

LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

By

Jerry Smith

jdevilkb@aol.com

The opening scene intercuts between BRUCE JOHNSON, a well built black man, early 20's, an up and coming boxer, fighting at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and TOMMY REED, (later known as Johnny Valko) a very tall, lean, white man in his early 30's. A tough fighter fighting in a back room in Chinatown, New York City. Both are middleweights.

During the opening scenes, the voice of DAVE BONTEMPO, a boxing announcer can be heard as the fight commentator.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING VENUE - NIGHT

The packed crowd CHEERS WILDLY. Bruce boxes a fighter he clearly outclasses.

In Bruce's corner is CARMEN GRATZI, his trainer and small share manager. Carmen, early 70's, is obsessed with the fact he's yet to have a world champion. Also in the corner is BILL JEFFERSON, a skinny black man, almost 50 but looks much younger. Bill runs the Atlantic City Police Athletic League.

ROUND 3. Bruce boxes, ala Mohammed Ali in his prime. Bruce lands a double left jab. His opponent tries to counter with a straight right, but is a full step too slow.

DAVE(V.O.)

It's like a man against a boy, although
Johnson is 8 years the junior.

INT. NYC - BACK ROOM OF A CHINATOWN WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

It's a good sized, smoke filled room packed with spectators, very VOCAL and mostly Asian. Tommy Reed is in a small boxing ring dimly lit by a hanging bulb. His opponent, CARL, is a sloppy, but dirty fighter, outweighing Tommy by 30 pounds. They wear the old style boxing gloves with thumbs. The REF is an old Asian man apparently blind.

Large sums of money change hands as the CROWD MAKES SIDE BETS as the fight continues.

INT. BACK ROOM - INSIDE THE RING

Tommy lands a five punch combination. Carl shakes it off and smiles a toothless smile.

INT. BACK ROOM - CROWD

A FAT ASIAN MAN smiles, peels off a few more hundred dollar bills from his roll and holds them up. A few other spectators rush to him to cover his bets.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING VENUE

Bruce lands the same five punch combination that Tommy landed in Chinatown, but drops his opponent as the BELL RINGS to end the round. Bruce walks calmly to his corner where Carmen is already in the ring waiting for him.

Bill places the stool and the spit bucket in the corner.

DAVE(V.O.)

This kid is incredible! I think
Gratzi may finally have a fighter
he can take all the way.

Carmen grabs Bruce and sits him on the stool. He looks back at the other fighter. Carmen sees the other fighter's corner men are helping him up off the canvas and onto the stool. The ref calls MOS to the doctor to come into the ring and check the fighter.

RING CARD GIRL enters the ring carrying the 'ROUND 4' card.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING RING

Carmen swipes grease off his own wrist and slaps some onto Bruce's face. Bill places an ice bag on the back of Bruce's neck. Bruce sits up straight. Looks at Carmen attentively.

CARMEN

How you feeling?

Bruce takes a deep breath and blows it out, nods casually.

Carmen looks back over his shoulder for a moment, then back at Bruce.

CARMEN

Bruce, this poor son-of-a-bitch is
so easy to hit. Work that new body
shot we've been working on in the
gym.

BRUCE
 (smiling and standing)
 Step to the right and L-5?

CARMEN
 Toward him and to the right.

Carmen demonstrates the technique then shoots another squirt of water in Bruce's mouth as the timekeeper blows a whistle.

TIMEKEEPER(V.O.)
 Seconds out!

INT. NYC - CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - RING

Tommy is against the ropes. He and Carl are in close working each other's bodies. After taking several shots to the stomach, Tommy tries desperately to get away.

The BELL RINGS. Carl continues to attack the body. The ref tries halfheartedly to break them. Carl shoves the ref away.

Tommy gets angry and grabs Carl's windpipe. Carl's eyes bulge as Tommy squeezes the air off, choking him. Carl's hands drop to his sides as Tommy walks Carl back to Carl's corner to hand him over to his corner men.

Tommy heads back to his own corner where he remains standing between rounds. A big glob of grease is on the corner pole of the ring. Tommy dabs his glove into it and smears it onto his face then looks out into the crowd. He scans the room. Tommy's scan stops on another man holding up a few hundred dollar bills calling MOS for bets.

Tommy fumbles into his sock for a few bills. He waves over a SMALL ASIAN KID. The kid runs to him, up the stairs to the ring, and to the ropes. Tommy bends to the kid.

TOMMY
 Any odds?

The kid nods his head spastically.

KID
 3 to 1 against ya.

Tommy hands the kid the bills.

TOMMY
 200 for me. 20 for yourself.

The kid smiles and runs through the crowd to the man waving hundred dollar bills.

BACK IN THE RING Tommy grabs a squirt bottle hanging on the pole and squirts down a mouthful.

The BELL RINGS. Tommy tosses the bottle aside and walks toward the center of the ring.

Carl rushes across the ring to meet him. He hits Tommy with a barrage of punches, driving him back to the ropes. Tommy clenches and looks out over the crowd. His scan circles the room until he spots the SMALL ASIAN KID. The kid makes the bet, turns to Tommy and holds up a paper bet slip.

INT. CHINATOWN BACK ROOM

Tommy nods to the kid, grabs Carl's right elbow and spins himself off the ropes and Carl onto them. Tommy lands a nine punch combo to the body and head.

Carl smiles again and nods to Tommy giving him credit for the punches. Carl rubs his left glove on top of Tommy's head to make fun of him.

Tommy slaps it away. Carl puts the glove back on Tommy's head. Tommy slaps it away again. Carl puts it back, turns and smiles at his corner man.

Tommy slips to his left, lets Carl's left hand drop down onto Tommy's right shoulder. Tommy throws a vicious short overhand right striking Carl just past the elbow, simultaneously locking the elbow and SNAPPING it.

Carl SCREAMS and grabs at his elbow.

Tommy throws a half dozen left hooks landing flush on Carl's jaw. Tommy throws the last hook with his arms bent more than needed, driving his elbow into Carl's temple instead. Carl starts to drop. Eyes rolled back in his head.

MATCH CUT TO:

Bruce's opponent drops, face down, eyes open, out cold.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - CAESAR'S PALACE BOXING VENUE

BONTEMPO(V.O.)
He's never getting up!

The crowd ERUPTS. Bruce stands in a neutral corner. The ref COUNTS TO 10 over the fallen fighter. The ref waves both hands over the fighter signifying the end of the fight. The doctor rushes into the ring to check the fallen fighter.

Bruce walks back to his corner to meet Carmen and Bill who are jumping through the ropes.

EXT. CAESAR'S BOXING RING - BRUCE'S CORNER

Bill checks Bruce's face for any swelling or abrasions as Carmen pats Bruce on the back.

CARMEN

God, that was sweet.

BRUCE

I think I hurt my right hand.

Carmen panics, eyes wide. He rushes to the doctor who checks the eyes of the fallen fighter with a tiny flashlight.

CARMEN

Doc, I think Bruce mighta broke his hand!

The doc looks incredulously up at Carmen then back to the fallen fighter.

DOC

No doubt on this man's head.

CARMEN

C'man, Doc, You gotta check him out.

INT. DRESSING ROOM IN CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - AFTER FIGHT

The dimly lit dressing room is a filthy six foot by eight foot room with three metal locker against the wall. One window. Peeling paint, cockroaches, and dead rats on the floor. There are two old wooden chairs in the room. One is on its side, a leg broken, the other is upright. An empty bucket and a plastic jug of water rests on top of the lockers. Tommy's huge gym bag is piled in the corner.

The DOOR OPENS. Tommy enters wearing his fight outfit. The gloves are off but his hands are still wrapped. Tommy SHUTS THE DOOR. He spins the dial on a combination lock to open it.

There's a KNOCK on the door. Tommy opens the locker door.

TOMMY

Yeah?

The little Asian kid who placed the bet enters carrying a bag of ice and money crumpled in his fist.

Tommy looks to see the kid, takes the bucket from on top of the locker, and places it on the floor.

The kid lifts the bag of ice a bit and drops it onto the floor to break it up into pieces.

Tommy takes a stiletto from the locker, picks up the ice, cuts the bag open, and empties it into the bucket. Tommy tosses the empty bag, reaches up to get the water, and starts to pour it into the bucket.

TOMMY

Get paid?

The kid nods and starts to count the money. Finishing, he hands a wad of bills to Tommy, and puts the rest of the money in his own pocket.

Tommy tosses the empty water bottle.

TOMMY

What did the ice cost you?

The kid waves Tommy off signaling that the ice is his treat.

Tommy peels a twenty from his wad and stuffs it into the kid's shirt pocket, puts the rest of the wad into his gym bag as there's another KNOCK on the door.

TOMMY

Yeah?

A fat greasy haired PROMOTOR walks in chewing on a fat cigar.

PROMOTOR

You put on a good show, kid. I give you a little extra. Made it an even hundred.

Tommy stoically nods a thank you.

The Promotor looks at the bucket of ice water.

PROMOTOR

Hands be okay for next week?

Tommy nods and the Promotor leaves. When the door closes, the kid pulls out a butterfly knife, whips it into the air until the blade appears, then uses it to cut the wraps off Tommy's hands.

Tommy flexes his left hand a bit, rubs it with his right, then plunges it into the bucket.

INT. LAS VEGAS - LOCKER ROOM AT CAESAR'S PALACE - AFTER FIGHT

The room looks like a star's dressing room. Very well lit. Mirrors on the wall. Plush chairs and a massage table. Inside the room is Bruce, Bill, Carmen, ROCCO DePALMA (Bruce's majority manager), the doctor, and a masseur. Rocco is in his mid-forties, shaved head, well trimmed beard.

Rocco's personality is that of a money hungry lawyer who uses fighters like pieces of meat.

Bruce is laid out on the table being massaged while the doctor checks his right hand.

Bill hangs up Bruce's trunks and robe and cleans up the room.

Carmen stands by, watching anxiously, waiting for the doctor's diagnosis. Rocco rubs his chin.

ROCCO
Well, Doc?

Doctor feels the hand, shakes his head slightly, and shrugs.

DOCTOR
We'll do some tests. X-rays, and MRI. I'll send the results back to Atlantic City. You'll have them by the time you get back there.

Carmen nods attentively as the doctor plays with the hand some more, and shrugs.

DOCTOR
And maybe rest it for a couple months just to be on the safe side.

Rocco, displeased, scowls at Carmen blaming him.

INT. NYC - OFFICE OF LE ROI - AFTERNOON

The office is extravagant, almost to the point of being gaudy. Deep, dark red, plush carpet. A huge oak desk.

Statues of naked women. A broken baseball bat, taped together, is on a stand like a samurai sword. 2 baseballs are on either side.

LE ROI, 50s, Don King type, has a severe limp. He uses 2 canes pacing back and forth. The intercom CRACKLES a bit.

SECRETARY(V.O.)

Mr. Le Roi, it's that trainer again. He says he really needs...

Le Roi pushes the intercom button with his cane.

LE ROI

Tell him I'll get back to him.

Le Roi sits behind his desk, LAUGHS, and lights a cigar.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - SKYLINE - DUSK

The sun begins to set and we see the elegance of the city as the Casinos start to light up. The scan makes its way to the seedier side of A.C. and the Police Athletic League building; an old dilapidated fire station. The property surrounding the PAL looks like any war torn region.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

The PAL is a two story building that looks as though it should have been condemned years ago. There's a metal door on the side where people enter. A few cars are parked outside.

Rocco's huge black Cadillac pulls up and parks. Rocco, expensive suit and overcoat, heads to the PAL door.

INT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

An office is located right passed the entrance. It's a small office with a desk, chair, and filing cabinet. Inside the office is MIKE and CRAIG HALL, two young black brothers who help run the PAL. The place has the overall feel of the ghetto.

There is a long stairway at the other end of the building that leads up to the boxing gym.

INT./EXT ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

The door opens. Rocco enters the gym, smugly nods to Mike and Craig.

Craig sneaks a peak to make sure Rocco has walked on.

CRAIG
Who's the asshole?

MIKE
Bruce Johnson's manager.

INT. ATLANTIC CITY - PAL

Rocco removes his overcoat as he walks to the stairway. He stops at its base and looks up. Rocco shakes his head, disgusted, seeing the long staircase with chunks of dry wall hanging from the ceiling.

INT. A.C. PAL - STAIRS

Rocco climbs the stairs.

INT. A.C. PAL - TOP FLOOR

It's a typical boxing gym one would see in any inner city. At one end is a regulation size boxing ring. The canvas is torn and duct taped together. A variety of speed bags and heavy bags hang from metal braces and platforms scattered throughout the gym. A huge wooden box against one of the walls is used for storage.

Bill Jefferson has a small office at the far end of the gym. In front of the office is a good sized window. Carmen is in the office on the phone.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Carmen, angry, SLAMS DOWN THE PHONE in its cradle.

Bill walks into the office and opens the file drawer.

CARMEN
(mumbling)
Black bastard!

Bill looks at Carmen as though to ask, "You talking to me."

Carmen sees Bill's look and shakes his head quickly.

CARMEN

No, it's that damn La Roi. He won't take my calls and I think we'll need him to get Bruce a shot.

Bill SLAMS the file drawer closed.

BILL

You don't need that piece of shit.

Carmen, worried, shakes his head slowly as he leaves.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

In the ring two kids spar. A white haired black man is in with them teaching them how to catch a jab.

Carmen walks to where Bruce works on one of the heavy bags. Carmen leans on the wall and watches Bruce. Bruce's left hand is gloved, his injured right hand is tied to his head. Bruce practices a left jab - double left hook to the body - left hook to the head combination. He's not turning his right shoulder to the bag enough.

Carmen shakes his head as Bruce finishes another combination.

CARMEN

(frustrated)

Bruce, you've got to commit that right shoulder toward the bag.

Bruce scratches his head with the hand that's tied to it.

BRUCE

What do you mean, commit?

Carmen pushes himself from the wall, gets into a fighting stance and jabs into the bag.

CARMEN

After you throw the jab,

Carmen pivots his right hip and drives his right shoulder until it points directly at the bag as he pulls the jab back to his chin. Bruce watches attentively.

CARMEN

drive the right shoulder toward the bag. Remember, your body is like a giant rubber band plane. The more you wind it up . . .

Bruce drives his right shoulder toward the bag.

BRUCE

The more you get out of it.

Bruce yanks back a vicious left hook and EXPLODES the bag.

Carmen smiles as he leans back on the wall. Bruce winks. Carmen looks passed Bruce and the bag to the stairway. He sees Rocco pull himself up the stairs using the bannister.

At the top of the stairs, Rocco studies the dirt on his hand from the bannister. He walks to a towel hanging from the ring rope and wipes his hand on it. Rocco cringes from the Vaseline on the towel he just wiped his hand on. He then wipes his hand on the ring apron.

Rocco sees Carmen and Bruce, raises his chin, acknowledging Carmen, and heads to them, pulling a handkerchief from his jacket and wipes his sweating brow.

Carmen nods to Rocco, then redirects his attention to Bruce.

CARMEN

Change the body shot to an L-5. Wind the shoulder the same, but just drive your left hip and knee to the bag.

Carmen demonstrates and JOLTS the bag. Rocco stands back.

CARMEN

As soon as it hits, rewind and throw it again.

Bruce imitates Carmen and JOLTS the bag with a triple L-5.

CARMEN

You can stay in there as long as you want. When you're done, then get out with a regular hook.

Bruce throws a regular hook, pulling away from the bag. As he does, he catches a glimpse of Rocco.

BRUCE

Hey Roc, what's up?

Rocco wipes his brow again. Bruce holds a glove to Rocco to do the fighters' handshake. Rocco ignores it at first.

ROCCO

Christ, it must be 90 degrees in here.

Rocco finally acknowledges Bruce and lightly hammers his fist down on top of Bruce's glove.

ROCCO
How's the hand?

Bruce waves with the hand that's tied next to his ear.

Rocco smiles briefly at Bruce then looks to Carmen.

ROCCO
Maybe he should take some time off,
Carmen. Won't he heal faster?

Carmen, perturbed, closes his eyes, shaking his head.

CARMEN
He's got a bruised tendon. You act
like he's in a body cast.

Bruce looks attentively at Carmen. Carmen scowls at Bruce.

CARMEN
(loudly)
He's still got a lot to learn!

Bruce smiles and throws the combination perfectly.

CARMEN
Again! Show me it wasn't luck.

Rocco wipes his brow.

ROCCO
He fights Galendez in 2 months.
Make sure he's ready.

Rocco turns and heads toward the stairway.

Carmen follows. He smacks the bag as he passes Bruce.

CARMEN
Keep working, Bruce.

Carmen catches up with Rocco as he reaches the stairs.

INT. A.C. PAL - ROCCO AND CARMEN

Carmen puts his hand on Rocco's shoulder. Rocco arrogantly looks down at Carmen's hand, then at Carmen.

CARMEN

(quietly)

We gotta get him a real fight.
These fish ain't gonna get him
ready for the top 10.

ROCCO

I thought Galendez was your idea.

Carmen looks at him quickly, thinking he heard wrong.

ROCCO

Well, anyway, it's an easy win,

Rocco pulls away from Carmen's hand, starts down the stairs.

ROCCO

...and an easy 10K.

Carmen shakes his head knowing it's the wrong fight for
Bruce.

INT. CHINATOWN - FIGHT VENUE - DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy, dressed in his ratty boxing robe and trunks, wraps his
hands with gauze and tape. He bites the tape to tear it.
There's a KNOCK on the door.

The door opens and the promotor enters carrying a pair of
boxing gloves, excited.

PROMOTOR

C'mon, kid, your up! Guys are
dropping like flies tonight.

Tommy looks annoyed to the promotor and starts to run tape
around his left hand.

TOMMY

Mind if I wrap my hands?

The promotor points at the taped hand.

PROMOTOR

That thing awright?

Tommy opens and closes his hand, flexing it.

TOMMY

It'll get the job done.

The promotor shoves a bill into Tommy's robe pocket.

PROMOTOR

Here's an extra twenty, don't get
the job done too fast.

Tommy looks strangely at the promotor.

The promotor suspiciously looks around the room and out in
the hall as though searching for spies, then closes the door.

PROMOTOR

You know, carry this guy a bit. The
crowd wants to see a show.

Tommy continues to tape his right hand. He tears the tape,
makes a fist, and PUNCHES his waiting left hand.

TOMMY

Send them up to Broadway.

The promotor smiles as he shoves a glove on Tommy.

PROMOTOR

Hey kid, how come you never tried
for the big times. You got what it
takes.

TOMMY

Because, you're the only one who still
calls me kid. I'm 37. For some reason
that's old in this sport. No
legitimate promotor will touch me.

The promotor scowls and fakes hurt feelings, protesting,

PROMOTOR

Hey, I'm legit!

The promotor laces the glove as Tommy smiles condescendingly.

TOMMY

Right, these things are legal.

The promotor quickly shakes his head no.

PROMOTOR

I said legit, not legal.

Tommy shrugs as though he could care less.

TOMMY

A fight's a fight.

The promotor finishes lacing the gloves and opens the door.

PROMOTOR

Well, old timer, time to kick ass.

Tommy heads out into the hall. The promotor follows him out and pulls the door SHUT.

MATCH CUT:

The DOOR OPENS into the back room where the boxing ring is located. Tommy jogs through the dense crowd and up to the ring. The crowd is very VOCAL. Money changes hands.

INT. CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - RING

Tommy climbs through the ropes into the ring. He looks across the ring to the other corner and sees his opponent, ED, a huge fat black man, easily a heavyweight, and two handlers in the other corner. One massages Ed's arm. The other wipes grease on Ed's face.

Tommy walks over to a neutral corner where the ref is. The ref steps aside. Tommy stomps his feet into the rosin on the ring canvas and grinds his feet into it.

ED

Hey, bones!

Tommy walks back to his corner, dabs at the grease on the ring pole with his glove and starts to smear it on his face.

ED

I'm talking to you, bones!

Tommy finishes with the grease, turns to Ed, looks around, then realize he's the subject of the verbal abuse. Tommy innocently points to himself to ask, "You talking to me."

ED

Yeah. I'm talking....

Tommy blows Ed a kiss.

Ed turns to his handler, asking MOS, "Did you see that?"

Tommy turns to the promotor and shrugs apologetically.

The PROMOTOR CRINGES, then lowers his head, shaking it.

The ref calls the fighters to the center of the ring, gives them very brief instructions MOS, and sends them back to their respective corners.

RING IN BACK ROOM/POLICE RAID ON THE CHINATOWN FIGHTS

The following scenes intercut between the police raid activity taking place outside, then inside of the fight venue, and the fight itself between Tommy and Ed.

EXT. CHINATOWN - STREET OUTSIDE FIGHT VENUE - EVENING

The store where the fights are held looks like a typical store. It's closed, one neon light is BUZZING and flashing.

Unmarked police cars pull up outside the store. A police raiding party quickly exits cars and rush toward the store.

INT. CHINATOWN FIGHT VENUE - RING

The BELL RINGS. Ed lumbers slowly toward the center of the ring. Tommy approaches, holds his left glove out to touch gloves showing good sportsmanship. Ed angrily attempts to swat it away.

Tommy pulls his glove back quickly, and leaps toward Ed, landing a vicious left hook.

Ed staggers to the corner, visibly hurt, shaking his head.

I/E. ENTRANCE TO CHINATOWN FIGHT VENUE

Police use a small battering ram to BURST through the door.

A small man ducks behind the desk at the entrance.

Police grab the man and drag him from behind the desk. As they do, he reaches back and pushes a button under the desk.

OFFICER

C'mon, Hopsing, let's go!

INT. CHINATOWN FIGHT VENUE - BACK ROOM

Money changes hands as the fight continues. A SIREN sounds and red lights around the room start flashing. The crowd panics and starts to head for the doors.

INT. CHINATOWN BACK ROOM - RING

Tommy and Ed mix it up in the ring.

Ed's handlers run from the ring trying to get out.

Tommy realizes a raid is taking place and clinches with Ed.

TOMMY

Hey, you fat bastard, the place is
being raided!

Ed continues to hit Tommy as Tommy struggles to get free.

ED

Right, and my shoe's untied, too.

More police officers herd spectators against the walls.

Tommy sees 2 police officers and a plain clothes police
Captain fighting their way through the panicked crowd trying
to make their way up to the ring.

Tommy frantically struggles with Ed to no avail. Seeing the
police getting closer, he grabs Ed's chin and back of the
head and turns his head, forcing him to see the police.

Ed's eyes bulge.

ED

Oh shit, I'm on parole!

The 2 fighters let go of each other as the 3 cops climb
through the ropes.

The 2 uniformed cops hurry toward Ed. Ed hits one with a
right hand, driving him back through the ropes.

Tommy backs to the ropes. He looks to Ed and calls out.

TOMMY

That's not going to help your
parole.

The Captain approaches Tommy.

Tommy holds both hands up in surrender.

The Captain spins Tommy around and pushes him to the ropes.
He grabs one of Tommy's hands and puts it behind his back.
Then SLAPS the cuffs around the wrist. The Captain leans to
Tommy's ear and whispers,

CAPTAIN

I lost a lot of money on you last
week, punk.

Tommy's eyes widen.

CAPTAIN
They're gonna find you hanging in
your jail cell.

Tommy jams the thumb of his free hand in the Captain's eye.

The Captain SCREAMS as he releases his hold from Tommy.

CAPTAIN
I'm gonna kill you slow, boy!

Tommy grabs the back of the Captain's head with both hands and simultaneously pulls the Captain's head down and his knee up, smashing the Captain's face. The Captain drops.

Tommy chews at the tape and laces of his gloves as he follows the Captain down to the canvas. Biting the gloves off, he immediately searches the Captain for the handcuff keys.

Tommy finds a wad of keys inside the breast pocket of the jacket. Tommy fumbles with them for a moment looking for the handcuff key. Quickly finding it, he unlocks the cuffs.

TOMMY
Shouldn't bet against me, Goober.

Ed is driven to the canvas by the 2 officers.

Tommy grabs his robe and leaps over the rope to the floor. He runs through the crowd pushing police and spectators aside as he heads back to the dressing room.

INT. CHINATOWN FIGHT VENUE - DRESSING ROOM

Tommy enters the dressing room and props one of the chairs under the doorknob. He hurries and opens the locker lock.

There's a loud BANG on the dressing room door as Tommy shoves his clothes into his gym bag.

OFFICER(O.S.)
Police! Open up!

THE DOOR STRAINS AGAINST THE CHAIR. Another BANG and the DOOR CRACKS.

Tommy grabs the bucket from atop the locker and SMASHES the window with it. He uses the bucket to smooth the window of jagged edges. Another BANG on the door and it SPLITS further.

ONE MORE BANG, the DOOR SPLITS IN TWO. The chair flies away from the door, officers #1 and #2 fall inside to the floor. 4 other officers rush in, trampling #1 and 2 on the floor. #1 and #2 SCREAM and CURSE.

Tommy tosses the bucket at the officers. Officer #3 ducks. The bucket hits #4 who is right behind, dropping him.

Tommy tosses his bag out the window, then leaps out himself.

#3 offers a helping hand to #4 who is on the floor. #4 smacks the helping hand away. #3 gives #4 the finger then hurries to the window, leans onto a jagged edge as he leans out, then quickly pulls his bloody hand back in.

#3
Son of a bitch.

#3 carefully leans back out and watches Tommy, cradling his gym bag, run down and out of the alley.

INT. NYC - PENN STATION SUBWAY STOP - A WHILE LATER

Typical subway stop activity. The train SCREECHES to a stop and the train doors OPEN and the car empties. Among the exiting passengers is Tommy, wearing his robe over his trunks, carrying his bag. No one gives him a second look.

Tommy casually walks up the stairs and outside to where the buses are RUNNING. He scans the buses: The destinations on the top front of the buses; "PROVIDENCE", "BOSTON", "WASH, D.C.", "ATLANTIC CITY".

EXT. NYC - PENN STATION - ATLANTIC CITY BUS

Tommy takes a wad of money from his sock, peels off a bill, and enters the 'ATLANTIC CITY' bound bus.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - BUS DEPOT - EARLY MORNING AFTER

The bus from NYC has arrived and parked. Passengers unload. Tommy, tired, stumbles off the bus. He has changed into street clothes. His gym bag hangs down by his side.

He yawns, stretches, then scans the city; The sun is just coming up between the casinos. To his left is a trash covered street. To his right, in the distance, he sees Bruce Johnson run toward him, shadow boxing.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY - STREETS

Tommy squints as Bruce approaches. As Bruce passes, Tommy's eyes widen. Tommy tosses his bag over his shoulder and runs after Bruce.

EXT. A.C. PAL

The PAL is closed. Bruce arrives, now running in place. 10 seconds later Tommy shows up. Bruce looks at him.

TOMMY

You're Bruce Johnson.

Bruce takes a deep breath, blows it out, and nods casually.

TOMMY

I caught the replay of your last fight. You put a hurting on that guy.

BRUCE

Thanks.

Bruce shadow boxes a bit, weaves an imaginary hook, and throws a vicious right hand at the air. He doesn't rotate the right hand enough to land properly.

Tommy helpfully points at Bruce's right hand.

TOMMY

Turn that hand over a little more and you'll bust it up a lot less.

Bruce flexes his right hand, looks at it, and nods slowly.

BRUCE

That's what my trainer keeps telling me.

TOMMY

Gratz is one of the best. Who you have next?

Bruce, still looking at his right hand, throws a right punch slowly, being sure to rotate it more.

BRUCE

Galendez.

Tommy pulls back a bit, shocked,

TOMMY
Oscar Galendez?!

Bruce looks up and nods innocently.

TOMMY
Christ! I could beat him.

BRUCE
You box?

TOMMY
(shrugging)
I fight more than I box.

Bruce offers his hand and hikes his head to the gym.

BRUCE
Come back at 2, they open the gym
up then.

Tommy nods as he shakes Bruce's hand.

EXT. A.C. PAL - 2 P.M.

It's a sunny day. Tommy lies on the sidewalk asleep against the wall. He uses his gym bag for a pillow.

Bill Jefferson walks up the street carrying a duffel bag over his shoulder. As he approaches the gym door he is met by a very attractive, well built LAUREN GRATZI, Carmen's daughter. She is a doctor and very well dressed.

Bill and Lauren talk MOS as Bill keys the lock and swings the door open. Before entering, he kicks Tommy's foot.

TOMMY opens one eye and looks up at Bill.

BILL
You here to train?
(to Lauren)
Don't worry, he'll outlive us all.

Bill walks into the building. Lauren shrugs, nods, then looks down at Tommy. Tommy looks up at her and fluffs his bag that doubles as his pillow.

TOMMY
Good morning.

Lauren smiles and walk away down the sidewalk.

LAUREN
It's afternoon.

INT. A.C. PAL - BOXING GYM

Tommy drags himself up the stairs.

Bill empties the contents of the duffel bag; bag gloves, boxing gloves, headgears, into the storage box. He finishes and pulls the hinged flip top lid forward, SLAMMING it shut.

Tommy stands and watches Bill as he walks passed. Bill, without looking at Tommy, hikes his thumb to the lockers.

BILL
Lockers are back there along with the showers. Get changed if you're here to work.

Tommy nods and heads for the lockers.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Bill walks in the office, takes an application from a drawer, sits at the desk, and writes on the application.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Tommy walks out from the locker room. He tosses his bag down, takes a hand wrap from it, and starts to wrap a hand.

Bill brings Tommy a pen and the application. Bill places the pen and application on the ring apron.

BILL
I need a signature.

Tommy walks toward Bill and looks at the application.

Bill looks suspiciously at Tommy for a moment, pauses, then points at the bottom of it where he wants it signed.

BILL
(slowly)
Right here.

Tommy shrugs and signs. Bill looks over his shoulder and speaks inquiringly as though he knows different.

BILL
That your real name?

Tommy starts to read the application.

TOMMY
Does it matter?

Bill studies him a bit more, then shakes his head.

TOMMY
Is that all?

BILL
That'n 25 bucks and you're set for
a year. You got 25 bucks?

Tommy reaches into his sock and pulls a wad from it. He peels a couple bills from it and hands them to Bill.

Bill gingerly takes the bills between two fingers.

BILL
Glad I caught you before you worked
up a good sweat.

Tommy takes the other wrap from his bag and starts to wrap.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - ONE HOUR LATER

The gym is full of 20 fighters doing various workouts. Tommy is the only white man there. He jumps rope next to DWIGHT, a black heavyweight who also jumps rope. Tommy jumps quickly, but nothing fancy. Dwight is quick but also crosses over and double jumps. Tommy studies him closely.

Carmen and Bruce come up the stairs. As they enter, most of the other fighters acknowledge them.

INT. A.C. PAL - DWIGHT AND TOMMY

jump rope. Tommy studies Dwight's technique. Dwight annoyingly scowls at Tommy. Tommy doesn't notice and attempts to copy Dwight and crosses the rope. The rope WHIPS his ankles. Tommy painfully responds MOS. Dwight shakes his head. Tommy starts to jump again, studying harder this time.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Carmen tells Bruce MOS to get changed. Bruce heads to the lockers. Carmen walks to the office.

Tommy tries a double jump. He falls short, the rope whips again.

TOMMY
OUCH! DAMN!

Carmen stops at the office door, looks at Tommy, and shakes his head ruefully.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Bill files papers. Carmen enters, hikes his thumb to Tommy.

CARMEN
Where'd you pick him up?

Bill looks from the file cabinet out the office window and sees Tommy untangle the jump rope from around his ankles.

Bill SHUTS the file cabinet and sits behind his desk.

BILL
Like everyone else here, he wants
to train, get a fight.

Carmen shoots a quick look out the window.

CARMEN
Fight?! The poor bastard can't jump
the rope. And Christ, how old is
he? He's got to be 30 if a day.

BILL
(under his breath)
37

CARMEN
What?

Bill slides the application toward Carmen.

BILL
He's 37.

Carmen starts to leave.

BILL
Your daughter was here.

Carmen stops at the door without looking back at Bill.

CARMEN
(condescending)
I wish she'd get a life of her own.
What'd she want?

BILL
Just wanted to know how you were?

Carmen looks at Bill disgustedly over his shoulder and hikes his chin toward Tommy as he walks from the office.

CARMEN
That 6 o'clock's all yours.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - END OF DAY

The gym is empty except for Tommy. He walks toward the speed bag. Bill is in the office at his desk.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Bill writes into a notebook. He hears a thunderous BANG(O.S.), jumps a tiny bit, but continues writing. A few seconds later, BANG(O.S.). Bill curiously puts his pen down.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Tommy works the speed bag. He touches it lightly to start it swinging, then weaves it as it comes toward his head, then EXPLODES a vicious short right hand into it. He weaves it again and BLAST a left hook into it.

Bill looks through his office window. He sticks his head out the office door and peeks around to investigate. Another BANG(o.s.). Wide eyed, Bill walks out of the office and heads toward Tommy who continues to HIT THE BAG.

Bill leans on the wall to watch. Tommy doesn't notice him. Tommy backs up a half step and starts to POP a left jab at the swinging bag, pinning it to the platform for a second. After three jabs he holds the bag with his jab then BANGS a right hand. Tommy steps closer and starts rapidly HITTING the bag the conventional way.

BILL
Don't you get tired?

Tommy BANGS a left hook into the bag then turns to Bill.

TOMMY
Getting tired is an excuse for
quitting, not a reason.

Bill grabs a towel from Tommy's bag and tosses it to him.
Tommy towels himself off a bit.

BILL
Well, it's almost 7, and that's my
reason for quitting.

TOMMY
I got a minute for a shower?

Bill walks toward the office answering without turning back.

BILL
Take 2, I got some paperwork to
finish.

I/E. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE - A WHILE LATER

Bill writes in the notebook. Tommy, with a towel over his
head, walks up and KNOCKS. Bill continues to write.

BILL
How's a rail like you get that kind
of power?

Tommy tugs the towel down around his neck and enters, but
stays near the door.

TOMMY
Any fights coming up around here?

BILL
Sure, casinos have 'em all the time.

TOMMY
Any chance of me getting on a card?

Tommy approaches the desk. Bill looks up.

BILL
You have all your tests done?

Tommy squints questioningly at Bill as he sits in the chair.

BILL
 Didn't think so.

TOMMY
 Tests for what?

BILL
 EKG, EEG, and you have to see an
 eye doctor.

TOMMY
 Get the hell out! You serious?

BILL
 If you wanna fight in Jersey I am.

Tommy incredulously HUFFS a laugh.

TOMMY
 What's all that stuff about?

BILL
 The AMA is concerned for your
 health.

TOMMY
 Are they concerned enough to foot
 the bill?

Bill looks at Tommy as though he's looking at an idiot.

TOMMY
 Didn't think so. How about Pennsy.
 What do I need there, a complete
 blood workup along with biopsies?

Bill chuckles and picks up the phone and dials.

BILL
 In Pennsylvania? If you can make it
 up to the ring without too much
 help, you're healthy enough.

Tommy nods quickly and mouths the word, "Cool!"

The phone RINGS(V.O.) in the receiver. Someone picks up.

BILL
 Hey, Russ, BJ here. When's your
 next card in Philly?

Tommy sits up attentively.

BILL
No way, man, the kid just finished
a five hour workout!

Tommy's eyes widen. He frantically KNOCKS on the desk to get Bill's attention. Bill looks up at him. Tommy nods quickly.

BILL
Hold on, Russ.

Bill holds the phone to his chest.

BILL
Are you nuts?! The man wants you to
fight tonight.

Tommy looks inquisitively and shrugs.

TOMMY
Well, yeah, that's soon enough.
Philly's only an hour away. We'll
make it on time.

Bill takes a deep breath, sighs it out, and sits back.

BILL
Awright, Russ, whatta ya got?

Tommy sits casually back in the chair.

Bill shakes his head no.

BILL
Light-Heavyweight?! No way, my boys
only . . .

Tommy leans forward, TAPS on the desk, and nods. Bill scowls.

BILL
Awright, Russ, you got it. Can ya
tell me anything about the guy?

Tommy starts to shadow box in his seat while Bill listens.

BILL
Hold on.

Bill looks to Tommy.

BILL
How many fights you had?

Tommy's hands freeze in mid air.

TOMMY
You mean in the ring?

Bill stoically stares.

BILL
What's your record?

TOMMY
223 and 4.

Bill's eyes burst open.

TOMMY
Oh, you mean sanctioned fights. 16
and 0.

Bill stares again and he slowly shakes his head.

INT. PHILLY ARMORY FIGHT VENUE - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The locker room is the lavatory. It's filthy, paint peeling from the walls. 8 fighters with their trainers get ready to fight doing various activities from shadow boxing to praying.

Tommy sits on the floor, staring. The look on his face is one of a daze. Bill carries in a bag of equipment (gauze, tape, scissors, cut medicines) looks around, spots Tommy and walks to him. Bill stops at Tommy's feet and studies him for a moment. Shakes his head a bit, wondering.

BILL
Hey, man, you awright?

Tommy nods slowly without changing his expression.

BILL
Who wrapped your hands?

TOMMY
I did. You find anything out about
the guy?

Bill kicks Tommy's foot. Tommy looks up at Bill. Bill hikes a thumb to the other end of the room.

BILL
Yeah, that's him over there.

His opponent, EARL WILLIAMS, a very muscular, bald, black man who looks like he just killed his mother.

TOMMY
He looks stupid.

BILL
All power, no movement. Can you
move a little bit?

TOMMY
If I need to.

Earl throws a hook and KNOCKS the dispenser off the wall.
Bill cringes.

BILL
I think you'll need to.

INT. ARMORY - INSIDE THE RING - LATER

Tommy and Earl fight on the inside trading PUNCHES to their heads and bodies. The ref watches closely. The crowd is very NOISY. The BELL RINGS ending the round. The fighters break and go back to their respective corners.

INT. ARMORY - TOMMY'S CORNER

Bill slips the stool under the ropes and puts the bucket with ice, water, and grease on the ring apron.

Tommy arrives at his corner and remains standing. He turns around and calmly leans back against the ropes, puts his foot up on the stool and takes his mouthpiece out.

Bill frantically jumps through the ropes. He grabs the grease from the bucket and smears some onto Tommy's face.

BILL
(excitedly)
What the hell you doin' on the
inside trading with this guy?

TOMMY
Resting. Son-of-a-bitch is strong.

The ring card girl enters the ring carrying the ROUND 2 card. The crowd WHISTLES and make lewd REMARKS.

The ref walks to each of the judges and takes a slip of paper from them.

Tommy looks up at the 'ROUND 2' CARD.

TOMMY
How many rounds is this set to go?

Bill squirts water into Tommy's mouth.

BILL
You got another 9 rounds.

A hammer HITS THE BELL.

Tommy rams the mouth piece back into his mouth.

TOMMY
Like hell I do.

BILL
Move with this guy!

The following is the fight scene in round 2 of the fight. The crowd goes wild, CHEERING and LAUGHING, during the round.

Tommy dances out to the center of the ring and sticks his open chin out to Earl. Earl stomps out toward him, scowls angrily, and throws a vicious left hook. Tommy coolly weaves to his right, under Earl's hook, and lands a short right hand right behind Earl's left ear.

Earl, driven back a bit, shakes it off, and lunges toward Tommy. Tommy sidesteps like a matador and hits Earl with a hook in the belly as he goes by, knocking the wind from him.

Earl's momentum takes him to the ropes. He hits the ropes, doubled over, and almost goes over them. Tommy runs to Earl and rubs the top on Earl's head.

The ref runs over and breaks the fighters. Earl catches his breath, swats at the ref, turns, visibly angry.

The next 20 seconds are filled with Tommy putting on a boxing clinic making Earl miss badly and countering him with the polished technique ala' Sugar Ray Robinson.

Earl, visibly hurt, is on the verge of being knocked out.

Tommy hits Earl with a 5 punch combination. Earl staggers and falls into Tommy, holding on to keep from going down.

INT. ARMORY - TOMMY AND EARL

in a clinch. The ref starts toward them. Tommy looks to the ref, sees him coming. Tommy taps on the back of Earl's shoulder and calls out in the direction of the ref.

TOMMY

Break!

INT. ARMORY - IN THE RING

Earl, in a daze, let's go and backs up with his hands down. As he does, Tommy hits him with a vicious left hook knocking Earl to the canvas. The ref rushes over and starts to COUNT.

From the corner Bill looks at the ref and Earl, and studies Tommy with a look of both being impressed and curious.

The ref waves over Earl to end the fight. Tommy walks from the neutral corner toward Bill. As he does he chews at the tape around his glove to bite it off.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - NEXT DAY

A few fighters walk from the lockers carrying their bags.

Tommy is the only one left working. He is at the heavy bag. He pushes it away, waits til it swings back at him, steps back, and throws a counter left hook. He repeats the drill.

Bill comes from his office and passes the fighters that came from the locker room.

BILL

See you guys later.

The leaving fighters turn and wave as they reach the stairs.

FIGHTERS

See ya tomorrow, BJ.

Bill looks over at Tommy. Tommy still works the left hook counter on the bag.

Bill watches Tommy on the bag. After Tommy throws three more step back hooks, he pivots, steps to the left and drives a right elbow into the bag.

Bill shakes his head and walks toward Tommy. Tommy repeats the drill with the elbow.

He throws another elbow and follows up with a knee to the side of the bag.

BILL

Why you gotta do that shit?

Tommy steps from the bag, looks around to see if Bill may have been talking to someone else.

BILL
Yeah, I'm talking to you.

TOMMY
What?

BILL
You know goddamn well what. Like that tap on the shoulder 'Break' bullshit last night.

Tommy huffs a smile.

BILL
You could have beat Williams without that shit.

TOMMY
(shrugging)
Force of habit, I guess.

BILL
Man, you got some sweet moves. I haven't seen a white boy move like that since , . . . (voice fades)

Bill looks curiously at Tommy and nods. Tommy interrupts, speaking quickly as though he's trying to change the subject.

TOMMY
You get me another fight yet?

Bill continues to look curiously at Tommy. After a pause for a second, Bill snaps to.

BILL
(jokingly)
Yeah, you're all set for tonight.

Tommy taps the bag with a few punches.

TOMMY
Pennsy again.

BILL
That was a joke, boy!

Bill shakes his head then squints at Tommy.

BILL
Don't you ever get tired.

TOMMY
How many times are you going to ask
me that? Of course I get tired.
Christ, I'm always tired, don't you
see the way I train?

Bill shakes his head at Tommy as though he's an idiot.

BILL
Then don't you think you should get
some rest?

TOMMY
(winking)
I rest between rounds.

Tommy starts to hit the bag again. Bill turns to leave.

BILL
Well, me personally, I need a
little more rest than that. I'm
going home.

Tommy finishes a combo and starts to take his gloves off.

Bill continues to walk away without turning around.

BILL
No, you go on, keep working. You
can sleep in here tonight.
(slight pause)
Unless you prefer the sidewalk?

Tommy pulls his glove back on with his teeth.

INT. A.C. TROPICANA CASINO - BOXING VENUE - NIGHT

The room is at maximum capacity. The crowd is very LOUD,
BOOING as they watch a preliminary bout. The fighters, #1 and
#2 dance and clinch more than fight. DAVE BONTEMPO and AL
BURNSTEIN are ringside wearing headphones as announcers for
the TV coverage.

INT. TROPICANA CASINO - RINGSIDE

Al and Dave sit in front of TV MONITORS.

The fighters dance and don't fight. The BELL RINGS ending the round. They go back to their corners.

DAVE

There's another one in the books.

AL

What book would that be, Country Line Dancing at its best?

DAVE

We'll be back after these messages.

Al tosses his headphones disgustedly onto the table.

AL

My God, who put these fights together?

DAVE

Let's hope the main event goes the distance so this slop isn't used as filler.

Al looks at the fight card paper, then tosses it aside.

AL

Johnson vs. Galendez. Not a chance.

The 10 second WHISTLE BLOWS signaling the start of the round.

THE REF(O.S.)

Seconds out!

Al replaces his headphones.

DAVE

It looks like Bruce is fighting the bum of the month club.

INT. A.C. TROPICANA CASINO - FIGHT VENUE

The bell RINGS. The two fighters approach the center of the ring. The ref steps back. The fighters touch gloves.

AL(O.S.)

That's the most contact they've done with their gloves tonight.

INT. RINGSIDE - AL AND DAVE FROM BEHIND

The monitors are seen over their backs. The two fighters dance. On the bottom of the monitor screen appears the trunk description of the fighters.

The MONITOR reads; PRESCO - BLACK TRUNKS, SAROTA - WHITE TRUNKS.

AL(O.S.)

Pay no attention to the bottoms of your television screens, ladies and gentlemen, that is a misprint.

DAVE(O.S.)

It should read; Fred Astair in the black trunks and . . .

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. A.C. TROPICANA - DRESSING ROOM - TV

DAVE(V.O.)

Ginger Rogers in the white.

CARMEN(O.S.)

Turn that shit off.

A hand reaches up and CLICKS the TV off.

INT. A.C. TROPICANA - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

is first class. Bill, Carmen, Rocco, and Bruce are in the room. Bruce sits on a massage table getting his hands wrapped by Bill.

Bruce watches Carmen. Rocco pompously leans on a wall watching Carmen show Bruce a new combination. Carmen explains as he demonstrates; He jabs straight out, pivots to the left, as the right calf compresses, he jabs forward again.

CARMEN

This will mesmerize GALENDEZ, that poor son-of-a-bitch.

Bill looks slightly over his shoulder at Carmen, turns back to Bruce's hands, shaking his head.

BILL
 (mumbling)
 Poor son-of-a-bitch is right.

Bruce looks curiously at Bill a second then back to Carmen.

CARMEN
 Use that quick, snapping jab. As soon as it touches, pivot to your left. The moment that right foot touches back, drive another jab.

Bruce nods. Rocco pushes himself off the wall and pours himself a glass of ice water.

ROCCO
 (condescending)
 Whoa, a double jab.

Carmen looks at Rocco, shakes his head ruefully, then returns his attention to Bruce. There's a KNOCK on the door. The door opens. An old man carrying a pair of boxing gloves enters.

GLOVEMAN
 Gloves for Johnson.

CARMEN
 Sign for these, Roc.

Carmen takes the gloves and puts them on his own hands as Rocco pulls a pen from his pocket and signs the man's paper.

CARMEN
 Anyway, just work it a couple times. It'll come in handy for stiffer competition.

BILL
 (mumbling)
 Instead of just stiff.

Rocco scowls at Bill as he replaces his pen. The glove man leaves and closes the door.

CARMEN
 After you pop that jab and pivot...

Carmen throws the jab and pivots to demonstrate.

CARMEN
 he's just going to follow you with his head. Hit him with the second jab on the tip of the chin.

Carmen slaps his own chin with the glove turning his head to imitate the effect of the second jab.

CARMEN

That'll turn his head just right.
Drive a short right hand behind his
ear. That should end it.

Carmen SMACKS a short right into his own waiting left hand.

MATCH CUT TO:

A boxing glove SMACKS into the head of Galendez. Galendez' mouthpiece flies out and Galendez staggers to the ropes.

INT. A.C. TROPICANA CASINO - FIGHT VENUE

AL(O.S.)

That's the fifth time Johnson has
used that pivoting jab.

The ref picks up the mouthpiece. The crowd is very VOCAL.

DAVE(O.S.)

That's right, Al. It looks like
practice. Although that time he did
follow with the right that sends
Galendez into the ropes.

Bruce rushes to him with a barrage of punches. Galendez desperately grabs at Bruce and clinches. The ref touches both fighters on the shoulders then points to a neutral corner directing Bruce.

REF

Break! Go to the corner, Bruce.

Bruce walks to the corner as the ref walks Galendez to his corner to hand the mouthpiece to his handlers. Galendez is still very dazed.

REF

Here, rinse this off.

Galendez' handler slowly walk up the steps to the ring as Bruce walks to the neutral corner and leans back.

AL(O.S.)

This is a break for Galendez, Dave.

The handler takes the mouthpiece and slowly walks down the steps. Ten seconds pass as the handler squirts the mouthpiece with the water bottle.

DAVE(O.S.)
He needs it. And it looks like
their taking full advantage.

Dave and Al watch the monitor. On the monitor is the corner working on the mouthpiece.

AL
This is ridiculous.

DAVE
Maybe they sent it out to be
cleaned.

AL
Well, as we prolong the inevitable,
Dave, let's tell our viewers what's
coming up in the world of boxing.

INT. A.C. TROPICANA - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

Carmen is massaging Bruce's shoulders.

CARMEN
My God, he was so easy to hit.

Bill scowls as he cuts the wraps off Bruce's hands.

BILL
(angry)
Too easy to hit! Don't you think
you better get this boy some
competition? How the hell . . .

Rocco enters the dressing room and slaps Bruce on the shoulder.

BRUCE
Hey, Roc, you going out to
celebrate with us?

ROCCO
No, I've got some business. I'll
stop by the gym to see you. When do
you start training again?

Bruce looks over to Carmen.

CARMEN

Take a couple days off, come back rested.

ROCCO

Okay, I'll see you then. Nice fight, Bruce.

Rocco heads toward the door. Bruce nods a smile as Rocco leaves. Carmen starts to follow.

CARMEN

Hey, Roc, we gotta talk about some things. We need to...

ROCCO

Yeah, yeah, I'll be in touch.

Rocco leaves and closes the door. Carmen stares at the closed door. Bill cuts the wraps off and tosses them into the trash.

BILL

Who's picking the opponents for this boy, you or DeParma?

CARMEN

That's what I wanted to talk to him about.

Carmen turns back to Bruce and Bill. He almost looks sad. Bill slaps Bruce on the back.

BILL

Hit the showers.

Bruce jumps off the table and heads into the bathroom.

Bill watches the door shut, then turns to Carmen.

CARMEN

(almost apologetic)
I know we need to up his competition. We gotta get Bruce ready for the top 10.

BILL

So he IS picking the opponents.

Carmen, looking both embarrassed and worried, speaks like he's trying to convince someone, either himself or Bill.

CARMEN

No, no. I've got the final say.

Carmen looks out of the corner of his eye to see Bill's expression.

Bill cocks his brow at Carmen as though he doubts him. Carmen nods quickly, trying to convince him, then checks the time.

CARMEN

I've got to meet someone. See that Bruce gets something to eat.

Bill nods as Carmen leaves.

INT. NYC - OFFICE OF LE ROI - EVENING

The office is dark except for a couple of 15 watt bulbs on each side of the desk. Behind the desk is Don Le Roi lighting a fat cigar. In a large leather chair facing Le Roi, smoke rises from the cigar that someone unknown is smoking.

Le Roi sucks on the cigar until it lights. He bellows smoke.

LE ROI

There's nothin like a Cuban cigar,
is there?

The smoke from the leather chair moves from side to side as the man shakes his head no. Le Roi sets the lighter down.

LE ROI

We're just about ready. You all set
with his next opponent for next
month.

Le Roi looks to the chair and smiles.

LE ROI

Good. Two more wins, and we'll make
our move.

(starts to chuckle)
Reality's going to be like a kick
in the face.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - AFTERNOON

The gym is busy and LOUD with training. Bill holds pads for Dwight in the ring. The BUZZER sounds. Bill walks to the corner to get water for Dwight

A light-heavyweight fighter approaches the ring apron.

L-H FIGHTER
Hey, BJ, can I get some sparrin'
today?

Bill looks around the gym.

BILL
I don't see anyone right now. Maybe
later, we'll see.

The light-heavy nods and walks back to the bag. The BUZZER sounds for the start of the round. Bill CLAPS the pads together then holds them in position for Dwight. Dwight starts to JAB at the pads and follows with COMBINATIONS.

Tommy, carrying his bag, climbs the stairs and heads to the lockers. His lip is split and face is bruised.

The gym, like a chain reaction, gets quieter and quieter.

The fighters have all stopped, staring and pointing at Tommy. Some SNICKER. Bill, in the ring, lowers the pads and turns, confused, to see what caused the distraction. He sees Tommy and jumps down from the ring.

Dwight holds up his hands questioningly. He is not happy.

Bill follows Tommy into the locker room.

INT. A.C. PAL - LOCKER ROOM

Tommy tosses his bag down and unlocks his locker.

BILL(O.S.)
What the hell happened to you?

Tommy pulls out his boxing shoes from his bag.

TOMMY
(calmly)
What?

Bill turns the corner and approaches Tommy, screeching,

BILL
What!?

Bill grabs Tommy's face and turns it toward himself.

BILL
You been fighting?

Tommy looks at him incredulously. Continues to speak calmly.

TOMMY
That's what I do.

Bill rips his hand from the face.

BILL
I mean in the ring!?

TOMMY
This was in a ring.

Bill's voice relaxes a bit, but he still looks shocked.

BILL
Damn, boy! Why didn't you tell me.
I would have worked with you.
(under his breath)
Looks like you could have used it.

Tommy's left eyebrow arches as he takes wraps and bag gloves from his bag.

TOMMY
I won.

Bill's eyes widen.

BILL
Damn, what'd he do, head butt you?
(under his breath)
About a dozen times.

Tommy opens his locker. As the locker opens, the next scene is a FLASHBACK that appears inside the locker.

INT. BACK ROOM - SMALL ROOM

Tommy and his opponent, MAC, who's more like a bodybuilder, are in the ring. It is more like a street fight than a boxing match. They are bare knuckled. Tommy's face is battered.

The following is a round of the fight:

The fighters are in a clinch. Tommy pushes his opponent away.

The opponent, exhausted, reels back against the ropes. Tommy rushes toward him and drives a knee into his stomach driving his opponent to the point where the opponent is bent backwards over the rope.

Tommy grabs the opponent behind the head and pulls their heads together driving his forehead into his opponent's nose.

The opponent drops, unconscious, and everything gets dark.

MATCH CUT TO:

Everything is dark.

The locker door SLAMS. FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. A.C. PAL - LOCKER ROOM

The SLAMMING OF THE DOOR brings us back to the present. Tommy starts to put on his shoes.

TOMMY

Head butts were allowed. It was one of those force of habit fights.

BILL

What the fu...

TOMMY

I needed cash for those tests. You know, the ones that prove the AMA is concerned with my health.

BILL

You still should've...

TOMMY

Get me something next week. If you're not in Vegas with Bruce, I'd appreciate the help.

Bill's demeanor changes to one of confusion and concern.

BILL

Ahhh, Bruce has been fighting nothing but fish. I think it's Rocco, but..., I don't know. Carmen trusts him, but he's ...

TOMMY

.... a lawyer, isn't he?

BILL
Yeah, and he's slimier than most.

Tommy starts out of the locker room.

TOMMY
I know I wouldn't bend over in
front of him.

Bill chuckles and follows.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Tommy walks from the locker room with Bill following.

Dwight leans on the ropes staring angrily at Bill.

DWIGHT
Hey, BJ, how 'bout it.

Bill looks up at the ring, nods, and starts up to the ring.

TOMMY
Hey, Bill, don't forget about that
fight next week.

Bill leaps off the stairs and walks to Tommy. Dwight takes his gloves off and angrily throws them to the canvas. He leaves the ring MUMBLING.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL AND TOMMY

Bill reaches Tommy and puts a fatherly hand on his shoulder.

BILL
(quietly)
Listen, you gotta slow down.

Tommy turns to listen with a cocked brow.

BILL
You don't have to do all those
fights. You're better than that. I
know you're better than that.

Bill looks around for spies.

BILL
(more quietly)
I know who you are, Johnny.

LAUREN(O.S.)
(angry)
Bill!

Bill closes his eyes as though he's afraid. He mouths the words, "Oh, Shit!" Some of the fighters WHISTLE(o.s.)

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Tommy smiles just short of laughing as Bill obviously tries to sneak to the office. Tommy follows.

TOMMY
Friend of yours?

Lauren, visibly upset, walks toward Bill and Tommy.

LAUREN
Where the hell is Carmen?

BILL
(to Tommy)
Carmen's daughter.

Bill enters his office and locks the door. Lauren reaches the door and POUNDS on it.

LAUREN(YELLING)
Goddamn it, Bill, he missed another appointment!

Tommy leans with his back on the wall next to the door of the office. He smiles and folds his arms.

TOMMY
You call your dad by his first name?

Lauren continues to stare angrily at the door.

TOMMY
That's a 'today's woman' thing, huh?

Lauren turns her head to face Tommy.

LAUREN
You're the guy who sleeps on sidewalks. Someone step on your face out there?

Tommy continues to lean nonchalantly on the office wall. He acts like he's ignoring her.

TOMMY
You don't look like one of those
'today's woman' types.

Lauren's eyebrows raise inquisitively.

TOMMY
They call you people feminist,
don't they?

Lauren smiles slightly, studying him.

TOMMY
I heard all feminists were carpet
munchers.

Lauren shocked, clears her throat, then composes herself.

LAUREN
And I heard all fighters were
punchy. But you seem to handle
complete sentences pretty well.

Tommy turns to her momentarily, looks her up and down, then stares ahead again. After a pause,

TOMMY
Don't look like a carpet muncher.

Lauren grabs his face, checking out the cuts.

LAUREN
And you certainly don't look like
much of a fighter.

TOMMY
Maybe we can work with each other.

Lauren smiles and winks.

INT. A.C. - ANGELINO'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

It's a quaint little place with Italian decor. SOFT INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC plays. Each table has it's own clothes tree. It's not too busy. The few patrons are dressed semi-formally. All the men are wearing ties.

Lauren sits by herself at a small table in the back. She is dressed smartly. Her suit jacket hangs on the clothes tree next to her table. She is enjoying wine.

The waiter, DOMINIC, approaches. He is a short, greasy haired man with a thick Italian accent.

WAITER

Ah, it's a pleasure to serve you once again, Dr. Gratz. Are you ready to order?

LAUREN

Thank you, Dominic. The wine is fine for now. I'm waiting for someone. I'll give him...

There is a DISTURBANCE at the door. It starts SOFTLY, unintelligible, then gets LOUDER.

MAITRE DEE(O.S.)

But sir, that is our policy.

TOMMY (O.S.)

Wait a minute, let me get this straight. You're telling me if a crack dealer comes in here wearing a tux, he gets a seat?

Lauren and Dominic turn to see the problem; the Maitre Dee stands behind a podium talking to Tommy who can't be seen.

TOMMY (O.S.)

What is it, you don't like my jeans? They're clean. I wash them everyday.

MAITRE DEE

I'm sorry, Sir, but...

TOMMY (O.S.)

Don't apologize, it's probably not your stupid policy.

The waiter turns back to Lauren.

WAITER

My apologies, Dr Gratz.

Lauren looks at the waiter apologetically.

LAUREN

I think he's with me.

WAITER

Oh, excuse me, Ma'am.

Lauren puts her hand over her mouth to hide her smile as she watches the waiter start toward the DISTURBANCE.

The waiter walks to the front of the restaurant. He talks MOS to the Maitre Dee, then looks back at Lauren, then back to the Maitre Dee. Tommy is still not seen.

After a moment passes, the waiter escorts Tommy to the table. Tommy wears jeans, clean white boxing shoes, a gray pullover crew neck, and a sport coat, a few sizes too big.

Tommy and Dominic reach the table. Tommy takes the jacket off and holds it up for Lauren to see.

TOMMY

Pretty nice jacket, huh?

Lauren nods and smiles, exaggerating that she's impressed.

LAUREN

Very nice.

Tommy tosses it onto the clothes tree and sits.

TOMMY

Yeah, they were afraid I wouldn't make it the 20 feet to your table without offending someone.

Lauren gives Dominic a displeased look. Dominic haughtily walks away.

LAUREN

Well, you succeeded famously. You look very nice.

TOMMY

Yeah, I should have been a model.

Lauren puts her hand on his as to apologize.

LAUREN

I should have pick another place. I should have known you weren't a jacket and tie kind of person.

TOMMY

Yeah, I had to draw the line at the tie.

Lauren looks around at the other PATRONS. They are all but pointing as they talk MOS as they look at Tommy and Lauren.

LAUREN
Would you be more comfortable
somewhere else?

Tommy waves off the notion as ridiculous.

TOMMY
I'm comfortable wherever I happen
to be.

Tommy looks at the patrons and blatantly stares back at them. The patrons cower away. Some hide behind their menus.

TOMMY
If they're uncomfortable, let them
take their pompous asses somewhere
else. Besides,...

Tommy turns to Lauren, smiles, winks, and hike his chin to the jacket.

TOMMY
I rented that rag for the full
hour. We've got plenty of time.

Lauren angrily looks at the jacket, then stands, disgusted,

LAUREN
They made you pay for that? Let's
go. I'll get your money back.

Lauren starts toward the door. Tommy grabs the jacket and follows. Patrons arrogantly point and talk MOS.

TOMMY
Let them keep it, maybe they can
buy themselves some manners.

They reach the Maitre Dee who stands behind the podium.

The Maitre Dee sees Lauren and Tommy. He looks shocked that they are leaving.

MAITRE DEE
Is there a problem?

TOMMY
Jacket doesn't fit. I've
embarrassed the lady.

Tommy ruefully shakes his head, faking embarrassment. Lauren removes the jacket and tosses it at the Maitre Dee.

LAUREN
Stuff that, and your Manicotti, up
your ass.

Tommy smiles, pleasantly surprised. Dominic rushes toward them waving the check.

Tommy looks at him, then inquisitively at Lauren.

LAUREN
I had wine.

Tommy snatches the check from Dominic's waving hand and reads it. Tommy pulls out a huge wad of cash and fans through it.

Dominic, the Maitre Dee, and Lauren study the wad of cash as Tommy peels off a ten dollar bill and hands it to Dominic.

TOMMY
You owe me a buck.

Dominic, arrogantly HUFFS his head up as he turns and walks.

TOMMY
Let's go.

Tommy grabs Lauren by the arm and leads her out.

EXT. ANGELINO'S - SIDEWALK

The door opens. Tommy and Lauren exit to the sidewalk. They pause for a moment then look at each other.

LAUREN
Well, where to?

Tommy grabs her by the arm and leads her across the street.

EXT. A.C. - DARK STREET

Tommy and Lauren in the distance come up the street.

LAUREN
Where are we going?

TOMMY
A place I used to go to,...seems
about a century ago.
(MORE)

TOMMY(cont'd)

Good sandwiches, good music, and no jackets required.

Lauren looks around nervously.

LAUREN

I don't think there's anything down this way.

TOMMY

This is a short cut.

Tommy pauses a moment and looks around.

TOMMY

At least I think this is the way. It's been a while.

Tommy walks. Lauren looks up at him with a more concerned look as she walks beside him.

LAUREN

Maybe we should head back to the main street.

Tommy squints, intensely trying to remember the way. They approach an alley.

EXT. A.C. - ALLEYWAY

The alleyway is dark except the tiny bit of light coming from a 15 watt bulb hanging from a wire hanging over a dumpster.

TOMMY(O.S.)

I think it's down this way.

Tommy and Lauren turn the corner and start down the alley.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DUMPSTER

There are 3 punks behind the dumpster passing a joint around. They hear a BOTTLE BEING KICKED(O.S.). One pothead quickly sneaks a look around the dumpster and sees Tommy and Lauren walking toward them. Lauren, frightened, clings to Tommy.

#3 slaps at 1 and 2. 3 holds a finger to his lips for silence. 1 and 2 give 3 a dirty look. 3 motions that someone is coming. 2 sucks hard on the joint. 1 takes a pistol from around his back. 3 pulls out a knife and quietly opens the blade. 1,2, and 3 press themselves to the dumpster to hide.

Tommy and Lauren seen from behind, approach. The three punks step out from behind the dumpster blocking the alleyway.

Lauren, visibly scared to death, quickly steps behind Tommy.

#1
Hey, Mama, don't be shy.

Tommy turns to Lauren who cowers behind him.

TOMMY
Is this your son?

#1 CHUCKLES as he turns to 2 and 3. Then back to Tommy.

#1
Oh, yeah, just call me a motha
fucker.

Tommy stoically stares at the punks.

TOMMY
How 'bout I just call you scumboy?

Lauren closes her eyes tight and starts to MUMBLE prayers.

#1
Hows 'bout I call you dead white
meat? Then we fuck your girl.

Lauren's eyes pop open as #1 cocks the hammer of the gun and holds it in his right hand up to Tommy's face.

The following is the fight scene that takes a few seconds.

A) Tommy simultaneously grabs #1's right wrist with his left hand and grabs the barrel of the gun with his right. As he does, Lauren releases her hold and watches. Tommy pushes his left hand to his right and pushes the barrel to his left. As he does the trigger finger of #1 snaps and the gun FIRES.

B) #1 SCREAMS and cradles his finger with his other hand. Tommy snatches the gun from #1 and is holding it by its barrel. Tommy backhand PISTOL WHIPS #1 in the head. Out cold.

C) #3 rushes to Tommy. The knife is in his right hand. #3 brings the knife down in a stabbing motion toward Tommy.

#3
Cracker mother fucker!

D) Tommy parries #3's attack by driving his left forearm into the attacking right forearm of #3.

As Tommy drives his left forearm up, he simultaneously cocks his right shoulder back and drives an uppercut into #3's stomach, dropping him.

E) #2 takes a Bruce Lee stance for a moment and drives a left round kick into Tommy's stomach. Tommy grabs the leg and pulls it, locking #2's right knee. Tommy drives a left leg side kick into #2's right knee and SNAPS it. #2 SCREAMS and drops.

F) Lauren stands, eyes wide, and overwhelmed.

LAUREN

Oh my God!

Tommy walks passed #3 who's still sucking wind. As he passes, Tommy front kicks #3 in the face and knocks him unconscious.

Lauren nervously starts to APPLAUD, but quickly stops.

Tommy looks back at her strangely, smiles ever so slightly, and heads toward #2.

TOMMY

Good attitude.

Tommy rolls #2 over, who has been reeling, holding his knee, and kneels on #2's chest.

#2's eyes widen in fear as Tommy grabs #2's collar with his left hand and makes a fist with his right. The right hand quickly closes in on #2's face.

Tommy tosses #2's head away. It hits the alley, unconscious. Tommy kneels by #2's side and starts through #2's pockets.

LAUREN

What're you doing?

Tommy pockets some cash from #2, gets up, and walks to #3.

TOMMY

They're going to buy us dinner.

Tommy kneels by #3 and starts through his pockets. Lauren goes to #1 and does the same.

INT. A.C. - CHOO CHOO'S BAR - 20 MINUTES LATER

It's a little hole in the wall, dingy bar, dark with 25 patrons. In the corner near the entrance way is a upright piano.

WALT JENKINS, a clean cut, 60ish, wearing a tux, SINGS Sinatra's "ONE FOR THE ROAD." On top of the piano is a huge brandy snifter full of dollars. The bartender behind the bar is an old fat man dress like someone from the 1890's.

The door opens. Lauren and Tommy enter. Tommy points to a table next to the wall a few feet from the piano. Lauren heads to the table. Tommy follows, passing Walt at the piano.

TOMMY
(nonchalantly)
Hey, Walt, how you been?

Walt looks up at Tommy for a moment, then back at the piano keys, then a quick double take. He hits a few BAD NOTES.

The bartender, patrons, and Lauren turn to look at Walt.

WALT
(shocked and loud)
Johnny?! My God, when did...

The patrons APPLAUD. Tommy winks and smiles at Walt as he follows Lauren to the table. Lauren looks confused as she takes a seat, facing Walt's back. Tommy sits facing Lauren.

Lauren leans forward, puts her hand on Tommy's forearm, and hikes her head toward the APPLAUDING crowd.

LAUREN
Why are they doing that?

Tommy points to the snifter on top of the piano.

TOMMY
See that jar full of money?

Lauren looks to the snifter of cash over Walt's shoulder as he starts to PLAY again. The bartender walks from behind the bar and grabs the snifter.

LAUREN
Why is the bartender taking it?

Lauren looks at Tommy waiting for the answer.

Walt watches the jar being placed on the bar.

TOMMY
Walt just bought every drink in the house for the next hour.

Lauren, confused, shrugs.

Tommy hikes a thumb to the patrons.

TOMMY
Everyone in here puts a buck an
hour in Walt's jar.

Lauren squints a bit trying to see the connection.

TOMMY
He plays for 5 hours straight. If
he hits a bad note or repeats a
song, he buys drinks for an hour.

Lauren sits back, somewhat surprised.

LAUREN
Couldn't that get expensive?

Tommy confidently shakes his head 'No'.

TOMMY
He's the best there is. He could
play for a month and never play the
same song twice.
(slight pause)
And you would be hard pressed to
hear any mistakes.

Lauren's eyes squint slyly as though she has doubts.

LAUREN
Oh yeah, so what happened tonight?

TOMMY
I think he thought he saw a ghost.

Lauren's eyes squint as she studies Tommy.

TOMMY
He probably thought I was dead.

Lauren shakes her head and starts to ask another question but interrupted by LOUISE, gum chewing waitress stuck in the 50s.

LOUISE
Whatta ya have?

Louise stands poised with her pen and pad to take the order. Lauren slightly shrugs as though anything will do.

LAUREN
Oh, uh,.... Red wine?

Louise writes in her pad.

LOUISE
Straight up or on the rocks?

Lauren shoots a look to Louise, then HUFFS a laugh.

LAUREN
Excuse me?

LOUISE
That means plain or with ice.

LAUREN
I know what it means. I just never...

TOMMY
Straight up...And I'll have a club
soda, orange juice, and slice of
lime.

Louise writes in her pad and leaves.

LAUREN
What kind of a place have you
brought me to?

Tommy DRUMS the table in time with the BLUES TUNE.

TOMMY
As the song says, "You meet the
losers in the best bars, and the
winners in the dives.

Lauren looks past Tommy to watch Walt as she starts to dance in her seat.

LAUREN
He is good, why is he here?

TOMMY
Sometimes people just get tired of
all the bullshit.

Lauren looks back to Tommy and starts to ask another question. Louise interrupts with drinks. She holds the glass of wine up in a presenting fashion for Lauren to see.

LOUISE
You see, dearie, this is what's
called, . . .straight up.

LAUREN
(condescending)
Oh, I see,

Lauren takes the wine then leans to Tommy and whispers.

LAUREN
You still have that gun you took in
the alley? I'm going to kill this
woman.

Lauren leans back, ponders a bit, then snaps her fingers.

LAUREN
Ice cubes looks like little rocks.

LOUISE
(smiling proudly)
Now you got it, sweetie.
(to Tommy)
You got yourself a smart one.

Tommy pulls out his wad of cash and hands Louise a twenty.

TOMMY
Oh, she's a smart one alright.
That's why she's with me, sugar.

Louise smiles, makes change and leaves.

Lauren studies the wad of cash as Tommy start to pocket it.

LAUREN
I was sort of wondering how smart
you were, carrying all that cash.
But after your alley performance, I
guess it doesn't really matter.

Tommy takes the cash out and holds it up.

TOMMY
This? I've got to get some tests
done tomorrow.

LAUREN
Tests for what?

Tommy points to his face.

TOMMY
I'd like to stay away from these
bare knuckle fights.

Lauren mouths the word, `bare knuckle?'

TOMMY

If I get some tests, I can fight
here in Jersey.

Tommy holds the cash up, then stuffs the cash in his pocket.

TOMMY

This'll be gone in a couple days.
(after a pause, disgusted)
Thanks to some know nothing
doctors.

LAUREN

Maybe they're just looking out for
you.

Tommy looks shocked. Lauren sips her wine.

TOMMY

Yeah, right, a bunch of money
hungry quacks who have no idea what
fighters are about.

Lauren chokes on her wine as she HUFFS a laugh.

LAUREN

Oh really, and just what are
fighters about?

Walt eavesdrops.

Tommy leans forward and looks into Lauren's eyes. Lauren
returns the look.

TOMMY

I think Norman Mailer said it best
when speaking of the first Ali-
Frazier fight.

Lauren eyes widen, impressed. Walt PLAYS, 'THE GREATEST'.

LAUREN

And just what did Norman have to say?

TOMMY

He said, "Fighters are substances...

WALT

close to rock. They work on...

Lauren looks past Tommy to Walt. Walt's head is tilted up as though speaking to the ceiling.

WALT

clumsy skills to hone them finer,
knowing if they can obtain parity,
blow for blow with any opponent,
they will win. They have more guts.

TOMMY

Up to a far-gone point, pain is
their pleasure, . . .

Lauren looks strangely at Walt and turns slowly back to Tommy.

TOMMY

for their character in combat is their
strength to trade pain for pain, loss
of faculty for loss of faculty.

Tommy and Walt half turn to each other as though to harmonize. The bartender puts the empty snifter on the piano.

TOMMY AND WALT

They have veins of unsuspected
strength and streaks when they feel
as spooked as wild horses.

Tommy turns back to Lauren. He has a proud smile on his face,

TOMMY

Did you see that fight?

Lauren looks into Tommy's eyes with a combination of wonder and admiration. She slowly shakes her head 'No.'

TOMMY

2 great fighters traveling down...

FLASHBACK - THE FIRST ALI/FRAZIER FIGHT

It's bits of the fight with Ali and Frazier trading tremendous punches and ends in the fifteenth round of the fight when Ali gets dropped.

The PIANO and Tommy's voice is heard as the fight is seen. The VOICES OF THE ANNOUNCERS ARE HEARD LIGHTLY.

TOMMY(O.S.)
subterranean rivers of exhaustion
and crossing mountain peaks of
agony. Ultimately staring at the
light of their own death in the eye
of the man they're fighting.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. A.C. CHOO CHOO'S BAR

Lauren stares with the slightest of smiles.

LAUREN
That sounds like Mailer again.

Tommy smiles, nods, and still has an admiring look on his
face as though he's watching the fight.

LAUREN
And you think that's normal?

Tommy snaps to and looks at Lauren like she's crazy.

TOMMY
Normal? Of course it's not normal.
We're talking about fighters.

Lauren finishes her wine and leans toward Tommy and gently
grabs his hand and rubs it.

LAUREN
You have any words of your own?

Tommy smiles and thinks a moment.

TOMMY
You walk into that ring and those
lights, those ring lights are so
bright, . . .

Tommy looks up at a faint light above himself.

FANTASY - BOXING RING

The ring is viewed from the floor up, looking through the
ropes up at the ring lights. It is only seen for a second as
the ring lights flash very brightly.

FLASHBACK ENDS

INT. A.C. - CHOO CHOO'S BAR

TOMMY
my God, you'd swear its the same
light people see when they die.

Tommy looks at Lauren, wanting her to understand.

TOMMY
You know, that one in a tunnel or
whatever it is, and you just hope
you're the one coming back.

Lauren looks at Tommy, shakes her head spastically like she's heard wrong, then like she's looking at a crazy man.

LAUREN
You're a lunatic.

Tommy laughs MOS as he shakes his head.

LAUREN
Why would anyone want to go through
that? Do you hear what you're
saying? You're talking about dying!

Tommy leans forward quickly and tightly grabs her wrist.

TOMMY
(adamantly)
I'm talking about living!

Tommy looks at his hand holding Lauren's wrist, releases it, and sits back. When a moment passes, he slowly leans forward, needing her to understand.

TOMMY
When we were in that alley,... or
afterward,... anyway, when we were
walking out, didn't you feel alive?

Lauren shrugs.

LAUREN
I felt lucky to be alive.

Tommy shakes his head ruefully, then stops, teeth clenched.

TOMMY
You should demand to be alive.
(relaxed, slight pause)
(MORE)

TOMMY(cont'd)

Because only if you've been in the
deepest valley,...

Lauren leans forward and kisses Tommy. As they part,

LAUREN

Can you ever know how magnificent
it is to be on the highest
mountain.

Tommy takes Lauren's hand and stands. Lauren joins him.

TOMMY

Let's get out of here.

Tommy walks to the piano and puts cash in Walt's jar. Walt
nods and continues to PLAY.

WALT

Leaving already? I wanted to talk
to you.

Tommy nods.

TOMMY

I don't have a phone, ... or even a
place to stay yet.

Lauren jots her number on a card and places it on the piano.

Walt reads the card and looks inquisitively at her and asks
MOS, 'You?' Tommy shrugs and Lauren nods as they head out.

TOMMY

I'm training at the PAL.

Walt looks Lauren up and down as she walks away. Tommy looks
back at Walt and catches him eyeing Lauren. Tommy smiles.

TOMMY

You still the best cut man around?

Walt snaps to with a nod. Tommy and Lauren leave.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - LATE AFTERNOON

Most of the fighters are gone. Bill cleans some of the
equipment and places it in the bin.

Tommy is on the heavy bag next to the ring practicing
COMBINATIONS, sweating profusely.

Across the way a couple fighters talk MOS, leaning against the bannister. FOOTSTEPS come up the stairs. The fighters look over the rail and down.

Bill walks toward the fighters.

The fighters' eyes widen and one taps Bill's shoulder as he passes. Bill stops as they secretly point over the edge of the bannister. Bill sneaks to the bannister and peaks over. He jolts back and quickly heads to his office.

LAUREN(O.S.)
Relax bill, I'm not here to scream
at you about Carmen.

Bill freezes. Lauren appears as she WALKS UP THE STAIRCASE. Bill remains motionless as Lauren approaches.

BILL
You're not looking for your Dad?

Lauren walks past Bill and heads toward Tommy.

LAUREN
No, he's in Vegas.

Lauren walks to where Tommy is and scoots up to sit on the ring apron. Tommy pays no attention to her.

Bill slowly, almost sneaking, walks toward Lauren as she sits and watches Tommy hit the bag. After a moment passes, LAUREN CLEARS HER THROAT. Hinting a smile,

LAUREN
Oh, I see, you've had your way with
me, and now you ignore me.

BILL
Oh shit!

Bill sneaks away and into his office. Tommy, out of breath, HITS THE BAG.

TOMMY
That wasn't my way. My way will
leave you walking funny.

Lauren MOANS SEDUCTIVELY as she puts one hand on her breast and one in her crotch and closes her legs on her hand.

Tommy leans his head on the heavy bag then turns to her with a slight smile.

LAUREN
Maybe then, I'll get you breathing
as hard as you are now.

Tommy shakes his head. He resumes HITTING the bag at a furious pace. Lauren leans back on her hands as she watches in admiration. Tommy EXPLODES 4 left hooks to the body of the bag. Lauren jolts back as though the punches are coming at her.

LAUREN
How can a human take that?

Tommy MACHINE GUNS left and right body shots to the bag.

TOMMY
Humans can't.

Lauren jumps down off the ring apron, walks to Tommy and taps him on the shoulder. Tommy stops punching and turns to her.

Lauren wraps her arms around Tommy and licks the sweat from his shoulder, then kisses him. They part slowly.

LAUREN
Not human, huh?

Tommy scowls as he shakes his head no.

LAUREN
Hmmm. Gives bestiality a whole new
meaning.

Tommy grabs Lauren by the shoulders and walks her back to the ring apron and lifts her onto it. He walks back to the bag and starts TAPPING it with jabs. Lauren pulls her knees up to her chest and hugs them. She wonders,

LAUREN
I think you'd rather fight than fuck.

Tommy HUFFS a smile as he continues HITTING THE BAG.

TOMMY
I'll tell you what you do. Take
your clothes off, put gloves on,
and see what we end up doing.

Lauren perks up quickly, smiling, then cowers, looking at him with squinting eyes.

LAUREN

I would..., but I'm not sure I
wouldn't get punched in the mouth.

Lauren jumps off the ring apron and dances around in a
fighter's stance. She punches Tommy in the arm.

LAUREN

I'm anxious to see you fight. When
are you getting those tests done so
you can fight around here?

Tommy HITS THE BAG as Lauren punches him in the back.

TOMMY

Tomorrow.

INT. LAS VEGAS - BOXING VENUE - NIGHT

VOCAL PACKED HOUSE. Al and Dave are the announcers. A
preliminary bout has just ended. The 2 fighters leave the
ring. Al and Dave read some notes they've written.

Dave, disgusted, shakes his head as he turns the page.

DAVE

Did you see who they got for Johnson?

Al flips his page. Dave tosses his notes disgustedly.

AL

Yeah, I saw.

DAVE

Another fish. How 'bout I just pre-
announce this fight and go get
something to eat?

Al reads for a bit more, then looks inquisitively at Dave.

AL

How do you mean?

DAVE

You know, something like, "Bruce
dances around, fires his jab like a
piston, sets him up for the kill
and knocks him into next week.

(quickly and sarcastic)

My goodness, he's on his way to a
world title.

Al smiles and shakes his head no as the CROWD STARTS TO RUMBLE. The fighters and their corners approach and enter the ring. The ring announcer enters the ring. BELL RINGS twice.

RING ANNOUNCER(O.S.)
Ladies and Gentleman, ...
introducing in the red corner...

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - EARLY AFTERNOON

The gym is busy with 20 fighters going through TRAINING ACTIVITIES. Bill is in the ring with two sparring fighters.

Walt Jenkins walks up the stairs and scans the gym. After a moment, he talks MOS to 2 fighters. They respond MOS and point to Bill in the ring. The BUZZER RINGS.

BILL
Time!

Walt walks to the ring and up the steps. One of the sparring fighters taps Bill on the shoulder and points to Walt. Bill turns, sees Walt, and walks to him.

BILL
You need something?

WALT
Is Johnny around?

Bill squints suspiciously, shakes his head slightly, and shrugs as though he has no idea what Walt is talking about.

WALT
(quietly, leaning to Bill)
I think he goes by Tommy.

BILL
He had to have some tests done. Who wants to know?

SERIES OF SHOTS

The following scenes are shown, INTERCUTTING from the PAL boxing gym to the ring at the Tropicana boxing forum.

At the PAL, Tommy goes through various workouts.

At the Tropicana, Tommy boxes DARRYL SMITH, a well built young fighter with very good technique. The fight is in the 5th round. The crowd is LOUD AND RESPONSIVE.

Lauren watches both. She is seen at various vantage points at the PAL and ringside at the Tropicana.

A) PAL BOXING GYM

Tommy HITS the heavy bag with right hand, left hook to the body, left hook to the head. He quickly repeats the drill 2 more times. Lauren watches.

B) RING AT THE TROPICANA BOXING FORUM

Tommy dances around the ring. Darryl moves well, trying to cut off the ring. Bill and Walt, in Tommy's corner, calmly watch the fight.

Tommy backs himself into a corner. Darryl closes in. Tommy covers up as Darryl throws 5 punches to his body. Darryl leans in on Tommy. Tommy grabs Darryl's right elbow with his left glove and spins Darryl onto the ropes, simultaneously spinning himself off the ropes.

Darryl turns so his back is to the ropes. Tommy pivots to face Darryl. Tommy throws the right hand, left hook to the body, left hook to the head combo, landing them all, staggering Darryl as the BELL RINGS.

The CROWD ROARS. Lauren sits ringside, kicked back in her seat, WHISTLING LOUDLY.

C) TOMMY'S CORNER

Tommy stands in his corner. Walt is in front of Tommy smearing grease on Tommy's face. Bill has an ice bag on the back of Tommy's neck and squirts water in his mouth. Walt shoves the mouthpiece back in Tommy's mouth.

BILL

Listen, this kid's tired. His jab is getting lazy.

Tommy nods as he listens, then looks over Walt's shoulder to Darryl's corner. Darryl is exhausted. His handlers are working on him excitedly.

BILL

Have some fun in there, put on a show. When he starts to chug that jab again, give me that number 4.

D) PAL BOXING GYM

Tommy works on the double end ball in the corner of the gym. Lauren lies backwards on the storage bin with her head hanging over the edge.

Tommy touches the ball with a jab to get it moving back and forth. As it springs back at his head, he rolls back then forward throwing a straight right hand, meeting the ball with a SMACK.(Number 4) Lauren jumps a bit.

E) RING AT THE TROPICANA BOXING FORUM

The round is well under way. The crowd CHEERS WILDLY. Tommy and Darryl exchange at a good pace. Darryl clinches.

The Ref BREAKS them. Darryl backs up, very tired. As Tommy walks toward him, Darryl throws a lazy jab. Tommy rolls back, then forward, landing a vicious right hand. Darryl's mouthpiece flies out of his mouth. Darryl, visibly hurt, lunges forward and grabs hold of Tommy.

The Ref signals TIME OUT to the timekeeper then points to a neutral corner, directing Tommy to it. The Ref grabs onto Darryl and leads him back to his corner. Tommy reaches the neutral corner and leans on the cushion.

REF

Where's that mouthpiece?!

Someone ringside tosses the mouthpiece to the Ref. The Ref hands it to Darryl's corner men.

BILL

Hey, Johnny!

F) TOMMY'S CORNER

Bill sits outside the ring. Bill shows Tommy a technique. Bill's left hand is straight out, his right hand cocks back by his ear. Bill SMACKS his straight right hand into the left as he mouths the word, "SPEEDBAG".

G)RING AT TROPICANA BOXING VENUE

Tommy nods quickly to Bill.

Darryl's corner man shoves the mouthpiece in. Darryl is still a bit dazed. The ref motions to the timekeeper for time in.

E) INT. PAL BOXING GYM

Lauren tries to jump rope.

Tommy works out at the speed bag. It swings back and forth. Occasionally he hits it with a jab and traps it to the platform for a second, then releases it. The TIME CLOCK BUZZES. Tommy traps the bag again then POPS it with a vicious right hand. The speed bag deflates.

F) RING AT THE TROPICANA BOXING FORUM

Darryl is against the ropes, almost out on his feet. Tommy throws a double jab; the second jab stays against Darryl's face for a moment then SMASHES a vicious right hand to Darryl's jaw. Darryl drops unconscious. The crowd ROARS.

The ref waves his hands over Darryl ending the fight. Bill and Walt jump into the ring to congratulate Tommy. Tommy spits his mouthpiece into his glove then calmly walks back to his corner biting at the tape on his gloves.

The ref, doctor, and Darryl's corner men kneel around Darryl, trying to revive him.

Lauren jumps up onto the ring apron and throws her arms around Tommy. Tommy kisses her forehead. The crowd goes WILD.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - AFTERNOON

The gym is busy with fighters. Tommy practices weaves under a rope that is stretched from a hook in the wall to one of the poles of the ring. Bill works with guys sparring in the ring.

Carmen, in the office, talks on the phone.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Carmen is angry as he talks MOS on the phone. He SLAMS the door closed.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

The gym quiets and most everyone looks to the office. Tommy keeps weaving and the sparring continues. Slowly the others resume the activities.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Carmen suddenly looks tired. He pleads on the phone.

CARMEN

Listen, he's not ready for a top ten.

Carmen runs his hand through his hair, almost pulling it.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

The BUZZER SOUNDS ending the round in the ring. Bill pats the backs of the 2 fighters and they head out of the ring.

Carmen walks from the office into the gym and sits in a folding chair. He rests his head in his hand.

Bill walks to the corner of the ring. Tommy is there drinking water from a squeeze bottle.

Bill leans over the rope to Tommy.

BILL

We got a fight in 2 weeks.

TOMMY

We? You going to hold the guy while I hit him?

The BUZZER SOUNDS. Bill climbs through the ropes and down the steps. Bill pats Tommy on the back and heads to his office. Tommy works weaves and punches the air.

WHISTLES AND LEWD REMARKS come from a few of the fighters as Lauren, dressed provocatively, comes up the stairs. One of the sparring fighters walk passed the stairway as Lauren's head first appears. He HUFFS A LAUGH.

SPARRING FIGHTER

(calling out)

Oh shit, Carmen, look out. Mother's here.

The sparring fighter quickly sneaks away as Carmen looks up.

Carmen looks to see Lauren at the top of the stairs. A fighter stands in her way. She stoically looks him in the eye, then waves him aside. The fighter backs off.

Carmen tries to sneak away as Lauren approaches.

LAUREN
Relax, Carmen,

Carmen looks at her suspiciously, then plops back down. Lauren grabs his chin and looks him in the face.

LAUREN
if that's possible. Damn, looks like your BP is up 100 points.

Lauren tosses Carmen's face away. Carmen give her a dirty look as Lauren scans the gym.

LAUREN
But you do what you want. How are you feeling anyway?

Lauren looks back at Carmen. Carmen RELEASES A SIGH and shrugs. Lauren looks away again to find Tommy weaving in the corner.

CARMEN
Oh, alright. Doctors say that...

Lauren smiles slightly as she watches Tommy.

LAUREN
That's nice.

Carmen looks at her, insulted. She looks back at him.

LAUREN
Why are you just sitting here?

CARMEN
I'm waiting for Bruce.

LAUREN
Why not work with someone else?

Lauren hikes her head toward Tommy. Carmen looks at Tommy as though he just heard something disgusting.

CARMEN
6 o'clock? Too old.

LAUREN
He fights great!

Carmen jolts his head back to Lauren as he points to Tommy.

Bill walks from the office toward Carmen.

CARMEN
6 o'clock? When did you see him
fight?

LAUREN
Why do you call him 6 o'clock?

Bill is close enough to listen in. The BUZZER SOUNDS. Carmen leans forward to look around Lauren to Tommy. Tommy drinks water from a squeeze bottle.

CARMEN
Look at him, straight up and down
like the hands on a clock.

BILL
It's better than a quarter to 3.

Carmen sits back in his chair and looks to Bill. Lauren continues to watch Tommy with admiration.

LAUREN
All I know is he's got a huge
second hand that points to ten
after. Mm-mmm.

BILL
Oh shit!

Bill sneaks away as Lauren walks to Tommy.

Tommy sprays water from the bottle over his head as Lauren approaches. When she's close enough he squirts her.

TOMMY
You're here early. No work today?

LAUREN
It's my day off.

The BUZZER SOUNDS. Tommy starts weaving. Lauren jumps up to sit on the ring apron.

TOMMY
Oh, that's right. No one gets sick
on Wednesdays.

Carmen looks from his watch to the stairway.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - LATER THAT DAY

Tommy works on the speed bag. Lauren heads back toward him carrying a freshly filled water bottle.

The BUZZER SOUNDS. Tommy HITS the speed bag with a left hook.

Lauren holds the bottle up to Tommy's mouth and squeezes.

TOMMY

Haven't you anything better to do?

LAUREN

Not unless you want to squirt something in my face.

Lauren turns and leans back against the wall. She smiles innocently as she rolls her eyes. Her eyes come to rest on the stairway. She sees Bruce walk up the stairs carrying his bag. A half dozen fighters walk to him and do the fighter's handshake as they greet each other with a RUMBLE OF HELLOS.

Carmen sleeps in the chair. He's awaken from the NOISE.

Carmen stands and walks groggily to Bruce scattering the other fighters with the wave of his hand. He massages the back of Bruce's neck, then looks at his watch.

CARMEN

Bruce, where you been?

BRUCE

Rocco took me out and got me a BMW.
He said it'd be okay to miss part
of the workout.

Carmen's massaging hand freezes as he scowls. Lauren, disgusted, watches Carmen and Bruce.

CARMEN

Didn't he tell you we got the call.
You got your top 10. You can't...

BRUCE

Rocco said I'll walk ...

Carmen lightly pushes Bruce toward the locker room and walks back to his chair. Carmen is somewhat deflated,

CARMEN

Get changed.

Bruce nods as he heads to the lockers.

BRUCE
 (slowly to anyone)
 ... right through Benitez.

Lauren watches Bruce walk into the locker room,

LAUREN
 That pisses me off. My dad only
 working with that prima donna.

TOMMY
 Bruce is good. Poor management, but
 definitely a good fighter.

Lauren turns and looks angrily at Tommy as he weaves and
 throws combinations.

LAUREN
 And you're not?

Lauren's mood lightens with her 'On The Waterfront' voice.

LAUREN
 Whatsa matta, you don't think you
 coulda been a contendah'?

The BUZZER SOUNDS. Tommy stares stoically at Lauren.

TOMMY
 I was a contender.

INT. A.C. PAL - LOCKER ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Tommy gets dressed in front of his open locker door. Bruce
 walks in from his shower to his locker next to Tommy's. Bruce
 has a towel around his waste and one around his neck.

TOMMY
 (half jokingly)
 You actually break enough of a
 sweat with that little bit of a
 workout to rate a shower?

BRUCE
 My manager says I'll be ready. How
 'bout you, what's next?

Bill walks from the back of the locker room and starts to
 CLOSE LOCKER DOORS. Tommy sees him.

TOMMY
Hey, who are WE fighting anyway?

BILL
Since when do you care?

Tommy buttons his jeans. Bruce towels himself off and listens.

TOMMY
(to no one)
Don't know, don't care.

BILL
Galendez.

TOMMY
Galendez is a fish! I'm not going
to get any work from him.

Bruce looks at Tommy curiously. Bill closes the last locker as he starts out of the room.

BILL
Trust me, it'll get you noticed.

Bruce watches as Bill leaves, then speaks quietly to Tommy.

TOMMY
(mumbling)
Noticed? Who gives a damn about...

BRUCE
Bill Johnson knows his shit. He'll
get you the right fights. Maybe get
you to a title shot.

Tommy shuts his locker and finger combs his hair.

TOMMY
I can't learn anything from
fighting Galendez.

BRUCE
Don't you want to be world champ?

Tommy heads out of the room without turning back.

TOMMY
Rather be the best in the world.

INT. TROPICANA BOXING FORUM - NIGHT

The ballroom is packed and set up for televised fights. 2 boxers are in the ring fighting toe to toe. Crowd is WILD.

Al and Dave are the commentators and reporting MOS.

INT. TROPICANA BOXING FORUM - DRESSING ROOM

is very clean and well lighted. Tommy, dressed in robe and trunks, wraps his hands. Walt sits quietly and watches. Bill walks in. CROWD NOISES are heard as the door opens.

BILL

Why don't you let me do that?

Tommy shrugs and tears strip of tape.

TOMMY

Force of habit. How long before we're up?

INT. TROPICANA BOXING FORUM - HOUR LATER

The crowd is quiet, waiting for the next fight. A RUMBLING starts from the back. Al and Dave turns to see the fighters. Al turns back and looks at his notes,

AL

Galendez, the fish, and Reed.
Anything on Reed?

Dave shrugs and shakes his head no. He looks back to see the fighters and their corner men start to approach. Galendez first. When Galendez gets half way to the ring, Tommy and his corner start up.

Galendez is in the ring. Bill, Tommy, then Walt jog toward the ring. It's crowded and not much room between the ringside seats and the table where Al and Dave are seated. As Tommy approaches, Al scoots his seat in a bit. Dave looks to Al, then at the approaching trio. Dave squints a bit first, then his eyes widen. Tommy smiles.

DAVE

Johnny?

TOMMY

Hey, Dave.

Al looks back to his notes.

AL
Johnny? You know this guy?

DAVE
We grew up in the same town.

That's Johnny Valko.

Al looks up at Tommy, trying to tap his memory.

AL
Johnny V! I'll be damned. What the hell brings him back?

Dave counts on his fingers.

DAVE
Probably something to do with the statute of limitations.

Al looks inquisitively at Dave for a moment, then, eyes wide, it hits him.

INT. TROPICANA - DRESSING ROOM - AFTER FIGHT

TOMMY
I told you I couldn't learn anything from him.

Bill stops cutting the wraps and scowls at Tommy.

BILL
Maybe if you let it go for more than 30 seconds . . .

A KNOCK on the door and Dave enters. Tommy looks over Bill's shoulder to Dave.

TOMMY
Bontempo. Boxing's finest analyst. Shouldn't you still be out there talking or something?

Bill turns to greet Dave. Dave nods to him. Bill nods and finishes cutting off the wraps.

DAVE
The fight lasted a half minute. There wasn't a lot to talk about.

BILL
That's what I was telling him.
How's Galendez?

WALT(O.S.)
He should get an award for his
impersonation of a PEZ dispenser.

Walt walks from the bathroom and scoots up on the table in front of the mirror. Dave walks to him and shakes hands.

DAVE
Mr. Cutman, it's been a while.

WALT
7 and a half years and we're
untouchable.

DAVE
You would have done boxing a
tremendous favor if you would have
finished the job.

INT. DON LE ROI'S OFFICE

is empty and dimly illuminated by the lamps on the desk. The PHONE RINGS. The door opens. Le Roi enters, hobbling with his two canes to the phone.

LE ROI
Yeah!... Beautiful... You sure he
didn't read that contract?... Yeah,
I know, no one reads 63 pages...

EXT. A.C. PAL - FRONT - DAY

It's a sunny day. The usual cars along with Rocco's are parked outside. Rocco leans on his car. A few fighters nod as they walk inside. Rocco ignores them and looks at his watch.

Bruce pulls up in his BMW. The windows are tinted.

Rocco walks up to the car. The driver side window LOWERS to reveal Bruce's smiling face.

BRUCE
Hey, Roc, whazup?

ROCCO
Let's take a little ride.

Bruce, with an almost concerned look, looks up at the second floor of the PAL. Rocco looks up to the PAL and waves it off.

ROCCO

You're more than ready, you've been fighting the best there is. You'll walk right through Benitez, trust me.

Bruce thinks for a moment then nods. Rocco heads around to the passenger side of the car.

ROCCO

You've got to learn to relax. Come on, I've been waiting for a ride in your new car.

The BMW SQUEALS its tires heading away from the PAL.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - HOURS LATER

Only a few left working out. Others walk from the locker room and leave. Tommy shadowboxes. Carmen sleeps in his chair.

Lauren walks up the stairs and approaches Carmen. She looks up at Tommy for a second, then back to Carmen.

LAUREN

Carmen, wake up.

Carmen wakes, trying to focus on his watch.

LAUREN

What the hell you doing?

CARMEN

Waiting for Bruce.

INTERCUT:

EXT. NYC - SKYLINE

of the George Washington Bridge. Bruce's BMW drives over the bridge toward New York.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - 3 DAYS LATER

The gym is crowded. Tommy spars with Dwight, mixing it up. Bill and Walt are on the ring apron, watching, leaning on the ropes.

Carmen walks up the stairs. A look of concern on his face as he looks at his watch. The BUZZER SOUNDS.

BILL

Time!

The fighters break and return to their respective corners. Dwight's handlers give him water and grease his face. Tommy turns and leans on the corner cushion. Walt gives him water and greases his face. Bill steps through the ropes and stands in front of Tommy. Bill demonstrates how Dwight has been weaving Tommy's left hook.

BILL

This guy's going under every hook you throw. Throw it a few more times like that, then bring it up, instead of across.

TOMMY

Like Ray Robinson. I'm setting him up.

Bill smiles and nods as he steps out. Carmen approaches and climbs the steps of the ring and leans on the ropes.

CARMEN

6 o'clock is going to get killed in there with that heavyweight.

Walt SUPPRESSES A LAUGH as the BUZZER SOUNDS.

BILL

I don't think so.

The following is the sparring scene of the round.

A) Tommy walks to Dwight and touches gloves then start to spar. The combinations are plenty and defense is good.

CARMEN(O.S.)

He moves pretty nice.

B) Bill throws a right hand and left hook in the air as to demonstrate.

BILL

Set up that hook!

C) Tommy, with a lot of head movement, moves toward Dwight. Dwight throws a series of punches, missing with all of them.

Tommy throws a straight right and a left hook. Dwight weaves the hook.

BILL(O.S.)
Couple more times.

Dwight and Tommy work on the inside. Tommy steps back and throws a hook. Dwight weaves it and counters with a right hand that Tommy rolls with.

D) Bruce walks up the stairs and watches.

E) They continue to spar evenly. Tommy starts to make Dwight miss badly. Dwight's back is to Bill. Tommy sees Bill in the corner throwing the Robinson hook in the air. Tommy throws a straight right hand and follows with the Robinson hook. Dwight weaves and ducks into the hook. The hook snaps Dwight's head back and he drops.

CARMEN
Damn!

Tommy offers a hand to help Dwight up. Dwight reaches up and Tommy pulls him up and the BUZZER SOUNDS.

BRUCE(O.S.)
Hey, Carmen, whazup?

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Carmen, upset, walks down the steps to Bruce next to the ring. Carmen puts his arm around Bruce's shoulder.

CARMEN
Bruce, 3 days, where you been?

Bruce smiles broadly as though nothing is wrong. A moment later he looks inquisitively at Carmen. Bill and Tommy watch and listen. Carmen pleads,

CARMEN
Bruce, you got the biggest fight of your career coming up. If you...

Bruce looks at Carmen like he's crazy.

BRUCE
Rocco says I'll beat anyone you put in front of me. He says I been training too hard.

Bill AND Tommy listen, shaking their heads.

BRUCE

Rocco says I got to get out and let
the people see me. You know,
promote myself.

Tommy looks at Bill, almost laughing, then quietly,

TOMMY

Promote hisself?

BILL

(huffing a laugh)
Fucking scumbag lawyers.

TOMMY

You're being redundant.

CARMEN

Bruce, you promote yourself every
time you get in the ring.

Bill and Tommy step out of the ring.

BILL

As long as he keeps winning.

Bruce and Carmen look at Bill. Carmen is relieved to have an
ally. Bruce waves him off.

TOMMY

(mockingly)
But Rocco says, . . .

Bruce turns and looks back as he walks into the locker room.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE - END OF DAY

Bill is at his file drawer. Carmen KNOCKS and enters. Bill
continues with his files. Carmen plops down in a chair.

CARMEN

What the hell is he doing?

Bill ignores him. Carmen doesn't notice and continues as
though in deep thought.

CARMEN

He's been a little lazy, but to

Bill turns slightly and mouths the words, 'a little', then
resumes with the files. Tommy appears in the doorway.

CARMEN
take entire days off. What's he
thinking? What the hell's going on?

TOMMY
You need anything before I leave?

Bill looks up from the files and shakes his head 'no'. Carmen looks at Tommy annoyed.

CARMEN
Go clean a spit bucket or
something, 6 o'clock, I'm trying to
figure something out.

TOMMY
Funny you should mention spit
buckets.

Carmen shakes his head, confused. Bill smiles short of a laugh. Tommy shakes his head with short, brisk shakes as though the answer is obvious.

TOMMY
What's slimier than one? Figure
that out, and I think you've got
your answer.

Carmen squints to try and see the obvious.

BILL
The answer is, 'a lawyer'.

CARMEN
Rocco?!

TOMMY
The whore leaves a slug trail when
he walks.

Carmen scratches his head. Bill LAUGHS. Carmen looks to Tommy.

CARMEN
Who the hell are you?

Tommy walks to Carmen and offers his hand.

TOMMY
Johnny Valko.

Carmen shakes the hand and searches his memory for the name.

BILL

He was the best 7 years ago and now
he's better.

Carmen locks onto the hand and looks into Tommy's eyes.

CARMEN

You're the guy who busted up Le
Roi.

Carmen releases Tommy slowly and flashes back to his problem.

CARMEN

You think it's Rocco?

Bill SLAMS THE DRAWER SHUT and looks at Carmen incredulously.

BILL

Christ, you finally get him some
competition and he's going to be in
the worst shape of his life.

Tommy SNIFFS the air and turns his head to the gym. He sees Rocco walks up the stairs meeting Bruce who's carrying his gym bag. Rocco takes Bruce's bag and slaps his shoulder.

TOMMY

Smell like something a lawyer would
do.

Tommy hikes his thumb toward Rocco and Bruce. Carmen leans back and looks around Tommy and sees Rocco and Bruce heading down the stairs.

TOMMY

You better just make sure your ass
is covered.

Bill points at Carmen with a nod to second the motion.

INT. LAS VEGAS BOXING VENUE - FIGHT NIGHT

It's a typical fight night. Cameras are poised and ready along with Dave and Al.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

The locker room scene is intercut with FLASHBACKS of Bruce. Bruce is in a nervous daze throughout. Voices are not heard during flashbacks.

A Boom box plays RAP MUSIC. Rocco leans against the wall watching Carmen wrap Bruce's hands. Bruce's body is not as ripped as in prior fights. There are 2 other HOMEYS in the room dancing to the MUSIC. Occasionally, Carmen, annoyed, looks at them and shakes his head. Carmen turns back and continues to wrap the hands.

CARMEN

Listen, Benitez is a SOB to hit.
Don't start too fast. If he...

FLASHBACK

Of Bruce and Rocco having dinner in NYC. Rocco laughs as the waiter brings 2 huge pieces of cake. Bruce holds his stomach, then grabs the cake and takes a huge bite from it.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

CARMEN

. . .that way you'll at least hit something.

Bruce snaps to. A worried look covers his face.

CARMEN

You see?

Carmen doesn't notice Bruce's blank stare as he nods.

BLACK #1

Ah, man, Bruce is gonna stomp that wetback piece of shit.

Carmen turns and looks at #1 who has his arms folded like a Rap artist. Carmen shakes his head. Rocco pushes off the wall and walks up behind Bruce.

ROCCO

No one's going to get in our way.

CARMEN

You just make sure you....

FLASHBACK

Bruce at a large private party. Rocco pours Champagne into a glass Bruce is holding. Bruce is drunk.

An attractive platinum blond, waved over by Rocco, approaches and rubs Bruce's crotch. Bruce slobbers Champagne down his chin. The blond licks it off.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

Bruce, wide eyed, looks more nervous.

ROCCO

He's all set, Carmen, lighten up.

BLACK #2

You listen to your man, there,
Bruce, he knows what he's doing.

Carmen finishes with the wraps. Bruce is zombie-like as Carmen ties and tapes the gloves on. #1 & 2 continue to dance. Rocco slyly looks at Bruce and hints a smile.

FLASHBACK

Rocco cuts a line of cocaine as Bruce watches nervously. Rocco gently taps Bruce on the back to nudge him toward the coke. Bruce hesitantly snorts a line.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

Carmen slips on a pair of focus pads for Bruce to hit. Bruce starts to shadowbox a bit, then TAPS the pad with a jab. Bruce looks slow and lethargic. Carmen shows Bruce how loose his shoulders should be.

CARMEN

Bruce, you got to relax. C'mon, put
some sting in that jab.

Bruce tries harder, but the JAB still sounds dull. A few RIGHTS and LEFT HOOKS follow just as dead. Carmen pleads,

CARMEN

Bruce, what the hell you been
doing? There's nothing there.

Rocco waves Carmen off as Bruce throws PITY-PAT PUNCHES on the pads.

ROCCO

He's as sharp as ever!

MATCH CUT:

To the fight. Bruce leans on Benitez throwing PITY-PAT PUNCHES.

AL(O.S.)
Bruce Johnson is not sharp!

DAVE(O.S.)
Not sharp?! He couldn't crack an
egg with these punches!

Benitez sidesteps, spins Bruce to the ropes and hits him with a BARRAGE OF PUNCHES as the BELL RINGS.

The ROUND 3 card girl prances around the ring as Bruce staggers back to his corner.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - RINGSIDE - AL AND DAVE
sit in front of their monitors.

DAVE
Reality has kicked Bruce right in
the face.

Bruce is worked on frantically in his corner.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - MONITOR

Bruce slumps in his corner. Carmen pleads MOS. The two homeys stand on the ring apron, staring.

AL
I think the only thing Benitez
HASN'T hit Bruce with is a kick.

SUPER: ROUND 6 CARD

is seen momentarily during Round 6 action.

Bruce moves sluggishly. His left eye is completely closed and his right eye is closing fast.

Benitez picks him apart.

AL(O.S.)
Apparently only one thing can stop
Bruce Johnson from becoming a great
fighter,...

DAVE(O.S.)
Yeah, his opponents.

The BELL RINGS and Bruce starts to walk to Benitez' corner. Benitez helps him back to his own corner.

Le Roi appears in the doorway of the ballroom.

Rocco stands at his ringside seat. He looks up at Bruce slumped in the corner with the corner men working on his eyes. Rocco turns to the doorway and smiles slightly at Le Roi. Le Roi smiles just short of laughing, nods and hobbles away.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - RING

The doctor is on the ring apron closely looking at Bruce.

AL(O.S.)
This may be it, Dave. He's taking a long look.

DAVE(O.S.)
It's obvious Bruce hasn't seen anything that's hit him in the last round and a half.

The Doctor steps off the apron. The BELL RINGS. Bruce is slow getting off the stool.

DAVE(O.S.)
I can't believe they're letting him continue!

AL(O.S.)
This is WRONG! Johnson could get seriously injured!

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM - AFTER FIGHT

The door opens. Bruce, in very bad shape, is being helped by his Homeys on each side. Carmen is frantic. Carmen clears items off the massage table. Bruce is dragged to it and laid down, virtually unconscious. Carmen straightens Bruce's head.

CARMEN
Relax, the doctor will be right in.

The DOOR OPENS and SLAMS. Carmen doesn't turn,

CARMEN
Is he going to be okay, Doc?

ROCCO(O.S.)
This is your fault!

Carmen jumps, startled, and turns to the door. He sees Rocco pointing at him. Carmen looks angry.

CARMEN
My fault?!

Rocco walks toward Carmen and points at Bruce.

ROCCO
You were suppose to train him!

CARMEN
He's got to come to the gym for me
to be able to train him!

ROCCO
That's it, you're out!

The two homeys sneak out of the room. Carmen squints, confused,

CARMEN
What the hell you talking about?

Rocco takes a contract out of his pocket and tosses it at Carmen.

ROCCO
Bottom of page 47.

Carmen flips through, then reads. Carmen, eyes wide and in shock, looks up at Rocco.

INT. LE ROI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Le Roi sits behind his desk reading a contract. The intercom on his desk BUZZES. He pushes a button on it.

LE ROI
Yes?

SECRETARY(V.O.)
Mr. DeParma and Mr. Johnson to see
you.

LE ROI
Send them in.

Le Roi releases the button, sits back, and smiles.

The door swings open. Bruce, swollen face and wearing sun glasses, enters with Rocco behind him.

LE ROI
Bruce, come in. Sit down. It's time
you were treated like the champion
you'll be.

INT. A.C.- LAUREN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The place is clean, quaint, and somewhat void of furniture. There is a brick face fireplace with a gas fire going. Tommy lies in front of it doing crunches. The DOOR OPENS and CLOSES.

LAUREN(O.S.)
You here?

Tommy continues to do the crunches.

TOMMY
(grunting)
By the fire. You find out what
happened to your Father?

Lauren enters and kneels along side of Tommy.

LAUREN
A clause in the contract. Something
to do with Bruce losing a fight.

TOMMY
In small print, no doubt. What's he
going to do now?

Lauren starts HITTING Tommy's stomach with hammer fists every time he crunches.

LAUREN
Find someone else to train.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - AFTERNOON

Tommy is in the ring with Bill HITTING FOCUS PADS.

Carmen teaches a newcomer how to throw a left jab.

Bruce ascends the stairs with his new TRAINER, MUHAMMED HABEB, a very Muslim looking black man with authentic African garb and accent. Habeb is arrogant to the point of being rude.

Many of the other fighters walk to Bruce to say hello MOS and tap fists together.

Tommy HITS THE PADS.

Carmen sees Bruce. Confused and hurt, Carmen tells his trainee to keep working MOS, and walks toward Bruce as Bruce and Habeb walk toward the lockers. Carmen heads them off and puts his hand on Bruce's shoulder.

CARMEN
Bruce, what the hell. . .

Habeb rips Carmen's hand from Bruce's shoulder.

HABEB
(loudly)
Get your hands off my fighter, old man!

Tommy and Bill turn to them. They see Carmen scowl at Habeb. Habeb coolly stares back.

Tommy, with an angry look, starts toward them. Bill, using the focus pad stops Tommy.

BILL
If Carmen wants, he'll knock that piece of shit out.

Habeb puts his hand on Bruce's shoulder and guides him to the lockers. Habeb holds Carmen's stare. When Bruce enters the locker room, Carmen returns to his trainee.

Bill holds up the pads. Tommy hits them with a couple LIGHT JABS as he watches Carmen.

INT. A.C. PAL - BUZZER ON WALL

SOUNDS and the RED LIGHT BULB illuminates.

BILL
Time!!

MATCH CUT:

INT. A.C. PAL - BUZZER ON WALL

SOUNDS and the GREEN LIGHT BULB illuminates.

BILL(O.S.)
Time!!

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - RING

TYRONE and LEWIS, 2 middleweights, spar. Bill stands on the ring apron in Tyrone's corner. ARCHIE ALBERTS, a middle aged trainer with little knowledge about training tends the other.

Bruce, still a little flabby, shadowboxes. Habeb watches him.

Tommy practices movement around a heavy bag near the ring.

Tyrone gets the best of Lewis. Lewis is tired from taking a beating. Alberts keeps waving for Lewis to come forward. Tyrone continues to pick him apart until he drops Lewis. Lewis lies on the canvas.

BILL
That's enough!

Alberts looks angrily at Lewis and throws a towel at him.

ALBERTS
He's alright! Get up, you bum!

Tyrone looks maliciously at Alberts and says "Asshole" as Bill climbs through the ropes and helps Lewis up.

Habeb approaches as Bill helps Lewis through the ropes.

HABEB
Hey Brother, can I get some work
for my fighter?

Bill looks strangely at Habeb.

BILL
I don't remember ma mentioning you.

Habeb, confused, looks around, then back at Bill.

BILL
I ain't your brother. But I like
Bruce, so I'll give him 3.

INT. A.C. PAL - INSIDE RING - 20 MINUTES LATER

The sparring is even. Every time Bruce throws a left jab, his right elbow comes up a bit.

Carmen, leaning on the ring apron, and Tommy, lightly working on the bag next to the ring watch.

BRUCE

over extends to try and reach Tyrone with a jab. The right elbow comes up slightly. Tyrone catches the jab.

TOMMY(O.S.)

He still lifts that elbow when he throws the jab.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - CARMEN AND TOMMY

watch the sparring. The BUZZER SOUNDS. Tommy walks to Tyrone's corner where Bill gives him water.

CARMEN

He didn't always do that.

Tommy shakes his head YES to Carmen saying, "Sure he did." Carmen watches as Tommy talks MOS to Bill and Tyrone, then shows Tyrone how to slip the jab and throw a hook to the liver.

Habeb scowls over at Tommy as Tommy demonstrates. Tommy jumps off the ring and walks back to Carmen.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM - INSIDE THE RING

Bill shoves the mouthpiece into Tyrone's mouth and pats him on the back. The BUZZER SOUNDS. Tyrone and Bruce touch gloves and spar. Bruce throws some jabs. His elbow lifts as he does.

BILL

There it is.

The fighters dance a bit more. Bruce tries to reach Tyrone with a jab. Tyrone slips to his left and drives a vicious left to Bruce's liver. Bruce crumbles to the canvas. Carmen smiles as he slaps Tommy on the back.

CARMEN

Good call, kid.

INT. A.C. PAL - DOWNSTAIRS

is empty. Habeb lurks by the side of the bottom of the stairwell. Tommy walks down. As he get to the bottom, Habeb steps out from the shadows and grabs Tommy's shoulder. Tommy drops his bag and cocks a brow at Habeb.

HABEB

I don't like people fucking with my fighter, white boy. Knock it off or you're going to get busted up.

Tommy smacks Habeb's hand off his shoulder, grabs Habeb's chin with his left and drives his right thumb behind Habeb's ear. Habeb, in excruciating pain, drops to his knees.

TOMMY

You listen to me, Malcolm. Your fighter's going to have trouble dancing pretty like he does with two broken knees. You got that?

Tommy tosses the head away, grabs his bag, and walks away.

INT. LE ROI'S OFFICE - EVENING

Le Roi sits behind his desk and hangs up his phone. Habeb is in the chair opposite him waiting, fidgeting. Habeb frantically mops his brow with a silk handkerchief.

LE ROI

Now, where were we?

HABEB

Mr. Le Roi, I really think it best if we get him out of there. It is not conducive to training.

Le Roi, smiling, waves off the notion as being ridiculous. Habeb stares confused for a moment, eyeing Le Roi's smile.

LE ROI

The facility in which his proficiency excels is not of consequence, my brother.

HABEB

This means he stays where he is, does it not?

LE ROI

Not only does he stay there, but we may pick up other fighters from the potentate purveyor of pugilistic pranks, Carmen Gratzl.

Habeb wipes his brow and leans forward. Le Roi grabs a cigar and his lighter. He's in deep thought as he lights his cigar.

HABEB

There is only one there of any consideration. And I do believe he is of an independent nature and not capable of persuasion.

Habeb's haughty attitude is starting to show. Le Roi eyes him with a look of disbelief.

LE ROI

No one turns down a title shot.

HABEB

(almost insulted)

You don't understand. I refuse to train him.

Le Roi ROARS WITH LAUGHTER.

LE ROI

You refuse?! What do you have to do with it? I make the champions, not you.

Habeb looks totally lost as Le Roi continues to LAUGH.

LE ROI

Don't tell me you're starting to believe the press releases I tell them to write?

Habeb sinks down in his seat and Le Roi grabs the phone.

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Bill works in his office. A KNOCK ON THE DOOR causes him to look up from his work.

BILL

Come in.

The DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS.

LE ROI(O.S.)
Mr. Jefferson, I would appreciate a
word with you if you'd be so kind.

Bill's head jolts up to look over his desk top and sees Le
Roi, smiling broadly, standing in front of the door.

Bill finishes up behind the desk.

BILL
(mumbling)
Let me get off this floor and get
some hip boots on first.

Bill takes his seat, cautiously eyeing the smiling Le Roi.

LE ROI
My Brother, may I have a seat?

BILL
(mumbling)
Family gets bigger all the time.

Bill holds a hand out offering a seat. Le Roi nods and sits.

LE ROI
I understand you train a very
talented young brother named Reed?

Bill CHOKES A LAUGH. Le Roi looks at him strangely.

LE ROI
Perhaps you would share the humor?

BILL
He ain't young. He ain't a brother.
His name ain't Reed. And he trains
his own damn self.

Le Roi bolts up from his chair.

LE ROI
He's not African American!?

BILL
Or black.

Bill presses a button on the intercom on his desk.

BILL
Craig, tell Johnny, ah Tommy, to
come to my office when he gets in.

CRAIG(V.O.)
He just walked by. I'll tell him.

Bill releases the button and waves Le Roi back in his seat.

BILL
He did take out Galendez in a half
minute.

Le Roi relaxes a bit, thinks, then slowly sits. Bill looks over Le Roi's shoulder into the gym and sees Tommy coming up the stairs carrying his bag.

BILL
(mumbling)
This is going to be good.

Le Roi smiles, hands folded in his lap. He seems content, then a thought hits him. Tommy is approaching.

LE ROI
You said his name is not Reed?

Tommy KNOCKS on the door. Bill waves him in.

BILL
May I present to you, Johnny Valko.

Le Roi repeats the name MOS. His eyes burst open, he death grips the chair as he swing around to look at Tommy.

Tommy stoically stares at him.

FLASHBACK

Of the first meeting between Le Roi and Tommy and Walt at Le Roi's office 7 and a half years earlier. The flashback ends with the match cut.

Le Roi, with a smug demeanor, sits behind his desk. Walt, trying to remain calm, sits in a chair opposite Le Roi. Tommy is angry, pacing the room. Walt leans forward.

WALT
He's earn a shot.

Le Roi ROARS WITH LAUGHTER.

LE ROI
(smugly)
You speak as though earn has
something to do with it.
(MORE)

LE ROI(cont'd)

Valko will fight Selton, put on a good show, and lose a close decision.

Tommy turns with fire in his eyes. Le Roi sobers just a bit.

LE ROI

Maybe later something will come up.
Maybe later.

Tommy points at Le Roi with righteous indignation, furious,

TOMMY

Who are you to tell me who and when I can fight?

Le Roi raises and pounds his chest.

LE ROI

I am Don Le Roi! I AM boxing! If you don't fall in line, you'll never fight again!

Tommy grabs the baseball bat from its samurai sword stand. Tommy points the bat at Le Roi.

TOMMY

If you don't sit your fat ass down, I'm going to be fighting sooner than either one of us expected.

Le Roi starts toward Tommy. Walt sinks down into his chair.

LE ROI

You must be punchy, you cracker mother fucker!

As Le Roi gets within range, Tommy swings the bat, STRIKING Le Roi in the knees. Le Roi SCREAMS and drops. Tommy continues to BEAT Le Roi's knees. Tommy, holding the bat, stands over Le Roi

TOMMY stares coldly at Le Roi.

MATCH CUT:

TOMMY stares coldly at Le Roi.

LE ROI

Keep him away from me!

INT. A.C. PAL - BILL'S OFFICE

Bill smiles broadly. Le Roi cowers in his seat. Tommy HUFFS disgusted and shakes his head as he backs out of the office.

Le Roi, nervously cowers from the office. As he does, he shakes an angry finger at Bill.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Le Roi quickly makes his way to the stairway. He is met at the top of the stair by Bruce and Habeb. Bruce and Habeb stare at him strangely.

HABEB

What is wrong?

LE ROI

You're right. This place is no good for him. Bad atmosphere. We'll get him his own gym.

Bruce looks around the gym, confused as Le Roi rushes passed him and down the stairs. Habeb slaps Bruce on the back.

HABEB

You heard Mr. Le Roi. Go clear your locker out.

Bruce shrugs and heads to the locker room.

INT. A.C. PAL - LOCKER ROOM

Tommy laces his shoes as Bruce enters and unlocks his locker. Bruce takes his equipment out and stuffs it into his bag.

TOMMY

It's wrong what you did to Carmen. Your problem was your management, not your training.

Bruce stops packing a second, looks around, then at Tommy.

BRUCE

Who the fuck are you to tell me what my problem is? What the fuck you care, anyway? That old man didn't give 2 fucks about you.

Tommy finishes lacing his shoes and SLAMS his locker shut.

TOMMY
But he did for you.

Tommy walks out of the locker room.

INT. A.C. PAL - MAIN GYM

Habeb stands close to the locker room door. Tommy comes out and walks close to him. As Tommy passes, he quickly lifts his arm up to finger comb his hair. Habeb thinks the hand is coming at him and fearfully jumps back. Tommy smiles.

TOMMY
How you doing there, Aukmed?

Habeb leans into the locker room.

HABEB
Bruce, come, we must leave!

Tommy grabs a jump rope as Habeb and Bruce leave the Gym. The other fighters, not too happy, watch as Bruce leaves.

BRUCE
(quietly)
Fuck yous'all.

TOMMY AND BRUCE

The following scene intercuts between Tommy and Bruce in their respective dressing rooms before their fights at different venues. The Intercutting is followed by a montage.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - TOMMY'S DRESSING ROOM

is top class. Bill and Walt sit, watching Tommy, dressed in robe and trunks, taping his hands.

TOMMY
Who do we have next?

BILL
Frazier. He's ranked 13 by the IBF.
And we've got a top 10 every month
after.

The GLOVE MAN OPENS THE DOOR and hands Walt the gloves. Walt nods to the man and the man leaves. Walt puts the gloves on and POUNDS them into his hands.

WALT
How 'bout we worry about this one
first?

Tommy bites the tape to break it off then nods agreeably.

INT. A.C CASINO - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

A masseur massages Bruce. The DOOR OPENS. Le Roi and Habeb enter. CROWD NOISES are heard until the DOOR SHUTS.

LE ROI
How are you feeling, Champ?

HABEB
He's fine, Mr. Le Roi.

BRUCE
I've never heard of this guy I'm
fighting.

INT. LAS VEGAS - TOMMY'S DRESSING ROOM

TOMMY
He's suppose to be tough, huh.

Tommy stands and throws a few punches in the air.

BILL
You seen his tapes.

TOMMY
Yeah, he chugs his jab.

Walt rolls back and throws a right in the air.

WALT
#4.

INT. A.C CASINO - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

BRUCE
Do we know anything about him?

Habeb looks to Le Roi. Le Roi waves the question off.

LE ROI
Just know you're on your way to a
world title.

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - RING

Tommy is in the ring with Frazier, a class fighter. They move around the ring, exchanging evenly. Frazier throws a couple jabs. The jabs drop after he throws them. Bill is seen getting Tommy's attention and demonstrating the #4.

WALT

There it is!

Frazier throws a jab. Tommy rolls back and counters with a right hand, dropping Frazier. The CROWD GOES WILD.

INT. A.C. CASINO - RING

Bruce is in the ring with BERT WEISTRUM, a flabby middleweight with little talent. The crowd is quiet.

Bert throws a wildly, sloppy overhand right that falls way short. The CROWD LAUGHS. Bruce counters with a lightning 4 punch combination knocking Bert out.

INT. A.C. CASINO - HALL TO BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

The door to the hallway opens revealing the LAUGHING CROWD. Bruce enters the hallway being escorted by Le Roi and Habeb who are smiling broadly. Bruce is not pleased.

BRUCE

What the hell was that?

LE ROI

Your first step to a title.

Bruce looks at Le Roi out of the corner of his eye.

BRUCE

Who do I have next?

HABEB

(shrugging)

We'll get someone.

MONTAGE - SPLIT SCREEN

The montage is SUPERIMPOSED over the 'RING MAGAZINE FIGHTER RATINGS' showing both Bruce and Tommy rising in the ratings.

The montage is a condensation of a series of fights of Bruce and Tommy against various opponents and other activities outside the ring. The fights take place at many different venues. Occasionally, Al and Dave are heard and seen commenting on the fights.

-Bruce fights another bum. The crowd is bored.

-Tommy trades punches with a contender.

AL

Neither man has taken a backward step, Dave.

DAVE

They could have fought this one in a phone booth.

-Bruce does the Ali shuffle in front of his opponent.

-Tommy gets beaten against the ropes. After Tommy takes a dozen punches, he spins his opponent into the ropes and pounds the body until his opponent crumbles.

-Dave interviews Bruce with Habeb and Le Roi standing by.

DAVE

Thank you, Bruce. Now if I could have a word with your manager.

Le Roi, with a broad smile, steps up to the microphone.

LE ROI

David, did'ya see the mellifluous effectiveness with which Bruce destroyed his opponent?

Dave gives Le Roi a strange look.

DAVE

It is quite obvious that Bruce's,
(clears throat)
opponents are carefully chosen. Do you...

LE ROI

Well, David, years ago someone hepped me. I figured if I could find someone to hep, it would be like repaying that man that hepped me. That's what I'm doing for Bruce. Don't you wish you had someone to hep, David?

DAVE

I can start by telling you there's
an 'L' in that word.

Habeb and Bruce scowl at Dave.

-Le Roi escorts Bruce and Habeb to a party. Le Roi waves a
call girl over for Bruce. She cuddles up to Bruce. Behind
Bruce's back, Le Roi hands the girl a packet of cocaine.

-Lauren swings her apartment door open and grabs one of
Tommy's bags. Tommy has his duffel bag over his shoulder.
They enter. Tommy tosses his bag down and plops onto the
floor. Lauren walks to the fridge and opens the freezer.
Inside are a dozen large paper cups filled with ice. She
peels some of the paper down as she walks to Tommy. She hands
the cup to Tommy. He lifts his shirt and places the cup on
his bruised rib.

-Bruce trains at a very lavish gym. Habeb watches him hit the
heavy bag. Bruce's technic is smooth and fluid.

HABEB

Very good, Bruce, very good.

BRUCE

Who do I have next? Shouldn't I be
fighting some contenders?

Habeb motions for Bruce to continue to hit the bag.

HABEB

Mr. Le Roi is taking care of that
as we speak.

-At Le Roi's office a man accepts an envelope from Le Roi.

LE ROI

We have an understanding?

The man opens the envelope and look inside. He smiles.

MANAGER

Oh yeah, Mr. Le Roi.

-Tommy at the PAL training. Bill is in the office on the
phone talking MOS. Carmen hurries up the stairs and into the
office. Bill listens to him MOS for a moment, then hangs up
the phone. Bill walks out of the office to Tommy. Carmen
follows. Tommy stops hitting the bag as Bill approaches.

TOMMY

What's up?

BILL

Richardson's opponent overdosed.
He's #3 and ours if we want him.
Carmen set it up.

-Tommy in the ring with Richardson. They're trading and the CROWD IS WILD. Bill, Walt, and Carmen are in his corner.

-AL AND DAVE

ANNOUNCE the fight as it continues in the b.g.

AL

My God, Johnny Valko has not made this an easy tour for himself.

DAVE

I believe he's fighting himself into a title shot.

AL

Oh yeah, that's right. That's how they used to do it.

DAVE

Nostalgia's a wonderful thing.

Richardson drops unconscious.

-Bruce in the ring with Pryor. They are both moving smoothly. Pryor, in control, has Bruce up against the ropes. The final BELL RINGS. The fighters hug. Al and Dave are announcing.

AL(O.S.)

Well, Dave, Johnson finally gets in with another contender. I think it was long overdue.

DAVE(O.S.)

Overdue and desperately needed to prove him worthy of a title shot.

-AL AND DAVE

Announcing the fight.

AL

Worthy or not, he's already signed.
That title was vacated and is up
for grabs. But personally, Dave, I
think Bruce's effort tonight was
too little too late.

DAVE

If the decision doesn't go his way,
Le Roi will have to ...

RING ANNOUNCER(O.S.)

And the winner, in the red corner,
Bruce Johnson!

INSIDE RING

Bruce and Pryor in the ring. The ref holds up Bruce's hand in
victory. The CROWD BOOS.

DAVE(O.S.)

Management is a wonderful thing,
Al.

AL(O.S.)

So are eyeglasses. Apparently the
judges left theirs at home tonight.

-Tommy is in the ring with Pryor going toe to toe, banging.
Tommy drives Pryor back to the ropes and attacks. The ref
steps in and stops the fight.

END MONTAGE

INT. LAS VEGAS VENUE - TOMMY'S DRESSING ROOM - AFTER FIGHT

Walt sits on a chair in the corner with his eyes closed.
Carmen and Bill pace, angrily.

Tommy cuts the wraps off. A doctor stands by, waiting to
check the hand.

TOMMY

The hand's fine.

The doctor grabs the swollen hand, squeezes, and checks it.
The doc makes an unpleasant face.

DOC

I think this thing is broken. You
better get an x-ray.

Tommy yanks the hand away and shoves it into a bucket of ice. The doc shrugs and leaves. When the DOOR CLOSES, Carmen points at Tommy.

CARMEN
He should be fighting for the
title, not Bruce!

BILL
Le Roi's got everything tied up.

Tommy pulls the hand out, makes a fist a couple of times, shrugs, and sticks it back in the bucket of ice.

CARMEN
His last 6 fights he beat 6
contenders. What's that tell you?

WALT
Same thing it tells everyone else.
He's the best. He doesn't need a
belt to prove that.

Bill thinks for a moment, then nods understandably. Carmen is still visibly upset. Tommy smiles and leans back.

INT. A.C. LAUREN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The fire roars. Lauren lies in front of it while Tommy gives her a massage with one hand. Lauren turns slightly to him.

LAUREN
This is backwards. I should be
giving you the massage.

Tommy SMACKS her on the butt with his bad hand and winces.

LAUREN
How's your hand?

TOMMY
(hopefully)
I don't think it's broke.

Lauren rolls over and gently grabs his hand.

LAUREN
You should let someone look at it.

TOMMY
One of those quack doctors?

Lauren scowls and squeezes his hand. Tommy winces and pulls the hand away.

TOMMY
Present company excluded.

LAUREN
This mean you're taking some time
off from fighting?

Lauren takes the hand back, kisses it, and plays with it with her tongue.

TOMMY
This happened 3 fights ago.

Lauren looks at him like he's a nut.

LAUREN
You're a lunatic.

TOMMY
You a psychiatrist now?

Lauren sucks on a couple fingers for a bit. She licks them with her tongue as she removes them.

LAUREN
CNo, but I do know what you need. A
little moist heat.

Lauren takes the hand and slides it down her body into her crotch.

INT. LE ROI'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ring Magazine on Le Roi's desk opened to the top 10 contender's page. Le Roi lights his cigar. Bruce, Rocco, and Habeb sit opposite him. Their faces are full of concern.

HABEB
What do we do. They'll cancel the
fight if we don't find a
replacement.

BRUCE
What's the matter with that Holmes?
Can't he get a woman without raping
the bitch?

Habeb slides the `RING MAGAZINE' toward himself.

INT. LE ROI'S OFFICE - TOP TEN LIST

shows the top 10 middleweight contenders. Johnny Valko is #2. Bruce is #1.

HABEB(O.S.)

No one here wishes to fight for the world's title?

LE ROI(O.S.)

Not on 3 days notice. They're afraid of losing their rating.

INT. LE ROI'S OFFICE

Rocco looks at the ratings. Bruce fumes. Le Roi angrily chews on his cigar. Rocco points at the list.

ROCCO

Why not Valko. I understand he never turns down a fight

(pause)

On any notice.

Habeb and Bruce look worried and sit up.

BRUCE

That's because he's always training. Besides, he just fought Pryor last Saturday. I really don't...

The INTERCOM BUZZES. Le Roi leans forward and hits a button.

LE ROI

Yes?

SECRETARY(V.O.)

Doctor Cunningham, line 2.

Le Roi hits a button on the phone and picks up and talks MOS. Bruce leans to Habeb and whispers.

BRUCE

He's a dirty fighter. I'd rather get someone more conventional.

ROCCO

This is for the world title.

Le Roi hangs up the phone. He sits back, puffs on his cigar, smiles, and CLEARS HIS THROAT. All look to him.

LE ROI
We'll get Valko.

Rocco smiles. Bruce looks worried. Le Roi points at the phone.

LE ROI
That was the ring doctor from his last fight. He virtually guaranteed me his hand was broke.

They all smile.

INTERCUTTING

The following scene intercut from Tommy and his people to Bruce and his to Al and Dave at their announcing table.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - TOMMY'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Walt, Carmen, and Bill watch Tommy wrap his hands. Tommy flinches in pain as he pulls the tape across the back of his hand as tight as he can.

Carmen pulls a syringe out of his little bag.

CARMEN
How 'bout a shot of Novocaine.

Tommy scowls at Carmen. Carmen shrugs. The DOOR OPENS and Carmen quickly puts the syringe away. The glove man enters.

GLOVE MAN
You have to sign for these.

Walt signs and takes the gloves. The glove man leaves.

CARMEN
I'll take those.

Carmen takes the gloves and starts to rub them on the wall.

WALT
What're you doing?

CARMEN
Roughing them up. They'll cut his face easier.

Walt takes the gloves from Carmen.

WALT
He's fighting a has-been that never
was. He doesn't need that.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - BRUCE'S DRESSING ROOM

Rocco sits back watching Bruce get a massage. Habeb paces nervously. The DOOR OPENS. Le Roi enters.

LE ROI
How are you feeling?

BRUCE
A little nervous, but OK.

Le Roi takes a small bottle from his pocket, opens it, and shakes a tablet from it. Le Roi hands the tablet to Bruce.

LE ROI
Take this. It'll help your nerves.

Bruce tosses the tablet into his mouth and washes it down.

BRUCE
What is it?

LE ROI
A little pick me up.

Bruce bolts up. The masseur jumps back.

BRUCE
What about the urine test?!

Rocco holds up a specimen bottle.

ROCCO
Taken care of.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - ANNOUNCER'S TABLE AT RINGSIDE

Al and Dave do the prefight hype. The crowd MUMBLES AND IS RESTLESS. Lauren is right behind the table.

AL
Well, Dave, it took a series of
mishaps, but it looks like we've
got ourselves a fight.

DAVE

A real fight. A fight that epitomizes the best of boxing vs. what threatens to be the downfall of boxing.

AL

That's right. A man of conviction, Johnny Valko, 8 years ago gave up his dream to be champion when he refused to play the games that are now common in the world of boxing.

CROWD GETS LOUDER. Al and Dave turn to the back of the room and see Tommy and his handlers making their way toward the ring.

Moments later Bruce and his handlers approach.

Both fighters enter the ring on opposite sides. They dance around the ring to loosen up.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - RING

The ref checks on the fighters for groin protection and gloves. RING ANNOUNCER, MICHAEL BUFFER enters the ring. He points at the time keeper who DINGS THE BELL TWICE.

BUFFER

Ladies and gentlemen, we present for you 12 rounds of boxing in the middleweight division for the vacant IBF world title. Now, without further delay, "LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE!"

The CROWD GOES WILD. Tommy shivers then looks down at his arms.

TOMMY

God, I get goose bumps when he says that.

Carmen looks at Tommy out of the corner of his eye, shakes his head then looks up in a praying manner.

BUFFER

Introducing first, fighting out of the blue corner, wearing the black, weighing in at 159 pounds, the #2 middleweight in the world, . . . Johnny Valko.

The CROWD ROARS.

BUFFER

And in the red corner, wearing red, green, and black, weighing in at an even 160 pounds. He is ranked #1 in the world by the IBF, Bruce Johnson.

The CROWD ROARS.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - RING SIDE

Al and Dave from behind. The ref calls the fighters to the center and gives instructions MOS.

AL

Well, Dave, the moment of truth approaches.

The fighters go back to their corners.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - TOMMY'S CORNER

Tommy stands in his corner. Walt slides his mouthpiece in and slaps Tommy on the back.

WALT

Do what you do best.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The following scene shows segments of the rounds.

BELL RINGS. The ref motions for the fighters to fight. Habeb leans on the ropes as Bruce moves to the center of the ring.

HABEB

Move to your left! That right hand is broke!

Tommy stops in his tracks. A strange look is on his face as he looks over to Habeb. Tommy backs up, dances, and fires left jabs at Bruce. Bruce blocks them.

Bruce fires combinations. Tommy uses his right hand for defense only as the BELL RINGS.

TOMMY'S CORNER

Tommy calmly stands. Carmen jumps through the ropes. Walt holds the ice bag on Tommy's back. Bill is on the ring apron.

CARMEN

(frantic)

What're you waiting on the right hand for? You said it wasn't hurt!

TOMMY

They think it's broke.

Bill leans inside the ropes.

BILL

OK. Hold off on it another couple rounds. Lull them into a false sense of security.

Walt squirts a blast of water into Tommy's mouth.

WALT

I love this kind of stuff!

The BELL RINGS and Walt pushes Tommy back out into the ring.

SPFX

The next couple rounds are SUPERIMPOSED over the ring card girls carrying the ROUND 2,3, and 4 CARDS. The rounds are filled with action of Tommy throwing a barrage of left jabs and hooks. Bruce fights back beautifully, always moving to his left. Bruce wins the rounds.

AL(O.S.)

Dave, Valko is not throwing his right hand. Could it be hurt?

DAVE(O.S.)

I don't see how. I don't think he's thrown it yet.

The BELL RINGS. Bruce raises his hands as he walks back to his corner.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - BRUCE'S CORNER

Is relaxed as Bruce sits on his stool. Habeb climbs through the ropes. 2 Muslims are on the ring apron.

HABEB

Beautiful. Keep moving to your left. You're naturally rolling with his hook.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - MONITOR

in front of Al showing Tommy standing in his corner.

AL

Johnny 'V' did take this fight on 3 days notice.

DAVE

But there's no question he's in shape. He discarded Pryor in a cold blooded fashion just last week.

AL

I think there in lies the problem. Johnny took out Pryor with vicious right hands. That may explain its lack of use against Johnson tonight.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - RING

BELL RINGS. Walt slaps Tommy on the back shoving him out. Carmen climbs out of the ropes and turns to Tommy.

CARMEN

He's ready. We'll let you know when.

Tommy dances out toward Bruce. Bruce moves to his own left and throws a right hand catching Tommy on the chin.

Tommy smiles and nods to Bruce. Bruce looks angry and throws a vicious right hand. Tommy weaves it. Bruce falls into him. Tommy bulls Bruce back into the ropes and drives a series of left hooks to the body. Bruce fights back.

AL(O.S.)

They stand and trade much to the delight of this crowd.

The ref steps in to break the fighters.

DAVE(O.S.)

It appears the fight plans have gone right out the window.

The timekeeper POUNDS the ring apron for the 10 second warning. Bruce approaches, moving to Tommy's right.

Bill and Carmen are POUNDING on the apron.

BILL AND CARMEN

Now! Now!

Tommy throws a right hand to Bruce's face, staggering him into the ropes. Tommy charges and Bruce clinches.

AL(O.S.)

Or have they!? This may have been a new version of the rope-a-dope.

BELL RINGS and Bruce staggers back to his corner. Tommy smiles and winks to Dave.

AL AND DAVE

DAVE

I think you're right, Al. My God, I thought he was slick 8 years ago, but that was sweet!

AL

Let's go into Johnson's corner and check out the panic.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - MONITOR

shows Habeb frantically slapping Bruce in the face. One of the Muslims is pouring water on Bruce's head.

HABEB(V.O.)

Bruce, you must listen. Hit and don't get hit!

AL(O.S.)

Well, Dave, there you have it. Muhammed Habeb has broken the code!

DAVE(O.S.)

It's obvious now why Bruce traded Gratzi for this man. A brilliant management move by Rocco DeParma.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - RING

The BELL RINGS. Habeb lifts Bruce off his stool. Bruce, still dazed, shakes his head and dances sloppily away from Tommy.

BILL
Take that loser out.

Tommy triple jabs Bruce back into the ropes. Tommy follows and shifts to his right. Tommy drives a left L-5 to Bruce's body, doubling him over, and quickly throws a vicious right hand behind Bruce's ear, driving Bruce to slump against the ropes.

DAVE(O.S.)
It looks like Carmen Gratzki may have finally associated himself with a world champion.

TOMMY AND BRUCE mix it up. Tommy throws another right and drives Bruce to the canvas.

AL(O.S.)
Don't jinx him, Dave. This is boxing where things can change at a moment's notice.

The ref steps in, points Tommy to a neutral corner, then starts to COUNT.

Tommy spits out his mouthpiece and chews at the tape on his gloves as he walks toward his corner.

The ref looks back at him and stops counting.

REF
Back in that corner.

DAVE(O.S.)
Or without notice! Johnny is leaving the ring.

AL(O.S.)
He'll be disqualified!

INT. FIGHT VENUE - ARENA

The NOISE OF THE CROWD is muffled as Tommy slowly walks out of the ring and down the steps. Carmen screams at him MOS.

Tommy walks passed the announcer's table and pats Dave on the shoulder, smiling. Lauren stands to meet him and hug him.

INT. FIGHT VENUE - TOMMY'S CORNER

Bill and Carmen are dumbfounded. Walt smiles slightly. The crowd CHANTS "VALKO". Carmen screams at Tommy.

CARMEN

What the hell are you doing?!

Tommy looks to Carmen.

TOMMY

I'm the best there is, old man,
that's all they need to know.

Tommy and Lauren walk through the crowd. The crowd continues to CHANT and slap him on the back.

In the ring Le Roi jumps through the ropes and holds Bruce's hand up as the doctor checks on him.

THE END