

12 ROUNDS



His dad's *toughest* fight might be learning how to be his *father*.

FATHER AND SON

EVAN JACOBS

CHAPTER 1

DONE

Dorian Rivas moved around the ring. His dad stood by the ropes.

“Get fiery, D!” his dad yelled. “What’s wrong with you?”

The teen was kickboxing with Steve Cullins. Each of them wore gloves and headgear. They had pads on their shins too.

Steve and Dorian were friends. They liked sparring together. It made each of them a better fighter.

Dorian tried to kick Steve in the leg. But the kick was blocked. Then Steve tagged Dorian on the side of the head.

“Look at that!” Mr. Rivas shouted. “He got you! You’re too defensive, D. Just throw!”

Mr. Rivas was a professional kickboxer. His career had started strong. Then he began losing. Now he fought and trained kickboxers part time. His main job was working for the city of Patterson. He was a plumber, and he hated it.

That’s why he’s always at the gym, Dorian thought. He’ll skip his city job. But he’ll never miss a day here.

Dorian was starting to dislike kickboxing. His dad was the reason. Mr. Rivas was always on him to do better. Everyone in Jackson’s Gym could hear Mr. Rivas yelling at his son. That really embarrassed Dorian.

The teen covered up, protecting his face with his hands and arms. He could still see Steve’s punches coming. Blocking them was easy. Dorian was waiting to counter with his own punches.

Then the bell rang. That signaled the end of the round.

Dorian walked to his corner. His dad stood there. Steve went to the corner where Charles Jackson was waiting.

Mr. Jackson trained Steve. He also owned the gym.

The gym was small. It had a ring, lockers, and two heavy bags. There was a weight-lifting space too.

I wish Mr. Jackson trained me, Dorian thought. *He never yells.*

“What are you doing?” Dorian’s dad asked. “You’re shelling up. That just lets him keep punching.”

Dorian knew what his dad meant by “shelling up.” He was saying Dorian was covering up to avoid being hit.

The teen shrugged. He reached for his water bottle. It hung near the top rope.

Mr. Rivas knocked the bottle out of his son’s hand. “Don’t get water!” he yelled.

“Whatever.” Dorian eyed the gym’s front

door. Cars drove past it. The teen wished he was in one of them.

Dorian was sick of his dad. He wanted to be anywhere but in the gym.

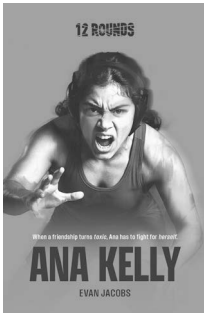
It wasn't always like this. Once Dad started losing fights, he changed. Dad got mean.

Dorian turned and walked away.

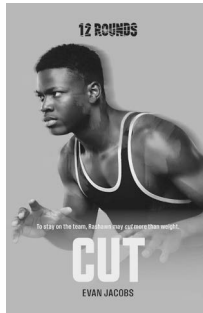
“Where are you going?” Mr. Rivas shouted.

Dorian grabbed his bag. He opened the gym door and left.

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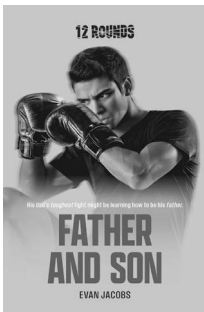
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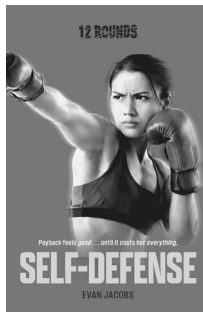
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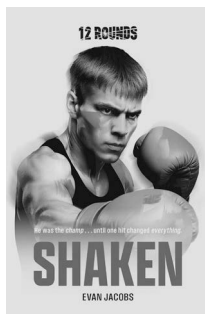
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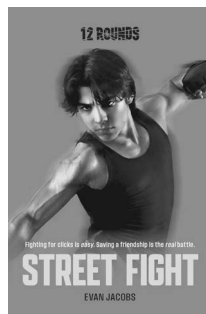
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FATHER AND SON

Dorian Rivas liked kickboxing until his dad started training him. Mr. Rivas is a professional fighter and has high expectations for his son. But when Mr. Rivas gets hurt during a match, Dorian feels it's all his fault. Will the father and son ever find a way to repair their relationship?