her hand and Dickens kisses it theatrically.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

I hear you write, Miss Menkin, as well as perform.

ADAH

Indeed, Mr Dickens. Poetry. In the style of Mr Whitman, a poet very much for the future one feels. And a style very much to my taste. But not alas everyone's.

DICKENS

Your theatrical reviews are most enthusiastic about you. Lord Byron would have approved.

ADAH

I hope so. But, unfortunately, like Lord Byron, I'm also considered mad, bad and rather dangerous to know.

She gestures him to a chair in the corner.

DICKENS

Isn't Mazeppa traditionally a man's role?

ADAH

Let's just say I'm braver and better-looking than most men.

She points towards the flowers.

DICKENS

You certainly make quite a splash everywhere.

ADAH

I can swim, Mr Dickens. The critics might attempt to pull me down, but I always bob to the surface.

Adah sits down and looks into the mirror and talks at Dicken's reflection in the mirror.

ADAH (CONT'D)

I see you've floated into the same section of the papers as I have recently.

Dickens glances away, a little uneasy.

DICKENS

Yes, er, yes. We both seem to be finding the institution of marriage a little difficult at the moment.

He moves awkwardly in his chair.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

Mentioning marriage leads me to the reason for my visit, Miss Menken. Apart from my gratitude for the use of your box and the appreciation of your performance, I would like to propose an offer.

ADAH

An offer, Mr Dickens?

DICKENS

As you are probably aware, Miss Menken -

ADAH

Adah.



DICKENS

- Adah, there's a certain display of pugilism about to enact itself upon the consciousness of this kingdom soon.

ADAH

If you mean my husband is about to fight in England soon, I've heard the rumour.

DICKENS

Yes, good. Now, you may be aware that I run a certain popular magazine here in London. And I believe my publication would benefit from a first-hand report of the event that is seizing the country.

ADAH

Mr Heenan has nothing to do with me now, Mr Dickens. In fact, he ran away from me in order to fight your Englishman. It appears he prefers the charms of your country to mine.

DICKENS

Not being an enthusiast of the sport myself, I must confess I consider his attitude rather misplaced, but I was wondering if you would consider accompanying me to the spectacle?

ADAH

(frowns)

Accompany you? Not really Mr Dickens. I'm not sure it would be - appropriate. I'm rather engaged - shall we say - at present, as you witnessed. I'm not sure I want to watch his performance.

She stands up.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Besides, women don't attend such events.

DICKENS

They could if disguised, Adah. And I see dressing up as a man is a role you perform well.

Adah brightens, starts pacing.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

It strikes me that it isn't only the steed of Tartary that is fiery and untamed. A spurned filly seeing her stallion gelded appeals to my sense of theatre.

She turns and faces Dickens directly.

ADAH

I'm warming to the proposition, Mr Dickens. It does have a sudden appeal.

She smiles.

ADAH (CONT'D)

And it could be fun!

INT. COTTAGE, NEWMARKET, SUFFOLK - EVENING

Gideon steps from his carriage followed by Morrissey and they walk up the path to the cottage.

He RAPS SHARPLY on the door.

A moment - Brunton opens the door.

GIDEON

Good evening, Mr Brunton. How are you and how are things? Is Tom around? I hope you two have settled into the stable barn okay?

He gestures to Morrissey.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

This is Mr Morrissey. Over from America to assist Tom.

Morrissey and Brunton shake hands.

They step into a small, but cosy interior: well-furnished, clothed table, with padded chairs and a wood fire flickering in the grate.

BRUNTON

Er - things are fine, Mr Gideon. Tom's - Tom's in the next room, sir. Asleep.

Gideon nods approvingly.

GIDEON

Good.

BRUNTON

Yes, sir. It's evening and Tom's always in bed at this time.

GIDEON

Good to hear he is being professional and taking his training seriously.

Gideon and Morrissey sit in a chair each, while Brunton stays standing.

BRUNTON

He takes his training very serious, Mr Gideon. Told me he was a big believer in Capt. Barclays' methods. He reckons every mile he covers in exercises is another round in his favour.

GIDEON

Sounds as though he is employing sensible planning and being meticulous. To be commended -

Gideon gestures to Morrissey.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

- with your added assistance and insider knowledge, Mr. Morrissey.

MORRISSEY

Hate to see a counterfeit represent America. At least Mr Sayers is a proper champ.

BRUNTON

He knows this is the big one, Mr Gideon. Up before light of dawn for a run to start the day.

MONTAGE:

Tom pounds at an improvised punchbag (a sack of grain dangling from the rafters), while Brunton pushes the sack to-and-fro, encouraging Tom to duck-and-weave.

BRUNTON (V.O.)

I tell him to use the Langham tactic.

Tom and Brunton are sparring. Tom throws a pulled punch at Brunton, then backs away.

He repeats the punch and the backs away again and again.

BRUNTON (V.O.)

Then a strict diet. Regular routine. At eight thirty, before breakfast, he swallows one small cup of very weak best-black Mocha without sugar or milk. At midday, he sups half a pint of ale without taking air.

Tom, at the cottage table, slowly SUCKING up beer through a straw.

BRUNTON (V.O.)

Sometimes as a moisturer, he takes the yolk of two well-beat eggs with thin bread - toasted the previous evening.

Tom at the table again, nibbles slowly on the bread.

BRUNTON (V.O.)

Then in the evening, a light meal of chicken or fish swigged down with a glass of old port.

Tom pushes his plate away and BELCHES LOUDLY.

BRUNTON (V.O.)

From the moment he signed, sir, Tom's been off butter, cheese, sugar and tobacco. It's the life of a monk.

MONTAGE ENDS.

INT. COTTAGE, NEWMARKET, SUFFOLK - EVENING

GIDEON

And, hopefully, with a nudge of divine support as well.

MORRISSEY

And mine, maybe not divine, but more practicable. I know how to floor this guy. Whereas the Guy upstairs -

Morrissey points up.

MORRISSEY (CONT'D)

- can get a bit distracted sometimes with other matters. I'm a bit more focussed: \$600 more focussed.

Gideon fishes into his pocket and produces three small packets.

GIDEON

And here is my contribution to Tom's preparation. The medication he has requested. Epsom salts, Carlsbad salts and a special blue pill that he administers with a draught of black laxative.

Brunton gathers up the packets.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

(smiles)

I suggest you leave Tom to his own devices on that particular day, Harry.

Gideon rises and makes his way to the door.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Mr Morrissey will be staying with you. To contribute his experience.

He turns.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Keep up the good work, Harry. England - and my bank balance - awaits. At five inches taller and fifty pounds heavier, Heenan is at a considerable height and weight advantage. So we need to assist Tom in whatever way we can.

EXT. NAVIGATION INN, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

STRAP LINE: TWO DAYS LATER

Heenan is clothed in boxing gear and is sparring with MacDonald.

HEENAN

This is more like it, Mac. Peaceful here. Away from the city, the bulls or crushers or whatever you call them in England.

He sways away from a MacDonald swing.

HEENAN (CONT'D)

And other minor distractions.

MacDonald stops sparring.

MACDONALD

Wouldn't put it past Gideon to create some further distractions, Jack. We have a history and he's a sharp one.

MacDonald points.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

Okay, Jack. Time for your run. Five miles today. Then we'll build up.

Heenan sprints away.

INT. BEDROOM, NAVIGATION INN, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAWN

Simple room: two single wooden beds in opposite corners, small table with clothes slung over it, bare walls.

MacDonald stirs in bed, a NOISE has awakened him. He slides out of bed and peers out of the window.

THREE MEN (plain-clothed POLICEMEN) are acting suspiciously: furtively peering from behind trees, slowly appearing and disappearing behind bushes - getting closer.

MacDonald rushes over to a sleeping Heenan and shakes him hard.

MACDONALD

Jack, Jack, get up quick. The crushers are here.

Heenan stirs.

HEENAN

What?

MACDONALD

Quick. Bobbies. Someone's peached. Get out the back - quick!

Heenan scrambles into a shirt and grabs a pair of breeches.

MACDONALD (CONT'D)

Follow the lane and it'll take you to the lock house. Old Rice'll take you in.

Heenan bounds down the stairs and legs it out of the back door, bare feet and butt naked, carrying the breeches.

He gets halfway down the lane, looks back, stops and puts his breeches on before racing off further.

EXT. NAVIGATION INN, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - MORNING

The three policemen slink up to the entrance.

The lead one steps forward and LOUDLY RAPS on the front door.

EXT. LOCK HOUSE, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

A PANTING Heenan rushes up to the Lock House's front door and starts POUNDING.

HEENAN

Mr Rice, Mr Rice. Open up, please.  
Open up.

Heenan backs away and looks up to a bedroom window.

HEENAN (CONT'D)

Mr Rice, quick. Police are after  
me. I need your help.

A head appears at the window, then dips away.

A large lock being DRAWN BACK is HEARD.

An elderly whiskered face appears.

RICE

What? What d'yer want at this hour?

RICE opens the door further.

RICE (CONT'D)

You're that American boxing feller,  
aren't you? Staying at the Inn?

Heenan looks over his shoulder.

HEENAN

Yes, man. Mr MacDonald sent me.  
You're Mr Rice, right? I need  
shelter.

Rice looks Heenan up and down - very slowly. Then suddenly  
flings the door open and bundles him in.

RICE

I don't know what you've done, lad.  
And I don't want to know, but  
anyone running from the crushers is  
fine with me.

INT. MAIN ROOM, LOCK HOUSE, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

The room is sparse: large wooden table in the centre of the  
room, straight-backed chairs around it.

As Heenan and Rice enter, from the opposite end of the room a young, innocent-looking teenage lad (ALBERT) also enters rubbing his eyes.

HEENAN  
This is most kind, most kind.

RICE  
Fine, man.

Rice looks down at Heenan's blackened feet.

RICE (CONT'D)  
Looks like you left in a bit of a hurry.

Heenan also looks down.

HEENAN  
Yeah, right. Your police start early in this country.

Rice gestures to Albert.

RICE  
Albert, get our visitor an ale. He's fair earned his self a swig.

HEENAN  
Er, no thanks. I'm in training. But have you paper? I need to let MacDonald know I've made it.

CU: HEENAN SCRIBBLES A NOTE:

**Am safe at the Lock House. For God's sake, bring my socks, boots and something to wear - J.C.H.**

Heenan hands Albert the note.

HEENAN (CONT'D)  
Now, lad. Quick as you can. Make sure Mr MacDonald gets this - and only MacDonald.

Albert SCAMPERS out the front and rushes down the lane.

EXT. NAVIGATION INN, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

Albert runs up to the front door and BANGS on it.

Police #1 opens it.

POLICEMAN #1  
Yes, lad.



ALBERT  
Is Mr MacDonald here?

POLICEMAN #1  
I believe he is, lad. What do you  
want with him?

ALBERT  
I've got a note for him. Can I give  
it to him?

The policeman smiles and stretches out his hand.

POLICEMAN #1  
Mr MacDonald's a little busy at the  
moment. If you give it to me, lad,  
I'll make sure he gets it.

Albert hesitates.

ALBERT  
I - I'm meant to give it to him,  
personal-like.

The policeman smiles again.

POLICEMAN #1  
Don't worry, lad. I'll give it to  
him - personally. You can trust me.

Unsure and looking worried, Albert slowly hands the note  
over, his hand trembling.

POLICEMAN #1 (CONT'D)  
Thank you, lad. Now run along. It's  
police business.

Albert turns on his heels and runs off.

The policeman glances down at the note, then looks up.

EXT. LOCK HOUSE, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - CONTINUOUS

There's three policemen at the front door.

One steps forward and KNOCKS LOUDLY.

POLICEMAN #1  
Open up in the name of the law.

A lock SLIDES back inside.

The door opens a crack.

POLICEMAN #1 (CONT'D)  
 Good morning, sir. We believe there's a certain gentleman of interest to us in your premises. An American that we would like to interview.

Rice opens the door further and looks at the police with disdain.

RICE  
 Ah, an American. Can't say I've ever seen an American. Wouldn't know what one looked like.

POLICEMAN #1  
 We can get an search warrant sir, if you're going to be difficult.

RICE  
 You just do that. 'Cos I wouldn't know what one of those looks like either.

INT. LANDING, LOCK HOUSE, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

Heenan's standing at the top of the stairs at the bedroom door listening to the conversation.

POLICEMAN #1 (V.O.)  
 Mr Rice, obstructing the law is an offence.

RICE (V.O.)  
 (innocent)  
 Law? How do I know you're the law. You don't look like police.

POLICEMAN #1 (V.O.)  
 We're in plain-clothes, man. Now, get out the way and let us by.

RICE (V.O.)  
 I only have your word who you are. You could be Americans.

Heenan, hearing enough, rushes through the bedroom, yanks open the window and climbs out onto the roof, dropping down into the garden before setting off across the fields.

EXT. LOCK HOUSE, TRENT LOCK, DERBYSHIRE - DAY

Policeman #2 starts to wander away from the argument at the front door and glances up around the back of the house.

A figure can be seen running away into the distance.  
Policeman #2 is galvanised into action and starts pursuit.

POLICEMAN #2

It's Heenan. He's making a run for  
it.

Policeman #3 turns and runs over looking at where Policeman  
#2 is running.

POLICEMAN #3

Right, let's get him.

All three policemen start chasing after the rapidly  
disappearing figure.

EXT. NEWMARKET HEATH, SUFFOLK - MORNING

Running on the heath, Tom notices he's under observation by  
two shady, suspicious-looking CHARACTERS attempting to follow  
in the distance discreetly.

He deliberately slows to a walking pace.

So do they.

He sprints again, at speed.

They attempt to keep up. Fail, breathing heavily.

INT. STABLE BARN, SUFFOLK - LATER

Tom enters sweating from his run.

He starts to shake himself down in front of Brunton.

TOM

I tell you there's shifty bobbies  
all over. Not fit enough though.

Tom looks over to see Gideon and Morrissey together sitting  
on two straw bales.

He wanders over.

GIDEON

Hello Tom, how is it going? I hope  
Mr Morrissey has been of the  
assistance required. He knows  
Heenan's style and weaknesses.

TOM

Been valuable, Mr Gideon. Real  
helpful-like.

MORRISSEY

Anything to help your country in its time of need. Hate to see its empire face-down in the mud.

GIDEON

The fight is close, gentlemen. And the country is enthused. An announcement is being made in the press. There has even been mention in the House. But, as you know, the authorities are watching. So we need to transport you to London discreetly.

Tom looks over at Gideon.

TOM

I've been followed a few times.

Gideon stands.

GIDEON

Leave that to me, Tom. I have an idea.

EXT. NEWMARKET HEATH, SUFFOLK - DAY

LS: TWO PRIZE-FIGHTERS IN TRAINING GEAR EXIT THE BARN

Both stroll nonchalantly onto the heath.

MORRISSEY (O.S.)

Let's see whether your police here in England are as stupid as the ones we've got back home.

From a distance, a pair of shadowy DETECTIVES see the men and, at a discreet distance, start to follow.

The fighters continue to stroll. They then start to jog.

The detectives try to keep up behind.

MORRISSEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It appears they are, Harry.

CU: ON FIRST FIGHTER REVEALS IT'S BRUNTON DRESSED AS TOM'S DECOY.

BRUNTON

I'm proving to be Tom's second in more ways than one.

INT. FARM BARN, EAST FARNHAM, SALISBURY, WILTSHIRE - DAY

In another training location - an empty barn - a frustrated Heenan sits on a chair inspecting his healing feet - still scarred and bruised.

Cusick and MacDonald stand nearby.

HEENAN

I'm telling you, Jim, there's a goddam English conspiracy against me. Look at these feet. I must've run two miles through meadows, ponds - God knows what - before getting stuck in that damn thorn hedge.

CUSICK

Nobody knew you were staying at the farmhouse.

HEENAN

Well somebody did. The police say that they had information.

MacDonald cuts in.

MACDONALD

I bet they did. At least the magistrates only bound you over to keep the peace.

Heenan starts to massage his feet.

HEENAN

Well, I'm the one that could do with the binding - and the peace.

CUSICK

I think we should keep moving anyway. What do you say, Mac?

MACDONALD

Fine by me. I know another quiet place.

HEENAN

I'd hate to stay where it's noisy.

Heenan shakes his head.

CUSICK

That settles it then. Hopefully without police on our backs. I hear the whole country's talking about the fight.

HEENAN

Well, it would help if the whole  
damn country would leave me alone  
to get on and train for it.

Cusick scurries outside leaving Heenan massaging his feet.

INT. BAR, CAMBRIAN STORES PUB, SOHO, LONDON - NIGHT

CU: AN ANNOUNCEMENT:

In the bottom right-hand corner of the paper it reads:

*"Those wishing to attend the Tom Sayers versus John C. Heenan  
fight should present themselves at listed London Sporting  
Houses this evening to purchase tickets."*

PULL BACK:

Man holding the paper is reading the announcement.

The bar is packed with a heaving mass of people eager for  
news and tickets. Heenan's Colours (large patterned  
handkerchiefs) are prominently displayed above the bar. It is  
attracting swift business with many outstretched hands  
clambering to buy Colours and tickets.

One PURCHASER takes his ticket and swiftly puts it into his  
mouth.

The NOISE is DEAFENING, as people SHOUT over each other in  
the excitement of heavy betting odds and CHEER at the arrival  
of another OLD FIGHTER.

Also displayed on the wall is a large flag with a border in  
the form of a championship belt, a laurel wreath and a circle  
of thirteen stars floating over the American's boxer's  
portrait stating "John C Heenan, the Fourteenth Star of  
America".

Falkland watches on with an air of smug satisfaction and  
aloofness.

In the background, two figures sit at a table in the corner.

SARAH

To the American -

She raises her tankard. Aldridge clashes his with hers. They  
swig.

SARAH (CONT'D)

- and our winnings.

They both laugh.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Only gamble on winners, John.

She winks.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
Mine's another -

They lock eyes. Then Aldridge rises and grabs her tankard, then walks to the bar.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
- as I like to say when I sell  
flowers.

INT. BAR, GEORGE & DRAGON, BARBICAN, LONDON - NIGHT

A handkerchief showing Tom's colours hangs over the bar.

The pub is as equally packed as Langham's: heaving with English supporters.

Tom's large, patterned handkerchiefs are displayed along the bar.

Among the crowd, sitting together at a table, are Tom's old friends and adversaries: Keene, Fuller, Perry and Martin all drinking and LAUGHING.

Tickets and coins change hands over the counter.

CU: ONE HAND HOLDS TOM'S COLOURS

CUT TO:

EXT. STAGE DOOR, ASTLEY'S ROYAL AMPITHEATRE, LONDON - EVENING

CU: SECOND HAND HOLDS TOM'S COLOURS.

As Adah and Wilkes walk out of the entrance of the theatre, arm-in-arm, an excited crowd rush forward to get a glimpse of her.

A MAN at the front offers Adah a choice of Heenan's or Tom's Colours.

COLOURS MAN  
Miss Menken, Miss Menken. Who will  
you be supporting at the big fight?

After a teasing hesitation, exaggerated rolling of eyes and pouting of lips, she chooses -  
(beat)

- Tom's Colours.

The crowd SHRIEK, CHEER and APPLAUD with delight.

WILKES

As an American, you don't feel the necessity to support a Yankee then, Adah?

ADAH

As a fellow Unionist and supporter of Abraham Lincoln, Mr Wilkes, you know all about taking sides in a civil dispute.

Wilkes gives Adah a knowing look.

INT. COTTAGE, NEWMARKET, SUFFOLK - DAY

Gideon, Tom, Brunton and Morrissey stand by a table covered with farm clothing and a heavy false beard and moustache lying next to it.

Gideon picks up the beard and hands it to Tom.

GIDEON

Today is the day, London, Tom. Try this for size.

Tom places it on his face, adjusts it.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

A little melodramatic one feels, but if the authorities insist on playing games with us, we must play our part.

Gideon hands Tom the farm clothes.

Tom - now disguised - stands for inspection.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

I wonder where Heenan is stowing himself away?

INT: WAITING ROOM, SALISBURY RAILWAY STN - DAY

Heenan - also in disguise - with upturned collar, hat and beard, impatiently turns the page of a newspaper.

He sits in the tiny waiting room alongside MacDonald.

He hears a train approaching and looks up, as it blows its steam WHISTLE.

Cusick pops his head in, speaking quickly.



CUSICK

Come on. It's here. Soon be no more disguises.

Heenan steps out on to the platform.

HEENAN

Needs to be. I dress up more than Adah does.

EXT. STABLE YARD, NEWMARKET, SUFFOLK - DAY

Tom and Gideon walk out into the stable yard, where a collection of horse wagons are surrounded by STABLE LADS and GROOMS milling about. Tom mingles amongst them.

In the background, two figures (Brunton and Morrissey) on the horizon can be seen walking away into the distance -

- followed by two furtive figures shadowing them.

EXT. PLATFORM, NEWMARKET TRAIN STATION, SUFFOLK - DAY

As the horse wagons are loaded onto the train, Tom slips into one of them and huddles into a small compartment at the rear of one of the stalls. Once inside, a groom locks him in and covers the trap door with bundles of hay and straw.

The train departs.

EXT. PLATFORM, COUNTRY WAYSIDE HALT - DAY

The train pulls into a wayside halt, en route to London. Plain-clothed POLICE check PASSENGERS as they board and alight from the carriages.

INT. HORSE-WAGON, PLATFORM, COUNTRY WAYSIDE HALT - DAY

Tom remains undiscovered in his hiding place under the straw. Background SOUND of horse shitting.

Tom pulls a face and shakes his head.

EXT. PLATFORM, SHOREDITCH STATION, LONDON - EVENING

A large CROWD has gathered due to rumours of Tom's arrival. The platform is swathed in a mixture of steam and fog.

UNIFORM POLICEMEN hold back the fans, while PLAIN CLOTHED DETECTIVES check all passengers alighting, looking for Tom.

The horse-wagons containing the horses are shunted into a nearby siding.

When everyone realizes Tom isn't to be found, the crowd start to drift away disappointed.

EXT. SIDING, SHOREDITCH STATION, LONDON - NIGHT

The STATION MASTER, carrying a lamp, checks his fob watch as he strides along the platform.

Watch shows 10 o'clock.

He marches up to the first wagon's door and produces a key from his pocket. Putting the lamp down, he unlocks the door, pulls back the bolt and opens the door to SCREECHING hinges. Picking up the lamp, he peers inside.

STATION MASTER  
Mr Sayers? Are yer there?

A movement in the dark.

Tom steps into the light, brushing down straw.

TOM  
Wasn't going far cooped up in here.  
Perishing cold. Where you been?

STATION MASTER  
The crowd and bobbies took a time  
to disperse. Hurry, Mr Gideon's  
waiting.

The Station Master lights Tom's passage from the wagon.

EXT. SIDESTREET, SHOREDITCH STATION - NIGHT

Outside the station, Gideon and Brunton are waiting in a brougham.

The road is jammed with carriages of all descriptions and the crowds are thronging the pavement.

INT. BROUGHAM, STREET, SHOREDITCH - NIGHT

Blackened with soot, still covered with loose straw, Tom gets in.

TOM  
Evening.

GIDEON  
Welcome, Tom. London is seething  
with excitement. Let us make haste.

BRUNTON  
Tired?

TOM

Thirsty and smelly. Those horses  
can't half shit.

GIDEON

(knocks on ceiling)  
Driver. The George and Dragon,  
London Wall. Quickly.

BRUNTON

My place'll serve you an ale, Tom.  
You deserve one. But round the  
back. Front'll be heaving.

TOM

Ale indeed and a scrub up.

The brougham pulls away.

Crowds continue to swill around as the carriage moves away.

INT. BAR, GEORGE & DRAGON, BARBICAN, LONDON - NIGHT

Brunton's pub is packed with supporters. Tom's Colours are prominently displayed sharing wall space with portraits, sketches and cartoons of old fighters and famous bouts.

Cigar-smoking young 'SWELLS' are mixing with roughly-clothed RUFFIANS all desperate for tickets.

BAR STAFF are busy selling tickets printed:

CU: **TICKET "TO NOWHERE"**.

Others are buying Tom's Colours.

Out of the crowd a successful MEMBER of the Fancy brandishes his ticket to the ceiling.

A hand suddenly SNATCHES the ticket away. The thief ducks into the crowd and disappears followed by the pursuing victim.

They run out into the street and pass an arriving brougham -

CUT TO:

EXT. GEORGE & DRAGON, BARBICAN, LONDON - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

- which draws up in the cobbled street outside Brunton's pub. From every window of the pub Tom's Colours are being draped.

INT. BROUGHAM CARRIAGE, LONDON - NIGHT

Brunton nods.

BRUNTON

We've put on a good show for you,  
Tom - place is buzzing.

Tom glances out.

TOM

Thanks, Harry. But I think I need a  
bit of quiet.

GIDEON

Indeed, gentlemen. Tomorrow is a  
big day.

SLOW FADE.

INT. LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - DAWN

A crowd begins to gather, wrapped in overcoats, gloves and hats.

A pair of boots TRAMP over cobbles - then another - another...

A coated, capped FIGURE - then and another - and another...

More STOMPING of boots joined by CLIP-CLOP of horses' hooves and the RATTLE of iron-clad wheels, as a hansom passes by - followed by glossy carriages with gilt crests and coronets painted on doors - followed by battered hansoms, more broughams, workmen's carts and more, more pedestrians...

In the distance a conspicuous brougham with a prominent coat of arms painted on the door: the coat of arms of the Marquess of Queensberry.

A footman opens the carriage door.

A slim FIGURE emerges wearing top hat, black swallow-tailed coat and distinctive patent leather black boots with white spats.

A SECOND FIGURE in a dark overcoat follows him out.

On the river, a barge - then another - and another...

All pouring in one direction.

Gate and façade of London Bridge Station appears.

EXT. GATES, LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Station Master in the station grounds gives a signal and an UNIFORMED EMPLOYEE unlocks the padlocked gates and the gathering crowd surge forward forcing the startled employee and gates back with force.

In the background, a liveried SERVANT, in shining riding boots and top hat, lowers the steps of a coach, so ILLUUSTOUS OCCUPANTS can alight.

The whole country seems to be arriving.

EXT. PLATFORM, LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Two trains, both with engines front and back containing thirty-three and thirty carriages, stand in readiness. Carriages are a weird assortment of styles, including cattle-trucks.

The crowd start to pour forward along the platform. PLAIN CLOTHED DETECTIVES stand back, searching for faces in the swell.

Despite the size of the crowd, the noise has dampened down and is now strangely subdued.

WHISPERS only - and furtive glances around.

The tension is broken when the train starts to STEAM UP: billowing smoke, LOUD HISSING.

EXT. PLATFORM, LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - MORNING

At the start of the platform, a HUGE CHEER goes up. In the throng, Tom can be seen wearing a fur cap, and with an Inverness cape covering his smart suit. He's accompanied by Gideon and Brunton.

As they proceed down the platform, another CHEER can be heard behind them and Heenan - heavily disguised in a dark, bushy beard and whiskers - appears with coat collar turned up and hat pulled down over his face. He's flanked by Cusick, Wilkes, Falkland and MacDonald.

Tom turns and clambers into the carriage of the first train followed by Brunton.

Heenan further down the platform continues on until MacDonald opens the door to a carriage of the second train and Heenan steps in followed by Cusick, Wilkes and Falkland.

In the background, two figures are amongst the crowd. One striding purposely in a heavy dark overcoat; the other attempting to keep up, heavily disguised in men's clothing: trousers, hat and large false beard.

DICKENS

There were the prize fighters, Mr Menken, in their rather theatrical disguises.

Adah behind, attempting to keep up.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

Like you, Mr Menken, they appear to have dressed up for the occasion, whereas I -

Dickens spreads his arms and gestures.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

- have distinctly dressed down.

Reaching a carriage, Dickens opens it and helps Adah in.

A bell suddenly RINGS OUT.

Gideon continues to walk up the platform to the front of the train and pulls himself up into the driver's compartment.

GIDEON

My good man.

Gideon offers the DRIVER his hand. In it is a sealed envelope.

The driver takes it.

DRIVER

Thankin' you, sir.

GIDEON

Directions. And appreciation enclosed.

Jets of steam HISS, engines begin to THROB, soot and SPARKS fly into the air.

The Station Master waves his flag. Couplings SNAP tight, as the carriages lurch forward and both trains slowly start to edge out of the station.

The first streaks of dawn brighten the eastern sky.

EXT. TRAIN/EMBANKMENT, COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

As the trains THUNDER through the countryside, pockets of UNIFORMED POLICE - some on horseback - stand both sides of the track in readiness, in case the fight is to take place on their patch.

Some passengers JEER at them and gesticulate as they speed by.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE, COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Tom and Brunton look out of the window.

BRUNTON  
Crushers out in force.

Gideon sits back, not looking out of the window. He smiles.

GIDEON  
Do not worry, Harry. Everything is  
going to plan. It is all in the  
preparation.

Gideon closes his eyes.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
The police are in for a little  
surprise.

EXT. TRAIN EMBANKMENT, COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

The trains continue to speed through the morning countryside. More pockets of MOUNTED AND UNMOUNTED POLICE line the journey and continue standing to attention in readiness. Once the trains speed by, they relax, turn and walk or gallop away.

EXT. SIGNAL BOX, REIGATE JUNCTION - MORNING

Outside the signal box, just before the trains approach -  
(beat)

- the points are suddenly switched.

The trains divert onto another line.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE, COUNTRYSIDE - MORNING

Brunton, looking out of the window, turns to Gideon, smiling.

BRUNTON  
That's fooled 'em.

GIDEON  
Yes. It does appear the police were  
on the wrong track.

EXT. PLATFORM, FARNBOROUGH NORTH STATION - MORNING

Quiet, tiny, peaceful station basks in the early rays of the morning sun. Birds SING, wakening the day.

In the distance, the first sounds of the CHUGGING trains. A train WHISTLE. The CHUGGING INCREASES - STEAM is billowing. The trains are sighted.

Brakes are suddenly applied SQUEALING - SPARKS from wheels.

EXT. PLATFORM, FARNBOROUGH NORTH STATION - MORNING

The first train stands halted. Carriages far exceed the length of the platform. Carriage doors are FLUNG open. The train starts to disgorge its throng of expectant spectators.

A riot of colour and NOISE. Passengers - including the Fancy - that have no platform are forced to jump down to the side of the track to much CHEERING and high-spirits.

The RING MAKER and his SON step onto the platform carrying new ropes and brightly-painted blue and mauve stakes, with the letters PBA in brilliant-yellow. Ropes are slung over their shoulders, stakes under arms. He and his son stride along the platform and out of the station followed by the crowd.

EXT. FIELDS, COUNTRYSIDE, HAMPSHIRE - MORNING

The Ring Maker jumps a wide ditch and a hedge and heads out onto open fields. Some of the crowd behind also jump but slip back and fall headlong into a stream.

Shoes are soaked - clothes torn on brambles, thorns - feet stuck in mud.

Mix of crowd: young, old, Lords, commoners, dressed appropriate to their class. Further wide ditches and double hedges for half a mile. Members of the Fancy are being carried piggyback across streams by poorer members of the crowd.

Coins change hands.

A fool-hardy BUCK shows off trying to leap a stream and lands headfirst. Emerges soaked to CATCALLS.

Heenan and his party are also tramping their way through the Hampshire countryside.

Heenan shakes his head.

HEENAN

This reminds me of an earlier incident.

MACDONALD

You've seen more of the English countryside, Jack, than most Englishmen.



Heenan flicks his trainer a look. As he does so, he notices Tom's party in the background. Amongst them are Morrissey.

HEENAN

Look who's here, the blowhard. Come to see a real title being fought over.

Cusick looks over.

All walk on.

EXT. FIELDS, COUNTRYSIDE, HAMPSHIRE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Adah and Dickens hurry along a field in a crowd. Dickens at his usual brisk pace, Adah stumbling behind.

DICKENS

Come along! Come along! No time to lose. We need an inner ring patch.

Adah struggles on.

Ahead, a large ditch appears.

A MAN ahead of Dickens attempts to vault it and slips, tumbling to the bottom.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

My good man. Your hand, your hand.

The man, dressed heavily with a full beard and battered hat, offers his hand and Dickens pulls him clear.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

My dear fellow. Allow me.

Dickens attempts to brush the dirt off his chest.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

May I. Er -

He glances over at Adah.

Dickens looks away.

DICKENS (CONT'D)

(embarrassed)

Yes, yes. Goodness. Be careful where you tread, my good - fellow.

Dickens curtly bows his head and strides off.

Adah gives chase.

The 'man' behind the beard's eyes crease in a smile.

Dickens fixedly strides on.

DICKENS (CONT'D)  
 Good to see others keeping abreast  
 of the excitement, Mr Menken.

Adah flashes Dickens a look.

EXT. FIGHTING FIELD, FARNBOROUGH, HAMPSHIRE - DAY

The Ring Maker and his son start assembling the ring,  
 measuring a twenty-four feet square on the grass.

Swinging wooden mallets HAMMER in stakes. Outer and inner  
 rings established by ropes. Camp stools are suddenly produced  
 for the Fancy and for those handing a sovereign out in the  
 ringed-off section.

Gideon starts to organise RING CONSTABLES: mostly old boxers -  
 battered scarred faces, tough, mean-looking. They are handed  
 whips, sticks and cudgels.

With the ring secured, the Ring Maker scores a scratch in the  
 middle.

Everything's ready.

From Tom's corner, a plush cap is thrown into the ring. Tom  
 then climbs in through the ropes.

From the opposite corner, a similar cap comes winging in,  
 followed by Heenan clambering through the ropes.

Dowling, the referee, calls the fighters to the centre of the  
 ring.

An expectant lull.

In the background, Dickens can be seen handing coins over to  
 a Ring Constable who allows him and Adah into the inner  
 spectator area. They sit on stools.

Already seated on two stools near them is the rigid  
 aristocratic bearing of the gentleman with the distinctive  
 black boots and white spats next to his companion.

The two principals approach each other and have a brief  
 exchange, followed by a warm handshake.

The size difference is stark: Heenan towers over Tom.

TOM  
 Welcome to England? A fine morning  
 this.

HEENAN

Yes, we've got a beautiful morning  
for it. We have business ahead.

TOM

If a man can't fight such a day as  
this, he can't fight at all.

The seconds: Brunton and Gideon for Tom and MacDonald and  
Cusick for Heenan, have a large, square wicker basket each  
containing water bottles and sponges.

Dowling hands a coin to Heenan.

Heenan tosses.

TOM (CONT'D)

Heads.

Tom calls wrongly.

Heenan checks the direction of the sun.

HEENAN

I'll take the higher ground.

Heenan's American supporters move immediately over to his  
corner, anxious to ensure safety in numbers for their out-  
numbered man.

Morrissey moves to Tom's side of the ring. In the background,  
the crowd's numbers are starting to be bolstered by locals.

EXT. THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PRIZE-RING - DAY

Having retired to their respective corners the boxers, aided  
by their seconds, now strip for action.

Tom's plaid suit comes off revealing white knee breeches,  
stockings and high-quartered lace shoes.

Heenan is similarly clad beneath his overcoat, but with  
elastic-sided slip-on shoes. Taking off his hat reveals he  
has cropped his hair.

Two sets of the Colours are tied - one each, belt-fashion  
around each man - with a second set twined around one of the  
neutral stakes.

Tom and Heenan continue to limber up.

TOM

My umpire, John Gideon.

HEENAN

Jim Cusick, mine.

Dowling signals the boxers to the scratch mark in the centre of the ring again.

The crowd goes silent.

Dowling steps out of the ring.

Silence continues, a tremor builds up among the spectators.

EXT. ROUND ONE, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

(beat)

The boxers scarcely move. Doing little more than posturing, they tap an advanced foot and prod out a left fist from time to time. Intermittently, they drop their hands and smile.

In time, the fighters come together. Tom jab's Heenan's nose: first blood is greeted with CHEERS from the home supporters, some of whom exchange cash furtively. Heenan's punches all miss their target.

EXT. ROUND TWO, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Heenan with a fast attack from his corner knots Tom in a wrestle. The American's clinch is good enough to conclude the round by throwing the smaller Englishman to the ground.

EXT. ROUND THREE, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

BOOKMAKERS and TOUTS continue SHOUTING odds throughout the fight, but there are few takers. Everyone's watching.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Tom launches a straight right hand. The punch darts towards Heenan's face but the American calmly tilts his head sideways.

Dealing Tom a blow to the forehead, Heenan lets go with his right. With a deep THUD, Tom is knocked to the ground.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUND FIVE, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Some of the crowd begin to GROAN as Heenan knocks Tom down again with a plummeting left hook. Tom kicks up his legs and comes up smiling.

EXT. ROUND SIX, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Tom's fists now appear ineffective and Heenan overmatches him in a clinch. But Tom's formidable powers of endurance allow him to struggle and wriggle free from his opponent's grip.

Heenan starts to showboat as Tom pursues, encountering searing jabs, one after another. Bobbing and weaving, Heenan manages to avoid Tom's right hands and left hooks, as he simply steps or leans out of range.

Heenan finds a gap and rocks Tom with a potent left-right combination that puts him on his backside.

EXT. ROUND SEVEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Tom, straight to work, goes about concentrating on Heenan's eyes with a flurry of jabs: his right eye begins to puff up.

Gideon notice something's up with Tom's right arm.

GIDEON

(to Brunton)

Look at Tom's right. He is keeping it close to his body?

BRUNTON

Well, he can't just use his left.

Gideon shakes his head.

Heenan brings the round to a bloody conclusion bashing Tom on the nose with a SICKENING BLOW heard all over the crowd. Both boxers are unsteady on their legs, but Tom needs assistance to return to his corner.

EXT. ROUND EIGHT, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Tom returns to scratch still a little unsteady.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

The savagery is relentless.

Out on the horizon, a couple of POLICE OFFICERS cross into the field followed by a number of COUNTRY FOLK - including WOMEN and CHILDREN - as they join the crowd.

The round ends. Tom returns to his corner.

BRUNTON

Tom, try to close his other peeper.

TOM

I'm trying, Harry. But he's hard as nails. Regular out-and-outer.

EXT. ROUND NINE, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Tom goes to work inside, but fighting with his right eye closed, Heenan's spirit is undiminished. He ends the round with a banging overhand right: another knockdown to the American.

The crowd notes the American supporter's optimism and retaliate by ridiculing and CATCALLING Heenan.

EXT. ROUND TEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Tom hits the dirt again to applause from the Americans after Heenan lifts him and throws him heavily to the ground.

Heenan tries to smile, but his face is so disfigured that his expressions are hard to read.

EXT. ROUND ELEVEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

As he gets knocked down once more, Tom spits blood. He looks up at Heenan, dazed and confused.

TOM

Is there another round?

Tom totters onto one knee and Brunton has to lead him back to his corner.

The crowd starts to become restive at Tom's display. The Americans start to mock Tom.

SOLDIERS from a nearby garrison start to arrive in red military uniform.

GIDEON

(concerned)

Tom, do not wrestle with him, he is too big. Jab, jab with your good arm and run.

BRUNTON  
Remember Langham, Tom. Work on  
faces, fib and back off.

TOM  
(shaking his head)  
Yeah, I'm proper used up. I'm not  
sure -

Tom spits blood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUND FIFTEEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Some of the spectators walk up and down the field in  
apprehension unable to watch.

The fighters are in their respective corners. Gideon whispers  
in Tom's ear.

GIDEON  
All your energy, Tom, all your  
strength and skill have got to be  
brought to bear on his left eye.

In the opposite corner, MacDonald counsels Heenan.

MACDONALD  
Don't be rash. Don't forget the  
longer the fight goes, the better  
his chances will be.

HEENAN  
The Englishman's got pluck, Mac.  
Full of spunk. Gonna take something  
special to down him.

Both men rise. Tom's right arm is useless except for painful  
defence, the English champion is suffering.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)  
Time.

Tom sets about prolonging the contest, turning tail and  
running around the ring. Heenan - maddened by this - pursues  
him, striking out but only catching him on the back. Every  
chance Tom gets, his slashing left fist aims for the  
American's left eye.

Tom knocks the American down and Heenan, this time, is guided  
to his place.

Tom cheekily staggers over to Heenan's corner to inspect the  
damage he has inflicted on his opponent.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUND SEVENTEEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Heenan's right eye is as big as a hen's egg and his left hand is badly swollen.

Tom's blowing but smiling.

Heenan gestures him on.

HEENAN

Come on, man.

TOM

Don't trouble. You've got it coming.

Tom ducks in with a fierce left jab.

Heenan's head jackhammers back. Blood and a tooth spray out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUND TWENTY-THREE - CONTINUOUS

Heenan is resting on a stool as MacDonald mops his face with a sponge.

GIDEON

Mr Dowling?

Dowling looks over at Gideon

GIDEON (CONT'D)

The rules state that stools can not be placed in the ring.

Dowling whispers to MacDonald that Heenan is obliged to return to the knee of Cusick. Heenan does so.

With minimum delay, the referee restarts the fight. Tom is visibly weakened and Heenan can scarcely see as the fighters come to the scratch.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Tom remains still, as Heenan circles. The American can barely see his opponent. Tom, enticing Heenan, briefly lowers his guard. Heenan lashes out a one-two combo, which sends the Englishman to the floor.

As Tom hits the ground, Heenan strike his opponent when he is down.

Gideon angrily shouts out.



GIDEON  
Forfeit! He has forfeited.

Dowling paces over to Gideon.

DOWLING  
The man's almost blind, Mr Gideon.  
I have to rule the blow accidental.

The boxers are not back in their corners.

Dowling strides around the ring to speak to Cusick.

DOWLING (CONT'D)  
That last punch proves your man  
can't see. If it happens again,  
Sayers wins.

CUSICK  
I concede he can scarcely see, but  
he's dominating. The fight's nearly  
over.

On the periphery of the crowd, more soldiers have hastened to  
the scene.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)  
Time.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROUND THIRTY-SIX, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Both sets of supporters are still continuing to gamble small  
side bets.

Tom's very weak now and can hardly stand.

Heenan's face is battered and unrecognisable.

Heenan drags Tom by the neck to the ropes, but Tom slips  
through his arms and falls clear.

GIDEON  
(shouting out)  
Roughhouse tactics by the American.  
Watch him referee.

Meantime, MacDonald and Cusick are in conversation with  
Dowling.

MACDONALD  
Sayers' supporters are crowding  
round my man's corner -

CUSICK

Threatening the integrity of the ring, Dowling. Pushing against the ropes and stakes.

MACDONALD

The ring-keepers can't keep order.

CUSICK

And look how many policemen have arrived.

Dowling turns, looks and nods.

EXT. ROUND THIRTY-SEVEN, THE PRIZE-RING - DAY

Both men are at the scratch in a desperate condition.

TIME KEEPER (O.S.)

Time.

Heenan is nearly blind in both eyes.

Tom appears close to collapse. He does all he can to keep his man at a distance, but Heenan gets Tom into a headlock under his left arm, and supporting himself by the stake with his right, holds Tom bent down forcing his neck against the ropes, strangling him.

Tom swings his left arm free and plants two vicious BLOWS on Heenan's face causing more blood to flow. Heenan responds by pressing Tom's neck further onto the ropes and leaning on him with all his force.

Tom's face is darkening dangerously - he's choking.

TOM'S MONTAGE:

Swimming images of LAUGHING, looming faces - swimming closer - receding - closer - Sarah's LAUGHING face - more faces - blurring - distant - suddenly Sarah Jnr's face appears, CRYING - disappearing - Tom's Jnr's face receding, CRYING - Eliza and Charlie loom out of the blur frowning, CALLING - and disappear again.

ELIZA & CHARLIE (V.O.)

Tom! Tom!

SLOW FADE TO  
BLACK:

EXT. PLATFORM 1, LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - DAY

A sea of faces.

(beat)

Expectant supporters on the platform wait for news of the bout.

(beat)

Distant WHISTLE.

Slowly, on the horizon, plumes of STEAM can be seen as the first train emerges out of the horizon.

A BUZZ of anticipation goes up and the fans SURGE forward. The train edges into the station and there's an expectant pause as the crowd wait to see who emerges first.

From the first carriage, out steps Brunton and Gideon. Then a lightly bruised Tom climbs out onto the platform to tumultuous APPLAUSE.

He smiles and waves, acknowledging his followers, his injured right arm hanging in a make-shift sling.

EXT. ENTRANCE, LONDON BRIDGE STATION - CONTINUOUS

As Tom climbs into a brougham with Gideon and Brunton, CHEERING supporters surround him.

The distant WHISTLE from another train can be heard as the second train PUFFS into the station.

EXT. PLATFORM 2, LONDON BRIDGE STATION, LONDON - CONTINUOUS

The second train arrives to a quieter reception.

Crowds are still milling around waiting for Heenan to alight, but the doors of his carriage remain closed and the shutters stay down.

(beat)

Door opens.

INT. BAR, GEORGE & DRAGON, BARBICAN, LONDON - EVENING

Tom is being toasted by a packed pub, as a torrent of questions are fired at him about what happened.

Above the HUBBUB, Gideon calls for order.

GIDEON  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

The fans continue the DIN.

Brunton WHISTLES SHRILLY. Instant quiet.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you.  
 For those of you that could not  
 make it to the fight, let me  
 present - the first Champion of the  
 World.

A huge CHEER goes up.

GIDEON (CONT'D)  
 And to inform you first-hand how  
 Tom became World Champion.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PRIZE-RING, FARNBOROUGH - DAY

Heenan is nearly blind in both eyes.

Tom appears close to collapse. He does all he can to keep his  
 man at a distance, but Heenan gets Tom into a headlock under  
 his left arm, and supporting himself by the stake with his  
 right, holds Tom bent down forcing his neck against the  
 ropes, strangling him.

GIDEON (V.O.)  
 In the thirty-seventh round, Heenan  
 broke Rule 28 by using the rope to  
 throttle Tom.

Tom's choking, when a knife from the crowd flashes and cuts  
 the rope. The ring is broken into.

GIDEON (V.O.)  
 A person unknown cut the ropes,  
 whereupon the ring collapsed and  
 the crowd surged forward. Soon, Tom  
 recovered his breath sufficiently  
 to continue fighting in the  
 confined space that was left in the  
 centre of the ring. A shout went  
 up.

A RAUCOUS HOLLER from the crowd.

CROWD  
 Crushers! Bobbies!

GIDEON (V.O.)  
 Tom was seconds from winning the  
 title outright, when the police  
 arrived and ended the fight.

The crowd bolt in all directions, as police rattles SOUND out  
 amongst the riotous confusion.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

INT. BAR, GEORGE & DRAGON, BARBICAN, LONDON - EVENING

GIDEON

So, as far as the London Rules are concerned, the man who has the upper hand without foul tactics before a bout ends prematurely is deemed the winner of the fight.

Another CHEER goes up.

Tom is immediately mobbed.

INT. BELL'S LIFE FRONT OFFICE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - DAY

STRAP LINE: ONE MONTH LATER

Seated at the back of the room, the key players at the fight that day are assembled in Dowling's newspaper office: Falkland, Wilkes, Brunton and MacDonald.

Sitting in front of them are Tom, Gideon, Heenan and Cusick.

Everything is quiet.

Dowling clears his throat.

DOWLING

(to Cusick)

Right, Mr Cusick, now that we've heard Mr Gideon's version of events, would you like to tell us exactly what you think you saw on April the seventeenth?

CUSICK

Yes, thank you, Mr Dowling.

Cusick stands - all nervousness.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP PRIZE-RING, FARNBOROUGH - DAY

Heenan is nearly blind in both eyes.

Tom appears close to collapse. He does all he can to keep his man at a distance, but Heenan gets Tom into a headlock under his left arm, and supporting himself by the stake with his right, holds Tom bent down forcing his neck against the ropes, strangling him.

CUSICK (V.O.)

When the World Championship fight was into its thirty-seventh round, Mr Heenan was on the cusp of victory when a member of Mr Sayers' camp fouled by cutting the ropes with a knife.

Tom's choking as a knife from the crowd suddenly flashes and cuts the ropes.

A hand reveals the knife being held by Morrissey.

CUSICK (V.O.)

And, as I remember, I saw the blade in Mr John Morrissey's right hand.

Spectators pour into the ring. In the confusion that surrounded them, Cusick berates Dowling.

CUSICK

You know the rules. The fight went on for far too long in a confined space.

Dowling and Cusick continue to ARGUE as confusion reigned around them.

Tom is held up by Gideon.

An enraged Heenan STOMPS over to the opposing corner and knocks Brunton flying.

HEENAN

You've cheated me! You English sons -of-bitches. Cheated me.

By now the police are forcing their way through the crowd.

Heenan stands alone in the centre of the ring with his Colours raised aloft in his fist. The American's face is hideously disfigured, so much so, his eyes are blinded due to the grotesque swelling.

CUSICK (V.O.)

In the ensuing chaos, Mr Heenan was by far the stronger of the two boxers and proved it by running unaided from the scene of the fight to safety, whereas Mr Sayers had collapsed and needed to be carried by his seconds back to the train.

FLASHBACK ENDS:

INT. BELL'S LIFE FRONT OFFICE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - DAY

Cusick returns to his seat.

Dowling stands.

DOWLING

Thank you, Mr Cusick. Gentlemen, I think you would all agree that this has been the greatest fight in the history of the sport. For strength, courage and prowess in the ring, it has never been bettered.

Dowling gestures to both men.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

Both men are deserving of the title. Both represented their countries with great fortitude and honour. Both deserve to be graced with the title Champion of the World.

All heads nod in agreement.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

So, as a consequence of the confusion and conflicting version of events caused, in no small part by the unfortunate arrival of Her Majesty's Constabulary, I - after hearing both strong arguments - judge it only fair and proper to award the title -

(beat)

- to both men.

Tom and Heenan look at each other and nod.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

In the true spirit of our sport, it is correct we pull the corner stakes from the ground of our disputes and name it a draw.

Dowling clears his throat.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

So shall we put the motion to a vote? Those who agree with this decision say 'Aye' and raise your arm.

All in the room, including Tom and Heenan, raise their arms.

ALL

Aye.

DOWLING

Good. It is therefore my honour to announce, at the behest of both men, nay champions, that they agree to share the title and both agree to have a silver belt each made from the singular one that currently exists.

Tom and Heenan look at each other and smile.

DOWLING (CONT'D)

At a future, mutually agreed date, the belts shall be presented to them to commemorate the greatest prize-fight ever.

All the men stand and start to APPLAUD - all smiles...

Dowling gestures to Tom and Gideon, who follow him into an adjoining office.

The others start to filter out the room.

INT. BACK OFFICE, BELLS' LIFE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - CONTINUOUS

DOWLING

Tom, something more. Mr Gideon and I have already spoken about this together.

GIDEON

Yes, Tom, in light of your truly heroic effort against an opponent much superior in stature to you, we consider you deserve a reward.

TOM

Reward?

DOWLING

And rest.

GIDEON

More accurately, a retirement.

Tom frowns. Looks from one to the other.

DOWLING

Tom, Mr Gideon and I have agreed that you have taken enough punishment and it's time for you to retire from the prize-ring.



GIDEON

We have set up a public subscription to be put into trust for you and your family.

TOM

Eh? But -

GIDEON

But, Tom, on condition you retire from the prize-ring and enjoy the fruits of your hard-earned labour.

DOWLING

The brutality of the prize-ring takes its toll, Tom, and if you continue your body will fail under the impact of such constant ferocity.

Tom looks from one to the other again, then addresses Gideon.

TOM

Okay, Mr - Mr Gideon. You know, I never really - never really -

GIDEON

I know, Tom. And although my business head is trying to convince me otherwise, another part of me - which got to know you - considers it right.

DOWLING

Also. We in the boxing fraternity consider that much as we all enjoy the gladiatorial aspect of our sport, we recognise how, in this modern era, more restraint, more regulation may be necessary to attract a wider following. The Marquess of Queensberry and his friend, Mr Chambers - who apparently attended the fight - are considering proposals.

GIDEON

So, Tom, you represent the end of an era. And it is only right that you should live out your retirement with that recognition.

Tom slowly breaks into a smile.

EXT. BELL'S LIFE...FRONT OFFICE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - DAY

Heenan and Cusick emerge from the entrance of Bell's Life office building and start along the street. They turn a corner and start walking past Astley's.

CUSICK

Well, Jack. We put up a performance  
I think. Fought our corner.

HEENAN

I had him, Jim. You know that. But  
under the circumstances.

Cusick points over to a large theatre billboard of Adah.

CUSICK

(smiling)  
Talking of performances. At least  
you delivered, Jack, which is more  
than she ever will.

HEENAN

(shaking his head)  
She's quite the lady now, Jim. And  
her performances bring in the  
punters - and bucks.

CUSICK

She performs alright.

As they continue on past the theatre, a carriage draws up and a COACHMAN opens the door to Adah. She climbs out and spots Heenan and Cusick immediately.

ADAH

Jack!

She flashes a smile - which drops.

ADAH (CONT'D)

- and Jim.

HEENAN

Adah! How are -

ADAH

Fine. Couldn't be better.

She directly addresses Cusick.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Mr Cusick, I'd like to speak to my  
husband - alone. If you please?

Cusick stares.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 Now! Move along, Mr Cusick. Your  
 friend can join you when I've  
 finished with him.

Cusick glances over to Heenan and reluctantly starts backing  
 away.

Adah addresses Heenan.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
 Follow me, Jack. We have a little  
 catching up to do.

Heenan looks worried.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, ASTLEY'S ROYAL AMPITHEATRE, LONDON - DAY

Just one bunch of wilted flowers on the side.

Heenan seated.

Adah's sitting in front of the mirror.

ADAH  
 So, who won your fight, Jack?

HEENAN  
 We drew. Well, officially we drew.  
 That's what the boxing authorities  
 want anyway - to tell the world and  
 make it official. To settle bets  
 and stuff. But really I -

ADAH  
 Won, Jack? Did you win?

HEENAN  
 I had him on the ropes.

ADAH  
 I know, Jack. I saw.

HEENAN  
 (surprised)  
 Saw?

ADAH  
 (smiling)  
 I was there and saw - something?  
 But the result?  
 (beat)  
 Did we draw, Jack. Because we had  
 no conclusion, no result. You ran  
 away.

HEENAN

But I still love you, Adah.

ADAH

You have a funny way of showing it.

HEENAN

But -

ADAH

Love, ha! Yes, love, Jack, and marriage. I'm beginning to learn that marriage is a powerful game, a powerful experience. With certain rules of engagement - like a fight.

HEENAN

But Adah, our love -

ADAH

(wistful)

Our love, Jack. Why do I love you?

She looks away.

ADAH (CONT'D)

Our love was a smokescreen. Where I trust to conquer, there I bleed. I loved you too, probably too much. I lost myself in you for a while. I even wrote a poem telling you so.

Adah stands and goes over to a drawer.

Pulls out a flyer: it's an illustration of her as Mazeppa strapped to a horse and above it the word '**PARIS**'.

ADAH (CONT'D)

I'm off to Paris soon. Flying to another nest. The difference between us is we're in different games, Jack. You make a living bruising people; I make a living taking people out of their pain.

HEENAN

But Adah, I have to earn. I have to earn dough in the only way I know how.

ADAH

I know, Jack, I understand that. But I have to earn a living too - in the only way I know how. That's why I still love you and probably always will. But our time together has flown.

Adah puts the flyer back in the drawer.

She sits back down in front of the mirror and talks to Heenan's reflection.

HEENAN  
But I don't want -

ADAH  
(swinging round)  
But I do - want.

Adah steps to the door and opens it.

Heenan reluctantly raises to his feet.

HEENAN  
Is this it then?

ADAH  
I'm afraid so, Jack. Goodbye - and  
good luck.

Heenan moves to the door.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
We shared a dream, Jack, a delusion  
for a while.  
(she winks)  
But it was fun - while it lasted.

She puckers her lips.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
You may kiss me.

Heenan bends down and gives her a full kiss - lingers...

Eventually, she gently pushes him away and shoos him through the door.

He disappears down the corridor.

ADAH (CONT'D)  
(calling out)  
Oh, by the way, Jack. Did I forget  
to mention? I never actually did  
get round to divorcing Mr Menken.  
So you have your freedom after all -  
and so does Mr Cusick.

Adah smiles - tinged with sadness.

EXT. OFFICE, BELLS' LIFE, NORFOLK STREET, LONDON - DAY

A small crowd has gathered on the opposite pavement. Tom's family are waiting at the front for him to come out. Eliza holds both children's hands, while Charlie paces up and down.

Tom emerges from the entrance as the meeting spills out, shakes hands with Gideon and Brunton and walks over to his family.

Sarah Jnr breaks from Eliza's hand and dashes up to her father. He gathers her up.

SARAH JNR  
Did you win?

TOM  
Some people think I did.

Sarah Jnr's face lights up.

TOM (CONT'D)  
But some people think I didn't.  
They've called it a draw.

Sarah Jnr's face drops.

Tom Jnr races up.

TOM JNR  
Well, I think you won.

Sarah Jnr's face lights up again.

SARAH JNR  
And so do I. By lots.

Tom scoops them both up in his arms.

TOM JNR  
Yeah, lots and lots.

Charlie SLAPS Tom on the back and Eliza kisses his cheek. They all start to move away in a group.

EXT. STREET, LONDON - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Tom, with Sarah Jnr and Tom Jnr taking a hand each. The children are smiling.

Tom turns to his brother and sister.

TOM  
- and Mr Gideon and Dowling  
mentioned no more fighting.  
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

They set up something to keep me going - a fund-like - so I don't have to fight no more.

ELIZA

Thank goodness for that Tom. You deserve it.

CHARLIE SAYERS

I'll drink to that, Tom. Sounds like ale's on you, lad.

The street is all hustle and bustle.

Wagons, carts, cabs CLUTTER by.

In the distance, rising out of the NOISE and SHOUTS of the street, the indistinct sound of a SWAZZLE.

There's a CHEER.

In a swirling mix, a figure can be seen on the corner holding flowers - Sarah.

Tom looks across.

TOM'S POV.

She looks across at Tom. Recognition.

Their eyes lock.

Sarah glances down at the two children. Then back at Tom.

Eyes lock again. Defiance and fire in Sarah's eyes.

Tom looks at the children.

The moment - the street freezes.

AUDIO: CONTINUES STREET SOUNDS IN THE MIX:

PUNCH AND JUDY MAN (V.O. - DISTANT)

That's the way to do it.

CU: FREEZE FRAME ON TOM.

## TOM'S EPILOGUE STRAP SUPERIMPOSED

Tom Sayers agreed to accept a £3,000 public subscription put into trust for him, on condition that he did retire from the prize-ring. He commented, "At last I shall avoid the shame of a pauper's grave."

Tom died from a tuberculosis and diabetes complications on the 8th November 1865, aged 39. Over 100,000 people attended his funeral a week later in Highgate Cemetery, London.

CU: FREEZE FRAME ON SARAH

## SARAH'S EPILOGUE STRAP SUPERIMPOSED

After Tom's death, Sarah Sayers challenged the Will and won her case, making the three illegitimate children by James Aldridge the sole beneficiaries of her dead husband's estate.

The judge ruled that it could not be proved that Tom was not the father of his wife's other three children. His judgement was they must, therefore, be regarded as the only legitimate heirs, because they were born when Tom and Sarah were married - unlike Sarah Jnr and Tom Jnr. By winning the case, Sarah had successfully disinherited her first two children by Tom.

FADE TO BLACK.

## HEENAN'S EPILOGUE STRAP

John Camel Heenan, defended his title in 1862 but then lost to Tom King. He eventually returned to the USA in 1865 where he contracted tuberculosis. He left New York for the purer air of the American West, where he died in the arms of his old manager, Jim Cusick, on 28th October 1873, aged 39.

## ADAH'S EPILOGUE STRAP

Adah Isaacs Menken, Heenan's bigamous wife, stayed in London for a time, where she befriended further literary figures including the poet, Algernon Swinburne and the painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She produced a book of poetry - but no baby, only speculation.

She later moved permanently to Paris, where she continued to work in the arts. She married four - possibly five - times throughout her rich and tumultuous life. She died on August 10th of peritonitis and/or tuberculosis in 1868, aged 33.

## POST FIGHT EPILOGUE STRAP



The Tom Sayers and John C. Heenan fight was the last major bare knuckle contest under the old London Prize-fighting Rules. The world had changed. The illegality, brutality and rowdiness of the staged events had become a public embarrassment. The condition attached to the subscription fund for Tom Sayers was that he should never enter the ring again and proved to be the formal farewell to the old ways. If the sport was to survive, it needed to reinvent itself. And to do that it would need a new set of rules, ironically championed by a hereditary aristocrat. His title was the Marquess of Queensberry.

C.U. SUPERIMPOSED COAT OF ARMS OF THE MARQUESS OF QUEENSBERRY.

FADE OUT.

**END CREDITS**