

Radioplay: Cribb and the Black

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1. VIRGINIA 1810. PLAY IN WITH EASY BY BIG WALTER 'SHAKEY' HORTON. BRING UP SOUND OF BOXING MEET IN A VIRGINIA FIELD. HURDY-GURDY PLAYS IN DISTANCE. MOLINEAUX IS IN A TENT, SHADOW BOXING, WARMING UP. THERE IS A LILT AND EMPHASIS IN HIS VOICE LIKE A YOUNG CASSIUS CLAY.

TOM

Life did not begin for me on the day that I was born. I was already past sap-rising time, grown strong by sucking eggs. Then one day in June of 1810 in the glorious state of Virginia, hell started a-hootin for young Tom Molineaux. I won my freedom that day. Freedom I won, that day.

MASTER

(rushing in, half-drunk, in a tizzy) Tom! Tom! I just seen Peyton's fightin boy, Abe. He's like two prize bulls friz together.

TOM

I aint jairy of Abe, no-huh.

MASTER

(a drunken confessional) Yersee, Tom - me and Peyton was up with the owls, and the drinkin made your masser do a foolish thing that may have his whole life gommeed up. I waghered an hundred thousand dollars on you to win today's fight. I did that thing. So if Abe was to whup you like he looks like he's going to, I'll lose my plantation - and you, Tom, I'll lose you. (fierce and cruel) You win that contest, boy, you hear. Don't you dare go down.

TOM LAUGHS, LOUD AND LONG.

(furious, scared) What you laughin at, Tom?

2. FADE UP BOXING MATCH, ABE AND TOM. BARE KNUCKLE PUNCHES. CHEERS OF CROWD. CRASH AS TOM IS FLOORED BY A PUNCH.

ABE (in background) I beat your pappy, I's goina beat you so bad. (laughs big)

MASTER You aint hardly thrown a fist. I'll be ruint, ruint boy....

TOM (breathless) You think on that, masser, and I shall be back presently.....

MORE FIGHT. WE STAY WITH MASTER AND CROWD. TOM TAKES A BEATING. FALLS AGAIN.

HENRIETTA Tom, what you doing to yourself?!

TOM Henrietta, I knows wot I am doing here.

TOM TAKES A BIG HIT. FALLS HARD.

MASTER Hit him, stomach him. Sakes alive, Tom, fight the evil black dog!

TOM (sudden, ice in his tone)....I want my freedom. My free-dom if I puts Abe down. My free-dom and 500 silver dollars in my pocket. My free-dom for your plantation, (in victorious contempt) masser.

MASTER Yeah, sure, okay. You do that, Tom, uh-huh, and I'll give you your paper, I swear I will.

TOM Your hand on the transaction, sir. (slap of their hands, delighted arrogant chuckle) Now just you watch this, how a slave becometh a freeeeee man to-day.

ENERGY OF FIGHT. REPEATED FAST PUNCHES. LAUGHTER FROM TOM. CHEER OF CROWD.

ABE (painful mouth-hurting groans) Where'd you get your punch-strength from, boy!

HENRIETTA That's my Tom! Good boy, Tom!

3. STEPS OF PLANTATION'S BIG HOUSE. CLINK OF MONEY IN A BAG. MASTER HANDS OVER A PAPER.

TOM This piece of paper. This all it takes to make a man free?

MASTER Tis all.

TOM You got one?

MASTER (furious) Slummock yer black feet down that road! You don't belong here no more!

TOM (withdrawing) I hate you. I was born hating you.

MASTER (happy) Will Peyton hates me too - I have his plantation down to the last mule. (suddenly affable) Bye, Tom.

TOM (amused) Bye.....Algernon. (walks away, whistling)

MASTER (calls after) What you going do with your new life, Tom, you and my 500 silver dollars?

TOM (calls back) I shall buy me a passage to England where I will fight the right smart Tom Cribb and become the Champion Boxer of the World. You'll see! You aint heard the last of me. I'm going to punch holes in the sky. (whoops and runs off down the road)

MASTER Mercy be, what have I unleashed into the world.

4. TOM HURRYING DOWN ROAD, HAPPILY CHUNTERING SONG I BOUGHT ME A CAT. HENRIETTA APPROACHING FAST ON A CART, WHIPPING HORSE FORWARD. SHE PULLS UP BESIDE HIM.

HENRIETTA Tom! Tom, you woodscolt! You going without a word, Tom!

TOM (hurrying away) The world is waiting, Henrietta. I have no time for your biddy-pecking now, girl.

HENRIETTA (heartbroken) Tom! We aint been parted a day since we was born!

TOM Aw, don't be drooped up, for I will be a great man in a while, and in another while I shall send for you, uh-huh, perzackley as I have said in our dreams.

MASTER (calls from distance) Henrietta! You come here, girl! Keep away from him! He aint family no more!

5. SHIP BOUND FOR ENGLAND. STORMY NIGHT. SEA FLASHING BY. CREAK OF BOARDS. SNORES. CALLINGS-OUT IN SLEEP. SEA-SICK RETCHING.

TOM I took passage on the Brig Neptune for England. For their book's sake I had need of a full name, so styled myself Thomas Molineaux for the first time, the name history would know me by, though I never did learn to write it down. Molineaux, my old master's name, was now the name of my new master, myself. (pause) I was never so sick, my belly full of leaping bugs, as on that crossing. Fourth night out, between sleep and thinking, I heard a ship pass by on the ocean....and it was full of men goozling and crying, and a rattling of chains...

SAILOR (calls) Who goes there.....?

A SHIPLOAD OF SLAVES MOANING IN THEIR CHAINS.

TOM

Next morning in calm of day I had already forgotten them. But then awhile when Tom Cribb was a-hammering my skull he woke up the memory and after that I thought of them almost every day, those African slaves going to America, and young Tom sailing away again, with them howling in his greedy dreams. (PLAY JUTISH MEDLEY BY GRAINGER) - I was asleep in the rigging when we came to the getting place. If anything was greener than Virginia, this was it. And whiter too - my, those pale faces at the dockside. I stepped into England with hardly a coin in my pockets, and no friend. But my stride was jaunty and I was beautiful to behold.

6. HORSE & DOLPHIN PUB, LONDON. CRICKET MATCH ON THE GREEN. CRY OF 'WELL BOWLED'. APPLAUSE, LAUGHTER FROM THE 'CORINTHIANS' - SPORTS FANS.

CORINTHIAN

Give em Hell, Bill!

TOM

(approaching, over-polite, confidently) Excusing-me, sirs, I am seeking a Mr Bill Richmond, who I understand is a black gentleman like myself.

CORINTHIAN

Dimmee, you're done up - he's just gone in to bat.

TOM

I wish to speak with him but briefly.

**CORINTHIAN'S
PAL**

Send the tyke into the crease, why not? (laughs like a horse) Lushington, give your bat to our ebony friend here.

CLUNK OF BALL ON STUMPS. WAIL OF LAUGHTER AND DELIGHT FROM CORINTHIANS.

CORINTHIAN

(calls) Colly's out! The black's in. (to TOM) You any good?

TOM

I do not know. I have not played this afore.

WAILS OF LAUGHTER ARE BEHIND US AS TOM WALKS OUT TO THE CREASE. WE GO WITH HIM, LEAVING THE CORINTHIANS BEHIND WITH THEIR LAUGHTER AND ENCOURAGEMENTS. RICHMOND HAS A DEEP FRUITY VERY ENGLISH VOICE...

RICHMOND (calls from his crease) You there, at t'other wicket - What in God's Holy name are you?

TOM (calls back) I am Tom Molineaux, free man of Virginia, pugilist, fistic fighter, Champion of America. I have come to seek your help.

RICHMOND Wait, my fellow American, I must receive my next ball!

BALL BOWLED. HIT BY RICHMOND. MILD APPLAUSE.

(calls from his end, already running) Run! Run you cove!

TOM (running up to and past him, then back again during speech) I take it you are Bill Richmond, boxing tutor to the Prince Regent, pugilist of note, who once fought Tom Cribb hisself.

RICHMOND (still running back and forth) Right now I'm a cricketer, and so are you. (he stops, breathless) Now hit that ball when it comes and I'll nosh you for free at my pub yonder.

WE ARE AT RICHMOND'S END, HEARING BOWLER'S RUN, GRUNT AND BOWL. HUGE THWACK. GASP FROM CORINTHIANS, THEN THIGH-SLAPPING LAUGHTER AND ENTHUSIASTIC TIPSY APPLAUSE.

(to himself)Dimmee! That'll not land till the cat has kittens.

FIELDER (small distant voice, pathetic) He's lost our ball.

RICHMOND (calls to the other crease)Well hit - dimmee, missed the name?

TOM (in deepest pride) I am Tom Molineaux, come to England for to fight Tom Cribb for the Championship of the World, with, sir, I hope, your help and advice.

WE GO WITH RICHMOND AS HE APPROACHES
MOLINEAUX.

RICHMOND Take your shirt off, Tom Molineaux. We've a minute while they seek the ball.

TOM REMOVES HIS SHIRT

FIELDER (running up) Blummy! I've never seen muscles like than on any man, black or white. And look at his mauleys, Bill?

RICHMOND You a brawling pug, Tom, or a follower of the sweet science of fisticuffing?

TOM I have the strength and the skill to beat any man. Would someone care to mill with me?

CLUNK OF BALL ON WICKET IN BACKGROUND.

CORINTHIAN Wheee! You're out! (giggles) You're both out!

RICHMOND CHASES AFTER HIM. WE STAY BEHIND WITH
TOM, WHO CHUCKLES.

RICHMOND (while running across the field) Why you nob-pitching scaly prig! That's not our ball you stumped us with!

CORINTHIAN (running) It is! It is!

RICHMOND You Greek! (running back till he's close to TOM and us) Cummon Tom, let's you and me throw everyone in the pond!

TOM Perzactly so!

SQUEALS FROM THE CORINTHIANS, RUNNING IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

TOM (close, laughing while wrestling someone down) I aint had so much fun since I last chased turkeys in the woods.

SPLASHES, SQUEALS, DROWNINGS, SPLUTTERINGS, QUACK OF DISTURBED DUCKS, SINGLE GOBBLE OF TURKEY. LAUGHTER FROM BILL AND TOM.

7. RICHMOND'S LIBRARY. TOM AND RICHMOND COME IN CLUNKING ON THE WOODEN FLOOR. YOUSSTOP CHANTS QUIETLY. DISTANT SOUNDS OF PUB REVELRY.

TOM That plump lady you pecked downstairs. She your wife? (amazed) Does you know she's white?

RICHMOND (intones) 'Tis not a set of feature, or complexion, the tincture of a skin, that I admire.....' bit of Shakespeare, wot! - Eat your steak, Tom - got to keep those shoulders meaty!

TOM (eating gluttonously, shoots questions) Why this room so full of books? Who that singing in the shadows?

RICHMOND This is my library. Old Youssop looks after it for me. I collect books on the subject of Africa. Did they teach you to read?

TOM (eating fast) No schoolhousing. Not a day.

RICHMOND Remember to chew, Tom.

TOM (complains) I'm chewing. - This all yours, this rimation palace?

RICHMOND I made a few bob boxing, dyersee.

TOM You a real black man, or you just come outta coalmine?

RICHMOND

(laughs deeply) I was born a slave in New York, 53 years ago. My mother was a washerwoman to late Duke of Northumberland. He thought me a likely lad, so when the War of the Revolution was done with, he brought me home, gave me an education, and when I took up the pugging, he waved his fogle keenly for me at ringside. (suddenly a new serious tone) I have the science, never lost a fight, dyersee, until the day I stood up afore Tom Cribb. He was a lad then, just off the docks. His bareknuckles bruised me up so badly I was on my back in this room for three years. He killed Jem Belcher. Ikey Pig's a ruin, poor lamb. - Tom, take the candle over there, to Youssop - go on, don't by shy.

CREAKS AS TOM WALKS OVER. BRING UP YOUSSOP'S JEWISH CHANT. HE CHUCKLES TOOTHLESSLY.

YOUSOP

You fight Tom Cribb, my boy - this is what you'll be.

TOM

Mercy me! His face is a hole, all caved in! He got no eyes!

RICHMOND

(gently) Tom Cribb punched them so far into Youssop's head, didn't he my dear, that they are quite lost inside somewhere. A proper milling that was. Goodfellow Cribb, I tell you, is a monster. But just maybe, Tom Molineaux, so are you.

TOM

I am might-nigh as terrible a critter as ever drew breath.

RICHMOND

Oh, I do hope so! For my revenge's sake, wot!

TOM

But I would not wish to make a fellow man into such a wreck as this.

RICHMOND

Ah then, Cribb will beat you.

TOM

Uh-nuh! Not me. Not he. Uh-nuh. I am unbeatable. Un-beatable.

RICHMOND

Anyhow, Cribb hasn't fought in over a year. Who dares challenge him? He's retired, more or less, getting fat enjoying being the champion. - Still, there's plenty other bruisers to mill with.

TOM

I wants Cribb. Beat a great man and you become a greater. I have lived only for two days in this life - on one I fought for and won my freedom, on the second I will vanquish Tom Cribb.

YOUSOP CACKLES WICKEDLY.

8. LONDON. STREET SOUNDS OF CARRIAGES AND STREET MERCHANTS. BRING UP *CHING-A-RING-CHAW* FROM COPLAND'S AMERICAN SONGS.

TOM

I was no longer a friendless man. A man blacker than I grasped my hand and swore to oversee my ructions. And in his yellow eyes under his curly grey brows, I did see the ghost of my father and when I wept for joy in my cot that night, it was also tears of memory I had, of my beforelife. Next day I climbed through the streets of the greatest city on Earth, to the Five's Court in St Martin's Street, for to meet Tom Cribb, who was making an exhibition of hissself there. That day, I met the monster of my life....

FADE MUSIC, BRING UP LOUD CROWD CHATTERING.

BARKER

(barks) Roll up, roll up! One shilling to be hit in the face by the Champion of England, Tom Cribb! Why don't Napoleon invade our sceptered isle - cos he's frightened of being hit in the face by Tom Cribb. One shilling! Roll up!

TOM

That him?! Why he don't look much more than middling peart. He got hair like a pony skipping in a field. Lend me a shilling, Bill!

RICHMOND

You'll have a headache for three days.

9. IN THE QUEUE TO BE HIT BY CRIBB

**COWARDLY
FANCY MAN**

No, Rupert, it'll hurt! I don't want him to hit me, dimmee!

BRAVE SWADDY Gwan and get hit, yer weed. Your grandkiddies will gawp when you tells em you was hit by Tom Cribb hissself in the flesh.

**COWARDLY
FANCY MAN** You first, be a brick, please.

BRAVE SWADDY Yeah, awl right.....

CRIBB (crisp West Country drawl) G'Morning, your honour. Tom Cribb is larky today and pleased to bash you. Close your ogles, here it comes..... (punches him hard)

BRAVE SWADDY Owwww! Me nose. Where's me nose?!

**COWARDLY
FANCY MAN** (laughs at his friend's hurt) Egad, wot a fusspot, wot! He hardly touched your nose. My turn. Don't break the skin, please!

CRIBB There you go!

A SMACKING PUNCH FROM CRIBB. COWARDLY FANCY
MAN'S LAUGHTER STOPS. HE RUNS AWAY CRYING LIKE A
BABY.

TOM My turn has come. Please, sir, hit me with all your might.

CRIBB Why, if it aint my own shadow come for its punishment!

LAUGHTER FROM CROWD.

Close your ogles, here it comes.

A HUGE PUNCH IN THE STOMACH, WINDING TOM.

TOM (angry) I was expecting a head punch, sir, not a stomacher!

CRIBB The advertisement don't specify the spot.

TOM Bill, give the man another shilling, I wish for to be hit in the face.

CLINK OF SHILLING. TWANK OF PUNCH.

(talkover to us, close) He hit me on my brows. I had a headache for 3 days.

10. SAME PLACE. AN INSTANT LATER.

CRIBB (approaching) This black devil of yourn, Mr Richmond, seems game and takes a hammer well.

RICHMOND He wrestled bears in Virginia, two at a time. Ate up their brains with a spoon.

CRIBB I'll bet he did. - There's a lad I know at Bristol, Ned Burrows, very leary, being knocking them down nicely. We have a match?

RICHMOND We have a match, Mr Cribb. (laughs) Yes, me dear!

11. TOTHILL FIELDS. MOLINEAUX VS. BURROWS, JUNE 1812. FIGHT FURIOUS IN BACKGROUND. CHEERS FOR FALLS AND GOOD HITS.

CRIBB (soft, close, to us and himself) The black keeps close, he does. See how he keeps his elbows cocked in his sides. (laughs) There's no reading him. Cepting he likes to hit the napper - (a good punch) Ooooooo, Neddy! - the napper, over and over, the napper. Yeee - that brought claret. A facer, a facer, a facer, a facer - bugger, ye can't see Ned's face for claret. Tothill Fields never saw such a drubbing! (yells) On yer pins, Burrows, remember what Cribb taught yer, arms length, jab his napper, counterpunch on the retreat - and I tell ye, he don't like a stomacher. (whispers to himself) I can feel these punches myself, deep inside, God help me. (sad resignation) Oh, Ned - he's knocked out yer ivories.

FLURRY OF ACTION IN FIGHT. WHUMP OF BURROWS
GOING DOWN. BIG CHEER FROM CROWD. ALSO SOME
NASTY VOICES: "Ert, yer cowardly black! Black devil!"

TOM (yells at crowd) Am I not beautiful to behold! Did I not swoop down from on high with my black-feathered angel wings. (coming closer, to CRIBB) I hath need of a dentist, Mr Cribb - it seems I have toothpegs sticking in my left mauley.

CRIBB (chuckles) You have a good science. You fought well, Tom. And that's Tom Cribb himself telling ye, me dear.

CORINTHIANS KEEP COMING UP TO SLAP TOM'S BACK
AND CONGRATULATE HIM, RIGHT THROUGH REST OF
SCENE.

TOM Why thankye, Tom. Now when perzactly does we ourselves rip and tear?

CRIBB (laughs) I'm an old man, me dear, past thirty now. I'll leave the milling to them's that don't see blurry.

TOM (shocked more than angry) But I came across the world for to mill with you, to whup your hide, to stand with the biggest hearted man.

RICHMOND (arriving through the crush) Cummon, Tom - Dimmee your fist's full of teeth! - I shall speak with Mr Cribb on this matter.

RICHMOND AND TOM ARE CARRIED AWAY BY THE
CROWD. WE ARE WITH THEM AS CRIBB CALLS....

CRIBB (calls, edge of cruelty) I fought a black boy oncetime before. (harsher still) Ye tell him, Mr Richmond, how I fared. I don't need to fight no more black boys, me dears. It's all done.

TOM (yells after) You're juberous of me, Tom Cribb! Juberous like a quiverin girl with your pretty hair!

RICHMOND (worried) Dimmee, Tom, you can't speak like that to him.

TOM

(petulant) He's juberous, juberous, un-huh. Juberous.

12. CRIBB AT HIS SHAVING MIRROR. THE RAZOR SCRAPES.
OUTSIDE, A FIFER PLAYS, PRACTISING FOR THE WARS.

CRIBB

Every day I used to stand here jaunty at my shaving mirror. That lumpy blurry face is Tom Cribb, Champion of England. Famouser than Napoleon, him. Until my shadow swooped in and made me juberous, whatever that is. If the Molineaux lad keeps on knocking them down, and he will, I'll have to fight him. No retirement for you Tom Cribb. He'll do to me what I did to Jem Belcher. No man never fought on as many blue ribbon days as me. Down they went, mighty men all. But I've had enough o'milling. - Here, ye there in the mirror, ye're no coal hauler no more, no jack tar, no little boy begging for bread on the streets of Bristol. What's your name? Tom Cribb. Champion of England, of the World, for ever and a day. (yells) Heap the porridge high, mother!

13. PRINCE REGENT'S PALACE. SNATCH OF *GOD SAVE THE PRINCE OF WALES*. TOM, RICHMOND AND JACK WALK DOWN CORRIDOR.

**JACK RATFORD,
PRINCE'S
FACTOTUM
RICHMOND**

(Noël Coward-ish) His Majesty the Prince Regent is ready for his boxing lesson now.

His mood today, Mr Ratford?

JACK RATFORD

(opening double doors) Bordering on jolly, Mr Richmond, if not jolly itself.

IN BACKGROUND THE PRINCE IS TRILLING *BRITISH GRENADIER* AND SKIPPING.

TOM

(whispers loud) Whoooo, aint he fat?

RICHMOND

Shhhhh, Tom!

TOM

I'm jairy of meeting so upper a man, Bill. I'll just stay here and watch, huh?

RICHMOND

He has asked to meet you. Now smile at all times. (crossing room) Your Royal Highness, look who I have brought to see you!

PRINCE

(hops with excitement, breathless from skipping) Is it really him? Ooooooh! What a hideous violent savage! But such a buttery smile. May I shake the mauley that defeated Ned Burrows, Tom Tough, Bob Rimmer, plucky Jack Carter?

TOM

Surely, sir, surely.

PRINCE

You see I have followed all your battles! (they shake) Scuse the clammy palm, Mr Molineaux. I sweat profusely. But for a man of over 25 stones, I skip tolerably well, wot.

HE SKIPS TO ILLUSTRATE. THUMPS ON THE FLOOR. A JAR WOBBLER ON ITS PLINTH.

Mr Richmond, pray rescue yon priceless Chinese vase. It wobbles when I skip. (stops skipping) Now, Mr Richmond, would you mind if I sparred with Mr Molineaux this morning? I would like him to show me how he intends to fight our Mr Cribb.

RICHMOND

(whispers) Tom, you be careful, wot. Just pat the Prince's cheeks with your hands - don't hit him or he'll hang us both.

THE SPARRING BEGINS. SLAPS FROM TOM. PUNCHES FROM PRINCE, WHO LAUGHS AT EACH PUNCH.

TOM

That, sir, was a harder punch than Jack Carter ever hit me with!

PRINCE

(delighted) You see, Mr Richmond, were I not a Prince, a boxer I would be. Give me a stomacher, Mr Molineaux.

A PUNCH AS IF INTO JELLY.

TOM Why, my fist disappeared up to the elbow in His Majesty's guts, and he did not double up or blow. You are a true athlete, sir.

PRINCE (delighted) Ha! Ha!

TOM And you don't look a bit insane, no sir, not a bit.

PRINCE (stops sparring) No, that's my father - not me. I'm not mad. (laughs oddly, commences sparring, more slaps)

TOM You said, sir, 'when I fights Tom Cribb'. But Mr Cribb is juberous and won't fight me. He says he is retired.

PRINCE I have sent him a note, Mr Molineaux. He will fight you on Copthall Common before this Yuletide falls.

TOM (hugely excited) He will! He'll fight! My second day! - It comes with wings of fire!

PRINCE Can't have an ugly great Moor like you going around knocking down our men, can we? Mr Cribb will tame you, ha, ha. I shall be there myself to see your blackness smeared across the ring!

TOM (carried away by the fight, suddenly triple the energy) Like this is how Tom Cribb fights, sir, his style is milling on the retreat. You move forward, sir, you chase, but he is moving away, see, I move, you follow, you throw your punch but Cribb he already gone, and hits you as he goes, see, there now, this is how he fights.

THE PRINCE IS BEING HIT PROPERLY. LITTLE UGHS OF PATHETIC PAIN.

RICHMOND Tom, careful, Tom. Those are becoming real punches, wot!

TOM But when he retreats I comes in close. You come in close, Majesty. Hit me in the belly. Hit me! Harder! Harder than that, you chaw bacon dog! Make those mauleys fly!

THE BREATHLESS PRINCE DOES HIS BEST. SUDDENLY,
THE CHINESE VASE FALLS AND BREAKS.....CRASH!!!!

PRINCE

Owh! (fade) That vase was a gift from Emperor Tsung Ching's mother, I'll have you know.

14. ON THE THAMES. CRIBB ROWING.

CRIBB

(SINGS) Come move the song, and stir the glass
For why should we be sad;
Let's drink to some free-hearted lass
And Cribb, the boxing lad
and a boxing we will go, will go, will go....

**CAPTAIN
BARCLAY**

(calls from riverbank) Cribb! Ahoy there, laddie! Tom Cribb,
Champion of England!

CRIBB

(stops rowing) Cap'n Barclay. What's your business, sir?

BARCLAY

(hectoring like John Knox) I have in my pockets a note from the Prince Regent. You have to fight the black, Tom. No more funk. Or ye'll lose every friend ye have. We can't have a black devil as champion! For mercy's sake, man! The whole country is in uproar over this!

CRIBB

(getting out of the rowboat) How's Jack Carter?

BARCLAY

He can't remember his name nor wear a hat. Totherwise, tolerable. - Copthall Common, December 18th, for the Championship of the World. If you keep him from under your elbow, ye'll flip him dead fer sure. I'm a man that knows.

CRIBB

Cribb's game, not a snidge juberous. Cribb will be there.

BARCLAY

The Prince has fitted yon blackee with a dandy suit of clothes. And he's sent him to see some ill-reputed old duchesses of his acquaintance. He'll be wore out by the time he stands afore ye.

CRIBB

He has lived for that day. Maybe so has Tom Cribb. Let be what will be.

15. CRIBB VS. MOLINEAUX, 18TH DECEMBER 1812.
SUDDENLY BRING IN MUSIC - WAR BY VINCE DICOLA.
NOISE OF HUNDREDS OF CARRIAGES RATTLING DOWN
ROADS. LAUGHTER , BUSTLE OF MULTITUDE. RAINFALL.

TOM

(close, over noise) My second day.

THE CROWD SHOUT FOR 'TOM CRIBB TOM CRIBB!'

POET

(declaims to crowd)

On the 18th of December of a fight I will sing,
When bold Cribb and Molineaux entered the ring
With hope and expectation our bosoms beating high
While the rain poured in torrents from a dark lowering sky....

FANCY MAN

Natty day for a set-to, wot!

**SIR THOMAS
APREECE, Referee**

(fade up on him).....six feet one inches at weighing 17 stones and 4 pounds, Champion of England....Tom Cribb

MAD ROAR FROM CROWD

.....and the challenger, five feet and nine inches and weighing 14 stones, the Champion of America, Tom Molineaux

WHISTLES AND UGLY CRIES OF: 'Black Devil!'

TOM

(close, during fight announcement above) It was the coldest day I ever knew, chunk-washin down. Far away, Napoleon was dying in the Russian snows with all his spangled armies. England had one bogey well beat. I was another such.

BELL. PUNCHING BEGINS. DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES
THE FIGHT CONTINUES IN THE BACKGROUND.

**EGAN, THE
JOURNALIST-
COMMENTATOR**

The Moor hits first, a left of no distinction. Cribb returns, a good hit under the eye of his opponent. Now a rally, exchange of blows, no import, they close - Molineaux's down. Cribb pushed him down.

CRIES FROM CROWD

BOOKIE

(cries) Four to one on Cribb.

POET

(mix in with end of above)

The first round Crib he hit him on the head
But received one in the mouth, and very freely bled
The next round Crib he seemed to have the best
but the black man most bravely resolved to stand the test.

BELL. TOM'S CORNER. HE DRINKS.

RICHMOND

You're staying at arm's length, Tom. Close in, close in. He's making you chase him, wot.

TOM

I will close. (going back into the fight) When the time comes, I will close.

CRIBB

(calm but fierce) Cummon, boy, I'll whip you like your masser whipped you back in Virginia.

TOM

I am a freeeeee man. More than you, Tom Cribb. I seen you getting out of Lord Stradbroke's carriage. Why, him and Cap'n Barclay, they own you, more sure than I was ever owned.

FIGHT RECOMMENCES, MORE FIERCE THAN BEFORE.

BOOKIE

(yells, worried) Four to one on Molineaux.....

FANCY MAN

Dimmee, why aren't you watching the contest, Lord B?

LORD BYRON

Oh, the crowd's far more interesting. I have never before seen 5,000 carriages in one place. They're not unlike mythological birds looking for a roost. Do you suppose the Prince Regent is here?

POET

Then the black he did rally, oh, how he play'd away
And shewd our British hero some terrible hard play....

FADE FIGHT, BRING UP.....

PRINCE

(reading letter) To Captain Lord Barclay of Ury - due to the sudden and irritating death of my sister Amelia, my father the King's favourite child, which event has also opened new avenues of madness for him, it is not thought seemly that I should attend so flippant an occasion as a boxing match. I am sending my factotum, Jack Ratford, to report.

FADE PRINCE AS BRING UP FIGHT

Please ensure he has the best possible vantagepoint.....George.

FIGHT FIERCER THAN WHEN WE LEFT IT.

POET

Like lightning, about Cribb's napper the blows came left and right
While the Black's friends felt certain their man would win the fight
Then the black still bore on with a terrible great force
the blows fell on poor Tom Cribb like kicks from an horse....

EGAN

(mix in with the above) The Moor plants two blows on the napper of the Champion. Both combatants appear dreadfully punished. The claret flows free! Oooo, a terrible blow from the black, and again! The Champion rallies....oh, no!

TOM

(to himself) I close. Now I close. His fists cannot fly. He'll not hit me again. I shall be free twice over.

CRIBB

(to himself) Who are you? You're Tom Cribb. Champion of England, unbeaten, never beaten, can't be beaten, not by any black thief.....

GASP FROM CROWD.

BRAVE SWADDY

Cribb's down!!!!!!! Down! He don't know where he is!

CUT FIGHT SOUNDS ALTOGETHER.

-

16. ROYAL PALACE.

PRINCE Yes, yes, Ratford, what happened next?

JACK RATFORD (rustle of notes, vague) It's in my notes somewhere. I seem to have lost the page. Ermmmm.....AH!

PRINCE (sounds of exasperation) Yes..mmm?????? M?????? Ph??????

JACK RATFORD At the end of the round the champion was quite senseless from a severe facer. They tried to wake him up, but he wouldn't come. So the 30 seconds between rounds past, and as Cribb could not rejoin, he had lost, but then.....

17. THE FIGHT. BOOS AND YELLS FROM CROWD...

SIR THOMAS APREECE, Referee (ding-a-linging bell) Time, gentlemen, you must recommence....

TOM (jumping for joy) He's beaten! It is accomplished! I am, today, Champion, Champion, I am, Tom Molineaux, champion o'yearth! Uh-huh!

BARCLAY (yells close) Sir Thomas, yon cowardly black has bullets held in his fists. A man in the crowd has seen them.

18. ROYAL PALACE.

PRINCE And did he?

JACK RATFORD Um? - Oh, they searched the black. They searched his bottle-man. They pawed the grass for bullets and found worms only. And it mizzled down and the black shivered, and I quote Lord Byron: 'till he looked like bald black goose'.

BRING UP FAINT SOUNDS OF THE FIGHT IN BACKGROUND.
FOR THE NEXT TWO SPEECHES WE ARE CLOSE ON
BARCLAY AND CRIBB.

BARCLAY (in the ring, patting CRIBB'S face) Cummon, laddie, cummon my braw laddie....

CRIBB Be it over? It's not over? (a big sniff, a wobble of his chops) - I'm clear now. Aye.

FIGHT SOUNDS VANISH, WE ARE BACK IN THE PALACE.

PRINCE (laughs) Meanwhile, Cribb had recovered his senses. Ha, what a clever ruse. That Barclay is a canny chaffer!!! (he trills *British Grenadier* as he fades)

19. THE FIGHT. ROAR OF CROWD, CHANTING 'CRIBB!'
DRUNKEN VOICE SINGS A-BOXING WE WILL GO.

EGAN The Moor cannot recover his wind. Cribb mills in, makes a hit, retreats, comes in again, hits. Molineaux staggers like an inebriate. Cribb attacks most forcibly. The black rallies. A hit to Cribb's eye.

TOM I can fight no more. I am cold. So cold traipsen through raindrops.

YOUSOP (cackles, close) Fight Tom Cribb and this is what you'll be.

20. RUSSIA. ICY WIND BLOWS. HUMMER OF SICK HORSES.
CLINK OF WEARY TROOPS.

AIDE-DE-CAMP The cold, the ice and the snows, mon Empereur, they have beaten us!
>

NAPOLEON Napoléon, he is greater than cold and snow. He cannot be beaten.

A SAD MARTIAL TRUMPET IN THE DISTANCE.

21. THE FIGHT. BRING BACK SUDDENLY...COLD MOANS
FROM TOM.

CRIBB

Down you go, my boy, or I'll crush your napper, I'll snap your ribs like sticks. Go down! Ha, look how small your getting, with each blow smaller...who's juberous now, blackee?

ROAR OF CROWD. SUDDENLY SOUND DRAINS AWAY...

TOM

(from silence) I was a boy again, I was climbing down a well and it was cold there. My father was at the bottom singing... (sings) I bought me a cat, my cat pleased me, I fed my cat under yonder tree, My cat says fiddle eye fee.....

BRING UP HUGE ROAR OF CROWD. BELLS PEAL.

**SIR THOMAS
APREECE, Referee**

...Tom Cribb, Champion of the World...!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

POET

Ye bucks and swells, ye milling coves who this hard fight did see
let us drink to these heroes, come join along with me
A bumper to brave Cribb, boys, to the black a bumper too
though beat he proved a man my boys, what more man could a man
do...

BRAVE SWADDY

(during the above, in crowd) He hit me in the face, he did, gawd
love'im!

PRINCE

(close) Oh I do wish most fondly I had been there! Damn my sister
Amelia!

THE TUNE OF I BOUGHT ME A CAT IS SOMEWHERE WITHIN
TOM'S MOANS.

RICHMOND

(calls into TOM'S ear) It is over, Tom. Cribb has beaten us.

RAISE SOUNDS OF CROWD, BELL, TO A CACOPHONY.
YOUSOP'S CACKLE RISING ABOVE IT. THEN CUT TO
SILENCE.

TOM

(talkover, from silence, deepest despair) I never thought that I would be a man who failed. But Napoleon, he did not die in those snows, that day, he lived to fight another day, and maybe if my spirit could rise, so would I.

22. PUG'S CLUB, LONDON. SOUND OF FENCING AND
SPARRING IN BACKGROUND.

CRIBB

(talkover) Tom Cribb had knocked out his last pug, he had. I was done with fighting and hoped that someday my eyesight would clear and my hurts cease from pain. So, a new life! I had never married and lived all my 34 years with my dear mother. Time to take a wife, see. But I knew no girls at all.

BARCLAY

Och no, bonnie champ, no. Women are the ruination of a man's health. They take away from ye the will to live, with every word and pouted kiss. I'd strongly advise against it.

CRIBB

(to BARCLAY) No, Captain. Cribb's mind's made up. (a sudden glad idea) I do remember a girl. Bristol landlord's daughter. We liked each other fine. Yes, she'd do! O'course I haven't seen her since I was 12 and she was 9. Handsome smile she had. Fearless sort of girl. I can see her in my mind's eye, cutting cheese. You don't think she'll be married by now, do you?

BARCLAY

(a Scottish noise meaning 'yes and with 43 children') I'd put good money on it.

CRIBB

(calls) Ikey Pig, stop hitting that man! I've a job for you. Get yourself onto the night coach for Bristol.

IKEY PIG

Want me to hit someone for yer, Tommy boy? If it's someone says that black really won the fight, I'll hammer'em flat as coin!

CRIBB You're cupid this time, me lad, not Mars.

IKEY PIG Ehhhhh?????

23. BRISTOL STREET. MUSIC: THE BRISK YOUNG SAILOR BY PERCY GRAINGER. STREET SOUNDS.

CRIBB (nervous as hell) No, Cribb won't go in. I'll wait here. You do the words with the girl for me, Cap'n Barclay.

BARCLAY I will not! Look, that'll be her, tending her chickens.

CRIBB Do your words, Captain - I've a face like a cauliflower and I'll speak like one too.

BARCLAY Ikey Pig's described you to the lassie in the most lugubrious detail. Just say hello and she'll fall into your arms. (getting angry) Ye're the feistiest fighter on God's Earth man, wot ye're frightened of a girl for?! Do your business man. I'll sit in a corner with a dram and a London paper. (off he goes) Ye can inform me of the outcome when ye're done.

24. CHICKEN YARD, BRISTOL PUB. CHICKENS CLUCK. MARGARET HUMS A SHANTY.

CRIBB (announces himself) Tom Cribb, that's me. Champion of England.

MARGARET (light welsh lilt) I can see that. Is that bruised eye from your last fight? Can I touch it?

CRIBB If you like. (she touches) Ow!

MARGARET I've a collection of pictures of you, cut from the papers. You're not as handsome as them, but better looking than that piggy man described to me. Of course he proposed to me himself.

CRIBB He never.

MARGARET (laughs) I get proposals every day, from every man that comes into my father's pub. But I never said yes yet. - Could you strangle a chicken for me? I never likes to do it, see.

CRIBB I'd rather not, if you doesn't mind.

MARGARET I can get tuppence extra a leg if I says you killed the bird.

CRIBB All right then.

CLUCK OF CONDEMNED CHICKEN. STRANGLER CRACK.

MARGARET Thankyou, Mr Cribb. (chuckles)

CRIBB (awkward) So, then, Margaret - how have you been keepin'?

MARGARET What, since when - when I was nine? I'd have to think about that question a bit.

BARCLAY (rushing in, waving paper, coughing) Cribb, laddie! It's in every street paper! - Excuse me interrupting yer business...

CRIBB Get away, Captain, I'm not finished yet.

BARCLAY O'course she'll marry you, man! Look at yerself! (back to biz) It's an open letter. From the black. To you. (reads) "Sir, My friends think that had the weather on last Tuesday, on which I contended with you, not been so inclement, I should have easily won the battle....da-de-do-de-do...signed with his mark, T. Molineaux." It's a challenge!

CRIBB (stern) I have beaten the black. No need for more.

BARCLAY (sly, whispers loud) Excuse me for speaking free before your intended, but there's them that says, and they are numerous, that but for yon ruse of the man now speaking in your ear, the black would be champion this day. (excited) We'll be ready for him next time, Cribbee, ayeeeeeee. I've devised a new training programme to get the fat off ye. (slaps CRIBB'S fat belly)

CRIBB I'll be as fat as I likes. I've done with fighting, I tell ye. I'm standing here waiting for my new life to begin.

MARGARET I'll marry you, Tom Cribb. But only if you beats the black, see. Only if you do to him what you just did to my chicken.

BARCLAY (puzzled) You killed her chicken? Why'd you do that then?

25. HORSE & DOLPHIN - RICHMOND'S PUB. BY THE POND.
DUCKS QUACK. DRINKERS' TALK A WAY OFF.

RICHMOND (walks up, a little reserved) Tom - he has accepted, Cribb accepts your challenge.

TOM Hallelujah! I have a third day!

RICHMOND He's gone to Aberdeenshire with Barclay - walked it apparently, wot! So that puts the fight back well into next summer. It will be warm, Tom.

TOM I shall be champion for more than five minutes after that occasion.

RICHMOND (awkwardly blurting it out) Tom, don't fight him! Come with me to Africa, instead.

TOM (amazed) Af-rica? Why Africa?

RICHMOND Both our pappys came out of there, didn't they not, wot? I've read so much about Africa. All those books. I want to see it for myself. - Everyone's black in Africa, you know.

TOM (laughs) Why, Bill, you are more English than the Prince of Wales hisself. You wouldn't last a day in Africa. (tough) If Tom Cribb is on the African plains with some other lions, I'll pooch out and fight him there. Otherwise my fur flies here. (posh) Now, excuse me, I has a sexual appointment with a Duchess.

RICHMOND While you're at it, you might ponder what Cribb's doing up on Barclay's estate. They're not playing twankay!

26. ABERDEENSHIRE, BARCLAY'S ESTATE. BAGPIPES MOAN THEIR WAY INTO A TUNE. CRIBB RUNS ACROSS HEATHER AND STOPS...

CRIBB (totally exhausted) Urgh, that must be 10 miles uphill. Cribb's had enough.

BARCLAY Och, ye'll be doing 40 miles while holding yer breath before I've finished with ye. - I think it's time for more purgative.

CRIBB (runs off) Pint and a pie for me! (yells) There must be somewhere in all this wilderness a man can get a pint and a pie!

27. SAME, A LITTLE LATER. MOO OF HIGHLAND CATTLE. CRIBB IS FORCING LEAVES INTO HIS MOUTH, GROANING.

BARCLAY These roadside plants will purge your manly body of all its impurities. All those boluses of half-digested cow. (a big moo from a cow) - Out they'll come like merchants out of kirk.

CRIBB (swallows the last of it, angry) I've eaten all your nettles and sour weeds. Now what?

BARCLAY (evil delight, running on the spot, deep breathing) Now we sprint 5 miles to the loch, then ye drink 20 pints o'loch watter. Then ye swims the loch, then ye runs a circuit of the loch, then swims again, then runs again, over and over, until the sun goes down.

CRIBB (groans) And to think I could be courting with my sweet Margaret, right now.

BARCLAY Women steal your strength! The fittest, healthiest men have no doings with women! Am I no the best example of the rule?

28. DUCHESS'S BOUDOIR. SQUEAK OF BED. SQUEAL OF DUCHESS.

DUCHESS Oh, blackee, my sweet strong blackee!!!!

TOM I am making brown woodscolts with this nice fat duchess! Uh-huh!

DUCHESS I confess, m'dear, you are the first blackee I have bedded. Are all blacks in America as strapping as you?

TOM Why, I am the runt of their litter! (thrusting away, breathless, excited) Do not look at me and just see black, for I am a man who is black, a black man, black and a man, a man with his eyes closed, black, never poorly white am I, but black, uh-huh - duchess, duchess, duchess, duchess.....

DUCHESS (breathless, but still cares to inform him) Actually, you should know, I'm only a countess.

FADE DOWN THIS, AND BRING UP:

29. STATELY HOME. KITCHENS. HUMMING OF COOK, CLANK OF COOKING PANS.

TOM (to us) I have just been showing the only part of me that Tom Cribb did not hit to a Countess of my acquaintance - that aint so good as a Duchess, but she's fatter and her cook, her doors are sooooo greasy....! (to COOK) I druther this pie to this pie, but this pie, this frams everything I ever ate.....(mouth full) I fights Bob Rimmer again tomorrow. Need to loosen up before I kills Cribb.

30. HIGHLANDS. CRIBB RUNNING, PUFFING. A HIGHLAND COW MOOS.

BARCLAY Keep those knees high, my braw wee champion!

CRIBB (too tired to speak, but he tries to spit out the worst swearing-fit ever heard on radio)

BARCLAY Stamp that good Scottish ground. Do you think the black's counting daisies! Ye'll needs be ten times to man you are to put him down!

31. PRINCE OF WALES' TAILOR'S PREMISES, LONDON. STREET SOUNDS OUTSIDE.

TOM (complains, haughty) This shoulderline taint perzackerly slaunchways, I'm sure. Now the Prince hissself recommended you, sir, and you have made me snurled and techious. I wants to be a proper peart dandy man.

TAILOR (nervously)The jacket is perfect, Mr Molineaux. It is the bulges from beneath wot are ruining the line, dyersee.

DING OF SHOP BELL OVER DOOR.

TOM With these bulges I shall whup Tom Cribb, my man. Bulges, huh!

HENRIETTA (small, shy) Tom, Thomas Molineaux, that you all dressed up like a rooster?

TOM (jumping up and down in glee) Henrietta? Oh, my dearest girl. You came. You came at last. Whooooo-heeeeeeee!

HENRIETTA Mr Richmond said you were at your tailor's and I could not wait a whole lot longer to see your big black face.

TOM (to TAILOR) This here's my Henrietta, my jularkee girl. She was a slave but I sent money for her freedom and now she is here. (ripping off jacket, autocratically) Fix this shoulderline perzackerly slaunchways, my man. Be gone, I wish to kiss this lady in private.

TAILOR Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

HENRIETTA My, you told that little white man just what wot do. (laughs and claps her hands)

TOM (suddenly bashful) Tweren't nothing.

THEY KISS.

32. LOCH. CRIBB SWIMS, GASPING FOR BREATH.

BARCLAY (yells from shore) Ye're swimming like a wounded elk, man! Do the overarm stroke, will ye!

CRIBB (energetic splashing) Cribb's coming for you now, Cap'n Barclay! He'll punch out your ogles! He'll stamp you flat. You may be Lord of all you survey.....(sinks and starts drowning, comes up)....but you don't own Tom Cribb. I am Champion of the World.....(growls, yells)

BARCLAY (running off) I'll meet ye back at the big house when ye've calmed down.

CRIBB (streaming water getting out of the loch, yells, stamps in mud) The big house is 20 miles away, you great lanky sod! (contrite) Begging y'pardon for my outburst, Cap'n.

BARCLAY

(a hill away) Awwwwwyeeeeeeeeee! (talkover, to us) I, Captain Barclay, have made this man from hog clay, into the strongest fittest human being that ever walked the Earth. No black ever born will put my laddie down. (sly) I've wagered a large sum on the outcome, and feel no jitters, (not 100% confident) aye, no jitters at all that I'll be the contest's real winner.

33. RICHMOND'S PUB. HENRIETTA WASHING UP.

HENRIETTA

(talkover, to us, while busy with chores) I am a small fatched girl, growing wide with too many potatoes. But I knows about fighting and fighting men. I stood by with a sponge when Tom's good father died from a beatin. I do not have feather-legged eyes. I look and I see what's truly there. Tom Molineaux was my sweetheart in every barn our master built. I have loved him. Always. But he is no longer that same boy. I edzact it so: He has become part of this other man - this Tom Cribb is his soulmate and life's companion - Mr Cribb now, not I. And soon the day comes when husky Mr Cribb will kill my boy, I knows this for sure. Tom he cooters around getting dirty with duchessness, wearing his fancy trews, fleshening up on great stews and sticky buns. Mr Cribb does the opposite, they say, getting stronger by the minute. I have closed my heart to this cruelty that comes. My freedom cannot help but look elsewhere for kindnesses.

RICHMOND

(clunking into bar) You working your hands again, Henrietta? I pay three lazy girls to do that. - Look, I found you in one of my books. Those tribal scars on your plump cheeks. It's all here. See! Ha! I have your tribe. I know where in Africa you came from. I can show you where you were born.

HENRIETTA

I have no interest in such things, Masser Richmond.

RICHMOND

But, dimmee, of course you do. Cummon, goose, I'll show you my library.

HENRIETTA

(truly scared) I aint going up there! No, sir. There's a ruint old devil up there.

RICHMOND It's only old Youssop, tis all... (pulling her) ...Cummon... this way, girl.

HENRIETTA Nuh! Nuh! I won't go!

SHE BEGINS TO LAUGH. SO DOES RICHMOND. BRING IN
YOUS SOP'S WISE CACKLE BEFORE FADING ALL.

34. HIGHLANDS. DISTANT BAGPIPES. CRIBB RUNNING.
BREATH SURE.

CRIBB Tom Cribb likes a bit of gossip, he does. I heard Molineaux the Black sent money back to Virginia to buy the freedom of some slavegirl he knew there. She came over in the spring. Thing was she liked greymop Bill Richmond better than her old boy. (laughs) The black men blackened each other's eyes over her...

TOM (background, elsewhere) She's MY sweetheart!

RICHMOND (background, elsewhere) She's a free girl. She can choose for herself!

CRIBB ...and Richmond married to a nice white girl too! They say Richmond won't be in his corner when I fights him. - I've been here six months now, running, swimming, eating leaves. I'm more Tom Cribb than I ever was, and a letter a day from my Margaret to spur me on. Her scribbled drawings of dead chickens, dead blacks, telling me every damn thing that happened to her since she were nine. (laughs, calls back) Barclay, where are you, man!

BARCLAY (puffing up behind him) I'm right behind you, Tommy. Ooooooh, that wee black is in for a surprise! Three stones lost ! And all the clever money on the black. My bonny, bonny braw laddie - we're going to make a tidy sum!

35. SUDDEN CUT INTO THE HEART OF THE SECOND FIGHT.
CRIBB VS. MOLINEAUX, THISTLETON GAP,
LEICESTERSHIRE, SEPTEMBER 1813. MUSIC: I HAD IT SO
HARD SUNNYLAND SLIM & LACY GIBSON. ACTION
CLOSER, EVEN MORE VIGOROUS THAN IN LAST FIGHT.

- TOM** (close, to us) My third and final day. (scorns, to CRIBB) Cummon, strike me with your biddy-pecks!
- EGAN** (commentates) The champion's leaner, faster on his feet. He mills on the retreat. The Moor follows and receives punishment. One, 2, 3, 4. But he's game. He comes on. (wild) He's split the champion's lip!
- CRIBB** (to himself) He's stronger. They say he's been doing nothing lately but dip his spike into Duchesses. But he's hittin harder than last time! Cribb's going down.....(breathless) England never did, not never shall lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.....

36. THISTLETON GAP. NIGHT. DRUNK SINGS MILES AWAY:
"Boney was a warrior....heeeee-hooooooooo..."

- CRIBB** (to us) First fight caused such a hullabaloo we had to have the second one far off from London, at Thistleton Gap in Leicestershire. Night before the contest I left the Black Bull Inn and walked across the moonlit field, like a ghost in my night-shirt, to see the 25 foot square wooden stage where I would beat the black in the morning. Then Cribb ambles over to the New Inn where the evil creature was staying.

STONES HITTING WINDOWPANE. WINDOW OPENS.

- TOM** Who's that waking a fighter when he is dreaming of victoriousness.
- CRIBB** It's me, Tom.
- TOM** Cribb! They said you had gone skinny! But mercy me - you sick?

CRIBB I was looking at the stage. Thought I'd come over and wish you good luck for tomorrow, lad, tis all.

TOM (sincere, no irony at all) Thankyou, Tom.

CRIBB You know, when I started fighting, I'd been a coal heaver, so they nicknamed me 'the Black Diamond'.

TOM (irony now) Naw!

CRIBB Thought you'd like to know that. (suddenly tougher) You seen my brother George at ringside?

TOM Uh-huh. Ugly. He looks like you.

CRIBB Same man almost. Size, strength, no girl could feel a difference. But he never won a prizefight. Every pug with an eye left sends him down. But no one ever beat me, Tom. I am a man that wins.

TOM (chuckling) Goodnight, Black Diamond. See you in Hell in the morning.

37. SUDDEN CUT TO THE FIGHT. CLOSE IN THE ACTION.

EGAN The black is in a fury. I have never seen such ferocity in a mill. He is distressed for wind, lungeing, left, right. Some of these punches are getting though. Cribb can't get away. Ooooo! The black's down. (pained groans from TOM) Could have been a low blow. Accident, of course.

LOWER FIGHT SOUNDS FOR THE FOLLOWING SPEECHES

PRINCE Was it perchance a low blow, Mr Cribb, that ruined the black?

CRIBB (sombre) Tom Cribb he never did hit low. It was a stomacher. I beat him fair and square.

TOM He broke my poor balls like they was bloody eggs. Cribb had now hit me everyplace. I stood for five more rounds. He broke my jaw, all my ribs, he bodaciosuly ruint me. I lived five more years but my life's work ended then - my spirit flew when at last I fell.

CLATTER OF TOM FALLING ONTO WOODEN STAGE.
CHEERS OF CROWD. CHANT OF 'CRIBB!'. SINGING OF A-
BOXING WE WILL GO. IN MIDST OF THE NOISE OF
CELEBRATION, MARGARET'S VOICE CALLS.

MARGARET Tom! Tom! Tom!

CRIBB (yells from ring) Margaret, I beat my black, put him down forever. Will ye be mine now, girl, will ye! Where are you?

MARGARET (closer) Tom! You killed him, didn't you! Oh, it was such a sight to see!

38. BAND ROOM OF THE 77TH REGIMENT, GALWAY
BARRACKS. AUGUST 4TH, 1818. DRUMMERS PRACTISING
NEARBY. SAME FIFER WE HEARD DURING CRIBB'S
SHAVING SCENE.

TOM (on bed, mutters slurred, crazy) Free-dom, uh-huh. Freedom. I cummin for yer. That was a low blow, you chaw bacon dog. Uh-huh! Black Diamond.....(laughs) Ohhhh, yessss. (sings) 'I bought me a cat...'

ENGLISH COLONEL (during TOM'S speech above, full of bumbling arrogance) They tell me you've another black in here. Well it's just not on.

DRUMMER CRUM We found him at Galway fair, sir. He was contesting with any local brawlers who might try their luck, when suddenly he fell, sir. From no blow. He just fell. He likes the drumming of the barracks, sir. He'll not be long.

ENGLISH COLONEL Yes, well, very Christian of you. And you'll do the necessaries?

DRUMMER CRUM Myself and the other two black drummers will take care of him. This is Thomas Molineaux, sir, who fought Cribb so bravely.

ENGLISH COLONEL (on his way) Stuff and nonsense.

39. NOWHERE. MUSIC, LOW: BIG EASY.

TOM (slurred speech) No more fancy clothes, no more duchesses biting my muscles. No more great days fed with pies. Bill Richmond, my second father, and I had a disagreement upon a certain matter and we parted. I fought too soon after the whipping by Cribb - I contested George Cooper in Edinburgh the week of the battle of Waterloo. He opened up all of Cribb's wounds and I fell real quick.

BRIEF FLASHBACK OF FIGHT

MAN IN CROWD (YELLS) Ert, yer cowardly black!

TOM My prizefighting days were done. I broomed through Scotland, later Ireland, giving exhibitions of the sweet science of fisticuffing. I allowed the home-boys to come goozling at me, trying their skills of pugilism with a master. But I was a skelington now. Drinkin bub for the pain all the hours. Till one day in Galway my brain popped.

40. DRUM ROOM OF THE 77TH REGIMENT. MARCHING OUTSIDE. DRUM PLAYS SOFTLY.

DRUMMER CRUM Your three friends are here, Tom. Three kindly black faces. Say what your soul feels....

TOM (breathing awkwardly, slurred) There is a man, I forgets his name. I fought him many, many times. Ax anyone, they will tell you his name. When I am dead, cut the skin from the backs of my hands, my mauleeeeees, and sent it to this man. (afterthought, slipping away) I have no message to accompany my gift.

HENRIETTA (faraway) That you, Tom, Tom? They're cookin themselves a gobbler in the big house. We can't eat none, but we can sure smell, uh-huh. (big sniff, smelling) Goodbye, Tom, bye.....

41. UNION ARMS, AUGUST 1818. IN BACKGROUND CRIBB IS WEEPING, SORROWFULLY, THEN ANGRILY.

CRIBB (in background, rails) I am Champion of England. No cowardly black can down me! I am a man that wins! (weeps) Poor Tom! Poor Tom!

BRAVE SWADDY (close) Wot's bothering old Tom Cribb, eh? Never seen a real man carry on so, never.

COWARDLY FANCY MAN Dimmee, he ordered everyone out of the bar! Haven't finished me drink. Package arrived for him from an army barracks in Ireland. (breaking up himself) Broke his heart, it did, wot. Dimmee, I'm going too....(weeps)

BRAVE SWADDY Errrrrt!

42. UNION ARMS, 1848. CRIBB HOLDING FORTH IN BACKGROUND. LAUGHTER FROM CUSTOMERS.

RICHMOND (close, to us) Captain Barclay made a prodigious fortune from the second Cribb-Molineaux fight, and purchased those parts of Aberdeenshire which he did not already own. He died at the age of 91, kicked in the head by a horse he was examining, wot. I took my new wife, Henrietta, and the two boys of my first marriage, to Africa, to see what it was like. I think I died there. Thirty years after his final contest, an old fat Tom Cribb was on his back legs still telling his story of how he fought Tom the Black for the Championship of the World.....

MARGARET (to us) I've heard him tell it every day since we married and I never tires of hearing it.....

CRIBB

(in bar, gravelly voice, over the top) And again I gave him one in the grubbery. Down he went. But up he came, twice as evil, black eyes shining from inside a blacker face smeared with claret. This before you is the remains of Tom Cribb - that day when I downed the black, I was more myself than on any other day...

THE WHOLE PUB CHANTS 'CRIBB, CRIBB'. SLOWLY FADE THIS UNDER THE FOLLOWING SPEECH.

TOM

(calm, his original self) After Cribb's time the white fighters would not contest with the black fighters. They were juberous of them, even with gloves on. It was not till Boxing Day of 1908, near 100 years after I fought my monster, and slavery then banished from the world, that Jack Johnson defeated Tommy Burns to become the first ever, but not the last ever, Black Heavyweight Champion of the World. His stride was jaunty and he was beautiful to behold.

BRING IN QUICK, PLAY OUT WITH *I BOUGHT ME A CAT* COPLAND, OLD AMERICAN SONGS.

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