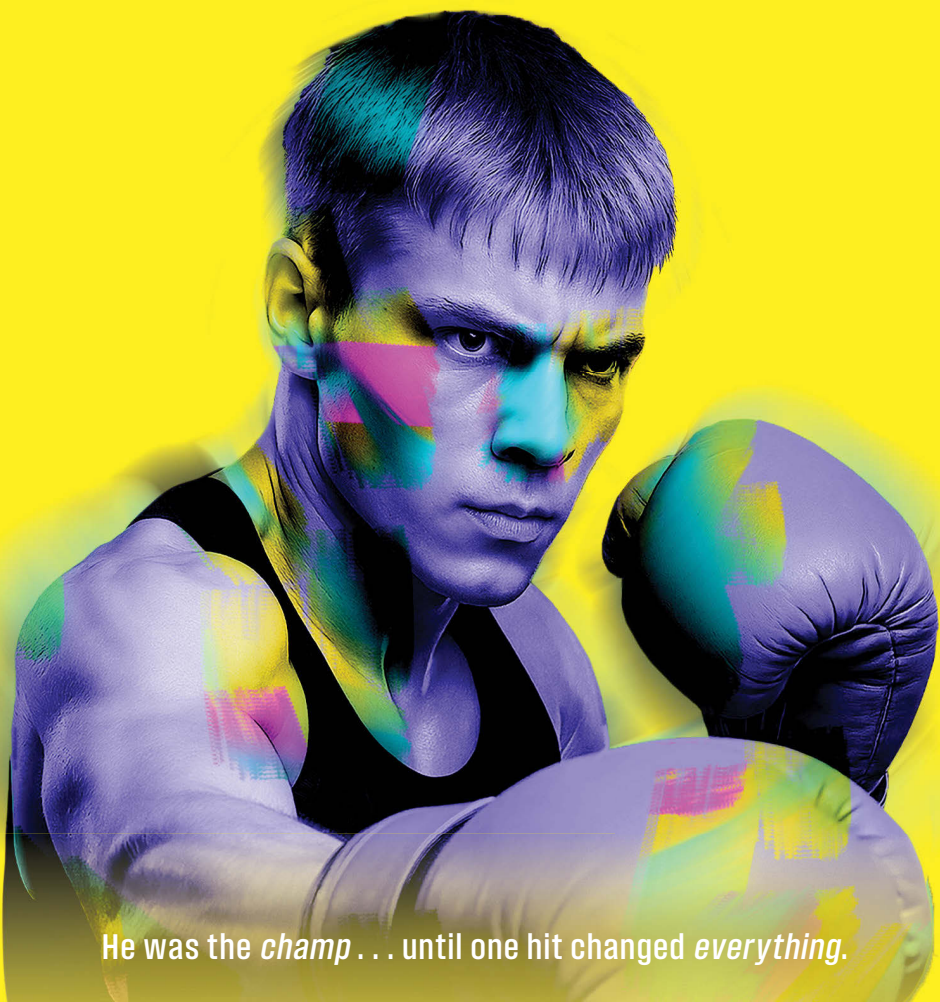


12 ROUNDS



He was the *champ* . . . until one hit changed *everything*.

SHAKEN

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

KNOCKOUT

Hands up,” Bryant said.

Josh wiped sweat from his brow. His blond hair was short.

Bryant’s locs were tied back. His hair was cut short on the sides and had two lines shaved like lightning bolts. This was fitting. He could throw punches that were as fast as lightning.

The two boxers circled each other. At Fight Club, they didn’t go all out when sparring. It was about practice. Weight class didn’t matter when choosing sparring partners. Josh came in at 160 pounds. Bryant was 210.

Josh threw a right jab. That kept Bryant away

from him. Controlling the space between them made Josh harder to hit.

Bryant moved his head. Then the two boxers came in close. Turning his body, Josh spun away.

“You’re not going to throw punches with me?” Bryant asked.

Josh smiled. “Nope.”

Bryant and Josh were seniors at Wrap High School in California. They were also best friends.

Nearby, Dante and Alex sparred.

“Is it always this hot in here?” Dante asked.

Supposedly, Dante had been boxing for a while. But he was new to Fight Club. He was short and boxed at 135. Everyone thought Dante talked too much. Most people ignored him.

The owner kept the gym hot. That was Coach Craig. He said heat warmed muscles faster.

“Just box,” Alex told Dante. Alex was taller than Dante. Height didn’t matter when picking sparring partners either.

Sparring took place throughout the small gym.

The gym only had two rings. Boxers were sparring in the rings and around them as well. “Wherever there’s room!” Coach Mosley would say. He was Craig’s assistant coach.

The bell sounded. This first session of sparring was over.



Now, it was final sparring. One fight happened at a time. Final sparring was a lottery. Boxers fought if their names were called. Those who weren’t fighting stood around the ring and watched.

Coach Craig and Coach Mosley picked the fighters. The coaches went into the ring. They stood in the center.

The coaches held white cards. Each card had information about a boxer on it. Coach Craig and Coach Mosley would each pick a card. Then the fighters on those cards would spar.

Sometimes the coaches didn’t use the cards. They’d just call two boxers.

“Dante!” Coach Mosley called.

“Josh!” Coach Craig shouted.

Laughter filled the gym.

“Why are you laughing?” Coach Craig asked. His voice was stern. “Anything can happen in the ring. You guys know that. At least you better. We’ve got a tournament on Friday. It’s against Santino. Remember? Laugh like that there, no statues for you.”

Coach Craig called trophies statues. Fight Club had won a lot of them. Most Fight Club boxers had at least one trophy. Josh had many. Dante hadn’t won any. But he was new. He hadn’t been in a tournament with Fight Club yet.

Dante put on his headgear. Josh hadn’t taken his off. He didn’t like to.

“Two rounds,” Coach Craig said. “Then we’ll call names again.”

“More like two seconds,” Alex said. “Take him out, Josh.”

Josh smiled slightly. He didn’t want to disrespect Dante. Yet he thought Dante was too new to have such a big mouth.

The bell rang. Dante rushed Josh. Everyone was surprised. Cheers and catcalls echoed in the gym.

Josh held him. He put his gloves on Dante's arms. Dante threw many punches. They hit Josh's chest, stomach, and arms.

Wow! Josh was surprised. *This guy is fast.*

Josh pushed him away. Dante threw a left jab. But Josh blocked it.

Again, Dante rushed him. Josh held his opponent.

He's really strong, Josh thought.

They separated. Josh expected another left jab. Dante threw a right cross instead. Josh's guard was down.

Instantly, Josh saw the gym drain of color. It went black and white. He no longer felt his legs. His body dipped and fell into the ropes.

What's happening? I'm not supposed to feel this way!

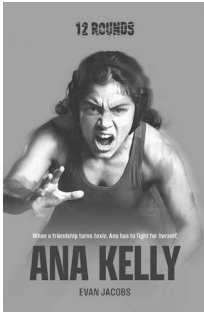
Dante advanced on him. Josh moved to hold

him again. But all he grabbed was air. His body fell to the mat.

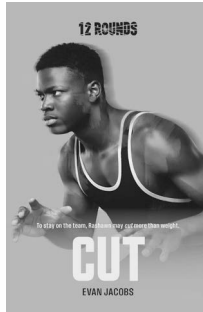
Coach Craig called out. “Time!”

Josh was shocked. He’d never been knocked out before. The sparring session was over. It wasn’t judged. But Dante had won.

12 ROUNDS



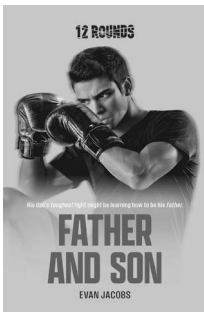
9781638896210



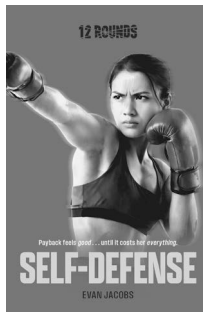
9781638896364



9781638896388



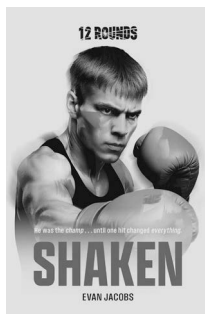
9781638896425



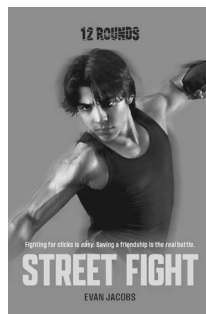
9781638896326



9781638896401



9781638896159



9781638896265

WWW.SDLBACK.COM/12-ROUNDS

12 ROUNDS SHAKEN

Josh has won more trophies than any other boxer at Fight Club. But when he gets knocked out sparring against the new guy, Josh's confidence is shaken. Will he ever be the fighter he once was?