

LAST MAN STANDING

Written by

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INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

A bar in the basement of a town's only inn. Stone walls, low ceiling. Lights that resemble lanterns. A lone bartender polishes glasses at one end of the bar.

At the other end sits RODNEY LUDLOW (23). Weathered. Hardened. He sips tequila neat.

Rodney catches the bartender glancing at the doorway, caught off guard by someone who just entered.

Standing in the doorway is GRAYSON LUDLOW (23). Rugged. Rattled.

Rodney and Grayson lock eyes.

Rodney takes the last sip of his tequila, and slams the empty glass on the bar.

The THUD of the glass simultaneous with...

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

...the THUD of a gloved fist's JAB towards the face. BLOCKED in the nick of time.

Two young men dance in combat around a boxing cage in a dimly lit, modestly equipped boxing gym.

RODNEY LUDLOW (19). Lean frame. Long, sweeping arcs. Impulsive. Irreverent. A showman.

GRAYSON LUDLOW (19). Strong build. Firm, deliberate moves. Intuitive. Imaginative. Idiosyncratic.

Pacing alongside them in the cage and focused intently on their match is BROCK LUDLOW (40s).

His gun is holstered at the waist of his sheriff's uniform pants. He wears a gray t-shirt with "CROWNSBERG POLICE DEPARTMENT" written in block letters on the front.

His muscular appearance belies his gentle demeanor.

BROCK

That's it, Rodney. Stay ahead of him.

Rodney BOBS and WEAVES, dodging Grayson's blows. What Rodney lacks in strength, he makes up for in speed. There's an elegance to his movements.

BROCK (CONT'D)
Come on, Grayson. Match his speed.
Stay present.

Grayson PARRIES a series of Rodney's jabs. Grayson's punches are powerful, but his lack of mobility keeps him on defense. Even when falling behind, he proceeds with grit.

BROCK (CONT'D)
(to Rodney)
Don't lose focus. Keep your
clarity. Force a mistake.

Rodney's discipline wanes as he gains an advantage and loses himself in the fun he's having with his brother. Even when fighting, his hot-blooded, jovial spirit remains intact.

BROCK (CONT'D)
(to Grayson)
Breathe. Trust yourself. You're
intuitive. Read his body.

Grayson's tries to collect himself and heed his father's advice, his wide-eyed innocence on display. It's too late.

He fails to cover in time, and Rodney's JAB lands square on his face.

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

Grayson stands motionless. Rodney's eyes search Grayson's face and find a wide-eyed paranoia. Grayson tries to read Rodney's body and senses his hot-blooded contempt.

Grayson eases slightly, then approaches Rodney.

Unsure how to greet each other, Rodney claps Grayson on the shoulder.

They sit down, and stare at each other intently.

Rodney gestures for another drink.

GRAYSON
(to bartender)
Gin and tonic.

RODNEY
You haven't been sleeping again.

GRAYSON
I've almost got it worked out.

They speak in hushed tones.

RODNEY
You've got to drop this.

GRAYSON
I can finish it this time.

RODNEY
Let bygones be bygones.

GRAYSON
In this town? No such thing as
bygones.

Rodney rubs his forehead, exasperated.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
I swear. I just need to get into
that safety deposit box.

They fall silent as the bartender serves their drinks.

RODNEY
How do you think you can do that?

GRAYSON
It's an old bank in a small town.
How many times have we been there?
You know it won't be difficult.

RODNEY
And if you get caught? You'll have
to show your hand.

Rodney takes a big swig of his tequila.

RODNEY (CONT'D)
Look, buddy. You know why Dad
always told you to stay present?
Your memory is too strong for your
own good. You can't separate the
past from the present. Dad started
this. It's not on us to finish it.

GRAYSON
I don't think he had it all wrong.
He was on the right track, he was
just missing a few pieces. We can
see it clearer in hindsight.

Grayson hesitates for a moment, knowing the rage his next
punch will incite. He takes a breath.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)
I talked to Oscar Monaco.

Incredulous and irate, Rodney loses his whisper volume.

RODNEY
Son of a bitch.

Grayson gestures to him to lower his voice.

RODNEY (CONT'D)
You went to the prison? Who knows
you were there?

GRAYSON
Nobody. I was discreet.

RODNEY
You don't know who saw you. People
talk in there. All the fucking
time. Jesus Christ, Grayson. You're
gonna get yourself killed.

GRAYSON
Not if I'm quick. I'll stay on the
offensive.

He subtly reveals THEIR FATHER'S GUN holstered to his waist.

He reaches to grab the handle to show Rodney the weapon in
its entirety, but Rodney stops Grayson's hand with his.

The instant their hands make contact lines up with...

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM -

...the instant Rodney's hand touches Grayson's, helping him
up off the canvas of the boxing cage.

RODNEY
You all right?

Rodney places his hand on Grayson's head and looks into his
eyes with concern.

GRAYSON
Yeah, I'm good.

Out of breath, Grayson extends a fist to Rodney. Rodney bumps
it with his.

RODNEY
You almost had me.

Rodney slaps Grayson's face affectionately.

BROCK

Not bad, boys. Getting better. Grayson, if you had relaxed a little you'd have caught a second wind. Rodney, you let your upper hand slip there. Everything worth doing in your life requires self-discipline. You gotta work on that.

Brock walks them over to a SPEED BAG. Rodney begins hitting it, showcasing his dexterity. Grayson downs water from his bottle, struggling to catch his breath.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Your both developing your own styles, which is good. But don't let them limit you.

Grayson starts hitting a punching bag. Brock paces around them, watching their moves.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Grayson, you're a counter-puncher. But that doesn't mean you can't take initiative. You've got it in you. You see the ambiguity and the paradox in things. That's good, it'll help you read complex opponents like Rodney. But don't let it weigh you down. Breathe. When it gets too heavy, it's your breath that's gonna save you.

Rodney and Grayson switch equipment.

BROCK (CONT'D)

And Rodney. You're good at staying on the outside and pinpointing him with strikes, but don't think that controlling the distance with jabs is your only weapon. When it feels right, throw an uppercut or a hook. You're light and you're free, but if you pack as much meaning into your punches as your brother does, you don't have to win by decision. You could put somebody to sleep.

Done with their drills, Rodney and Grayson head back to the center of the cage.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Tell you what. Let's get you guys out of your selves for a bit. This time, think of yourselves as icons you admire. Doesn't have to be a boxer. Who's someone you would want to embody? Better yet, pick one for each other. Grayson. Name a legend that reminds you of Rodney.

GRAYSON

Jesse James.

Rodney is delighted. He high-fives his brother.

RODNEY

Oh, hell yeah.

BROCK

I like it. An outlaw. Rodney, name one for Grayson.

RODNEY

(to Grayson)

Who's that guy in those movies you like? East of Eden? Rebel Without a Cause?

BROCK

James Dean. That's good. Enigmatic.

Grayson smiles.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Now adopt those personas this time. Let them give you confidence, all right?

The boys face off at the center of the cage.

Brock clasps one hand on each of their shoulders. The instant he GRIPS them simultaneous with...

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

...Rodney RELEASING Grayson's arm.

RODNEY

What the hell are you doing?

GRAYSON

Relax. It's for protection.

RODNEY

The sheriff's department's been looking for that since Dad died.

GRAYSON

He'd want us to have it. He'd know we need it.

RODNEY

I'm done with all this.

GRAYSON

Look, you're right. This is weighing on me. The only way to lift it is to put it to bed for all of us. You're lucky. Every day you're brand new. I'm not.

RODNEY

You really want to end up like Dad? His life was one long losing battle. Right up until the end.

GRAYSON

What about the people he was trying to help?

Rodney gestures for another drink.

RODNEY

You know what they say about the greats? The best fighters? That no matter how good they were, they never knew when to leave the ring. Even when everyone told them it was time to retire, they couldn't turn down a fight. That's what's gonna do you in.

The bartender serves Rodney's drink. He takes a big sip.

GRAYSON

For someone who doesn't want to end up like Dad, you sure drink like him.

RODNEY

You don't drink as much but you're just as destructive. Don't kid yourself.

Another sip.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Remember that prayer Dad had to say? When he started going to those meetings? Grant me the serenity to accept things I can't change.

GRAYSON

The courage to change the things I can.

RODNEY

And the wisdom to know the difference.

He finishes his drink. Slams it on the bar and stands up. Unsure what to say, he takes a breath. He inhales and...

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

...exhales. Lying on the floor. Grayson extends his arm to pull him up.

Rodney laughs. He embraces his brother in congratulations, somewhere between a hug and a headlock.

BROCK

Atta boy, Grayson. Good round, both of you. No matter who you fight or how it goes, always shake their hand. Show 'em respect.

Rodney keeps Grayson in a merciless hug.

RODNEY

What does this show?

Brock laughs.

BROCK

You tell me.

RODNEY

(to Grayson)

It shows that you can't get rid of me. That you're not alone.

Rodney slaps Grayson's face playfully, and they begin swinging at each other. Two lion cubs. Perfect brotherly love.

The physical affection and warmth between them stands in stark contrast to...

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

...the tension and cold distance that separates them.

They stare at each other. There's something they each want to say, but don't know how. They've lost the words.

Rodney extends his arm to try and touch Grayson's shoulder, but hesitates nervously, then retracts it.

Crestfallen, they look at each other for a moment longer.

Rodney musters a nod to Grayson, and he does the same.

Rodney turns and leaves.

Grayson takes the last sip of his gin and tonic, and slams it down on the bar.

The THUD of the glass simultaneous with...

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

...the THUD of Rodney's playful slap landing on Grayson's face.

BROCK

All right, all right. This time, punch out of the self, into the other. Connect. Rodney, try and feel some of the meaning Grayson does. It's worth it's weight. Grayson, just breathe easy. Strike a match like Rodney does. Rodney, let it burn. One more round then we'll head home.

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

Same bar, same lone bartender. Sitting at the bar is RODNEY LUDLOW (26) More weathered, more hardened. Two glasses in front of him. Tequila neat. Gin and tonic.

He spots a newspaper lying further down the bar. He grabs it.

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

RODNEY

One more round? He beat me. Let's call it a night.

BROCK
You remember what Rocky said?

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

RODNEY holds a calculated, vindictive stare on the front page of the newspaper.

He downs the tequila in one sip. He slams the glass on the bar.

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

GRAYSON
Going in one more round when you
don't think you can...

INT. AMBER STREET INN - NIGHT

Rodney stands up and sets the paper on the bar.

The front page reads: MAN FOUND DEAD IN FAMILY'S ORCHARD.

A picture of Grayson, smiling with pride after winning a boxing match, displayed prominently alongside the headline.

Rodney secures HIS FATHER'S GUN to the holster at his waist.

RODNEY (O.S.)
...that's what makes all the
difference in your life.

Rodney begins downing the gin and tonic.

RODNEY (CONT'D)
Breathe easy, brother.

INT. CRIMSON STREET GYM - EVENING

Rodney and Grayson bump fists to begin their last round.

The instant their gloves TOUCH simultaneous with...

INT. AMBER STREET INN

...the THUD of Rodney slamming the empty gin and tonic glass on the bar.

Black.