

12 ROUNDS



Family tradition is her *legacy* . . . freedom is her *fight*.

SENSEI'S KID

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

UNDER PRESSURE

I'm so glad we got to hang out." Val Gomez turned around. She looked at her friends in the back seat of her mom's car.

"Me too!" Marta Daniels agreed. "What a great Saturday at the mall."

"Yeah," Luz Ito said. "This was awesome!"

But Luz's joy didn't last. Her face dropped as Val's mom made a right turn. They pulled into the parking lot of Dragon Ito. It was the school for karate Luz's family owned.

The dojo had been in Luz's family for many years. Dragon Ito karate began in Japan. This

dojo in the United States was started by Luz's late grandfather.

Now, Luz's father ran it. He was the sensei. That meant he was the head karate teacher. Mr. Ito also sold real estate. Luz's mom taught at an elementary school.

Luz was one of her dad's best students at the dojo. He wasn't happy she'd gone out with her friends. A big tournament loomed the next Saturday.

"I need total focus from you," Mr. Ito had told his daughter.

This year, Luz was a sophomore in high school. Marta and Val were too. Luz wanted to spend more time with her friends. She didn't want to just focus on karate.

"Drop you here?" Mrs. Gomez asked.

"Yes," Luz said. "Thank you."

I don't want to be here, Luz thought. I should've gone home.

Val's mom made a U-turn. She stopped the

car in front of the dojo. An old sign hung on the building. It read “Dragon Ito” in jagged, black letters. Red and black dragons were on both of the dojo’s windows.

“Thanks again,” Luz said.

She got out of the car. Val’s mom drove away.

The tightness Luz often felt inside returned. It had gone away at the mall.

Luz always felt the need to make her dad happy. Her family life centered around the dojo.

When Luz was younger, she had liked that life. That was how her eight-year-old brother, Kenji, was now. He could spend all day doing karate.

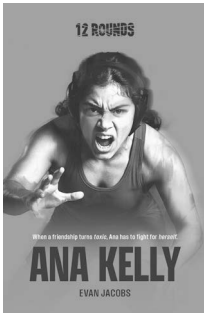
But Luz had grown up. She wanted to do more. Playing tennis on the high school team sparked her interest. Still, Luz had never tried out. *Dad would never allow it.*

Luz had a plan. It would start after next week’s karate tournament. She was going to do more outside the dojo. The right time to say something just had to present itself.

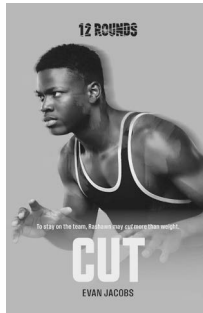
“Practice doesn’t make perfect,” her dad always said. “Perfect practice makes perfect.”

But I’m tired of feeling like I have to be perfect,
Luz thought.

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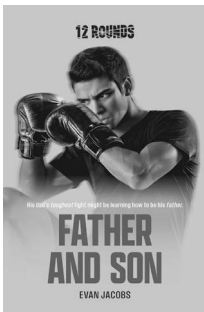
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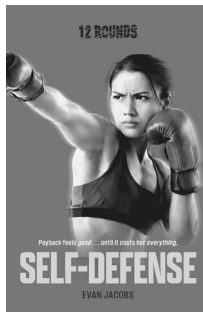
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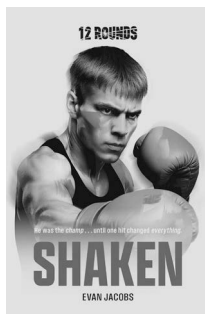
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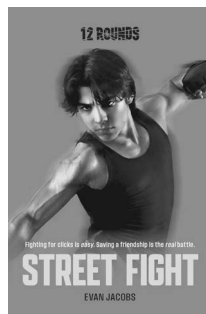
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SENSEI'S KID

As sensei, Luz Ito's father runs a karate school in the U.S. It's a tradition that has been in Luz's family for generations, dating back to their days in Japan.

But Luz feels her father focuses too much on the school and karate. Luz wants more out of life.

Will she be able to explain this to her father?

Can Mr. Ito accept his daughter's choices?

