

The Boxer and the Bomber

2019

THE BOXER AND THE BOMBER - SYNOPSIS

Based on a true story.

Dublin, St. Patrick's Day 1923. A bloody civil war has been raging in the city for almost two years. Brothers, sisters and friends have often found themselves on opposing sides. In an attempt to restore order the new state have started executing dissidences in high numbers. Opposing forces react by calling for a compulsory period of national mourning. All public amusements are to be shut down. Anyone staging or attending a public event leave themselves open to terrorist attacks by the opposition.

Sounds like the perfect time to stage a world championship boxing match in the city right? What could go wrong?

Our story is told from the point of view of two characters you normally wouldn't associate with civil war Ireland.

The Battling Siki - The current light heavy-weight champion of the world. A Senegalese fighter, who's faced racism and marginalisation his whole life. His last title fight in Paris was marred by a match fixing scandal. Ireland is the only country willing to stage his title defense. Siki isn't afraid of anything but he has no interest in going to a war zone until one morning he wakes up hungover on a ship bound for Dublin. Unbeknownst to him, his manger has guaranteed he will show up for the fight, one way or another.

Lizzie has grown up in rural Ireland. Her family were heavily involved in the local struggle during the war of independence. Their home became the de facto area headquarters and safe house. She rejected the treaty after the war and found herself on the side opposing the newly formed Irish state during the civil war. She was rejected by her family and is now living in Dublin, where she carries out clandestine actions against state forces. She's just been given her biggest task to date - to lay a bomb at the arena on the night of the fight.

Characters

SIKI

French-Senegalese boxer, male in his twenties.

LIZZIE

Irish republican, female in her twenties.

SIKI - Present

SOUND: HORN BLOWS

What? What's that?

Lijntje?

Oh my head.

I should have stopped Charlie from buying that last bottle of Champagne.

Was that the last bottle?

I can't remember--

SOUND: HORN BLOWS

WHO'S BED IS THIS?

SOUND: SCUFFLING, OPENING WINDOW, WAVES, SEAGULLS, ENGINES.

I'm on a ship!

Charlie, you bastard!

I have to get out of here.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING

Bonjour madame! Excuse moi--

No, there's no need to scream.

SOUND: DOOR SLAMMING

Shit, I'm only half dressed.

SOUND: PULLING ON DOOR

And now I can't get back into my room.

There's a door to the outside at the end of the hall.

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SOUND: RUNNING FOOTSTEPS, OPENING DOOR, WIND BLOWING

Whoa... It's cold. (Shivering)

Charlie!?!... Lijntje?!

Is that them sitting in deck chairs?

He's seen me.

"Louis.. good. You're awake. We were worried you'd never--"

Charlie, where am I? What have you done?
Lijntje how could you let him do this to me?

"Now Louis calm down.
You're scaring the other passengers."

SOUND: KICK DECK CHAIR

SOUND: SEA SOUNDS INCREASE

You should be the scared one Charlie.
How would you like to go overboard.

"Louis, mon amie.
It was the only way to get you to--
This is for your own good.
Lijntje agrees. Don't you Lijntje?"

Is this true Lijntje?
Look at me...

Sweet Lijntje. She never says a word.
Charlie must have bullied her into it while I was
passed out. He probably hired a couple of goons to
carry me down to the docks. Then a bribe for some
ship's attendant to look the other way while they dump
me in a cabin.

"Louis, There's no turning back now. We left Cherbourg
almost 10 hours ago. We'll be in Dublin by tomorrow
morning. I've already arranged a date for the fight
with the Irish promoter. It's only a month away.

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Training starts now! I want six laps of the ship before breakfast, off you go Siki. My world champion. My battling ape."

SIKI - Past

The Battling Siki.
That's what the whole world calls me.
Not my real name - Louis Fall.

Charlie says he couldn't think of a more unfortunate name for a boxer than... "fall".

I'm -
"A savage jungle ape that can't be tamed.
My skull is so thick, I feel no punches."

I've never even seen a jungle. I grew up in the port of St. Louis in Senegal. We had nothing. We fished the harbour for food and dived shipwrecks for anything we could sell. I had barely learned to walk by the time I was swimming through underwater graveyards. Stealing from the dead.

Then one day a white woman sees me. She says she's a famous actress from Germany. And she'd like to take me home with her. I'm perfect for one of her shows she says.

A baby savage! She already has lions and tigers that can do the most wonderful tricks she says.

My mother tells me to go with the lady. There's nothing for me here she says. I can still remember the tears in her eyes.

That's the last I saw of my family. Sometimes I wonder if they're still there, in St. Louis?

LIZZIE - Present

I'm absolutely bricking it.
Bridgy would you stop turning around to see if I'm following you and concentrate on where you're going.
It's not my fault I'm falling behind, the chain on this yoke keeps sticking on me and the basket weights a ton.

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God I haven't the faintest where we are. I just hope Bridgy knows where *she's* goin'.

Lots of soldiers around tonight. The cheek of that one-patting down an old man. Do they think we're all out to kill them?

Oh, here's Bridgy slowing up finally.

"Lizzie, that's it up there on the left." She says.

I hope she's right.

Grand so. Here we go. The picture house is open for business. The 8pm showing has already started. They're all in there watching the newsreel about now I'd say.

No Free Staters or CID in sight.
I'm to go in as far as the foyer and leave Bridgy holding the bikes outside.

I have the mine. Jaysus where's the fuse for it?
It's in the basket somewhere. I put it in there myself.

I have it. Bridgy, stop lookin' at me like I'm an eejit.

Fuse attached and lit. We've got 2 minutes. That's long enough of a warning for anyone too close.

SOUND: FIZZING

The smell off the fuse - fizzing away in my hand.

Everyone is in the theatre. Wait there's still an auld lad behind the sweets stand.

I have my announcement memorised.

"This establishment is in violation of the Public Amusements order!
You've got 30 seconds to get out of here before the place gets lit up."

He's not moving. Probably in shock the poor crater.

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"Go on Mr. Get out. Now!

This fuse is burning away fast.
I'll throw it in the ticket booth over there.
Bridgy is still there holding my High Nelly, thank God.
Let get out of here.

The bike's a lot lighter without the mine in it or
maybe that's just the adrenaline pouring outta me.
Where's Bridgy?

She's shouting after me - "He's clear."
So the auld lad got out.

We don't have long now before it..
My heart is racing. We must be about 200 yards up the
road at this stage.

But.. there's no sound of any explosion.

"It should have gone off by now."
Bridgy says - stating the obvious.

I know that. I lit the fuse meself.

"Did you not light the fuse?" The gaul on her.

I did.

"Well, either the fuse blew out or the mine is a dud."
She says.

"Are you sure you lit it girl?"

I'm sure. I say.

"Right. Well then I hope for your sake it was a dud.
Otherwise we'll look like a right pair of feckin'
amateurs."

I check the paper the next day. Lucky for us it was a
dud - "Failed to detonate" it says.

Our mission was nothing compared to the string of
antics going on lately.

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The Rotunda theatre there is still smoking away after being lit up last month and a mine went off at the cinema on Abbey street last week. Injured eight civilians they said. They were well warned a course.

A couple of our lads even went and fired a few rounds over the heads of some golfers out at portmarnock golf course last weekend.

Fooooouuur!

SOUND: GUNSHOTS

Scared the shite outta them.

But nothin' is stopping the Free Staters from executing our lads. Twenty in Kerry the other week. Now they've executed more than the Brits ever did. Well done lads. I hope you're proud of yourselves.

So the Chief says we have to show them who's actually running the country. We're issuin' an order to all Irish citizens.

It goes...

SOUND: CLEARS THROAT

"It is ordered that a time of national mourning be proclaimed, all sport and amusements be suspended, all picture houses and theatres and other places of public amusement be closed, especially horse riding, hunting, coursing, dancing and outdoor sports. Anyone refusing this order will be treated as an enemy of the Republic."

A few days after our trip to the pictures, Bridgy reemerges. She says the Battalion Commander and the Quartermaster want to see us.

Oh shite. They'll want to know what went wrong with the mine.

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SIKI - Past.

The actress lady puts me in her travel trunk. She says I'm not to make a sound while they load me on the ship but she'll come find me as soon as we're out at sea.

I'm so afraid in the dark, I don't know how much time has passed, whether it's night or day. Eventually I hear her calling me.

"Madame!" I shout back.

I'm banging the trunk as hard as I can.

"Louis!"

I hear her getting closer. She opens the case.

I'm about to jump out but she says, No. I can't. I have to stay hidden until we get to Marseille. She leaves me some food and water, then shuts the lid again. I'm back in the dark.

I get woken up when the trunk starts moving violently. I can hear men shouting and banging. Light spills in through the key hole.

And then everything is quiet again. So I wait... And wait... Nothing.

When the light from outside the trunk turns to darkness I know something has gone wrong. She's not coming. I force the case open. I'm alone.

I sleep on the streets of Marseille for more nights than I want to remember.

I learn to fight my way out of situations. I'm good at it. People start paying me to fight. In warehouses, dock yards, clubs. Eventually hotels and theatres.

(laughs)

I spend my money on Whiskey, Caviar, Champagne, tailored suits and women. They say "How civilized I look for a boxing ape."

When the war breaks out they say I have to join up. I

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won't get any more fights in the ring if I don't go fight the Kaiser first. I'm no coward. I saw hell at the Somme. They gave me a medal for it.

Nothing much changes after the war. I still search for fights anywhere I can get them.

Charlie starts turning up at my bouts. He says he can get me a world championship fight. He knows the right people he says. He says he'll get me to America.

How would I like to fight Jack Jonson some day? Well, he can make it happen he says.

LIZZIE - Present

Oh Jesus, I'm sweating bullets.
Relax Lizzie, you've done nothing wrong.
It'll be grand. I'm sure he's a reasonable man.

"How a ya Lizzie."

Okay, he's smiling. That's not too bad.

"You haven't been in Dublin long have you girl?"

About a year now I suppose.

"But you're from Dungarvan aren't you. You're a Keating aren't you?"

I am. I say.

"And you're not married."

I'm not no. Are you?

Oh Jesus. Why did I say that?

Sir. We're sorry about the cinema job. The mine didn't go off.

"Ah don't worry about that. You kept yourself together. That's the main thing."

Oh thank God. He doesn't mind the mine.

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"We've got another job for ye ladies. A very important job. We need people who can keep their heads and who can go places unnoticed. You've proven you can do both."

"You come from a good fighting family Lizzie. Your brother, God rest him. He was some solidier."

LIZZIE - Past

I'm not surprised he's heard of my family. Our house down in Dungarvan was practically military HQ during the Tan war. The whole lot of us had to do our bit for the cause.

I remember my first job. I was to get the train up to Dublin with my sister Cathy.

We met the Quartermaster in the Clarence Hotel and he gave us a pile of revolvers and bullets for the lads back down home. Cathy said we should fill our suitcases with Knickers and night dresses and hide the guns under them. So it might embarrass any Tans or RIC men from rooting around in our unmentionables. We were on the train back down that evening. Jesus the weight of the cases almost kilt us.

When we got home to Dungarvan the station platform was packed with Tans. He had to walk right through them.

One of them goes to lift Cathy's case off the train for her. If they felt the weight of it, they might think to search it, so she shouts out.

"I've no need of help from the likes of you."

They tell us to "fack off" with ourselves then and they leave us walk on. I was petrified.

There was always a supply of arms hidden around our house. Ammunition up the chimney. Revolvers under the baby's cot. Riffles stuck in the thatched roof.

The Brits would raid the house every so often. They'd turn the place upside down. It used to put my mother in some state.

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They came bursting in one Sunday-- There was a bandolier full of bullets draped over the chair in the dairy room. We all thought we were done for. The eejits upended the whole house but didn't see what was right in front of them.

My grandmother said they missed it only for her praying to St. Anthony to blind them. I'd say it was more to do with the smell of drink off them than St. Anthony.

SIKI - Past.

After eking out, fight after fight--
When I finally get me my first world title shot it comes with a catch.

It's against Gorgeous George Carpenter.

He was the reigning world light heavyweight champion. A French man. A movie star. A war hero and of course, white.

The bout was billed as the "gentleman vs. the savage".
I don't have to tell you who was who.

I knew I could easily take him. Then I would set my sights on Johnson. I wanted Johnson more than anything.

Charlie sits me down a few days before the Carpenter fight in Paris.

"You're going down in the Sixth" he says.

Fuck you Charlie. I'm not diving.

"This is how it's going to work Louis. This is the only way. The next one will be for real. Then we'll go after Johnson. If you don't do this you're finished."

Does Carpenter know? I say. Is he in on this?

Charlie just says that's no concern of mine. That means he is.

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I'm to slip in the second round to let everyone know the fix is on.

On the night of the fight there's a man-made mist over the ring. A mixture of cigarette smoke and steam collected from the thousands of hot bodies squeezed into the arena.

When George walks out he's showered with cheers and rose petals. I walk out to and avalanche of boos and banana skins.

It's scheduled for twenty rounds but I know it'll be over in six. I won't even break a sweat. I slip in the second. It's on. George knows it and so does the referee.

But in the third George starts talking to me. "Go back to the jungle Siki." What is he doing? Is he trying to get me to fight him for real?

Just as the bell rings and we turn to our corners he thumps me one in the back of the head. "Feel that? I thought your head is too thick to feel anything." He says.

I spin round and land one to his lower spine. The ref pulls us apart.

I've had it with the gentleman George. Charlie sees it in my eyes.

"Now Siki remember. The Sixth!".

I'm not listening to him. My eyes are fixed on Carpenter.

As soon as the bell for the Fourth rings I rush out and start pummeling Carpenter.

He spits in my face. Kicks me in the shins but nothing can stop me. I know I have to finish this now. If I have to go back to my corner Charlie with just throw in the towel. He'll say I'm injured. No, I'm finishing this now.

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Finally I land the perfect blow. I can feel Carpenter's check bone collapse into his face with the force of my right hook. He back-peddles for a few steps before falling straight over.

He's out. But there's no count! The referee disqualifies *me*.

Trip. He says. I tripped Carpenter.

He declares Carpenter the winner even though he's still flat on his back, unconscious.

The crowd are enraged. They hurl their chairs at the ring. A gang tries to grab the referee.

The crowd start chanting "Siki gange, Siki gange, Siki gange."

They're refusing to leave the arena.

After an hour the judges give in and declare me the winner. But there's no ceremony or presentation.

Charlie is furious with me. The French boxing commission are furious. They're even more incensed when I tell the press that there was a fix in but that I couldn't go along with it.

"Was George in on it?" they ask. I say I don't know.

The boxing commission deny it of course. They come up with some bullshit reason to suspend my French boxing license. Even if I could find someone to challenge me, it's illegal for me to fight in France.

Charlie leaves me. He says he's done with my antics. I don't care.

Fuck Charlie, fuck the boxing commission and fuck Gorgeous George, the war hero.

I buy a lion cub.

And (laughs)

I walk him down the Champ Elysee on a leash, while I'm in my best top hat and tails.

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It made for a great picture in the paper. I'm the most famous man in town. I'm the World Champion, I can do whatever I please. They're going to talk about me so I might as well give them something to talk about.

Lijntje says we should get out of Paris. She wants to keep me away from the bars and nightclubs. I know she wants to go back to Holland, near her family. But I also know they don't want her back as long as she's with me.

People hate me even more when they find out I married a white woman. Charlie never lets her come to the fights. She never comes to the clubs or bars.

LIZZIE - Past

My little brother Pat was the favourite. A Mammy's pet. Fierce popular with all the lads and the girls were always after him. Trouble was the Tans were after him too. They wanted him dead or alive.

He was the leader of his column. The day he died was the day our family fell apart. Mam never got over it.

His column was sent off to wreck a bridge down in the valley. So British army convoys couldn't cross the river.

They had no explosives or anything, so they just went at it one night with pick axes and hammers.

Course they didn't make much of a dent and morning was fast approaching. But the lads were as stubborn as that bridge, they kept at it.

Along comes a Tan convoy at the crack of dawn. A few of the lads didn't have enough time to get away so Pat decides to ambush the convoy. Pin them down for a few minutes so as the lads still on the road can get away.

A bullet caught Pat in the stomach before they could move off.

He couldn't walk and the lads had no car or cart. They dragged him up the road to Whites' farm and hid him in

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the corner of the field, down in a ditch.

And that's where he died. Twenty six years old is all he was.

When word reached the house we knew we had to get to the body before the Tans did. Who knows what they'd do with him. And if they found him in Whites, well who knows what they'd do to them too.

My Father, Mother, sister, brother all got up into the cart. Nobody was stopping me from going too. It was a quiet ride down into the valley.

None of us cried when we saw his body. It didn't really look like Pat. It was like a waxwork of him. His eyes were closed. His clothes were stained black with dried blood.

We got him up into the cart and covered him over with hay. All the way back up to the house I was praying we wouldn't get stopped. I'm not sure we could have held it together.

We couldn't properly wake him or bury him. So all we did was wait til nightfall then we buried him down in O'Farrell's field. It was just ploughed that week so no one would notice anything disturbed.

My Father swore that when the war was done with we'd move him to a proper cemetery and he'd get a military funeral.

But the war was never done with. All that happened was one shower got replaced by another.

The Tan war took one brother and then my sister goes and marries a Free Stater.

None of us went to the wedding. My father wouldn't even utter her name. It was like she never existed.

We worked out ways of talking around any mention of her or my brother Pat. If any visitors mentioned either of them they'd be met with blank faces and silence. They soon learned to stick to small talk in our house.

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SIKI - Past.

A few months after the Carpenter fight Charlie finds me in a bar.

"Training hard I see". He says.

"You know I prefer to do my work outs on the dance floor. And if I feel like sparring, I can just refuse to pay the bill."

That gets a laugh out of him.

"What do you want Charlie?"

He leans in and says

"I've got you a contender, a venue and a purse. What do you say to that?"

I say

"What's the catch this time? I know it's not in France. And England and America have refused to let me fight there. So it's not Johnson I'll be fighting.

"There's no catch at all. He says.

"This is a legitimate fight with a proper contender."

"It's with Mike McTigue a very impressive Irish boxer, working the American circuit. The East coast."

He and his manager were at the Carpenter fight.

So we are going to America?

"Not yet." He says. They want the fight in Dublin... in Ireland.

I'm not fighting some boxcar Paddy in Ireland. Isn't there still a war going on over there? I'm done being shot at.

And if I fight there then there's no chance in hell the English will ever let me fight in London.

Charlie has all his answers ready. He always does.

"He's a good fighter. But not so good that you can't take him. He's known in America. So beating him is your

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best route there. All the American news men will be over reporting on this.

Yes, there are still some disputes amongst the Irish, it's just farmers and peasants. They've guaranteed us it'll be safe. You'll have your own private guard. The Irish are keen to show the world that they can stage an event like this. So they're not going to let anyone ruin it.

And the English. Who cares about them. You want to fight in New York not London don't you?"

I'm still not convinced. I'm not fighting in a bombed out backwater against a paddy nobody. I deserve better. I'm the world champion here.

Charlie stays calm, just says Okay fine, well let's just forget about it for now and have a few drinks. He's buying he says.

Next thing I know I'm waking up on a ship in the middle of the Irish Sea.

LIZZIE - Past

After the war the Tans were gone but the house still got raided.

By a bunch of jumped up boys playing solider, in their "official" uniforms. All they were really interested in doin' was settling old scores.

They came banging on the door one night with only myself and Mam in the house. Me father was down in the pub. Mam did her drinkin' in her room. She was out for the count.

A bunch of them tear the place a sunder. I know who they are.

One brute satisfies his duty passion on me.

Then they leave.

I have to tell Mam my situation. She just looks right through me.

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They both stop talking to me.

Father Delaney arrives in his car the next month and takes me up to the Nuns in Dublin. And then I'm gone... Like my brother and sister... As if I never existed.

They take my baby boy off to a rescue agency. "It's for the best". They say.

SIKI - Present

When we arrive in Ireland, a crowd are already there waiting.

"What do you think Of Ireland Siki?"

I thought it would be greener.

"Did you bring your pet Lion?"

I left him back home. He gets sea sick."

"Are you concerned about your safety in light of the Amusement Order?"

What is he talking about?

One of the Irish organizers quickly responds; "The Irish people need not heed any order that is not issued by the Irish Government. All Amusements will continue to operate normally, including the first ever world championship boxing match to be staged in Eire. It will go ahead as scheduled on St. Patrick's day at the Scala theatre in Dublin and we encourage anyone who still hasn't bought a ticket to do so before the event sells out."

These kind of questions keep coming...

"Will there be extra security measures at the venue or in the surrounding..."

Suddenly I'm bundled away and on to a train by several heavily armed men-- My personal guard.

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They pace up and down the train patting down passengers before removing them from my carriage. One moves to pat me down but I tense my arm muscles.

"Sorry Mr. Siki." He says.

"They're the biggest arms I've ever seen. No need to pat you down. We'll take care of you. Don't worry."

Charlie are you trying to avoid me?

Charlie. Charlie! What's this amusements order they're talking about? Why are they asking me if I'm worried about my personal safety?

"Nothing to worry about Siki. Just some local radicals. They're trying to use the press from the fight to kick up a fuss. You're of no concern to them."

Then he says;

"The locals really seem to be excited about this fight, no? There must have been a hundred people there waiting for us."

"Why don't we open our training sessions up to the public? For a small fee of course."

That's Charlie. Nothing scares him except maybe the thought of losing out on an opportunity to make a few more francs.

But he says that opening sparring matches to the public will win them over. Get them in our corner. So on the night of the fight the audience could influence the judges in our favor.

Convincing the judges to rule against an Irish man, in Ireland on St. Patrick's day will require a lot more than opening our training sessions.

What if I tried out some of their bars? Matched the locals drink for drink? Win them over that way?

One of my private guardsmen speaks up;

"We don't advise that Mr. Siki. We wouldn't want to lose you in a crowded surrounding. "

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I'm the only Black man in Ireland! You won't lose sight of me easily.

LIZZIE - Present

"You kept yourself together. That's the main thing."
The commander says to me.

"We've got another job for ye ladies. A very important job. Have ye heard of this fight they're planning for St. Patrick's day? Well you'll have two mines this time."

Everyone's goin' mad for this boxing match. There's newspaper men in from all around the world. This is our chance to show the world what we think of this sham government we're left with.

Meself and Bridgy walk past the venue for the fight a few days before St. Patricks day. To see where would be best to drop the mines. We keep on going up the street until we get to the Rotunda. There's a queue of people out the door.

What's goin' on? I ask a fella.

"We're going to get a look at the Battling Siki." He says.

"He's having an open training session today. They say he fights like a crazed savage. I'm bringing the young lad for a look."

We report back to the Commander. He already knows all about it.

"Siki has his own personal guard." The Commander says. "They've put a CID unit on him."

The CID. Mick Collin's old murder squad. Those boys don't mess around. They started back in the Tan war picking off the crown's G men... now they're after us. They were made an official inteligenge unit by the Free Staters but they're not like the rest of them. They run themselves. They shot first, ask questions later. But if they do catch you, they have ways of getting information out of you.

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So they'll be on duty for the night of the fight, in plain clothes with Thompsons under their overcoats .

I don't want anyone to get hurt but violence is the only thing they understand.

Am I worried that innocent people might be injured or even killed on account of my actions?

Well, they've all been warned.

SIKI - Present

An envelope is slipped under my hotel room door. I open it up. The handwriting looks frantic and angry but it's not in any language I understand. I show it to one of my guards on the way to training. He says it's in Gaelic but he won't translate it. Whatever it says, it's not good.

LIZZIE - Present

My battalion commander says they sent messages to both fighters. Urging them to call it off or face the consequences. Then I hear the feckin' eejits wrote the messages in Irish. Did they expect a French-Senegalese lad to be able to read Irish?

SIKI - Present

It's fight night.

How many soldiers do they need?

Theres a truck load of them ahead of the car and another truck load behind us. That must be a least twenty.

I wonder if McTigue has as many? He probably has more.

The theatre is full to the rafters. So much for the order affecting attendance. There must be two thousand out there. It's so loud. I can barely her myself think over all the singing and stomping feet.

I'm the World Champion. Why am I walking out first?

Ah yes, go on. Boo me. I'll soon shut you up.

McTigue is talking his time. Here he is. Go on soak up those cheers.. while you can.

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There are soliders everywhere. They're surrounding the ring. Pushing the crowd back. They're standing guard at all the exits as well.

LIZZIE - Present

Typical Bridgy. She's after speeding off on me again. Slow down. Right there's the General Post office. The theatre should be just after it to the left. We're to cycle right past it until we see the next lane. Throw our mines in and get away as quick as we can.

The place is teaming with guards and soldiers. They've blocked the road off to cars.

The fight must of started by now. That's the crowd cheering inside.

Christ. There's soldiers everywhere. It's a death trap. We should just keep on cycling past the alley. Forget this whole thing...

Shite, there's Bridgy gone down the alley.
Right. Well, here we go.
Light the fuse. Throw.
Go on Bridgy get rid of yours.

There should be a side door into the theatre down there.

Now we've got less than a minute to get away.

Stay calm. Don't cycle too fast.
Keep going Bridgy. Don't look behind you.

Oh Jesus, What are those young lads doing there.
Should I say something? Are they far enough away. God help them.

SIKI - Present

SOUND: BELL

Here we go. First round.

Come on McTigue.

(MORE)

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(cont'd)

Im over 6 kilos heavier than him but he's 8 centimeters taller and his reach is longer.

He's a heavy hitter. This may take a while.

It's not pretty but I..

SOUND: EXPLOSION

LIZZIE - Present

That's one gone off. Wheres the second?

SOUND: SECOND EXPLOSION

Don't look back. Keep peddling.

"Hold on there." It's a solidier.
Oh god he's stopping us.

He's barely looking at me. Has his eyes fixed over my shoulder.

I have to look round and see what's gong on.

There's massive plume of dust coming out of the alley and engulfing the street.

Soldiers are shouting and running down towards it. They disappear into the haze.

Don't run in ye eejits." A soldier shouts.
"There might be more blasts. Wait til it clears."

SIKI - Present

The whole room is shaking.
The doors at the side of the theatre have blow open and a solidier is lying ob the ground.

The crowd are rushing forward, trying to break through the ring-side soldiers' cordon.

McTigue isn't moving. He must be as shocked as I am.

More soldiers are running to the side of the theatre. They're pushing the doors closed. They must be blocking anyone from leaving the venue.

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(cont'd)

Is that the sound of gunfire outside?

Why aren't they getting us out of here? The crowd are going to storm the ring.

A soldier is shouting"

"Anyone tries to enter the ring and we'll shoot".

SOUND: BELL RINGING

Do they think ringing that bell is going to calm the crowd?

"Everyone, It's fine. Quiet down now. Quiet."

Theres a priest in the middle of the ring. Pleading with the crowd.

"Quiet please. The officials have told me that there was a minor disturbance outside but It's being dealt with. For our own safely, we have to remain inside the theatre. Everyone calm down so we can resume the boxing match."

What? Resume the boxing match? Are they mad?

LIZZIE - Present

The dust is starting to clear. I can make out figures. The young lads are in the middle of the road. The blast must have thrown them 10 yards.

SOUND: GUNFIRE

Gunshots? Who are they firing at. None of our lads are here.

Ye'd better get out of here." The soldier is saying. Go on. Before ye get hurt."

He's waving us on.

(CONTINUED)

SOUND: GUNFIRE

Who are they shooting? The stupid feckers are shooting at each other. They must be.

SIKI - Past.

The referee signals us to come out of our corners. McTigue and I sheepishly move forward and the bell sounds for the next round. We just stand there looking at each other for a second or two but the crowd starts shouting and jeering.

I hit him one, as reminder that we've still got a match on here. He swipes back and we focus on the fight in the ring and not the one going on outside.

I open up a cut over Mctigue's eye in the 11th. He hits me hard on the top of the head in the 15th. So hard that his hand recoils and drops. I think he's broken a finger.

We go at it blow for blow right to the end of the 20th round. I'm exhausted but I land a few more to his head and his eye before the bell sounds.

SIKI - PresentSOUND: BELL RING

That's it. It's over. I've won I'm sure of it. even if it's ruled a draw, I retain the title. There's no way he has beaten me.

The crowd is so loud. I can barely hear the announcer.

"By unanimous decision the... NEW Light heavy-weight champion..

What? The Ref is holding McTigue's arm up.
Fixed again!
Where's Charlie? I'll kill him.

I have to get out of here. The noise of the crowd is deafening. I need a drink.

"Sorry Mr. Siki." My guard is saying to me.

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(cont'd)

"They're not letting anyone leave. They're still trying to round up the irregulars who planted the bombs outside."

Bombs?

"Yes Mr. Siki. But we think we've got them pinned down now."

Was anyone hurt?

"That's no concern of yours Mr. Siki."

"We'll soon have you out of here and back on a boat in the morning."

SIKI - Past

They bundle me into a car and tell me to keep my head down. I can hear gunfire as we speed along the streets.

Charlie swears he wasn't in on any fix. But that doesn't mean the fight was straight either.

"What are you complaining about Louis?

You're still getting a third of the purse and with all the money we made from the open training sessions, we've come out alright."

And I wasn't blown up or shot. I say.

"Exactly, Now let's go get you drunk."

LIZZIE - Present

The fight is all over the paper. They actually finished the fight?! Even with bombs goin' off. I have to hand it to them, they're determined.

The Irish boxer won a course. Let me skip down to the bit about the explosion.

"Botched bombing attempt." It says.

"Didn't disrupt the fight or deter the 2,000 strong crowd. Although all patrons were forced to remain in the theatre until a running gun battle was concluded

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outside on Sackville street. A sixteen year old boy was injured by flying debris from the initial blast. Two State soldiers received gunshot wounds. Two men, presumed Irregulars were taken into custody at Oriel House but were later released without charge."

The feckers were shooting at each other! They even arrested their own fellas.

The young lad though. How badly was he injured I wonder?

Bridgy is fairly shook up after it. There's been no word at all from the Commander.
Is that them finished with us now?

How long is this going to go on for? Maybe it's time to get out. I don't see us winning this fight. It's all a fix.

Bridgy is talking about going to America. She has a cousin in New York City. Sur' I might as well go with her.

SIKI - Present

Where to next the Charlie?
There's nothin' in France. I'm nothin' to them. I'm not the World Champion anymore.

"How about New York?" Charlie says.
"Let's go after Johnson. Pick up a few purses along the way."

Okay Charlie. I'll go willingly this time.

SOUND: HORN BLOWS

Epilogue

The Irish Civil War came to close in 1923 when, facing impossible odds, IRA rebels dumped their arms. Ten months of vicious fighting turned former comrades against each other. For many people, it was better not to speak of that period and to pretend to forget. The bitterness of the conflict cast a long shadow over the new state for decades to come.

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Siki became a notorious figure in New York's Hell's Kitchen. He never got another title shot and never fought Jack Johnson. Bar brawls, numerous fines and nights in jail for drunken behaviour became a common occurrence for him.

Just a few short years after losing his world title in Dublin, the Battling Siki lost his life at the age of 28. On December 15 1925 Siki was shot twice in the back on a dark New York street. He managed to crawl almost forty feet in the direction his home before he collapsed and died. His murder was never solved.

Lizzie eventually settled in Hoboken, New Jersey. She married and raised her family there. She never returned to Ireland and never found out what became of her first son, who she named Pat.