

12 ROUNDS



Love hits *hard*. Jealousy hits *harder*. Can Sam stay in harmony?

EIGHT LIMBS

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

CRUSH

How does the octopus defend itself?” Mrs. Scott asked. She was the science teacher at Sea View High School.

Samantha Wong knew the answer. Octopuses were her favorite animals. She wanted to raise her hand and answer the question. But she didn’t. Mrs. Scott called on another student.

“They blend in,” the student said. “And move away fast.”

Samantha was a really good student. Her confidence wasn’t as great. The last thing she wanted in class was attention. Blending in was just fine. Maybe that was why she liked octopuses.

She liked her nickname too. Her real name was Samantha. But most people called her Sam.

Sam was a freshman. She wasn't popular. But she had a best friend. His name was Able Soto. They'd been friends for a long time.

Last year, Sam had been in eighth grade. Her parents had wanted her to go out for a sport. Sam had always been into academics. Sports didn't interest her.

Yet her parents persisted.

"You need more confidence," Sam's dad said.

Her mom agreed. "A sport will help you."

Sam didn't like any sports. She did well in PE. But that was for a grade.

Wanting to keep her parents happy, Sam chose Muay Thai. The sport was a mix of boxing and kickboxing. This choice surprised her parents. Still, they were glad she'd chosen something.

Sam found a gym that taught the sport. As an eighth grader, Sam started taking beginner classes. The gym also offered more advanced lessons. There were competition classes too.

Sam wasn't very good at Muay Thai. Yet she liked learning self-defense. It made her feel more independent.



"You really think your life is in harmony?" Able asked.

Sam and Able sat in the school cafeteria. Students around them were talking, texting, and eating.

"Yes," Sam said.

"Why?" Able speared a cucumber from his salad. Then he popped it into his mouth.

"Well." Sam swallowed a bite of a chicken nugget. "My favorite animal is the octopus. It has eight arms. I started Muay Thai in the eighth grade. Lastly, Muay Thai is called the 'art of eight limbs.' Everything is in harmony around the number eight."

Muay Thai got its nickname because eight areas of the body were used as weapons. They included two fists, two shins and feet, two elbows, and two knees.

Able laughed. "Okay." He looked at his phone.

As they ate, Sam saw Sasha Bho. Sasha was a junior. She was one of the advanced students at the Bho Gym. That was where Sam trained. The gym was owned by Sasha's family.

Sasha walked with a friend who trained at the gym. Her name was Jasmine.

Sam watched how Sasha acted. A girl almost bumped into Sasha. Rolling her eyes, Sasha pushed the girl away. Sasha also gave her a dirty look.

Nobody messed with Sasha. Everyone knew she was a good fighter. She had won a lot of trophies.

Sasha walked up to her brother. His name was Brian. He was a freshman. Brian had his back turned. She jokingly put him in a headlock.

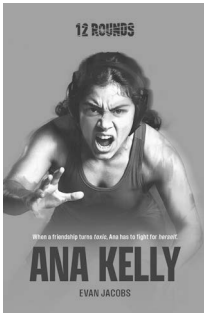
Brian trained at the gym too. He was good at Muay Thai. Sam had talked to him a few times. She thought he was nice.

Able chuckled. "You always stare at Brian."

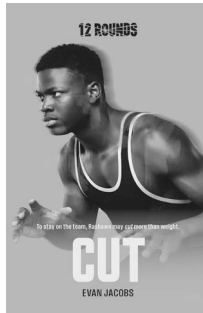
"What?" Sam blushed. "That's not true. I'm just a people watcher."

Still, she kept her eyes on Brian. Eventually, he left the cafeteria.

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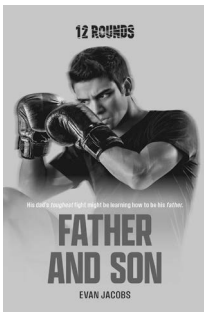
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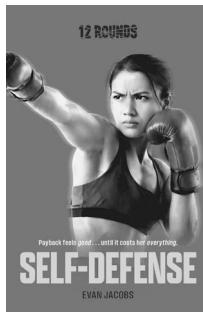
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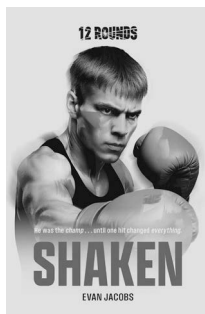
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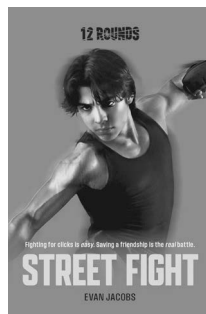
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Sam Wong's life is in harmony. Then a boy in her martial arts class asks her to go on her first date. Sam likes the boy, but his sister isn't happy about this new relationship. Will Sam's life ever be in balance again?



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