

12 ROUNDS



When a friendship turns *toxic*, Ana has to fight for *herself*.

ANA KELLY

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

ICE BREAKER

Kelly Hernandez screeched. Her voice was high-pitched. “Ana Kelly!” She wrinkled up her face. “Ana Kelly! I hate how Ms. Brown says our names together. It’s so annoying.”

Ana Ramirez laughed. Brooklyn Solis and Shay Morris did too.

“Wow!” Ana said. “That sounded just like her!”

The girls were all tenth graders. They went to Orangeside High School. Ms. Brown was one of their teachers. She taught math.

Ana and Kelly sat together in Ms. Brown’s class. This was their first class of the day.

Ms. Brown always called out Ana and Kelly's names. It was often because they were talking in class. Sometimes, they were texting.

Ms. Brown said "Ana Kelly" like it was one person. This was kind of true. The girls seemed inseparable. They had met in eighth grade. Since then, they'd been best friends.

Math was the only class where Ana didn't follow the rules. It was also the only class she had with Kelly. Ana was a good student. Her grades were solid. They had to be. Otherwise, she couldn't wrestle.

Ana loved wrestling. She liked how physical it was. Pinning an opponent was the best feeling.

Last year, Ana had won her weight class. This was in the California Interscholastic Federation. It was called the CIF for short. The CIF governed high school sports in California. Ana's win had been a big deal. She was only a freshman at the time.

The girls were at the mall. Kelly walked in front. Ana followed. Brooklyn and Shay trailed

behind. All four dressed the same. Each wore a hoodie and jeans. They all held their phones.

Shay sighed. "There's nothing to do here."

Kelly nodded. "I know. This mall is so boring."

"We have to go," Brooklyn said. She motioned to herself and Shay.

"Bye. See you later." Ana hugged the two girls.

Turning around, Ana saw Kelly walk away. Ever since Ana got to the mall, Kelly had ignored her. She was mad because Ana had been late. Ana had wrestling practice after school. Kelly didn't like Ana not being available.

Ana caught up to Kelly.

"You still here?" Kelly asked. She didn't look at Ana.

"Always." Ana put her arm around her friend. That broke the ice. Kelly smiled.

A security guard eyed them. He watched them walk into a shoe store.

"Why do we hang out with them?" Kelly asked.

“Brooklyn and Shay? They’re our friends.”

Kelly rolled her eyes. “They’re boring.”

Ana gave Kelly a look. The girls cracked up.

They checked out some shoes. Kelly held up a pair made for toddlers. “Put these in your hoodie.” She pushed them into Ana’s hand.

“Why?”

“It’s my cousin’s birthday,” Kelly said.

“Why can’t you do it?” Ana asked.

“No pockets.”

Reluctantly, Ana put the shoes in her hoodie.

The security guard shouted. “Hey! Put those back!”

Kelly ran out of the store. Ana followed. She’d be in big trouble if she got caught stealing.

I could get arrested! Then I’d get kicked off the team!

That thought scared Ana. She sped up.

The guard reached for Ana’s arm. Ana moved left. Then she grabbed his shirt. Using her weight, Ana threw him to the floor. It was a technique she used to win wrestling matches.

“Oof!” The guard had hit the floor hard.

Ana hoped he was okay. She ran out the mall’s main door.

Kelly was capturing everything on her phone. “You beat up a man!”

“I can’t believe you recorded that!” Ana cried.

They stared at Kelly’s phone. Kelly played the video. It showed Ana throwing the guard to the floor.

“I’m going to post it privately,” Kelly said.

“No!” Ana said. “What if I get in trouble?”

“How? It’s private. Only approved followers can see the post.”

Ana felt weird. It was cool using her wrestling moves. Kelly was impressed. That made Ana feel good. But Ana knew what she’d done was wrong. She wasn’t mean or tough. The teen only acted that way around Kelly.

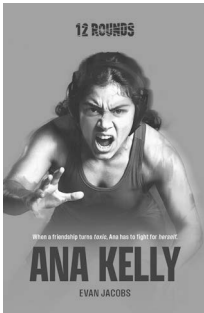
“Rosa texted me,” Kelly said.

Kelly’s sister Rosa had been in Juvenile Hall. She’d gotten in trouble with the law. At first, Kelly thought Rosa would only be in Juvenile Hall until

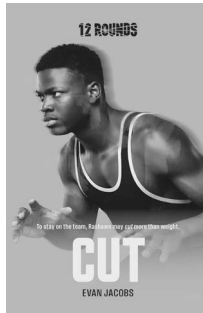
her court date. But Rosa had to stay there a while longer. Now she was 17. Ana and Kelly were both 15. After her release, Rosa was sent to a different school. It was for people who had been in trouble.

Ana and Kelly walked in silence. Kelly kept texting Rosa. A minute before, Ana had been Kelly's focus. Now it was like Ana wasn't even there.

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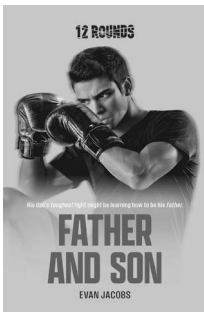
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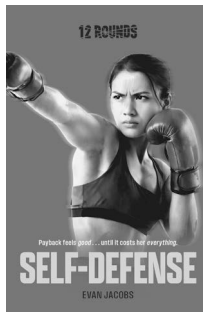
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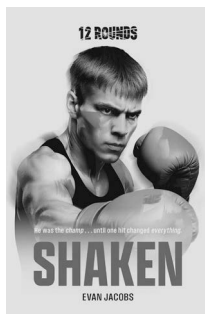
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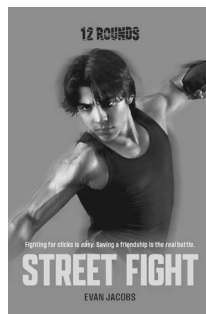
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ANA KELLY

Ana and Kelly have been friends for so long, it's almost like they're one person. When Ana's brother Ben points out that Kelly is bad news, Ana doesn't want to hear it. Will Ana heed her brother's warning, or will she risk everything to keep her friendship?