

## Shadowboxing

Treatment for *Jackie*. an NYU Thesis Film by Tamika R. Guishard

*When emotions replace fists, a woman's scorn can mean life or death.*

A friendly dinner takes a wrong turn in "Jackie." The story of an Ivy Leaguer and her birth mother who find out that their similarities are disturbingly strong and first impressions can never be undone. Sharon, born below Brooklyn's poverty line, has married wealthy and maintains a stunning home in the suburbs of South Jersey with her four year-old son. Her world is rocked when made to confront Jackie, the daughter she gave up, in a quest for her son's life-saving bone marrow. With frantic caution she seeks her out, to find out Jackie's thrived through the nation's finest institutions. From foster homes in East New York this is no small feat. Determined, Jackie is ready to show her mother just how much she has not, does not and will never need her. This is where our story begins.

*Jackie*. has a "Kill Bill" surrealism despite its gritty authenticity. Stylistically it plays out like a Boxing Match Documentary. Super 16mm will be translated onto the screen as hi-8 for a home video feel. Long takes, emphasizing a fly-on-the-wall perspective, will only be intercut when either Jackie or Sharon's emotional jabs make contact. (These points of "impact" cut together would play out much like a highlight reel.) Each woman's "single" will contain her opponent. Through invasive frames, split-screen and poignant blocking, scenes personify rounds as each fighter strategizes for victory:

PROCESSION Donning a robe over her sweats, Jackie is clearly a tomboy although her bedroom is bright with memorabilia and design. She stabs a baking chicken breast, testing its readiness, and cleans her dorm suite to the tune of cheesy R&B. Cracked through its middle, her mirror is buffed to a sparkle.

*In this corner...*

ROUND 1 In the dorm lobby Jackie's lookout, Ms. Anita, sizes up the opposition: Looks like Jackie's sister's come to visit. If she's that nervous, those flowers will not suffice...

ROUND 4 **BELCH!** Sharon's uncharacteristic tableside manner starts the KITCHEN scene. Only with each other for company, each woman fashions her own "corner." Jackie refuels while washing dishes at the sink and Sharon at the table with family photos. These objects or "memory weapons" trigger their vulnerabilities.

The story, its emotion and characters, will be consistently enforced through this strong boxing motif. A few rounds of "drunken sparring" later, mother and daughter have formed what seems like a genuine bond over bottles of wine and "Connect Four," a two-player game from their respective childhoods. Jackie holds on to that game chip for dear life when forced to decide if her little brother's mortality is worth more than the satisfaction of hurting Sharon. This game, along with opposing colors, costume and set design further embody the treatment for *Jackie*.

*Jackie*. will resonate with children and parents, the homeless and the privileged, guarded souls and vulnerable spirits. This film does not vilify parents who have chosen to give their children up for adoption, but it does probe the things we expect from our youth—even after abandoning them. Fight fans, film geeks, and everyday people will come away with a greater understanding that while scorn is not just between lovers, it really has no place in the life of a child.