

Journey-Man

By

Written by  
Joseph Bologna

©AEGIS Productions

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Dark and empty, the room's metallic lockers reflect a faint light bleeding in from the nearby hall.

TED BALDWIN, in boxing apparel with his head hunched over his lap, sits on a bench facing the hall.

Numerous, echoing quotes grow louder and louder. They all sound over each other, muddling each message.

{voices}

Ted quickly jabs a locker to his right with a thundering WHACK, and all the voices immediately silence.

He stands up, hesitates, and continues forward toward the hall.

As he walks, the voices incrementally intensify back to the volume and clutter they once were.

{voices}

INT. HALL

Ted reaches double doors with harsh lights peering in from the cracks.

His gloved hands tremble as the voices' intensity remains.

Ted pushes through the doors.

INT. RINGSIDE

An illuminated boxing ring is surrounded by dark seats that sparkle with sporadic camera flashes.

MUSIC and YELLS from the small crowd mostly drain out negative voices that still sound off, muffled.

Ted makes his way to the ring with his head faced forward, expressionless.

INT. RING

Ted enters the ring and his music fades out.

Yells from the crowd are indiscernible from voices, more spaced out, in his head.

(CONTINUED)

Across from Ted stands his OPPONENT and the REFEREE gestures for the two to meet in the middle.

The two walk forward and Ted holds out his hands for sportsmanship. His opponent drops his gloves down on them, forcefully.

Ted returns to his corner, shaking his head.

As he leans into the corner, the voices become more concentrated as the surrounding sounds deafen.

Referee signals the bell to ring and it RINGS.

Ted and his opponent begin their short journey to each other, both of them guarding their faces in stances.

The voices intensify more and flashes of them personified intercut with the slowly approaching opponent.

Ted's dazed, forward look glosses over just in time to focus on an approaching fist which connects with his left eye.

CUT TO:

Ted GASPS back to consciousness, awakening face-down on the mat.

REFEREE  
...SIX!...SEVEN!

Ted PUSHES himself to his feet and is accosted by the Referee.

REFEREE  
Look at me!

TED  
I'm good!

REFEREE  
Can you continue?

TED  
I'M GOOD!

The referee signals for the match to continue and Ted is instantly hit with another fist.

Ted falls back onto the ropes and is grappled by his opponent.

The bell RINGS, ending the round.

(CONTINUED)

The fighters return to their corners. Ted hunches over, as we've seen him before, and the voices again return.

HENRY (O.S.)  
Mr. Baldwin.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

Ted, face full of dark bruises and sitting in a flimsy chair, jumps awake and looks up to HENRY, stoically looking at him with furrowed brows. They are seated on opposite ends of a circle of men and women.

HENRY  
Back in the ring?

TED  
Yeah.

HENRY  
You could at least tell us about it  
this time.

Ted shifts in his seat.

TED  
Maybe next round.

HENRY  
One of these days I will expect you  
to say something again.

TED  
And maybe one of these days I'll  
have something to say that you'll  
like.

HENRY  
Whether or not I agree with your  
method of dealing with anger is  
irrelevant to the purpose of these  
meetings. We come here to speak  
about our problems, to help each  
other. The least you could do is  
try.

Ted and Henry share a glance, neither budging.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Stacy, you were just telling us about how you exercise to clear your mind. Care to elaborate?

Ted and the group's attention turns to STACY.

STACY

Sure, um, it just helps me forget, y'know? Jogging, running, yoga; focusing on those and just trying to be productive distracts me from feeling low.

HENRY

Very good, it's important to have things we can find solace in and begin to heal through; a coping mechanism, per se. Things that can help us naturally and progressively come to terms with our issues and become better prepared to deal with them. Does anyone else have an example to share?

MICHAEL raises his hand.

HENRY

Yes, Michael?

MICHAEL

Whenever I feel overwhelmed I know I find comfort in books.

HENRY

Good, good. Christine?

CHRISTINE

Well...it is kind of trading one problem for another, but smoking calms my nerves.

Some murmuring in the group, Ted rolls his eyes.

HENRY

I guess I'll be referring you to the other group that meets here on Thursdays.

Most of the groups chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

Denise, you've spoken in-depth before about your faith. Charles, we know you draw. How helpful in overcoming our day-to-day struggles do we find our pleasures and...poisons, in some cases, to be? Stacy, how effective is exercise for you?

STACY

It helps a lot, its a great catalyst for release but...

HENRY

It's not a long-term solution.

STACY

No. It helps, it does, but there are only so many hours in the day it's an option. There are still times that I'll feel just...overwhelmed. I'll lash out, I'll scream at a friend who's just trying to help, I'll punch a wall.

HENRY

That's not your fault. Sometimes these things will happen but we--

Ted scoffs to himself, shaking his head.

HENRY

Do my ears deceive me? Ted, is there a frog in your throat or do you have something to say?

Ted hesitates.

TED

I just think it's funny that there's nothing wrong with lashing out until I do it.

HENRY

What you do is different and you know it.

TED

You're right, it is; what I do is sport. It's concentrated. It's regulated.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY

The problem isn't what you're doing, it's how you're going about it.

TED

What other ways are there to go about it? I box other boxers. I punch people who are perfectly content with the possibility of being punched.

HENRY

But it isn't them you're punching, is it?

Ted stares back at Henry, a look of surprise crosses his otherwise stone face.

INT. RING

Ted sits in the corner we left him in. He looks up across the ring to his opponent who changes into one of the people we've seen him flash into before.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

TED

I save my emotions for the ring. That's my coping mechanism, right? Stacy exercises, Mike reads, Denise prays, Christine smokes. All of them do something to distract themselves from their problems. I square up with my mine, I face them, I punch them in the face. I don't need nicotine. I don't need Steven King. I don't need God. I need a ring and an opponent.

INT. RING - VARIOUS

Ted fights his opponent.

TED

A guy walks into me, I don't say anything. I save it for the ring. Some lady cuts me off in traffic, I don't honk back. I save it for the ring. Any anger I feel, and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TED (cont'd)  
agitation I face, I hold it back  
and I let it out where it's ok to.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

HENRY  
What you're doing is redirecting  
your anger--

TED  
What I'm doing works--

HENRY  
--you're passing accountability off  
of yourself and onto--

TED  
I'm not hurting anybody not willing  
to get hurt.

Henry sighs and leans forward in his chair.

HENRY  
What you have is a short-term  
solution; you're bailing water out  
of a boat as you sink in the middle  
of the ocean. Sooner or later,  
you're going to drown.

Ted again stares deeply toward Henry. Voices once more flood  
his mind.

INT. RING

Ted again remains in the corner, drowning in the noise  
traffic and waiting for the next round to begin.

HENRY (O.S.)  
It amazes me, Ted...

Ted shakes off the voices.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

HENRY  
You come back time and time again  
yet leave no further along than you  
are when you arrive. What even  
brings you here?



INT. RING

Ted looks across the ring to his opponent, being attended to by his cornerman, and then back behind himself; alone.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

TED

A friend suggested this.

HENRY

And what does this friend think of your progress?

INT. RING

Ted sinks backward into his corner.

TED (O.S.)

I don't think she cares anymore.

The bell rings and the two fighters rise. They hastily make their way toward each other and begin trading blows.

Voices begin seeping back into Ted's head.

A wild left hook catches Ted in the ear, unleashing a sharp, deafening RINGING and disorientating him.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

The ringing continues, and Henry's mouth, though in motion, produces no audible sound.

Henry gestures toward Stacy, and Ted turns to her to see another set of silently moving lips.

INT. RING

Ted steadies himself on the ropes and briefly smirks.

He turns back to his opponent and claims the upper hand. As he continues his beating, sound progressively returns.

The bell rings again and the two men are separated.

Ted sits back in his corner and is struck with a pencil.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

Ted is shaken back to attention. He is wearing different clothes than last we saw; a new day.

He picks a pencil up from his lap and looks up to Henry.

HENRY

I don't know which to be more concerned about: that you can't seem to ever focus or that I appear to be putting counting sheep out of a job.

Ted tosses the pencil back to Henry.

HENRY

Who were you fighting this time? A parent of a baby who was crying behind you in a movie? A garbage man who didn't put your trashcan back neatly?

TED

It was actually some old man who threw a pencil at me.

HENRY

Sounds to me like you want me to join you to your next hospital visit.

Ted' smirk drops; he breaks eye contact.

HENRY

Do you want to talk about your last trip to the emergency room?

TED

That wasn't because of boxing.

HENRY

No, just another vice.

TED

I tripped and hit my head--

HENRY

What were you even drinking that much for? I know you aren't the type to--

(CONTINUED)

TED  
I lost my day job.

INT. RING

Ted, still sitting in the corner, looks up to see BOSS (30), standing behind a desk in the opposite corner of the ring.

BOSS  
Why do you keep doing this to  
yourself? Where is your head at?

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

HENRY  
Couldn't balance with boxing?

Ted, looking downward, shakes his head.

HENRY  
Here's a prime example of it having  
a negative impact on your life,  
Ted. Why can't you see that it's  
doing more harm than--

TED  
Because I need it.

Henry freezes where he sits.

TED  
I...I have control in the ring. I  
understand what do do inside the  
ropes. Once I step out?

Beat.

HENRY  
Go on.

TED  
There's just a cloud over me. I  
feel I'm moving in slow motion,  
like I'm up to my neck in water.  
I'm tired all the time but I can't  
sleep unless I fought that night. I  
have no energy until I'm in the  
ring; where I can face my problems,  
where they become malleable.

(CONTINUED)

HENRY  
But you can't punch every problem  
in the face, can you?

INT. RING

Ted glances up to his opponent from his corner but instead  
sees himself in his place.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

TED  
...no. You can't.

INT. RING

Ted sulks in his corner. Voices slowly return.

HENRY (O.S.)  
This process is a two-way street,  
Ted; I can only talk so much.  
Sooner or later, you need to--

DELILAH (O.S.)  
Listen...

INT. LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

DELILAH, (late 30s) enters with a rag in hand from behind Ted  
who is bleeding and seated on a bench. She coughs then  
begins to wipe the blood off of Ted's face.

DELILAH  
If you keep holding your hands that  
low, you're not going to have a  
face left to punch in a few years.  
As big as an improvement as that  
would be...

TED  
I'm pretty messed up, aren't I?

DELILAH  
I've been in that corner since your  
first beat-down. This is nowhere  
near that bad.

(CONTINUED)

TED  
That's not what I meant.

Beat.

Delilah drops her hands onto her lap and her eyes follow.

DELILAH  
You aren't the only person in the world to ever drink one too many and take a spill.

TED  
It's not just that.

DELILAH  
I know, not exactly your best few days. A whole class and job down the drain at once. I feel like you should get a sticker for that, at least. What's the opposite of a gold star?

TED  
A mirror at this point.

DELILAH  
Ok, let's leave beating you up to me and your opponents, huh?

TED  
My professor and boss seem to have a knack for it too.

DELILAH  
Well, maybe they had some points.

Beat.

DELILAH  
Maybe we're going about this the wrong way; maybe fighting it isn't right.

TED  
It's working right now.

DELILAH  
And what if it stops working later?

Ted draws back from Delilah and crosses his arms.

(CONTINUED)

Delilah sinks back, averting her eyes, and coughs again. She adjusts her hair but quickly takes off her wig, revealing a bald head underneath. She gets up and makes her way across the room to her bag which she searches through.

DELILAH

Alright, if you're not gonna listen to me, I have someone else in mind.

She pulls a brochure out of her bag and returns to Ted. She hands it to him. It reads "Dr. Henry Pauche Support Group."

TED

I don't know, this just isn't my kind of thing.

DELILAH

Can't hurt to try, right? He's a good guy. His sessions have helped me deal with...this shit a little better. You just have to be willing to meet him halfway; the only person standing in your way is yourself.

Ted sighs.

DELILAH

If you're not gonna do it for yourself, at least give it a shot for me.

Delilah gets up, leaving the brochure with Ted as she walks back the way she entered.

DELILAH (O.S.)

We might as well find someone you'll listen to.

INT. RING

Ted looks backward to his empty corner.

DELILAH (O.S.)

I'm sure as hell not gonna be here forever.

The bell rings. Ted looks up for a moment, then stands.

FORM CUT TO:

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

Ted sits down, in new clothes again. The other group members take their seats around him.

The door creaks open behind him as Henry enters and makes his way to his seat.

Henry takes his seat.

HENRY

Good afternoon, everyone. Does anyone have any news to share?

Henry brings his mug up to sip.

TED

I do, actually.

Henry nearly drops his mug.

HENRY

My word, Ted. I forgot you could talk.

TED

And I forgot I could listen.

Henry's smirk dissolves and he leans in his chair.

TED

I've spent so much time shutting people out that I never bothered to listen to what they were saying. You of all people should know that.

INT. RING

Ted moves toward his opponent, hesitantly.

TED (O.S.)

For the first time, I faced myself. I've been fighting my problems for so long, but only on the surface-level. I've been stubborn, I've let my pride get in the way of letting people in; people only trying to help.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

TED

I was shifting accountability from myself to other people; blaming every other person I pass on the street for my own lack of control over my emotions. I see that now. Punching my problems hasn't been solving anything.

HENRY

What is it you're telling me, Ted?

Ted holds eye contact with Henry.

INT. RING

Ted straightens up from his fighting stance.

He drops his hands, gloves dangling past his waist.

INT. SUPPORT GROUP

TED

I'm done. I've been a journeyman long enough. It's probably time to reach my destination.

Henry smiles.

HENRY

So what will you do now?

TED

Well...

Ted looks to Michael.

TED

I'm gonna pick up a book.

Ted looks to Stacy.

TED

Maybe try some non-combative exercise.

Ted looks around to Christine and Denise.

(CONTINUED)



TED  
I think I'll leave smoking and the  
big man to you two.

The group members chuckle.

HENRY  
This is a good start, Ted. I'm  
proud of you. How do you feel?

Ted smiles.

TED  
I'm good.

HENRY  
Good.

Beat.

HENRY  
So! I think we've heard enough from  
Journey-Man over here, right? How  
are the rest of us doing?

The group begins to chatter with a newfound energy as Ted  
looks around, listening to them all intently.

CUT TO BLACK